

No. 53/20 "CONCEPT OF THE COMMONWEALTH"

Text of an address by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. L.B. Pearson, recorded for broadcast over the British Broadcasting Corporation, May 29, 1953.

Great occasions should inspire reflection as well as celebration. So, on the eve of the Coronation of Her Majesty, our thoughts turn to the Commonwealth, of which our young and gracious Queen is the head and symbol. In the bewildering and changing conditions of the present day, we need to understand clearly what the Commonwealth is and what it now means, not only to its own peoples but to the whole world.

I, naturally, look at this association through Canadian eyes. We Canadians are a North American people, closely associated with the people of the United States, and fully aware of the extent to which our destiny is linked with theirs. At the same time, we remain deeply attached to the Commonwealth. At this mid-point in the twentieth century, we are convinced that it has a major contribution to make to the establishment of an enduring peace, to the strength and stability of the free world.

There have been great changes during the sixteen years since the coronation of King George VI. The human race, poised perilously on a shrinking globe, has armed itself with weapons of such devastating power that international morality and pacific restraint have become imperative even for mere survival. The shadow of aggressive Communist imperialism has fallen upon us. We must do our best to remove it. The peoples of Asia and Africa have been stirred by nationalist aspirations that will not be denied. We must do our best to understand them.

This last development has profoundly affected the character and the destiny of the Commonwealth. India, Pakistan and Ceylon are now fellow-members, as free, independent nations. More than ever our association has become one of people of every race and colour and creed, working together on the basis of equality. There can be no chosen people, no master race in the Commonwealth association.

My own country, Canada, has also seen tremendous changes during this period. It has grown greatly in industrial power, and it is still expanding and developing in new and exciting fields. But of greater importance even than these outward sinews of our new-found strength, are the inner sources of national unity which have been developed over these years. Both outwardly and inwardly, Canada has, I think, come of age; but she has no desire to leave the Commonwealth family in which she has grown up.

The last war and its aftermath have seen my country accept responsibilities in the international field which we would hardly have contemplated before 1939. We are no longer so much concerned with the assertion of a nationhood which we can now take for granted. We are more concerned with the search for ways by which, without jeopardizing what is essential