

*Report on Commonwealth Conference*

other parts of the commonwealth, were set out only a few days ago by the Archbishop of Canterbury when he said:

But the tragedy is that so far they (South Africa) have seemed to pay little or no regard to the burdens they are imposing on the hearts and consciences and political principles of those who are their brethren in the commonwealth, in culture, in Christian faith and in common humanity.

Only in the last 24 hours I have received from the Primate of the Anglican church of Canada the declaration of that church, which represents the views expressed at the 1958 Lambeth conference:

The conference affirms its belief in the natural dignity and value of every man of whatever colour or race as created in the image of God. In the light of this belief the conference affirms that neither race nor colour is in itself a barrier to any aspect of that life in family and community for which God created all men. It therefore condemns discrimination of any kind on the grounds of race or colour alone.

I would be less than frank if I did not say that I cannot report that there was any indication in Mr. Louw's attitude, representing his government, that he was moved by the arguments or concerned about the force of international opinion. However, he learned the viewpoint, he recognized that of all those present there no one, in the informal meetings or elsewhere, could give support to racial discrimination in a multiracial commonwealth.

It is clear that the issue of racial conflict will continue to pose a fundamental problem for commonwealth countries and, indeed, for the world community. My hope is that by this meeting we have assisted in the process of change. The matter was not on the agenda but it was discussed with clarity and frankness; and above all, by those from whom you would have expected the expression of violent opinions, with a dignity, a restraint and a recognition of the tremendous issues at stake that must give heart to all of us as to the meaning of the commonwealth as such.

International concern has been demonstrated in the United Nations. In the last few days the secretary general, Mr. Hammarskjöld, has been holding talks in London with Mr. Louw. Whatever the results may be, I am sure they will be aided in their talks by what took place at the conference. I hope the people of South Africa can work their way out of the dreadful impasse to which they have been brought. I hope their isolation on the continent of Africa will give them thought and a realization of the situation. It was a great South African, Field Marshal Smuts as he subsequently was, who as long ago as December, 1918, reminded us of this fact:

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

There is no doubt that mankind is once more on the move. The very foundations have been shaken and loosened and things are again fluid. The tents have been struck and the great caravan of humanity is once more on the march.

He was pointing to the need of new institutions, new ways of thought, new kinds of international behaviour if the world was to avoid the catastrophe of another war. His words were of prophetic application to his own continent.

It was made very clear in the communique that racial equality was of the essence. The communique had this to say:

Whilst reaffirming the traditional practice that commonwealth conferences do not discuss the internal affairs of member countries, ministers availed themselves of Mr. Louw's presence in London to have informal discussions with him about the racial situation in South Africa. During the informal discussions Mr. Louw gave information and answered questions on the union's policies, and the other ministers conveyed to him their views on the South African problem. The ministers emphasized that the commonwealth itself is a multiracial association and expressed the need to ensure good relations between all member states and peoples of the commonwealth.

We know the results of the assertion of racial superiority only a few years ago and the effects that followed from it. It is my hope that the South African government will heed and heed quickly the appeal that was made to it, not only in the communique but in personal conversations.

The government there has been planning to hold a referendum on the question of changing the present status of South Africa from a monarchy to that of a republic. In that regard it was pointed out that the choice between a monarchy and a republic is entirely the responsibility of the nation concerned. Then there are these significant words. I am not going to interpret them, because they require no interpretation; their significance lies in the fact that they were accepted unanimously by all who were there.

In the event of South Africa deciding to become a republic and if the desire was subsequently expressed to remain a number of the commonwealth, the meeting suggested that the South African government should then ask for the consent of the other commonwealth governments either at a meeting of commonwealth prime ministers or, if this were not practicable, by correspondence.

This established clearly that membership in the commonwealth is not a formality. These words speak for themselves. They make clear that the prime ministers were not prepared to give an advance assurance that South Africa might remain a member of the commonwealth in the event that a decision was made to adopt the status of a republic. Therefore the important point is that if a change of status does take place as