

is more than a security organization. All the chapters of the Charter and all the conferences and meetings which have been held within the United Nations since it came into effect, reveal the fact that every statesman in the world knows in his bones that he and his nation will not be secure from war until by some means or other they have removed the economic and social causes of war. I do not think, therefore, that there is much point in examining now the constitutional structure of the British Commonwealth; in concerning ourselves too much about the logic of a situation in which a king is the head of an association of states which includes a republic; or in worrying too much about the fact that it is quite possible within this system, for the king, who is head of the Commonwealth, to be at one and the same time both at war and at peace. The most recent example of this kind of analysis of the Commonwealth appeared a month ago in an admirable American publication called The Reporter. In the issue of that paper for June 6 there appears a stimulating and amusing article by Mr. J.H. Huizinga entitled "The Commonwealth Cult - What Really Binds Britain and the Dominions?". Mr. Huizinga indulges in the time-honoured exercise of peeling the fruit to see what substance there is in it, and comes to the conclusion that the fruit he is peeling is an onion. When the leaves are all before him on the table, the investigator admits that he is little wiser than when he began and he himself is reduced to tears. But an onion, after all, when it is all together, as it grew in the ground, is something very different from the assortment of leaves of which it is compacted. It has shape, it has texture, it may be identified even in the dark, and moreover it has uses that would make any good cook regret its absence.

Mr. Huizinga, I must confess, used a somewhat more elegant metaphor. Here is what he says:

"It would, then, seem fair to say that the Commonwealth appears in fact to be no more than an alumni association without an executive committee, by-laws, or a programme of concerted action, whose independent-spirited, self-willed members, presided over by their former headmaster, recognize no other obligations toward one another than may be prompted by the heart or by considerations of farsighted self-interest. Apart from the ties of blood linking some members of the association, and the familiarity - which has been known to breed contempt as well as friendship - inherited from the days when they were all at school together, there is only one thing that distinguishes this very heterogeneous gathering of sovereign nations from any other. And that is that they have been remarkably successful in passing themselves off as something they are manifestly not; a political entity whose component parts may claim the right to accord one another tariff preferences regardless of agreements made with outside nations."

I do not propose to argue with Mr. Huizinga about his analysis, and I think we had better leave him to his tears contemplating something which he has reduced to a state where it is obviously not fit for human consumption. When we have finished with his analysis and similar comments which it is quite easy to make about the Commonwealth, we still need to know whether there is some useful, constructive contribution which this association of states can make in solving the urgent problems of the free world.

We must, I think, begin by reminding ourselves that the Commonwealth possesses the validity that comes from uninterrupted growth. It is an organism, and like any healthy organism, it has adapted itself to its environment. The political conditions in which it originated as part of the British Empire, no longer exist, and that Empire could not possibly continue in the form it took a hundred years ago. It is quite misleading to suggest that this development has taken place merely because of a weakening in the imperial power of Great Britain. No matter what had happened to the United Kingdom in the last hundred years, the very process by which the various parts of the old empire grew in population, in industrial strength, in political experience, would have made it impossible to maintain the old order. No matter how powerful Great Britain had remained, the decentralization of its empire could not possibly have been avoided. The fact that that transformation has taken place by organic processes and not by surgery, is good evidence that the association has vitality and meaning in the modern world.