

You, the representatives gathered here, and your respective countries, are striving for prosperity and progress, not for themselves alone, but shared with other like-minded nations for this and future generations.

### The Nature of the Commonwealth

The unity of the Commonwealth is in the things of the spirit and in a common adherence to the inheritance of political institutions. Its anchor is in the abiding values and traditions of the past to which is joined the dynamism of the present. Its strength lies in freedom, in justice, in the broad practices and in principles of Parliamentary Government - of government by election and consent - of government which respects the rights and freedom of the individual. Being a living institution, founded upon strong yet flexible constitutional principles, the Commonwealth can and does develop in harmony with new conditions. It can and does respond to the new problems to which new times give birth.

It embraces a multitude of regional interests in all continents. It reaches across the racial and cultural divisions of the earth. It provides a helpful bridge between the East and the West, and between peoples diverse in history, culture, language and creed. Its unity of spirit among a diversity of peoples provides the basic brotherhood to this family of nations.

The Commonwealth is a political paradox in that it accomplishes what it does without treaty obligations and so it must remain.

It is an association that is inclusive, not exclusive. It is ever-expanding with the emergence of new nations into independence. It encourages and fosters the independence and the individuality of its member nations, rather than conformity and conventionality. It has grown from the adaption of a world-wide empire of another day to the new conditions and attitudes of the century, and in doing so has become one of mankind's greatest hopes for the maintenance of peace with freedom.

Canadians are proud that the birth of our nation some 91 years ago constituted the beginning of this process by which the Commonwealth has emerged. Our independence was followed by that of the southern Dominions. At the end of the First World War, however, only 10 percent of the population of the British Empire could be described as truly self-governing. Since then vast changes have taken place, and in the last dozen years the structure