

Until five years ago, Canada was the only independent Commonwealth country in the Western Hemisphere. Now there are five, and, in addition, six Commonwealth islands in the Caribbean have, or are about to achieve, a new "associate" status which gives them a measure of independence.

Because of geographical proximity, and other factors, Canadians have long had a special sense of affection for their West Indian neighbours, and we are confident that our long-standing relation will become more meaningful, and of greater mutual benefit, in this new era of independence. An important, practical step in this direction was taken last year, with the convening in Ottawa of the Commonwealth Caribbean-Canada Conference, which was attended by the prime ministers and chief ministers of all the Commonwealth Caribbean countries, and presided over by our own Prime Minister, as head of the host government.

We recently experienced a deep loss, when one of the most distinguished leaders of the Commonwealth Caribbean, Sir Donald Sangster, former Prime Minister of Jamaica, passed away. Sir Donald was a good friend of Canada, and was known by many Canadians; he was also a strong believer in the Commonwealth, and what it stands for in the world today.

I have been speaking of the changing nature of our Commonwealth association, particularly as it affects Canada. The conflict in Vietnam, while not a Commonwealth problem, is of great concern to countries of the Commonwealth.

It might be noted that Britain, as one of the Co-Chairmen of the 1954 Geneva Conference, has a special responsibility with respect to Vietnam, as have India and Canada, as two of the three members of the International Commission set up to supervise the cease-fire arrived at in 1954. Two other members of the Commonwealth, Australia and New Zealand, both situated in the area of conflict, are contributing forces for the defence of South Vietnam.

Canada has, of course, no direct national interest to assert or maintain in Southeast Asia. We have been drawn into that part of the world as citizens of the wider world community, and we have endeavoured, both through the Commission and in other ways, to use our influence in promoting the cause of peace in Vietnam.

It has been our position all along that a settlement of the conflict in Vietnam will require concessions on both sides. We should certainly like to see the bombing of North Vietnam stopped, but we should also like to see the infiltration of the South stopped, and we should like to see negotiations looking towards the peaceful solution of the conflict begun, for only through negotiations do we believe that a genuine solution can be found.

The situation in Southern Africa is also a matter of concern to the countries of the Commonwealth. The illegal regime in Rhodesia represents a grave problem for Britain and a serious challenge to the principles of racial co-operation to which the Commonwealth is committed. Indeed, it has been the dominant theme at three of the last four meetings of the Commonwealth prime ministers.