

the last weeks, to visit several countries of the West Indies, especially Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados and Guyana, immediately before the Prime Ministers' Conference which was held in Jamaica, from April 29th to May 6th last. The purpose of those visits was once again to point out our interest in our relations with the West Indies and the Commonwealth as a whole and with that area in particular.

During those visits to the Presidents of the three countries concerned, the Prime Minister discussed our bilateral and multilateral relations with the West Indies and had very serious discussions as to the future of all the West Indies, the eventual future of a federation of the Commonwealth West Indies and of all the islands concerned and also the future relations between Canada and the West Indies.

I believe the Prime Minister of Canada made it clear to the Prime Ministers of the three countries concerned that we wanted to deal with those countries as equals.

I suppose we have no intention of interfering as Canadians in West Indian Affairs, or of trying to impose on that area, or on a country in that area, even supposing we were provided with the opportunity to do so, the solutions which might seem proper to Canada, but which we are not sure it would be appropriate to impose on those countries.

The relationship we seek with the West Indies is based on the principle of equality and reciprocity. We do not seek hegemony or territorial expansion. It is quite the contrary, in view of the long-established relationships we have had with that area and of the real community of interests that binds us. I think that it is only within the frame of total equality of relationships that we can help them meet their aspirations within the spiralling economic expansion they are presently experiencing also and in view of their problems stemming from that expansion.

That is why Canada has provided a lot of assistance through bilateral programs, for example through organizations such as the Caribbean Development Bank and the West Indies Community, CARICOM.

I think that it is within that context of Canadian assistance through multilateral or bilateral programs that we must consider the motion introduced by the hon. member for Hillsborough who, for that matter, gave a very interesting account of the need for Canada to help those countries meeting their aspirations fully.

I suppose that in that part of this motion which deals with former British possessions in the West Indies which have not attained independence yet, one must include Commonwealth West Indies Islands which have not attained total independence yet. Indeed those islands which attained independence *de facto*, and those which have some domestic independence but are still attached to the British Crown must be distinguished insofar as external relations are concerned.

The territories still under British authority are the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Turks, Caicos Islands and Montserrat. Furthermore, even though they are not part of the West Indies, Bermuda is still a British protectorate. On the other hand, we should not forget Belize, a Central American territory which is not autonomous. Last, there are the states associated to Great Britain

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and that I mentioned before: Antigua-Barbados; St. Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla; Dominica; Sainte-Lucie and Saint-Vincent which, although they enjoy a large autonomy in their internal affairs, have to deal through Great Britain for their exchange matters or external affairs. However, it is to be noted that autonomous states can without asking for Westminister's permission, proclaim themselves fully autonomous or constitute a Federation within the area.

● (1620)

To come back to the wording of the motion of the hon. member for Hillsborough, he wishes apparently that a special joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons be established to study the opportunity of allowing the political and geographical union to Canada of Turks and Caicos Islands or any other island. It is probably appropriate that the motion does not prejudice of the nature of those closer relationships mentioned by the hon. member in his motion even though we can conclude from the rest of the motion and the mention of Turks and Caicos Islands that some form of economical and political union with Canada is contemplated.

The point I wish to underline is the following: the first part of the motion emphasises the fact that Canada should take the initiative in making proposals to those islands. Yes, in the second part of the motion it is asked that this House approve a political and economical union with any island of the Commonwealth West Indies which would request it. Were that motion to pass as it is presently, and were any West Indies island to request unification, Canada would have no other choice but to arrange a union agreement with that Island.

I wonder whether the hon. member really intends to deal in a hurry with such an important matter which might have serious consequences for the Canadian people and all the islands concerned.

Mr. Speaker, I think that Canada has reached the logical limits of its territorial development. Besides, when Newfoundland joined the Canadian Confederation in 1949, the historic dream expressed in section 146 of the BNA Act came true. The necessary amendments to that Act if other territories were to be added to the Canadian Confederation would not as such be a major problem. However, I think they would run counter to every philosophy in our constitution.

Another very important factor to be considered when new territories are to become part of a constituted political body is obviously that we might be accused of neo-colonialism.

The sun has set for quite a while on the splendors for the British empire, and in my opinion, it is a good thing. However, if Canada were to allow some islands, whether in the West Indies or elsewhere, to join the Canadian Confederation, I greatly fear that we would be accused by the world public opinion of trying to extend our hegemony to distant territories with which we have more or less important cultural and geographical relations.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very delicate matter on which I do not intend to dwell, but I do not think it is very timely for Canada to try and build its own colonial empire, directly or indirectly, at a time when the influence of all colonial states, Portugal, Spain, Great Britain, France and even the