



Statements and Speeches

No. 74/17

THE COMMONWEALTH AND CANADA - ASSOCIATION FOR THE FUTURE

A Statement by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Allan J. MacEachen, to the Royal Commonwealth Society Toronto, November 27, 1974.

* * * *

...Essential to a continued understanding of, and involvement in, the Commonwealth, is an awareness by our young people of its true nature and value. The work accomplished by the (Royal Commonwealth) Society in this and other areas deserves the recognition commensurate with its importance.

Happily, I need not convince this audience that the Commonwealth is alive and well and living in a flourishing condition throughout the globe. But the cynics who have diagnosed the condition of the Commonwealth as moribund are legion. The late Dean Acheson, in one unfortunate extraterritorial foray in 1961, observed, not completely facetiously, that the Commonwealth did not exist, as it had no political structure, or unity, or strength.

In the Canadian judgment the evidence does not support this view. The association has both form and substance; the membership insists the Commonwealth continue and expand. The activities of the association, and of Commonwealth non-governmental organizations, grow; the Royal Commonwealth Society testifies to this. The Commonwealth persists, and like philosophy, consistently inters its undertakers.

Support for the Commonwealth remains a central element in Canadian foreign policy. Canada's commitment to the Commonwealth, which has evolved with time, is not the mere consequence of history; it is rather the consequence of the adaptive and responsive qualities of the association and its ability to accommodate and further policies and ideals consistent with Canadian national objectives.

The Commonwealth is a unique institution. Its members share a common language and a common historical experience. The Commonwealth includes no super-powers. It is not an arena of Cold War politics. It is not intended to pursue one specific goal, or to resolve one specific problem. It cannot be viewed purely in terms of developmental assistance, or of a donor-user equation. It draws its strength from the ideas and ideals inherent in British political
