

of responsible government with a wide area of local autonomy was widely applied throughout the British Empire; the changes flowing from general application of this conception have been immense.

A second major development occurred over the period 1867-1939 as Canada gradually came to assume more and more responsibility for its relations with other countries and for its own defence. Out of the pressures, strains, persuasion and dialogue with Britain up to the Versailles Peace Conference at the end of the First World War and subsequently in the Twenties and Thirties, Canada, supported on occasion by Australia and the other Dominions, succeeded in asserting its independence from the Imperial power by a series of agreements and precedents that in turn became the basis for further political development. Following the First World War, Canada and the other Dominions successfully asserted the claim to independent representation at conferences, beginning with Versailles, and to diplomatic representation in foreign countries. The altered relation was registered by a communiqué from the Imperial Conference of 1926 which declared that Britain and the Dominions were "equal in status, in no way subordinate to one another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations". The Statute of Westminster, 1931, gave legal effect to the substance of the decisions reached in 1926 and established the legislative equality of the Dominion parliaments with the British Parliament.

In part as a result of developments in the Second World War, the movement toward independence in the then colonial areas of South and Southeast Asia became irresistible. In 1947, Britain acted to enable India to achieve independence and "Dominion status" on August 15, 1947, a development accompanied by the partitioning of the subcontinent and the emergence of the Muslim state of Pakistan on the same date. A year later, Ceylon also achieved independence. The following year, in April 1949, the Commonwealth prime ministers agreed that India, which had decided to become a republic but wished to remain in the Commonwealth, should be encouraged to do so. The acceptance as a full Commonwealth member of an independent, non-white Asian republic constituted an important landmark in the development of the Commonwealth; two decades later the great majority of members are of non-European stock from Asia, Africa or the Caribbean, and a majority of members have adopted a republican form of government.

Another key stage in the evolution of the Commonwealth was the repeated public reaffirmation during the 1960s that the association was non-racial in character and stood firmly for the principle of racial equality. This principle was implicit in the decision to accept India and Pakistan as full members in 1947, Ceylon in 1948, and other Asian and African members in the late Fifties. However, it was publicly reaffirmed in 1961 at the time of South Africa's withdrawal, and again came into prominence in 1964 and subsequent years in connection with the Rhodesian issue. The non-racist character of the Commonwealth was explicitly reaffirmed in the communiqué of the 1964 prime ministers' conference, and assumes a prominent place in the declaration issued by heads of government at Singapore in January 1971.

Nature of Commonwealth Association

The essential functions of the Commonwealth can be stated simply in two words: consultation and co-operation. As expressed in the opening