



# STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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## CANADA AND THE COMMONWEALTH

An Address by The Honourable Paul Martin,  
Secretary of State for External Affairs,  
to the Canadian Club in London, Ontario,  
12 April 1965.

There is an old parable about the cloak of Socrates. It is said that, in the course of his lifetime, Socrates' cloak was patched so many times that, in the end, nothing remained of the material that had gone into the making of it. And yet, though all its original parts had been replaced, it still retained its identity as the cloak of Socrates. Now the point of that parable was to show that an idea has a life, a validity that does not depend on the particular form it assumes at any given time. Surely, this is not without relevance to the nature of the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth has always eluded definition. That is in part because it does not really fit any recognized category of international association. But it is also because the Commonwealth is continually evolving.

In that evolution Canada has played a key part. It has been said that "the present conception of the Commonwealth owes more to Canadian thinking and Canadian pressure than to any other influence" and there is a good deal of substance in that claim. From the beginning we have wanted to have the best of both possible worlds. We have wanted to have complete independence to pursue the policies that would serve our national interest and strengthen our national unity. But we have not wanted to cut our ties across the seas. Our position on the North American continent led us inevitably to reach out beyond our borders for a broader and broadening framework of association within which to advance our interests and make our distinctive contribution.

This is the basis of the approach we have taken to the evolving Commonwealth. It is why we have always resisted any conception of centralization or joint policy control, why we asserted our claim to separate diplomatic identity at the conferences that followed in the wake of the First World War, why we pressed our demands for a clear statement of Dominion status in 1926. It is also why we helped pave the way for the last major change in the constitutional form of the Commonwealth relation which was designed to enable India to remain in the Commonwealth as a republic.