

*Commonwealth Conference*

despite the many changes in the status of member nations which have taken place in recent years, of which the proposed change in the status of Pakistan, which was freely accepted by all the other commonwealth nations, is only the most recent example.

But the nations of the commonwealth are closely and confidently associated in the pursuit of common objectives which are good objectives for them and good objectives for a wider community than the peoples within their own borders, and they are representative of all parts of the world. Each prime minister naturally looks at the world situation from the point of view of his own country and his responsibilities to the people whose government he heads.

Frequently, however, it can be helpful, and it has been helpful, to see how the world situation looks from an entirely different part of the world. For me that was the most rewarding part of the tour around the world which I made a year ago. For me and I believe for all other prime ministers, that is one of the most valuable aspects of these meetings. It is not merely that we gain new and useful information, though we do that, but it is that we have an opportunity of seeing through the eyes of trusted and like-minded associates how the world situation looks from other parts of the world. It was of immense value to the representatives of western governments to get the point of view of the Asian prime ministers on the questions before us—all the questions before us.

Though this was not an economic conference, we did have a useful and encouraging exchange of information and views about the development of commonwealth trade and of world trade. This is summed up in a paragraph of the communique: We all reaffirmed our adherence to a principle—which is the very foundation of Canadian economic policy—that is to say:

The progressive approach to the widest practicable system of trade and payments.

—as the best way of serving our individual and the general interest. We also had very serious discussions of the problems of nuclear energy, and listened to a most impressive, indeed an unforgettable, statement of Sir Winston Churchill as he painted for us, in majestic and memorable words, the significance of man's discoveries in this field which could mean his total destruction or the unfolding of a future for him beyond our present dreams.

While the superiority of the western world in nuclear weapons is now probably our most important single deterrent against war, nevertheless, we recognize that this is a wasting

[Mr. St. Laurent.]

asset and that peace must ultimately rest on a better and more lasting foundation. But one thing is sure and we had impressive evidence before us to prove it: a nuclear war would mean global ruin. Against this grim conclusion, we contemplated the happier possibility of hope for peace arising out of the very destructive power of the weapons now available. This may, as Sir Winston put it, result in the destruction of war, rather than the destruction of humanity. It is then for us all, as the communique puts it, "a choice and a challenge".

Defence questions generally were discussed in plenary sessions, during which the various prime ministers spoke of their own countries' problems in this field and how they were being met. There were also limited meetings on area defence problems, attended by those members of the conference which had accepted special peacetime commitments in those areas. International tensions, however, and the search for peace and security, dominated our discussions. It was accidental, but I think useful, that we met while developments were taking place in the Far East, which caused general anxiety. As these developments occurred, we exchanged views about them in a way which I am sure was very helpful in relation to our individual policies.

We did not try to draw up a blueprint for collective action which would be made public, but we all have our individual obligations in these matters, and we all have a common concern to avoid conflict; and also, may I add, to avoid disunity and division among the nations that are earnestly seeking peace; and I am convinced we are all doing our utmost toward those ends.

At the close of our meetings, it was my privilege to express the thanks of all the prime ministers to our host, Sir Winston Churchill. He replied with a few moving words about what he called our "fraternal association", in which he pointed out that this association meant to him, among other things, that each of our governments should always think of the others every time we had to say or do anything which would affect the others. I do not propose to disregard that wise advice, but as the principal communique indicates that the developments in the area of Formosa were necessarily of special concern to all the prime ministers present, I want to say a special word about our own position on this Formosan question. This position cannot, of course, be either final or inflexible, because the situation itself is changing and the changes that take place are bound to affect our judgment of how our policy should develop.