

The Commonwealth

It is natural enough that with Her Majesty, by happy circumstance, in Canada when this debate takes place, the Commonwealth and Canada's place in it should be foremost in our minds at this time. I recall with satisfaction the useful exchanges of views which have taken place here in Ottawa in recent months with a number of Commonwealth leaders. In March we had the pleasure of welcoming the United Kingdom Prime Minister, Mr. Macmillan, and Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd, and I would like to take this opportunity of paying tribute to the important part they have since played in preserving the unity of approach of the Western powers in the difficult negotiations that have been carried on at Geneva. We have, in addition, had the privilege of welcoming here the Prime Minister of Australia and Cabinet Ministers or other distinguished representatives of India, The West Indies Federation, Pakistan and, only last month, Nigeria.

One has only to recite the far-flung territories from which these visitors came to be reminded of the vast compass of this friendly association of nations which continues to exercise a beneficent influence on the affairs of all mankind. It is an association, moreover, which is never static but constantly expanding and evolving as former dependent territories take their place in orderly progress as free and independent members of the Commonwealth. As a member of the Commonwealth we are justly proud of its record in facilitating the constitutional development of its members. For example, very recently we had the opportunity of welcoming a further step in this direction and yet another member, Singapore.

Similar developments are taking place today in another most important area of the world, Africa. In the welter of news reports about problems and stresses in various parts of that continent I am afraid there has been a tendency to overlook a significant and happy Commonwealth event in Africa. I am referring, of course, to the fact that recently powers of self-government passed to the populous northern region of the Federation of Nigeria, thus completing the international political evolution which is to culminate on October 1, 1960, when the large and important nation of Nigeria is scheduled to obtain independence.

I am happy to say that both the Prime Minister of the Federation and the premiers of the regions have expressed the intention to remain in the Commonwealth. I am sure all hon. members will wish to join with me in expressing to the Nigerian leaders and to the United Kingdom Government congratulations for their respective parts in this welcome event. The Canadian Government hopes to be in a position to establish suitable diplomatic representation in Nigeria and to take similar action with respect to the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland as soon as circumstances permit.