

Kingdom. No doubt this, in part, has occasioned the approach to Canada by the United Kingdom as well as the more informal approach by some of the political leaders of the Federation.

4. Thus, we have been asked by the United Kingdom if we are willing to “associate” ourselves with them in extending aid to the Federation. We have also been asked by the United Kingdom if Canada could join with other Commonwealth countries, and possibly with the United States and other countries in a “joint programme” of economic assistance. It can be assumed that BWI and the United Kingdom have real hopes of help from Canada.

5. Canada, of course, shares the concern of the United Kingdom — as does the United States, no doubt — that, as the West Indies moves toward independence it should develop strong free institutions and a democratic way of life. The vast distances which separate the various units of the Federation, the uncertain strength of the Federal Government, the significant differences in income between the various Units, are only the most important of the difficulties which will face the Federation. But the democratic development of the Federation, while not assured, may at least be assisted if the older Commonwealth countries, and perhaps the United States, show an active and friendly interest in West Indian problems and help them find solutions to their more pressing economic needs.

6. Further, it would seem undesirable from Canada’s point of view, if the vacuum caused by the decline of the United Kingdom influence and participation in the affairs of the area should be filled by the United States alone. For this reason, if for no other, Canada should be prepared to undertake some of the tasks which until now have been carried out by the United Kingdom.

7. In summary, it may be said that Canada has a real interest in fulfilling the hopes of the BWI and the United Kingdom — the importance of our commercial relations, which we hope to improve, our concern that the Federation develop free institutions, and our concern with the continued strength of the Commonwealth — all these reasons argue that we should not disappoint these hopes.⁹⁰ Indeed, if some form of aid is not forthcoming from Canada, we will give the impression that we are indifferent to the relationship of the West Indies — and other potential new members — to the Commonwealth.

8. West Indies officials have made it clear that, on their side, they must have economic and technical help from other countries. If the Federation is to be a success, they must exploit their resources more fully, and they must raise the level of technical skills. While, as compared with the Colombo Plan countries, standards of living in some of the wealthier islands appear high, there are some islands in the Federation which would certainly be classed as depressed; generally incomes per capita are substantially lower in the Federation than in the more developed countries of the Commonwealth. There is, of course, a significant flow of private investment from Canada and the United States to the Caribbean — rather more, as far as Canada is concerned, than to the Colombo Plan countries. Though in terms of human needs the West Indies are less worthy of economic aid than some parts of South Asia, yet there is no doubt that the economic and technical needs of the West Indies are real and pressing. Without outside help the economic progress of the islands and the economic and political development of the Federation will be slow. (Annex I sets out a record of conversations between Canadian officials and two Ministers from St. Kitts and Nevis; it gives an indication of the sort of needs (and requests) for help which are likely to be encountered in the Islands.)

⁹⁰ Note marginale :/Marginal Note:
I agree L.B. Pearson]