

The most significant development in the Commonwealth Caribbean in recent years has been the coming of independence to several territories in the region and substantial constitutional changes in the others. It is, above all, these processes of change, by which the West Indian territories have assumed increasing responsibility for their own affairs - processes which are still continuing - which make it appropriate for Canada to discuss with them our mutual relations.

Both Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago gained their independence in 1962. This week another Caribbean Commonwealth territory will become independent - British Guiana, which is to be called Guyana. Unlike the other Commonwealth territories in the Caribbean (with one exception), Guyana is not an island but is situated on the mainland of South America. It has experienced a good deal of turmoil in the last few years, but the present Government is making efforts to overcome the problems that have given rise to this turmoil. I am sure that all friends of Guyana, of which Canada is certainly one, will wish this new country well as it embarks on independence.

The presence of Guyana, along with Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica, will mean that there will be four fully-independent Commonwealth countries, including Canada, at the Ottawa conference in July.

One of the other participants, Barbados, is expected to proceed to independence within the next few months. A constitutional conference to discuss the timetable for Barbados's independence is planned for London late in June.

Six other islands (Antigua, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent) that have accepted invitations to the Ottawa conference are now in the process of negotiating a new status with Britain, which will give them a very advanced form of self-government and the opportunity, should they desire it, to proceed to full independence. So long as these proposed new arrangements are in force, Britain will continue to have final responsibility for the defence and external affairs of these islands.

The remaining three Commonwealth Caribbean territories that are expected to participate in the conference in Ottawa - British Honduras, the Bahamas and Montserrat - are in varying stages of constitutional evolution.

In approaching the forthcoming conference, Canada will not be seeking to formulate our special relation in exclusive terms. Nor do we wish in any way to detract from the relations the Caribbean territories have with other countries. In particular, there are the continuing responsibilities that Britain has in the territories that are not fully independent, and it is anticipated that Britain will be represented at the conference in some way.