

*Commonwealth Conference*

monwealth prime ministers. I can assure the Prime Minister that the fact the house has made very considerable progress in his absence is purely coincidental. I should like to tell him that he had a very able substitute in the Acting Prime Minister, who handled the opposition very efficiently mainly because we were unable to either decipher or interpret his answers. At the present time the interpretation is about three days behind delivery.

**Mr. Pearson:** I wish I could do that.

**Mr. Douglas:** Canada, Mr. Speaker, has always been fortunate in the stature of the men who have represented this country at commonwealth conferences. This conference certainly has been no exception. I should like to tell the Prime Minister that all of us as Canadians are proud of the serious diplomacy and moderation of voice which he brought to this important conference. All of us as Canadians were pleased to have him there to speak for this country and represent this country at this great conference of the commonwealth.

This commonwealth, Mr. Speaker, is one of the great experiments in human relations. In the lifetime of many of us, we have seen the largest empire the world has ever known gradually change into a free association of free nations. The fact that some 20 nations, representing 700 million people, with a minimum of bloodshed and violence have secured their independence, is a tribute to the courage of some of our statesmen and to the wisdom and moderation of others. Whether this free association of free people can continue to exercise an influence in world affairs only time will show. It will depend to a very large extent on the kind of leadership which is provided.

I should like to say first of all that I am sure all of us are pleased at the declaration of human equality which was enunciated by the prime ministers' conference. I believe these two paragraphs of the communiqué are worth putting on the record.

The prime ministers affirmed their belief that for all commonwealth governments, it should be an objective of policy to build in each country a structure of society which offers equal opportunity and non-discrimination for all its people, irrespective of race, colour or creed. The commonwealth should be able to exercise constructive leadership in the application of democratic principles in a manner which will enable the people of each country of different racial and cultural groups to develop as free and equal citizens.

I am sure the people of Canada will endorse these principles. Since there is an old adage

that charity begins at home, I hope we will set an example to the commonwealth by beginning to apply these principles of non-discrimination, of free and equal opportunity for all people irrespective of race, colour or creed, to those within our own borders, particularly our Indian and Eskimo populations.

I think it was important that this conference should have dealt with the matter of Southern Rhodesia. It seems to me the conference had to deal with this subject. If apartheid is a matter of importance to all members of the commonwealth, surely representative government is equally important to all parts of the commonwealth. Surely it was incumbent on the prime ministers at that conference to make it very clear that they could not accept into partnership in the commonwealth any country which did not grant representative government to all the people within its borders. I am pleased that the prime ministers' conference went on record as saying that they could not accept Southern Rhodesia unless it had sufficiently representative government for all its people, and that they would not recognize any unilateral independence on the part of that country.

When this question of human equality is raised, of course the matter of South Africa immediately comes to the fore. Many of us will regret that the conference did not support the idea of economic sanctions against South Africa as the only means of registering a vigorous protest against the discriminatory policy of apartheid. I think there will be those who will feel that when gainful trade was at stake we were prepared to forego our ringing declarations of human equality and our repugnance against racial discrimination. Even if we could not agree about economic sanctions I would have hoped, and I still hope, that some vigorous steps will be taken to see that arms at least are not supplied from any part of the commonwealth to South Africa.

Of course when we speak about discrimination against black people in South Africa we have to carry the principle all the way and be equally concerned about the imprisonment of black people by black people. I refer to states like Ghana, where it would appear democratic principles are being set aside and that discrimination, not on racial grounds but on political ideological grounds, is being practised.