



In response to a further question about the possibility that the Commonwealth should act as a unit in the world security organization, Mr. Fraser said:—

I think that would destroy the whole idea of world organization. I may say this, that there is no British leader I have ever heard who has put that point.

I should like to add to what Mr. Fraser said a few observations of my own. Inside the Commonwealth we can and do manage as a rule to reach agreement on the general lines of policy which our governments should pursue in dealing with major issues. We find it possible to agree because we have the will to agree and cherish similar international ideals and purposes. If, however, the countries of the Commonwealth had to reach agreement by some political process yet to be devised, so that all were bound to carry out a single policy, there would be a very different story. The World Council is to be an executive body. It must be capable of prompt and singleminded action. The United Kingdom, which is indisputably a great power, will sit on the Council in its own right, and its influence there will be enhanced by its special relationship with the countries of the Commonwealth. The United Kingdom representative will, however, be responsible to London and will take his instructions from London alone.

Supposing we were to change this so that he would become a representative of the British Commonwealth, should he have to withhold action until he has received instructions from half a dozen governments? What should he do if these instructions were in conflict? Should he follow the majority opinion even if it is violently opposed by the government, parliament and people in one or more Commonwealth countries? At the very best, action would be delayed and decisions blurred. At the worst we would run the risk of rendering the Commonwealth impotent in international affairs and perhaps of disrupting it.

I say to the few in Canada who have advocated such a change that the prestige abroad of the British Commonwealth was never higher than it is to-day. The prestige is based upon a belief that in the British Commonwealth there has been evolved a unique alliance of a peculiarly tough and enduring kind whose members act together not because they are under any strict obligation to do so but because they have the will to act together. Our friends abroad, furthermore, have discovered that the primary objects for which the members of the Commonwealth act together are objects which can be shared by other countries of good will. They realize that the Commonwealth is not a power bloc exploiting its own interests but a group of like-minded nations whose close association has in the past formed, and should form in the future, a most reliable element within the framework of the world order.