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CONTENTS

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Canada and the Commonwealth | 1 |
| Attack on Pollution | 3 |
| PM Conference Leader | 3 |
| Canada-U.K. Tax Agreement | 3 |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Canadian Orchestra in Belgium | 4 |
| Consumer Price Indexes | 4 |
| Science Council Appointments | 5 |
| Recreation Symposium | 5 |
| Meeting on Securities Law | 5 |

CANADA AND THE COMMONWEALTH

The following excerpts are from a recent address by Mr. L.B. Pearson, Prime Minister, to the Royal Commonwealth Society in Montreal:

...I sometimes think that there are three things in particular that happen to hold the Commonwealth together at the present time: Oxford, Cambridge and — except for Canada — cricket. But, above all, it seems to me that the really important bond that must be accepted by all is the bond of racial equality inside the Commonwealth, without any form of discrimination. That is the greatest value of the new Commonwealth. It is a multi-racial association at a time when the world is crying out for that kind of association. The Commonwealth can act in that sense as a bridge between the continents and between races through acceptance of the fact that there is not and cannot be in the world in which we live, any superior race — that, in Arnold Toynbee's memorable phrase, "the West is now surrounded by the world".

Now there is a danger that if this conception of racial equality and non-discrimination goes, the value of a multi-racial association goes. If that goes, if it is breached, if it is ignored, or if it is bypassed, then I think the Commonwealth will go. It will have great difficulty in remaining an association of any kind because the other and older traditions that I have mentioned are weakening as the new generations come to power. They may not in the future, in themselves, be strong enough to hold the Commonwealth together. Political and economic divisions inside the Commonwealth can be resolved or can be accepted, as they have been, but divisions on racial matters, along racial lines, if those divisions develop and persist, I think the Commonwealth,

as I have just said, may find great difficulty in remaining as any kind of an association.

RHODESIA — COMMONWEALTH CRISIS

Therein lies the importance, and the danger, of the situation we now face in Rhodesia. That situation in Rhodesia at the present time represents a break in the evolution of African colonies to independence based on the rule of the majority, at least of the majority in terms of black and white. Every British-African colony that has become free has achieved its freedom on that basis. Perhaps it might have been better if the freedom had been postponed until there was a better chance of orderly development; more time may have been needed in some cases for such development. But it is idle to argue about that now because it has happened. It happened quickly and completely in all the African colonies, with good will on both sides and in most cases with a British legacy of law and administrative order to build on.

Rhodesia however was different. Rhodesia has been a self-governing colony for many years — a self-governing colony based on white supremacy. Because of the industry and the initiative and the intelligence and the dedication of that white minority, Rhodesia had made great progress and had many important achievements to their credit. There is no doubt about that. It couldn't have happened without the white colonists. But whatever may be the arguments for or against this kind of white development, the fact is that white minority rule is not now acceptable in 1966 as a basis for independence in any part of the world. That is what makes the situation in Rhodesia now, where there is an effort