

The strength of this commonwealth association rests not in exclusive defence or economic arrangements among its members. Indeed in time of peace formal defence arrangements have been singularly lacking. The greatest strength of the commonwealth bond is the adherence of its members to its common ideals, their common political heritage which assures mutual understanding without the necessity of formal instruments of association; their common interest in promoting and defending their democratic way of life. These ties persist in spite of all changes in the world situation. Common dangers serve but to strengthen them. The commonwealth has twice proved its worth as a powerful instrument for the preservation of freedom for its members and for mankind. As such it remains.

A most significant change in membership in the commonwealth has occurred during the past year. What was once the empire of India has disappeared. In its place are three new nations of the commonwealth, India, Pakistan and Ceylon; while a dependency of the late Indian empire, Burma, has severed formal tie and become a separate republic. I think the good will relations will continue.

The India Independence Act and the Ceylon Independence Act passed last year, as members know, were but the final steps in the transfer to Indian peoples of the right of self-government which began many years ago. It is a matter of rejoicing among men of good will everywhere that the final stage was accomplished, not only without resort to violence, but with such evident good will and respect on either side. History scarcely affords a parallel of an imperial power abdicating sovereignty over subject peoples so generously and so speedily as Britain has done in India.

It does not detract from the merits of the settlement to note that the Indian peoples are in a very real sense the beneficiaries of a system of political freedom which developed here in North America. The first planting of representative institutions in the new world over three centuries ago in the colony of Virginia, the achievement of responsible government by Canada and Nova Scotia, exactly one hundred years ago; the growth of autonomy in our external affairs which followed the first world war, are milestones in the development of Indian national freedom as in our own. This heritage of freedom within the commonwealth, the people of Canada, I think I may say, are glad to share with the peoples of India.

Under the India Independence Act, India and Pakistan have the right to leave the commonwealth if they so desire. We hope that they will not choose to do so, though the choice is solely theirs. The people of Canada esteem their membership in the commonwealth not merely for reasons of sentiment or tradition, but for its positive advantage. In a world in which the values and virtues of our civilization are in jeopardy, this association of free nations is both a moral and a material bulwark against the forces of disorder and oppression. It is to be hoped that the peoples of India and Pakistan, like the people of Canada, will continue to find the commonwealth a worthwhile club to which to belong. But whatever their decision, and it is theirs, we wish them well, in the great future that is unfolding for them. We wish to be their friends.

I should like to avoid mentioning one painful subject, but it would be unrealistic to do so. I refer to the serious friction which has developed between India and Pakistan over certain territorial areas, and to the dreadful communal rioting which has troubled both countries. Apart from our concern on humanitarian grounds that peace and order should prevail in that subcontinent there is always the danger that others may be tempted to fish in troubled waters. Geographically, India and Pakistan lie on the frontiers of the free world. The freedom of their peoples is not unconnected with that of other freedom-loving peoples.

A course of action by which the Kashmir dispute might be settled has recently been adopted as a recommendation in the Security