

probably now as much as ever before in our history, of the value of that association--especially, in the service it is now performing not only for the nations of the Commonwealth, but for the world at large in providing a bridge, one of the few effective bridges, between the free East and the free West.

In his contribution to the debate the hon. member for Oxford (Mr. Nesbitt) devoted most of his speech to our Commonwealth of Nations. He advocated--and in certain sections of the House this has been advocated for years--what he called the strengthening of our Commonwealth. Among other things he asked what was the basic difference between the Commonwealth and, let us say, the United Nations. He asked what was the difference between our relationship with members of the Commonwealth and with, let us say, a country like Brazil.

Well, if he had attended meetings of the United Nations assembly or other United Nations agencies--and I hope he will have that opportunity--and if he had attended Commonwealth discussions, I think he would sense at once the difference between the two associations. And that is not of course to depreciate the value of the association of the United Nations.

The basic difference in the Commonwealth relationship is that it has been formed, has grown up and has been built on the habit and the tradition of co-operation. We have developed within the Commonwealth a feeling of close unity. There is a genuine understanding among its members to work together in peace and in war, and a strong desire to co-operate and to work out agreed policies and agreed solutions to problems, even when it is not always possible to do so. And then of course we have the great advantage of a common head in the Commonwealth, both for the monarchical and the republican members, and also the bond of common Parliamentary institutions and Parliamentary traditions.

The hon. member for Oxford feels that we should strengthen these bonds, and that we should develop what he has called a central secretariat. He says that we should also try to work out an intra-Commonwealth defence force. Well I would suggest to the hon. member--and this is a matter which has been discussed often both in and out of the House--that if the members of the Commonwealth tried to build up some strong and centralized machinery, if they tried to build up a centralized intra-Commonwealth defence force, far from strengthening this association it might, indeed, weaken it to the point where it would disappear at least in the sense in which it exists today.

I think the Commonwealth in its present form and organization is doing a most valuable and important service. One of the most useful things about the Commonwealth is that it does include within its membership a variety of peoples, at times antagonistic peoples; and if we tried to bring those peoples together in any formal and organized way, for defence or by exclusive economic co-operation, far from strengthening the association we might indeed weaken it.