

As a group of sovereign nations, the Commonwealth, for reasons too familiar to enumerate here, occupies a unique place in the world. Membership in it confers undoubted advantages but it also imposes obligations and I will refer to both this morning. An effective Commonwealth contribution on many fronts to political, economic and social progress and understanding can lead us to a more stable and secure world.

No one who reviews the history of the Commonwealth can fail to be impressed with the resilience it has demonstrated in the course of its evolution from a colonial empire to the free association of states it now comprises. This evolution was manifestly evident at the London meeting last June where thirty-three Heads of Government or their representatives met to confront some of the most pressing questions affecting the security of our world. That distinguished gathering of leaders collectively represented almost one billion of the world's population from all corners of the globe. In this respect, the Commonwealth is a reflection of our world and as such cannot fail to be concerned with the full range of pressing international issues of our times.

At the London meeting of Heads of Government four basic themes predominated - (1) liberation in Southern Africa, (2) the restructuring of world economic relationships or the New International Economic Order as it is known, (3) the more positive commitment of the Commonwealth to the world community and connected with this, (4) a clearer engagement on the part of the Commonwealth to finding solutions that will enhance the economic and social progress of its members.

The problems that exist in Southern Africa are all closely intertwined. In South Africa the outrageous doctrine of apartheid continues to offend the conscience of the world. Until this wrong is righted - and justice and equality prevail, as they must - we must strive for its eradication both because that is right and because the conflicts that it engenders work their harm upon other regions.

We are all of us only too familiar with the situation in Rhodesia where a minority regime now in power and supported by South Africa seems resolved to rule or ruin the state. None of us can condone continued intransigence and denial of majority rule by the Smith regime in Rhodesia. The longer this situation prevails the less are the chances of a peaceful, negotiated settlement and the greater the prospect of escalating violence. By continued pressure and continued negotiation, we must seek a peaceful solution. We, in Canada, will continue to support the current efforts by Britain and the United States to achieve a lasting, peaceful solution.

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