

or war. My predecessor, Mr. Mackenzie King, was one of the most resolute advocates of this view and in the end the overwhelming majority of Canadians followed his lead.

The issue between these two ideas was settled at the historic Imperial Conference of 1926 and it was settled in favour of the second alternative. Though it was settled in principle in favour of complete nationhood, a great many sincere and earnest people regretted the decision. Certainly up to the beginning of the second world war, vigorous rearguard actions were fought in many of the nations of the Commonwealth against the development of complete national independence for each member state.

To my mind the lesson for the Commonwealth of the Second World War and its aftermath is that so long as a genuine identity of aims, ideals and interests exists among the nations of the Commonwealth they will remain bound together by a community of action in all matters of great moment. And I believe the knowledge that our Commonwealth association depends upon respecting one another's ideals and interests is a wholesome restraint upon the self-regarding policies of any one of the nations of the Commonwealth.

Since the nations of the Commonwealth are scattered all around the globe, it is obvious that they can never achieve a community of purpose unless each nation pursues policies which are not exclusively national or even regional in their appeal, policies which have as their objective the welfare of humanity all over the globe.

There can be no formal bonds to hold the Commonwealth together. Even the position of the Crown has changed, but not our respect for the Crown nor our devotion to the King. The Commonwealth has no formal constitution. Today it has become a free association of free nations which used to be linked together politically, and now are associated because of a common attachment to certain political ideals. All of us in the Commonwealth stand for the maintenance of a large measure of freedom for the individual within the community, for genuine control by the citizens over their governments, and, underlying both these concepts, for the view that nations, large or small, have a right to order their own affairs in their own way, so long as in doing so they do not menace the existence or the freedom of their neighbours.

There are still some people who feel that these ideals are so general that they can be, and, in fact, are shared by most of the free nations which are not in the Commonwealth; and that therefore the Commonwealth as such has ceased to have any real meaning.

With this conclusion I cannot agree, though I certainly agree with the premise. To me the greatest attraction of the Commonwealth is that it is not exclusive in its ideals; that it is founded upon conceptions that could, with advantage to the world, be extended to all other nations.

What is more, the Commonwealth relationship, far from inhibiting co-operation with other nations, has created in all of us a habit of understanding and co-operation which makes it easier for our nations and our governments to work with other nations and other governments, inside or outside the Commonwealth, to further ours and their common interests.