

*Commonwealth Conference*

than anything we have known in the past. The change in the commonwealth is perhaps more noticeable because of the character of the increase rather than the extent of the increase. The new members have come from Africa, the Caribbean and Asia; and because of the nature of the new membership, as well as its number, the search for a common denominator of agreement on policy and attitudes and like mindedness, if you wish to put it that way, I suspect is more difficult than it used to be.

But to the extent that this can be achieved the result is more important today, I believe, than it has ever been in the past, more meaningful in terms of the world in which we live. I think everyone who took part in those meetings was deeply impressed and in some cases surprised at the extent to which all 18 delegations sought to find value in this association and sought to strengthen it, irrespective of their background and past history; sought to use it for constructive purposes which could help move the world forward toward the resolution of some of its most difficult problems.

Another noteworthy feature is the fact that the expanded membership has not resulted in a dilution of the intimacy of relationship in contact and discussion which one might have expected following this kind of increase. With such a large membership representing such a wide range of interests, viewpoints and, indeed, emotions, one might have expected to find a dilution of the informality and the intimacy of the discussions which used to take place at commonwealth meetings. Fortunately this does not seem to have happened. I think the conference of last week and this week may go down as one of the vitally important stages in the evolution of commonwealth affairs. It is too early, of course, to state with confidence that this will be the case; it depends on what the various leaders who met and conferred together are able to do during the weeks, the months and the years ahead to carry out the substantial measure of agreement which was achieved in London. But I believe the potentiality for a great step forward by the new commonwealth is there.

As the communiqué indicates—and I am talking now about the first item on the agenda, which is the usual discussion of the state of world affairs generally—there was general agreement that the reduction of east-west tension which has occurred has helped to produce solutions to some of the most serious threats to international peace in re-

cent years, and that it at least provides an opportunity to work out some of the problems which remain dangerous and worrisome. At the same time there was general recognition that the competition between the free and the communist worlds remains a dominant factor in international affairs. Where once this was seen most sharply in the confrontation, between the Soviet union and the western countries, it emerges now in subtler forms with competition on the continent of Africa for influence among the peoples of the new countries both within and outside the commonwealth. It emerges, too, in the relentless pressure of aggression and subversion in Southeast Asia.

In the discussion of the situation in southeast Asia—and there was very considerable discussion about it—there was naturally a great deal of thought about the position of communist China, which is such a tremendous factor in this whole matter. The view was expressed by the leaders of certain commonwealth countries—and it was expressed without qualification—that the policy of the countries of the west, including Canada if you like, in refusing to extend diplomatic recognition to communist China was unrealistic and unhelpful, and that it did not assist in reaching a solution to the problems of southeast Asia which in this view, and I might add in the general view, could not be solved without the participation of the government of communist China.

Those who held this view without any qualification stated that the policy that had been adopted by certain governments was sterile and fruitless, and that the sooner that policy was abandoned and the sooner communist China was admitted to the United Nations, the better it would be for the solution of outstanding international disputes. This did not imply, on the part of those who held the view, any particular sympathy with the form of government in Peking or with the aggressive policy that China has followed; it reflected, rather, the opinion that the Chinese government should be in the world forum, where it would have to defend its actions and be subject to the pressures of world opinion.

I understand there was a reflection and a report of these discussions carried by a Canadian newspaper, which said that I had said in the discussions that China—and these were the words used—ought to have its place in the United Nations. I did speak along those lines, but that particular report does not reflect what I was attempting to

[Mr. Pearson.]