

But we have never felt that the pursuit of security through military strength alone was enough. If we are ever to achieve a lasting peace strength must always be accompanied by good-will, by moderation and by constructive efforts for human welfare. The nations of the Commonwealth have repeatedly demonstrated that they can muster considerable strength in war, and we have co-operated effectively to resist aggression in the past. We in Canada have never regarded the Commonwealth as such as an instrument for organizing our common security on the basis of our collective strength; we do not so consider it today. The security of all parts of the Commonwealth obviously depends upon the right kind of relationships with other nations outside the Commonwealth: and very specially on our relationships with the United States.

But we do believe that the Commonwealth has none-the-less a very constructive role in the world today, and I would like to indicate what I consider that role to be. It was this Commonwealth relationship which brought the Prime Ministers of half a dozen independent nations from distant parts of the globe to meet here in London in these first days of 1951; and some examination of that relationship and the relationship of the Commonwealth to the rest of the world seems in order.

The nature of the Commonwealth is a subject on which it is almost impossible to get even like-minded people to agree.

I have a feeling that if I were to ask my colleagues in the government at Ottawa to define the Commonwealth I would get as many definitions as there are members of the Cabinet. I am sure there would be a variety of views even in the Canada Club.

The Commonwealth, you know, is rather like the elephant the blind men in the fable tried to define, except that the Commonwealth is not as integrated as an elephant has to be to survive. On the contrary, the Commonwealth will survive only if we do not try to force too much integration upon it.

I do not need to remind you that the Commonwealth started out as a world-wide empire ruled from Downing Street. Fortunately, it was an empire ruled by men who had the wisdom to realize that unless they progressively surrendered their control to the local authorities in their colonial possessions around the globe the whole association might break up - as other Empires had broken up - in bad blood.

Before 1914 a situation had been reached where the Dominions, as they were then coming to be called, had complete self-government in all their domestic affairs, though they were without direct external relations with other countries, and the major issues of foreign policy for the whole empire were settled exclusively in London, by Ministers responsible exclusively to the Parliament at Westminster.

That relationship was upset by the First Great War, and the British Empire emerged from the war with two apparent alternatives open to it. On the one hand were those who believed the self-governing Dominions could share with the United Kingdom in the formation of a common foreign policy; on the other were those whose view was that self-government must be carried to its logical conclusion, and that each of these self-governing Dominions must be free to develop all the attributes of nationhood. These latter maintained that real nationhood included the right and the obligation of making decisions even on the most vital questions of foreign policy, including peace