

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 55/6

THE COMMONWEALTH OF NATIONS - A CANADIAN VIEW

Address by the Canadian Ambassador to the United States, Mr. Arnold Heeney, to The Round Table, Palm Beach, Florida, on February 21, 1955.

Three weeks ago today in London, eight men met about a table at No. 10 Downing Street. Seven of them were Prime Ministers; the eighth a Deputy Prime Minister. The nations whose governments they headed covered great territories in every main quarter of the globe. Their peoples were of many races and tongues and many creeds. Together they represented one-fourth of the world's population. They were themselves almost as different in aspect and personality as the inhabitants of their several countries. Yet they were meeting together in complete equality as the Prime Ministers of the Commonwealth.

At the head of the table was the English host, the incomparable Winston Churchill, for long the epitome of everything that is Britain. With him sat Louis Stephen St. Laurent, bearing the name of that great river up which his French ancestors had sailed to establish Canada; and Robert Menzies and Sidney Holland, heads of the two stoutly British nations of Australasia; and Pandit Nehru and Mohammed Ali and John Kotelawala, whose three young governments divide the whole vast area of the ancient Indian sub-continent; finally, Godfrey Huggins of the new African federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, and C.R. Swart, the Deputy Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa.

For nine days, with numbers of their colleagues and advisers, these eight men conferred in the privacy of that old room. They met as friends without formality and talked with easy freedom and frankness of the great problems of mankind - of peace and war, of the removal of differences between nations and widening the area of understanding, of world trade and finance, of economic progress and mutual assistance, of the challenge of atomic energy - of the relations of their countries to one another and to other nations and peoples. Without fixed agenda or formal procedure they exchanged information and views and compared ideas about how best to ease the anxious strains which had developed in the Western and Eastern worlds. They explored means of co-operation among themselves and their governments in the efforts which each was making to raise the standards of their own peoples. They sought new ways to enhance the value of their own association "in the pursuit of peace, liberty and progress".