

produced the Commonwealth, and is the important historic development which produced the Commonwealth and made it a useful instrument in the international world.

It has always seemed to me, and it seems to me now, that an informal association of this sort could, if employed imaginatively, make an important contribution toward progress in the relationships between the developed and the developing nations, and in the relations of peoples of different races and colours. I say to you, Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that such an informal association can achieve meaningful results only if it is prepared to confront the real gut issues haunting the new world and members of the Commonwealth.

One of the overriding international facts since the end of the second world war is the challenge to the exclusiveness and complacency of the white club which had previously dominated all international relationships and all international policies.

The new developing nations are still weak and poor economically. They are still uncertain politically, but increasingly they are developing a sense of self-assurance and participation, and are demanding an equal place. In this context a meaningful and frank dialogue, to use the Prime Minister's favourite word, among the heads of the members of the Commonwealth can be of immense value; but as far as our part in the discussions in London was concerned, our part in the dialogue, it was neither meaningful nor frank.

These are the reasons I feel a deep disappointment about the Prime Minister's role at the conference, as that of a non-spokesman. It is again necessary to recall Canada's particular opportunities in this field. From all our contacts and all our reading we know Canada has a special place of trust among the developing nations. We emerged as an independent nation almost a century before them, but we also emerged out of colonial status. We have never an imperial goal or imperialistic intentions. This has given us a special position which we can either use to promote good will, or which we can dissipate by appearing to be insensitive to the problems which worry the new members of the Commonwealth.

I say, Mr. Speaker, that the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker),

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when he was prime minister used Canada's position properly and admirably in the case of South Africa.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Lewis: I remind this House of Commons that the right hon. Mr. Pearson used Canada's special position properly and admirably when he represented Canada at the meetings of the prime ministers of the Commonwealth. Through those actions Canada gained stature in the Commonwealth and credit throughout the new world. It is a great pity that the present Prime Minister, who raised so much hope, produced so much disappointment, and played no part of consequence, relevance or importance in the debates which took place.

He was reported to have said that he wished the conference to deal with the problems of the future and give less concern to the difficult problems of the past and the present. May I say, I hope without sounding too unkind, that I have seldom heard or read such a fatuous statement, unworthy of a man of intellect—as if the future descends from heaven in a vacuum unaffected by the past, as if indeed it is possible to think of building a future without removing the ills and the ill will created by the past and persisting into the present.

This attitude of uncommitted dilettantism explains the absence of the kind of commitment to first principles which is essential in dealing with such primeval problems as human equality, with which many sections of the Commonwealth are concerned.

I am not for one moment suggesting that solutions were easy or even that the meeting of Commonwealth prime ministers could have produced them, particularly in view of the informality and the structure of the Commonwealth. But I am saying that a position on Rhodesia which says "Nibmar if possible but not necessarily Nibmar" is a betrayal of first principles and cannot but do damage to the future of the Commonwealth.

If the struggle for equality in Rhodesia should be lost temporarily—if that should happen—at the least let us not be a party to giving Smith the appearance of legality, by supporting a deal which negates solemn assurances previously given by the British Prime