

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES



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A Statement by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Paul Martin, at the Plenary Session of the Third Commonwealth Education Conference, Ottawa, August 27, 1964.

* Indicates paragraphs delivered in French.

I wish to place before this Third Commonwealth Education Conference the position of the Government of Canada on some of the vital issues you are discussing.

The Commonwealth association provides an incomparable basis for co-operation in many differing fields of endeavour. Twenty years ago, it was commonly thought that the strength of the Commonwealth lay in the "like-mindedness" of its members - then few in number, and all countries whose populations were largely of European origin. Today the strength of the Commonwealth lies to a very great extent in its diversity.

We can see clearly the turning-points in the recent history of the Commonwealth. One was symbolized by the decision of India to maintain its membership in the Commonwealth when that great country became a republic and by the agreement of the other members to welcome India under these circumstances. A second turning-point resulted from the stand taken on apartheid. I think that another important stage was reached this year when the Prime Ministers subscribed to a declaration of racial equality put forward by the Prime Minister of Canada. They agreed that the Commonwealth has a particular role to play in the search for solutions to the inter-racial problems which are threatening the orderly development of many areas in the world.

From another standpoint, the inauguration of the Colombo Plan in 1950 was a turning-point because of the concentration of the members of the Commonwealth, in the years which followed, on problems of economic development. Although the Colombo Plan has been enlarged to include other countries of South and Southeast Asia (and we have taken special interest in the countries of Indochina), Canada's main effort has been centered on the Commonwealth countries.