

*Report on Commonwealth Conference*

a result of the referendum, the consent of the other commonwealth governments will be required as a pre-condition of continued membership. Again I emphasize the fact that this was accepted by all.

The attention given to the South African problem, however, should not be allowed to obscure the deliberation which took place on many other subjects. The nature of those deliberations is fairly reflected in the communique, but I am going to make a few general references thereto. The multi-racial nature of the commonwealth was underlined by the admission of Ghana three years ago at the last meeting, by the participation of the prime minister of Malaya this year and by the fact that the federation of Nigeria, with a population of 35 million, will join the family on the 1st of October and that Sierra Leone and other countries of various colours and races will, it is expected, soon be applying for membership.

What has taken place here is a recognition that there is no automatic membership in the commonwealth, and I believe it is also suggestive of the possibility that the time is not far distant when acceptance by custom rather than by declaration of certain basic principles, including equality of all races, colours and creeds, will be assured. This view is underlined in various editorials to which I could refer. I draw the attention of the house to the fact that Canada's views were known, but the fact that we had not had a resolution placed Canada's representative in a position to speak to Mr. Louw in a way that did not arouse his antagonism. What happened here is well set out in the London *Financial Times*:

If the South African government carries through its plan for making the country into a republic... important constitutional matters will arise. It goes on to say:

More important even than these constitutional considerations is the simple truth expressed by Mr. Diefenbaker last week that a commonwealth in which the majority of the population is coloured must unequivocally accept racial equality.

The seriousness of racial problems varies widely from member country to member country. Not all of them have an untarnished record. Yet the position today is that the truth of Mr. Diefenbaker's proposition is accepted in theory at least everywhere in the western world except in South Africa. Refusal to accept it would mean losing the struggle against communism by default.

And so I might go on in that regard. This was an important step forward, and in that connection it is important internationally. We reviewed the international political situation. As to our views on the summit conference, I shall not now refer to them in view of what has taken place today.

There was universal agreement on the importance of developing a general detente in international relations, the urgent need of concluding a broad agreement to end the testing of nuclear weapons, and the desirability of finding avenues of progress in the field of general disarmament. There was an awareness of the growing importance of China in world affairs; and in particular, in order to ensure the implementation of any international agreement on disarmament, the participation of China was recognized as being of first importance.

The meeting was notable also for the growing recognition it gave to the development of the economic needs of the newly independent countries of Africa. I have mentioned already the fact that Nigeria will become a member. I have also referred to the second constitutional decision which arose from the intention of Ghana to introduce a republican form of constitution by July 1. In connection with the decision regarding Ghana's relation to the commonwealth, the government of Ghana applied to continue as a member, thus again illustrating the flexible nature of the commonwealth relationship which permits member countries to remain in free association despite the differences in their forms of government.

As to the economic needs of the emerging nations of Africa, there was a unanimous recognition that a substantial expansion of economic assistance was necessary in order to assist these countries to achieve self-sustaining growth. The greatest remaining underdeveloped region of the world is Africa, where no special international economic assistance program has been established and where the flow of investment and aid funds, in comparison with that to other underdeveloped countries, is disproportionately small. The Prime Minister of Ghana is seriously concerned about this situation. It was agreed that unless measures are quickly taken in this crucial formative period in the history of these new African nations there may very well develop in those nations doubts as to the good will of the developed countries of the west, and they may be tempted to look for sympathy and assistance in other directions.

Mention was made of what the Colombo plan had done. There is no such type of international assistance as yet available in Africa. Consideration is therefore being given to the possibility of co-operative action among members of the commonwealth in assisting the economic development of countries in Africa which have recently attained or are approaching independence. This matter will be studied by the various commonwealth