THIS WAS THE CIVIL WAR

FULL BLOWN CRISIS—As a result of his indecision over the issues of the day, President Buchanan was faced with a full blown cabinet crisis in December, 1960. Howell Cobb, of Georgia, the secretary of the treasury, resigned from the cabinet and went south to aid the forces of secession. Lewis Cass, the secretary of state, was next to go. Buchanan then switched Attorney General Jeremiah S. Black to Cass' job, and brought in Edwin M. Stanton to replace Black. Shown is a drawing of the cabinet in session in 1858 before the resignations. They are, from left, Isaac Toucey, navy secretary; President Buchanan, Aaron V. Brown, postmaster general; Black, Secretary of War John B. Floyd; Jacob Thompson, interior secretary; Cass and Cobb. (UPI Telephoto)

Cabinet Crisis for Buchanan

By MERTON T. AKERS
UPI Correspondent

A hundred years ago, the administration of President James Buchanan was in desperate trouble.

Only a week before, his State of the Union message to Congress, in which he straddled the flaming issue of secession, had pleased neither the Northerners nor the Southerners and alienated both.

And as a result, the indecisive President had a full-fledged cabinet crisis on his hands.

Only a feeble ray of compromise dimly shone in this tense week. The Committee of 33, a House group appointed to find a way out of the North-South crisis, held its first meeting and did nothing but squabble.

The cabinet crisis was on everyone's tongue. A tangled maneuver, it was, of politicians trying to use the President to push the country to the extreme position of either secession or to a hard preservation of the Union stand.

The Northerners seemed to have the edge, too.

Cobb Resigns

Howell Cobb of Georgia, secretary of the treasury, was the first to desert Buchanan. Publishing a red hot secession "manifesto" on Dec. 6, 1860, Cobb followed it up two days later by resigning from the administration. Cobb held that secession now was inevitable. The only feeling between the "Black" Republicans and the people of the South, he said in the document, was one of bittedness too deep to be overcome. After March 4, 1861 (when Lincoln was to be inaugurated) the federal government would have no claim on the South's confidence or loyalty.

Then he went South to Georgia and plunged into the fight to take his state out of the Union.

Cobb had already a distinguished career. He was a former governor of Georgia. As a Whig congressman he had advocated preservation of the Union by compromise on slavery, but by 1860, after nearly four years in the cabinet, he had gone over to the secessionists. A distinguished battlefield career was ahead.

Cass Exits

Next in the cabinet to go was Lewis Cass, secretary of state. Cass was 78, a Democrat and a firm Union man. He had fought in the War of 1812, a brigadier general in the regular army. He was President Jackson's secretary of war and later was minister to France. He ran for president in 1848 against Zachary Taylor and was a senator from Michigan for two terms. He was one of the strong men in the cabinet.

But he broke with the President over the issue of reinforcing the forts at Charleston, S. C. Buchanan then had before him a series of requests for inforcements from Maj. Robert Anderson, who was struggling to restore the forts. "Old Buck" vacillated. On Dec 13 Cass made one more effort to compel Buchanan to act.

"These forts must be strengthened, I demand it," Cass told the President.

"The interests of the country do not demand a reinforcement of the forces in Charleston," Buchanan replied. "I cannot do it and I take the responsibility on myself.

Cass quit in disgust. Buchanan switched Attorney General Jeremiah S. Black to Cass' job as secretary of state. A Pennsylvanian, Black was a strong Union man. It was his opinion that Buchanan had cited in his message to Congress that secession was unconstitutional.

Stanton Enters Cabinet

As attorney general Buchanan chose Edwin M. Stanton. Born in Steubenville, Ohio, and educated at Kenyon College at Gambier, Ohio, Stanton had worked himself up to a top-position lawyer by 1860, practicing in Steubenville, Pittsburgh, and finally in Washington when his cases in the Supreme Court began to take most of his time.

Stanton was a pugnacious little man, as rabid an anti-slavery advocate as the fiercest of the Southerners was pro-slavedy. He learned his abolitionism at the knee of his father, a Yankee Quaker, He absorbed more at college and here was converted to the Episcopal church, embracing a faith that at times bordered on the morbid. In Cincinnati trying a case, Stanton snubbed one of his co-counsel, Abraham Lincoln, but would be Lincoln's able secretary of war later. He was intense, and industrious, excitable, suspicious and a prophet of doom. His remembered words, spoken at Lincoln's death bed, would be: "Now he belongs to the ages."

In place of Cobb at the treasury Buchanan appointed Philip F. Thomas of Maryland, who would last only a month.

Committee Hit Snag

The one hope of compromise at the moment seemed to be the Committee of 33, one House member from each state. Appointed Dec. 6 it met first on Dec. 11. At the start all seemed conciliatory enough, but on the 12th when Reuben Davis of Mississippi made a long speech attacking the Republicans, who controlled the committee, bad blood began to appear.

A resolution, designed by the Northerners to smooth over the ruffled feelings of the Southerners, was adopted but it ran into a denunciatory manifesto of Dec. 14 signed by 30 Southern congressmen which said that the time for argument had passed and that the Republicans had nothing to offer. On Dec. 14 chairman Tom Corwin of Ohio made a long speech again calculated to smooth over the fighting and suggested a mode of operation for the committee.

He wanted to take up a pending proposal to ask Northern states to repeal all laws against the Fugitive Slave Act. The committee wrangled on, and in a few days the Republicans voted down a resolution to extend the Missouri Compromise line to the west coast, with slavery permitted on the south and free soil on the north whenever the territories became large enough to warrant admission to the Union.

There the issue rested. It would be Feb. 28, 1861, before any tangible results from this committee would be laid before the House.

(Next Week — South Carolina Secedes.)

Christmas Train Taking Gifts to Chile Children

Santiago, Chile — (UPI) — A special ten-car Christmas train with a full dress Santa Claus at the controls is en route from Santiago for the south to distribute holiday gifts to a half million children. They are survivors of last spring's earthquakes and tidal wave which ravaged ten provinces of southern Chile.

Santa Claus will guide the train on a 1,000 mile tour through 72 villages.

Msgr. Emilio Tagle, the apostolic administrator in Santiago, blessed the train that will bring cheer to the young victims of Chile's greatest natural disaster. A bottle of champagne was broken against the gaily decorated locomotive for good luck.

Children See Departure

Among the officials who saw the train leave was Minister of the Interior Sotero del Rio. His wife was one of the women who conceived the idea of the Christmas train. Also at the station were 200 Santiago school children. School children throughout Chile contributed to the half million toy cargo.

Many of the toys were contributed by patients in hospitals for the physically disabled as well as the blind. Their gifts include wooden horses, refinished by hand, books and tricycles.

The wife of Mexican President Adolfo Lopez Mateos was the largest single contributor. The Junior Red Cross in the United States and Canada collected some 125 thousand toys from North American children. The American Red Cross provided bags for the toys, carrying greetings in Spanish from U. S. children. Chilean and foreign businessmen contributed cash.

While the train dispenses its Christmas cheer on land a Chilean warship will carry toys to offshore islands.

4-H Club News

Central Point Swine Club

The Central Point 4-H Swine club meeting was called to order by President Judy Frink at the home of Eldred Charley.

We planned a skating party. We also set our goals for the year. Refreshments were served by Mrs. Charley.

Donald Herzog,
Reporter

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