

As far as Canada is concerned it can easily be asked by the uninstructed why, for instance, have we a Governor-General unless he governs? Of course those who understand our system know full well that the Governor-General, who is appointed by the King on the recommendation of the Canadian Government, acts as the personal representative of the sovereign. His relation to the government of Canada is as you know exactly the same as that of the King to the government in Great Britain.

We treasure the British connection in Canada because it has given us some of our most characteristic institutions and keeps alive certain traditions in Canada which give us our meaning as a separate country. A distinguished citizen of New York, Mr. Lawrence Hunt, made a very penetrating remark on a visit to my country not very long ago when he said "Canada outside of the British Commonwealth would lose her political and spiritual significance as a nation". That is true. Canada is the more Canadian for being British.

Next to Great Britain herself we are the senior member of our sisterhood of nations. We are more than that. Canada is the laboratory in which the modern concept of a British Commonwealth was gradually worked out. This was effected not through any effort to devise elaborate theories but just by a workmanlike process of reconciling the aspirations of a young country with continued membership in a group. In this we were aided by wise men in the mother-country who understood. And to-day let me say that nowhere in the world is there greater understanding of Canada's position and outlook than in London. We can look with some real satisfaction on the part we have played in the growth of the idea of a British Commonwealth, for there are few people in the world west of the Iron Curtain who do not recognize the contribution which the Commonwealth is making today to the world's freedom, and stability.

The Commonwealth has been in the news of late. Certain things have happened which have given rise to speculations as to its future. The Indian Empire for instance has dissolved into two states, India and Pakistan. At present they occupy a position in the Commonwealth like that of Canada or Australia but they have not yet decided on their future status. They have full freedom of choice. Ceylon has become a Dominion having achieved her sovereign status quietly with good will on both sides. Burma has elected to become a republic. So has Eire. Mr. Churchill made a characteristic observation on this subject in December when he said, according to the report that "he still had some hopes that Ireland was to be partitioned together, and thus excluded into the British Commonwealth". Although Eire is now a foreign state, she will rightly enjoy close relations in trade and citizenship with other Commonwealth countries.

What is the significance of these developments? How do they add up? Is the Commonwealth in liquidation? Well, people have often said it was in liquidation before this and events have proved them wrong. I venture to state that what we see is a demonstration of the flexibility of British institutions, their power of adapting themselves to changing conditions. There is one thing that is abundantly clear. All the changes which have taken place have been the free and unfettered decision of the people concerned. And when power has been transferred, this has been done with cordiality and good will. Indeed such a fundamental change as has taken place in India is not a defeat of British policy. It is the fulfilment of the hopes of countless Englishmen ever since Macaulay sowed the seeds of democracy in the Indian sub-continent over a century ago. It was Englishmen and Scotsmen who first taught Indians to want to be free.

It is always difficult to define the British Commonwealth. Any great conception which has grown over the generations as this has done eludes the labels of the theorist. Although it is hard to say what the Commonwealth is, it is easier to say some of the things it is not. It is not a military alliance, although the units which compose it all - save one - acted together