

Mr. Chairman,
Your Excellencies,
Members of the Royal Commonwealth Society,
Honoured Guests,

It gives me great pleasure to speak to members of the Toronto Branch of the Royal Commonwealth Society, and their guests. It gives me the opportunity to make new friends and to greet some old friends in a group whose presence here confirms their interest in public affairs.

It also gives me the opportunity to commend the Society publicly for its work. The promotion of interest in Commonwealth affairs by the National Council and the different Branches of the Society in Canada contributes greatly to a better understanding of the role and character of this unique association. Of particular merit, Mr. Chairman, is the work of the Society in sponsoring essay contests for Canadian youth on particular aspects of Commonwealth activity. Essential to a continued understanding of, and involvement in, the Commonwealth, is an awareness by our young people of its true nature and value. The work accomplished by the Society in this and other areas deserves the recognition commensurate with its importance.

Happily, I need not convince this audience that the Commonwealth is alive and well and living in a flourishing condition throughout the globe. But the cynics who have diagnosed the condition of the Commonwealth as moribund are legion. The late Dean Acheson, in one unfortunate extraterritorial foray in 1961, observed, not completely facetiously, that the Commonwealth did not exist, as it had no political structure, or unity, or strength.

In the Canadian judgment the evidence does not support this view. The association has both form and substance; the membership insists the Commonwealth continue and expand. The activities of the association, and of Commonwealth non-governmental organizations, grow; the Royal Commonwealth Society testifies to this. The Commonwealth persists, and like philosophy, consistently inters its undertakers.

Support for the Commonwealth remains a central element in Canadian foreign policy. Canada's commitment to the Commonwealth, which has evolved with time, is not the mere consequence of history; it is rather the consequence of the adaptive and responsive qualities of the association and its ability to accommodate and further policies and ideals consistent with Canadian national objectives.