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The terrible events of 1940 revealed how great was the menace to freedom and how suddenly freedom might be lost. So long as freedom endures, free men everywhere will owe to the people of Britain a debt they can never repay. So long as Britain continues to maintain the spirit of freedom and to defend the freedom of other nations, she need never doubt her own preeminence throughout the world. So long as we all share that spirit, we need never fear for the strength or unity of the Commonwealth. The voluntary decisions by Britain, by Canada, by Australia, by New Zealand, and by South Africa are a supreme evidence of the unifying force of freedom.

The Strength and Unity of the British Commonwealth

This common effort springing from a common source has given a new strength and unity, a new meaning and significance to the British Commonwealth and Empire.

Without attempting to distinguish between the terms "British Empire" and "British Commonwealth", but looking rather to the evolution of this association of free nations, may I give to you what I believe to be the secret of its strength and of its unity, and the vision which I cherish of its future. "We . . . who look forward to larger brotherhoods and more exact standards of social justice, value and cherish the British Empire because it represents, more than any other similar organization has ever represented, the peaceful co-operation of all sorts of men in all sorts of countries, and because we think it is, in that respect at least, a model of what we hope the whole world will some day become."

This vision, I need scarcely say, is not mine alone; indeed, the words in which I have sought to portray it are not even my own. They were spoken thirty-seven years ago by one whose fame to-day is not surpassed in any part of the world if, indeed, it has been equalled at any time in the world's history. They are the words of the present Prime Minister of Britain, uttered by Mr. Churchill in 1907. As they continue to reverberate down the years, they bring fresh inspiration to all who owe allegiance to the Crown and increasing hope to mankind.

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Visions of youth, sometimes, "die away,
And fade into the light of common day."

They fade not because the vision is ever wholly lost, but because resolution wavers, because determination fails, because of seemingly insuperable obstacles. It has not been so with Mr. Churchill. He has not to ask

"Whither is fled the visionary gleam?

Where is it now, the glory and the dream?"

The glory and the dream—are they not being realized, at this very hour, in the strength and unity of the nations of the Commonwealth?

Means of Consultation and Co-operation

From time to time it is suggested that we should seek new methods of communication and consultation.

I believe very strongly in close consultation, close co-operation, and effective co-ordination of policies. What more effective means of co-operation could have been found than those which, despite all the handicaps of war, have worked with such complete success?

It is true we have not, sitting in London continuously, a visible Imperial War Cabinet or Council. But we have, what is much more important, though invisible, a continuing conference of the Cabinets of the Commonwealth. It is a conference of Cabinets which deals, from day to day and, not infrequently, from hour to hour, with policies of common concern.

When decisions are taken they are not the decisions of Prime Ministers or other individual Ministers, meeting apart from their own colleagues and away from their own countries. They are decisions reached after mature consideration by all members of the Cabinet of each country, with a full consciousness of their immediate responsibility to their respective Parliaments.

Let us, by all means, seek to improve where we can. But in considering new methods of organization we cannot be too careful to see that, to our own peoples, the new methods will not appear as an attempt to limit their freedom of decision or, to peoples outside