

Lest there be any misunderstanding, I think I should stress an important consideration about our desire to strengthen Canada's special relation with the Commonwealth Caribbean countries. Canada is not seeking to have a relation with any part of the region that would be in any way analogous to that which Britain has with those territories for which it continues to exercise constitutional responsibilities derived from the fact that they have been British colonies. We are thinking rather of close practical co-operation for mutual benefit in the various fields already mentioned.

I think that we must also recognize the interest that the independent Commonwealth countries in the Caribbean have in developing and maintaining their relations with both the United States and the Latin American republics. At the same time, we in Canada have a wide range of interests in other parts of the world - for example, through NATO - that are of no great interest to the Commonwealth Caribbean countries. To recognize these factors is simply to recognize that our relation with the Commonwealth Caribbean can be strong and meaningful without necessarily prejudicing any of the interests and relations either we or they have elsewhere.

There is another aspect of the spirit in which Canada seeks to approach the question of strengthening its ties with the Commonwealth Caribbean that I think might usefully be stressed. It is our conviction that the relation we have and hope to foster must be based on full respect for the identity of the West Indian peoples.

The leaders of several Commonwealth Caribbean countries have made it abundantly clear on many occasions that political independence is the goal for which their countries are striving; this is a goal for which Canada can have only the utmost sympathy. Indeed, as I have already noted, three of the Commonwealth Caribbean countries which will be at the Ottawa conference have, or will by then have, attained this goal, and a fourth seems likely to follow within a few months.

While some of the islands in the Eastern Caribbean may not be endowed with the resources really necessary to sustain the burdens of full independence by themselves, at least not at an early stage, they are, as I have noted, moving towards a relation with Britain that provides them with many of the opportunities and challenges of independence. In offering help and co-operation to the Commonwealth Caribbean countries, Canada is concerned not with providing them with what might be described as a crutch. We wish rather to help them develop the means and provide some encouragement to achieve an increasing degree of self-reliance, so that they can make their special and constructive contributions to the international community.

It may well be that some, or all, of the Commonwealth Caribbean countries will decide that they can overcome the disadvantages of small size by building together on the sense of community which clearly unites them. Canada is particularly anxious not to do anything that could possibly interfere with this.