

compliment to Senator Thorvaldson who introduced the motion, and I compliment him now on his initiative and enterprise in moving that the External Relations Committee be awakened from its long slumber. That is putting it in a different phraseology, but so far as we are concerned it means about the same thing. For much too long this important committee has been quiescent, with the exception, so far as I know, of the speeches made by my friend Senator Gouin. It may be that, not being a member of that committee, I am not familiar with all its activities. So far as I can recollect, however, very little has come from the committee for a long time on this most important subject.

I am inclined to think that Senator Thorvaldson has undertaken a rather heavy assignment, as chairman, if he attempts to carry through the program of inquiry and report—and, I presume, advice—which his speech foreshadows. However, I am not the only one who welcomes what he is doing. On Saturday last, May 8, the *Toronto Globe and Mail* published a short but comprehensive editorial, headed "Useful Study." It reads:

The Senate study of Canada's position in the Commonwealth, to be undertaken by the External Relations Standing Committee, should be able to make a useful contribution to Canadian understanding of this important world institution.

Though it is more often defined in terms of what it is not, than of what precisely it stands for, the Commonwealth is undeniably an influential and constructive association of new and old countries. Canada is a member by tradition and, even more importantly, as a matter of self-interest.

The Senate study will no doubt begin with this assumption and go on to consider what further contributions Canada can make toward strengthening the Commonwealth relationship.

I am sure that if this committee's study and report and advice tend to do what the *Globe and Mail* expects it to do to strengthen Commonwealth relationships, it will meet with the approval of everyone in this chamber.

I was struck by a remark made by Senator Thorvaldson—I regret that he is not in the chamber tonight. He said it had been suggested, or words to that effect, that this committee must not bury itself in generalities but must get down to consideration of specific problems. That, he said, is quite right;

otherwise, its work might become an exercise in futility. Honourable senators, I think everyone will agree with me in this, too, that if its work consists of platitudes it will be an exercise in futility.

What are these problems of the Commonwealth to which the senator has referred? He has not listed them—and neither can I. What are the problems which confront us that we should inquire into? Perhaps I should not say "we," because I am not a member of that committee.

First, I would like to know what is the Commonwealth, and of what countries it is composed. We were told in Jamaica, when the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association met there in November last, that there were delegates present from 66 parliaments. That was not by any means all the parliaments of the Commonwealth. Delegates from those 66 parliaments came from 38 individual states and represented 750 million people. That is a lot of people—about one-quarter of the population of the world. Therefore, the problem is great and the senator has certainly taken in enough territory.

The influence which an organization of this kind, whatever its principles, would have in world thought and in world politics must necessarily be very profound. I would like to know what is the basis of this association, what brings us together, what holds us together, and what we could do to increase the good will among ourselves and so extend the membership in the association and thus its influence in foreign affairs.

Senator Thorvaldson mentioned South Africa, which, he said, had withdrawn from the Commonwealth because of racial discrimination. Well, there is not very much to be gained by threshing that old straw. It is too bad that South Africa left the Commonwealth, but why inquire into the responsibilities in that connection? I suppose that no one here agrees with the policy of South Africa with regard to the black people who inhabit that country, but I do suggest that we could have had a considerably greater influence in bringing about better conditions in South Africa had that country remained a member of the Commonwealth than we have now that it is on its own.

As I have said, there is not much advantage in threshing old straw, but something might be gained could we settle the general principles involved, and decide what is required for membership in the British Com-