

The Government there has been planning to hold a referendum on the question of changing the present status of South Africa from a monarchy to that of a republic. In that regard it was pointed out that the choice between a monarchy and a republic is entirely the responsibility of the nation concerned. Then there are these significant words. I am not going to interpret them, because they require no interpretation; their significance lies in the fact that they were accepted unanimously by all who were there:

"In the event of South Africa deciding to become a republic and if the desire was subsequently expressed to remain a member of the Commonwealth, the meeting suggested that the South African Government should then ask for the consent of the other Commonwealth Governments either at a meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, or, if this were not practicable, by correspondence."

This established clearly that membership in the Commonwealth is not a formality. These words speak for themselves. They make clear that the Prime Ministers were not prepared to give an advance assurance that South Africa might remain a member of the Commonwealth in the event that a decision was made to adopt the status of a republic. Therefore the important point is that if a change of status does take place as a result of the referendum, the consent of the other Commonwealth Governments will be required as a pre-condition of continued membership. Again I emphasize the fact that this was accepted by all.

The attention given to the South African problem, however, should not be allowed to obscure the deliberation which took place on many other subjects. The nature of those deliberations is fairly reflected in the communiqué, but I am going to make a few general references thereto. The multi-racial nature of the Commonwealth was underlined by the admission of Ghana three years ago at the last meeting, by the participation of the Prime Minister of Malaya this year and by the fact that the Federation of Nigeria, with a population of 35 million, will join the family on the 1st of October and that Sierra Leone and other countries with various colours and races will, it is expected, soon be applying for membership.

What has taken place here is a recognition that there is no automatic membership in the Commonwealth, and I believe it is also suggestive of the possibility that the time is not far distant when acceptance by custom rather than by declaration of certain basic principles, including equality of all races, colours and creeds, will be assured. This view is underlined in various editorials to which I could refer. I draw the attention of the House to the fact that Canada's views were known, but the fact that we had not had a resolution placed