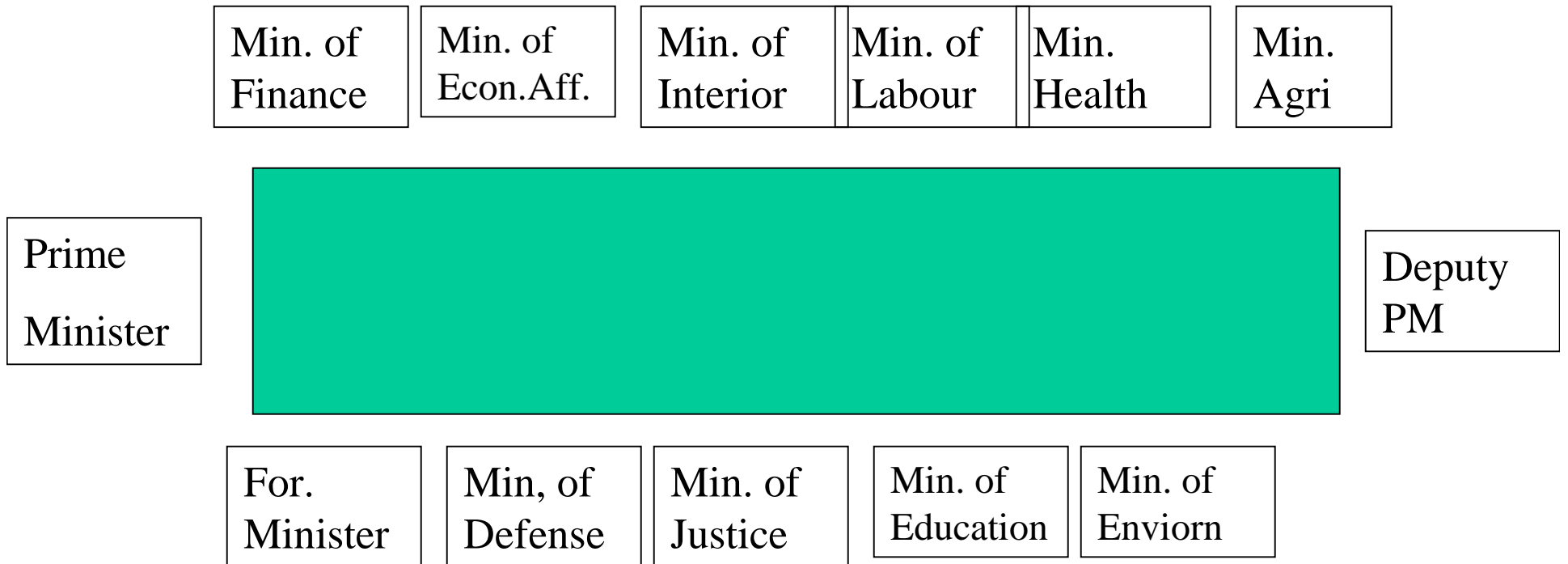


Parliamentary Government

Defining characteristic

- Executive is directly controlled by the legislature
 - The parliament is elected by the citizens, and then appoints the “government” or “cabinet”

A Hypothetical Cabinet



A Legislature: The German Bundestag after the 1987 Elections

<i>Party</i>	<i>Seats</i>	<i>Perc.</i>
Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU)	223	44.87
Social Democrats (SPD)	186	37.42
Free Democrats (FDP)	46	9.26
Greens	42	8.45
Minor Parties		
Total	497	100

Since...

- The “government” serves at the pleasure of the legislature in a parliamentary system, the cabinet put forward must retain the “confidence” of the legislative assembly.
 - In some systems it must survive an “investiture vote”, some it must not.
 - But either way, it must retain support on a day to day basis.

Typically, we think of
“confidence” as being assured by

- The support of a majority of members of the legislature.
 - Given party discipline, this means that a government must obtain a commitment of support from the leaders of enough parties to command a majority of the seats of the legislature

In the German Bundestag after the 1987 Elections,

- any combinations of parties controlling 249 $((497+1)/2)$ or more seats was a majority

There are many possible coalitions

No.	Members	Seats Controlled
1	CDU, SPD	409
2	CDU, FDP	269
3	CDU, Greens	265
4	SPD, FDP	232
5	SPD, Greens	228
6	CDU, SPD, FDP	455
7	CDU, SPD, Greens	451
8	SPD, FDP, Green	274

But remember, life's easier if you control a majority (249) of the seats

No.	Members	Seats Controlled
1	CDU, SPD	409
2	CDU, FDP	269
3	CDU, Greens	265
4	SPD, FDP	232
5	SPD, Greens	228
6	CDU, SPD, FDP	455
7	CDU, SPD, Greens	451
8	SPD, FDP, Green	274

Are all majority governments equally plausible?

No.	Members	Seats Controlled	Surplus
1	CDU, SPD	409	160
2	CDU, FDP	269	20
3	CDU, Greens	265	16
4	SPD, FDP	232	-17
5	SPD, Greens	228	-21
6	CDU, SPD, FDP	455	206
7	CDU, SPD, Greens	451	202
8	SPD, FDP, Green	274	25

To answer that we need to

- Think about the process of government formation
- Think about what the goals of the actors involved in that process

Formation process

- Typically, a *formateur* is chosen
 - The *formateur* is the person who manages the bargaining process that leads to the formation of the government

The selection of the *formateur* differs across countries

Country	<i>Formateur</i> designated by	Process
Greece	Constitution	leader of largest party is first, leader of second largest party is next, etc.
UK, Ireland	Tradition	leader of outgoing government is first <i>formateur</i> , even after losing an election!
Finland	Head of State	President chooses <i>formateur</i>
Netherlands	Head of State	Queen choose <i>informateur</i> who recommends <i>formateur</i>

The bottom line, often, is that

- A leader from the party winning the most seats, acts as *formateur*
 - This happens either by rule, by tradition, or as the result of strategic behavior
 - Leaders of most successful party can credibly threaten to veto any proposal by other *formateurs*

Goals of actors: *Alternative views*

- Office-seeking – form cabinet with the hope of securing the largest number of ministerial portfolios
- Policy-seeking – form cabinet with hope of producing policies that maximize one's policy goals

If you were a CDU leader and lived in an office-seeking world, and were named *formateur*, what would you propose?

No.	Members	Seats Controlled	Surplus
1	CDU, SPD	409	160
2	CDU, FDP	269	20
3	CDU, Greens	265	16
4	SPD, FDP	232	-17
5	SPD, Greens	228	-21
6	CDU, SPD, FDP	455	206
7	CDU, SPD, Greens	451	202
8	SPD, FDP, Green	274	25

Answer:

- What ever would allow you to put together a coalition that would
 1. command a majority of the seats in the legislature,
 2. Give you a most ministerial portfolios possible

Bargaining process

- *Formateur* (representing largest party) makes offers to leaders of other parties.
 - *Content of offer is “I’ll give you X ministerial posts” in exchange for a promise of legislative support equal to the size of the number of seats your party controls.”*
 - *Presumably, leaders of parties controlling a large number of seats will require a larger number of ministerial posts before they say “yes”*
- When *Formateur* has gotten “enough” party leaders to say “yes”, the government has “formed”

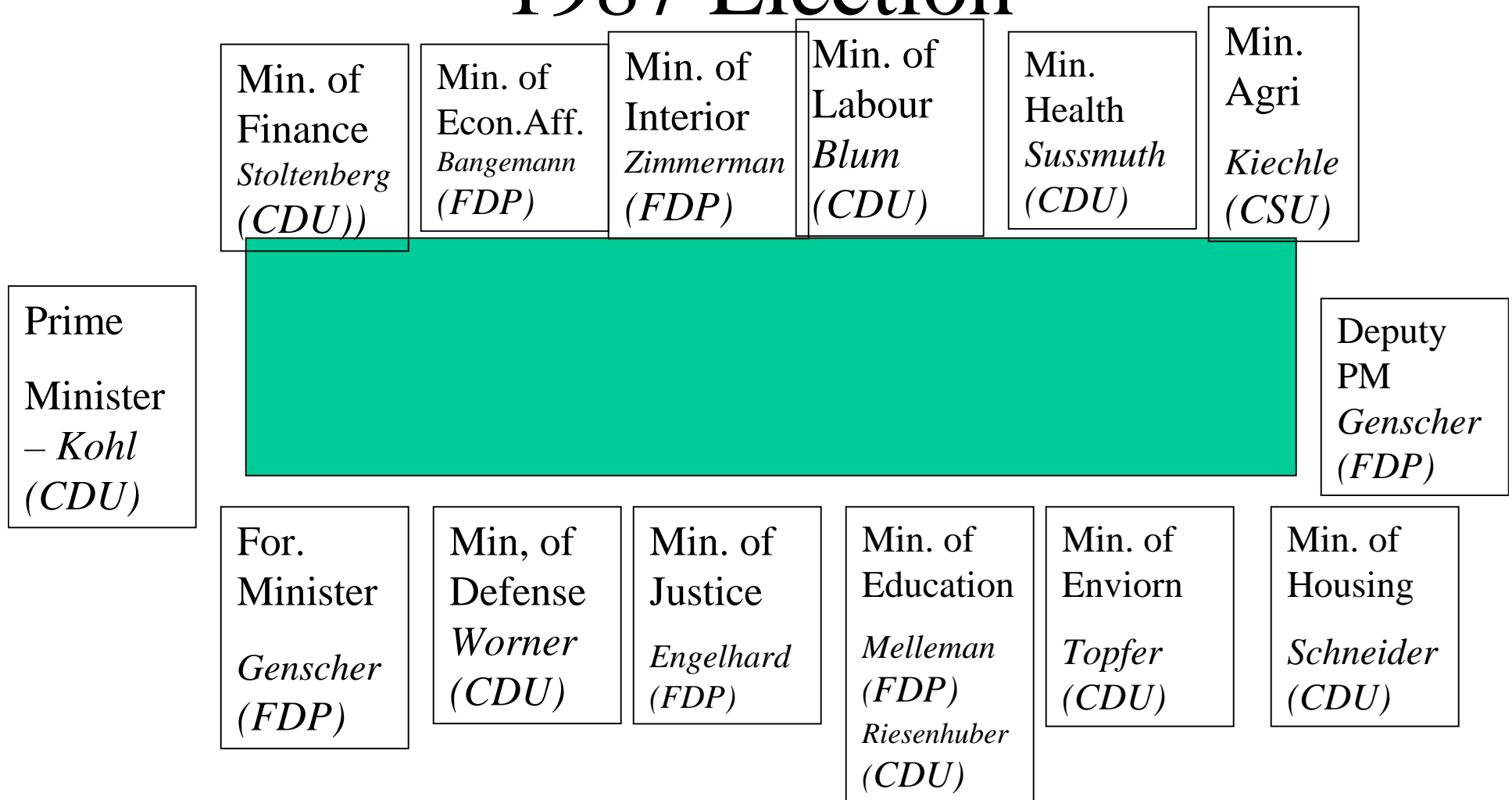
The above logic, predicts “Minimal Winning Coalitions”

No.	Members	Seats Controlled	Surplus	
1	CDU, SPD	409	160	
2	CDU, FDP	269	20	
3	CDU, Greens	265	16	Minimal Winning Coalition
4	SPD, FDP	232	-17	
5	SPD, Greens	228	-21	
6	CDU, SPD, FDP	455	206	
7	CDU, SPD, Greens	451	202	
8	SPD, FDP, Green	274	25	

Which coalition actually formed?

No.	Members	Seats Controlled	Surplus	
1	CDU, SPD	409	160	
2	CDU, FDP	269	20	
3	CDU, Greens	265	16	Minimal Winning Coalition
4	SPD, FDP	232	-17	
5	SPD, Greens	228	-21	
6	CDU, SPD, FDP	455	206	
7	CDU, SPD, Greens	451	202	
8	SPD, FDP, Green	274	25	

The German Cabinet after the 1987 Election



What happened?

What happened?

- Maybe leaders aren't pure "office-seekers"?

If you were a CDU leader and lived in a policy-seeking world, and were named *formateur*, what would you propose?

No.	Members	Seats Controlled	Surplus
1	CDU, SPD	409	160
2	CDU, FDP	269	20
3	CDU, Greens	265	16
4	SPD, FDP	232	-17
5	SPD, Greens	228	-21
6	CDU, SPD, FDP	455	206
7	CDU, SPD, Greens	451	202
8	SPD, FDP, Green	274	25

To answer that you'd need to know something about the distribution of parties along salient issue dimensions

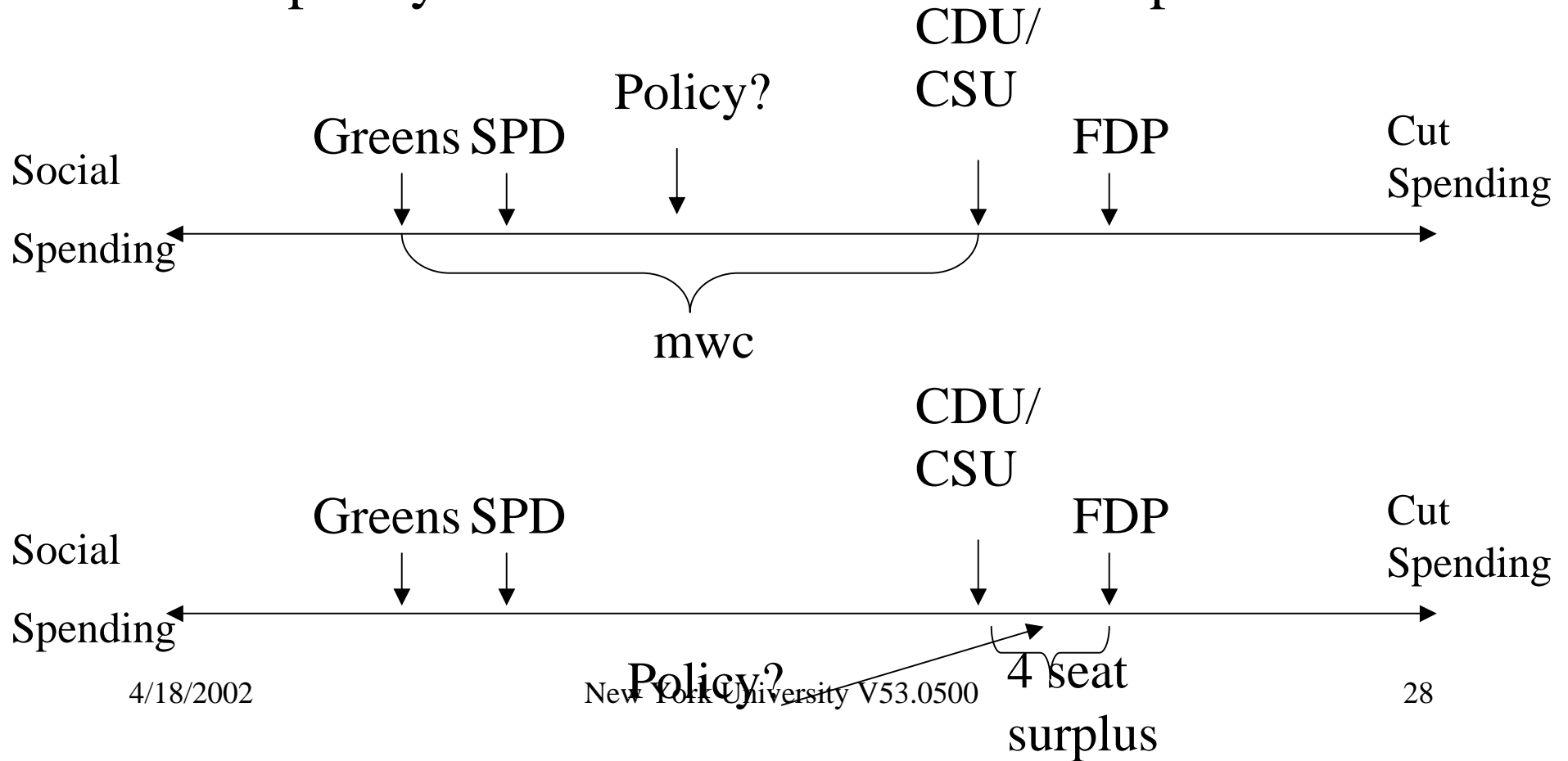


Now, knowing what you know about the policy position of parties, what you do?

No.	Members	Seats Controlled	Surplus	
1	CDU, SPD	409	160	Minimal connected coalition
2	CDU, FDP	269	20	
3	CDU, Greens	265	16	
4	SPD, FDP	232	-17	
5	SPD, Greens	228	-21	
6	CDU, SPD, FDP	455	206	
7	CDU, SPD, Greens	451	202	
8	SPD, FDP, Green	274	25	

Does this mean that policy-seeking dominates office-seeking in Germany?

Hard to say since CDU didn't have to totally ignore office-seeking to get a policy closer to their ideal point – they accepted a 4 seat surplus majority in exchange for a policy outcome closer to their idea point



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So, all the majorities are not equal...

No.	Members	Seats Controlled	Surplus	Type
1	CDU, SPD	409	160	Surplus Majority
2	CDU, FDP	269	20	Minimal Connected
3	CDU, Greens	265	16	Minimal Winning
4	SPD, FDP	232	-17	Minority
5	SPD, Greens	228	-21	Minority
6	CDU, SPD, FDP	455	206	Surplus Majority
7	CDU, SPD, Greens	451	202	Surplus Majority
8	SPD, FDP, Green	274	25	Minimal Winning

Cabinet Formation

- Appears to be the product of complex bargaining game in which actors trade policy concessions for access to cabinet portfolios
 - Party leaders have a choice,
 - join forces with parties you disagree with and govern
 - Stay “ideologically pure”, act as opposition party, and wait for your turn to govern

In light of this trade-off...

- Coalitions are likely to be minimal *connected* coalitions, not necessarily minimal *winning* coalitions

The Essence of Parliamentary Rule is

- Cabinets have to worry about a vote of “no confidence”
 - If cabinet pushes legislature too far, the MPs can make the “government fall”
- MPs have to worry about the Prime Minister dissolving parliament and calling for new elections
 - New elections may make some parties unnecessary in forming new government
 - Can have reputational consequences for parties and individuals
 - “Party discipline” means cabinet members can punish MP’s that are not loyal

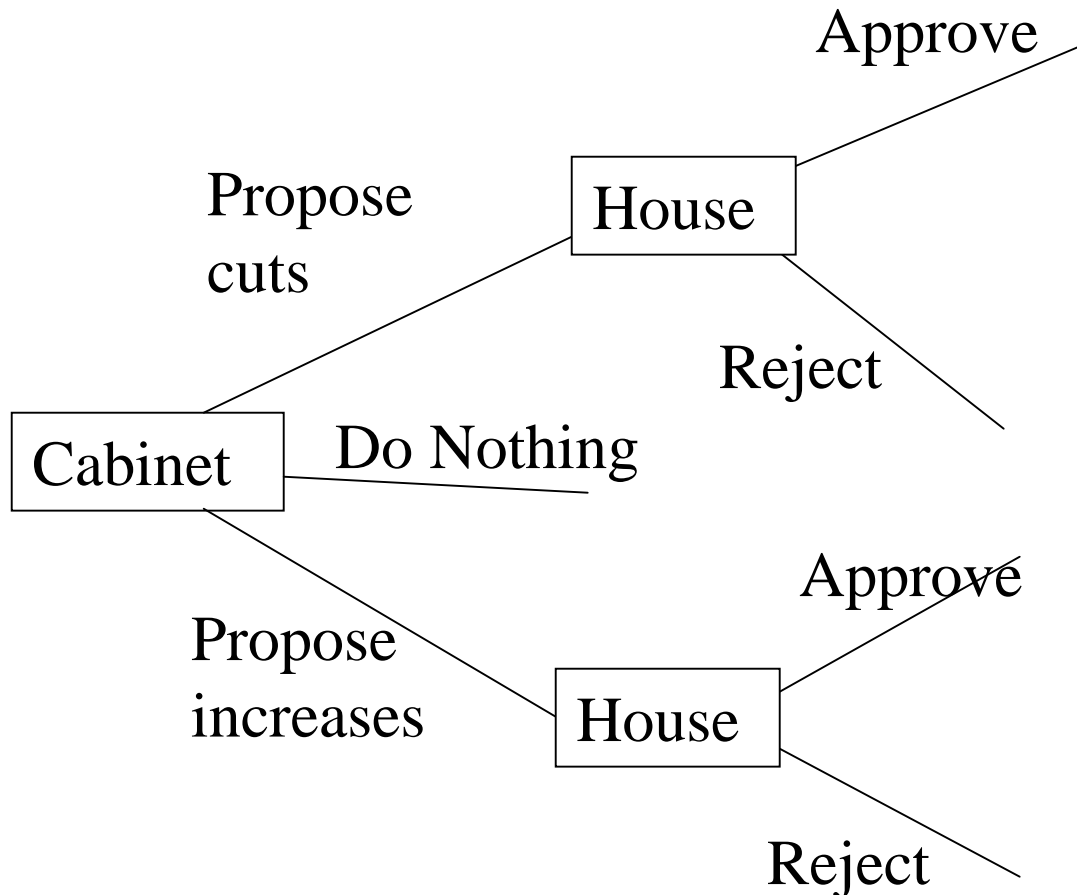
Thus,

- Since cabinets serve at the pleasure of the legislature, the legislature is in the driver's seat.
- But, since cabinet member control the political futures of MPs, the cabinet is in the drivers seat

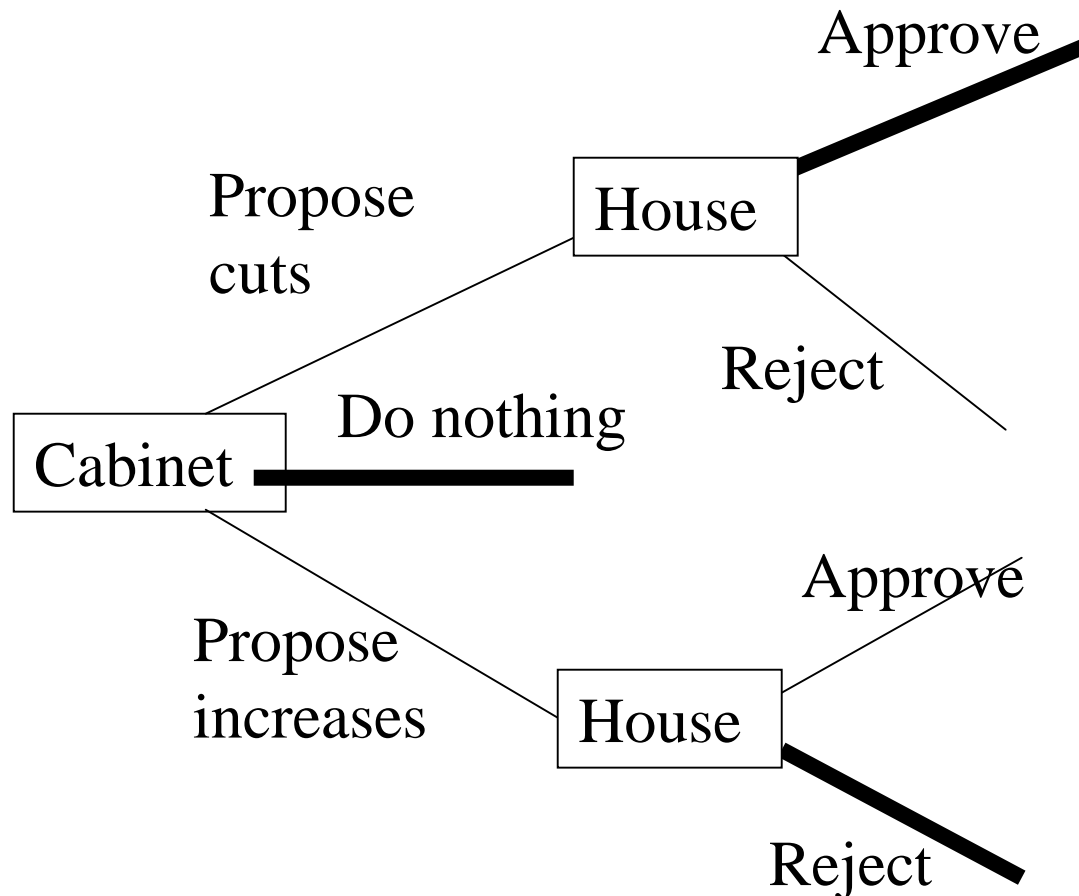
So, who “rules” in Parliamentary systems, the cabinet or the legislature?

- From 1945 to 1978 97% of the bills submitted by the cabinet were approved by Britain’s House of Commons
- But is this evidence of a strong cabinet or a strong House?
 - A weak cabinet may submit only the bills a house would pass

Suppose cabinet wants low social spending, and how wants high



If House can credibly threaten to reject bills, and the cabinet is the agenda setter, only bills that will pass will be proposed



So, high success rate is not *necessarily* an indication of power

- But, since not cabinet members are allowed to offer amendments on bills, the approval of amendments might offer some relevant evidence.

Cabinet amendments are much more successful than non-cabinet ones

		Fate of Amendment	
		<i>Not Approved</i>	<i>Approved</i>
Proposer	<i>Cabinet Member</i>	2	1770
	<i>Other member of House</i>	3988	210

Evaluating Parliamentarism

- Advantages:
 - Can respond quickly to changed circumstances with direct policy response
 - Lines of responsibility clear
- Disadvantages
 - Few protections for minority- Danger of tyranny of the majority.
 - Coalition government could be unstable
 - In part because of “tyranny of the minority”
 - Small parties may try to blackmail or free-ride on large parties

Keep in mind, there are varieties of parliamentarism

	Majority Governments (Common in 2 party systems)	Coalition Governments (Common in multi-party systems)
Strength of Parliamentarism Present	Quick Policy Response Clear Responsibility	Minorities Powerfully Representated
Weakness of Parliamentarism Present	Unprotected minorities	Cabinet Instability