

I said a few moments ago that the leaders in these countries still look to Canada. They are small units in a modern world, beset with external and domestic problems, and they are fearful of the domination of their largest neighbour, conscious of Britain turning toward a more European association, and feeling their way towards a closer association with Latin America. On the Caribbean side, too, our long historical connections with the area, its geographic proximity, and the amount of tourism, trade and investment and aid flowing there have created special connections which we cannot overlook. Whether we like it or not, and however we may wish to define it, we obviously have a relationship with the Commonwealth Caribbean which is unlike that with any other part of the world.

In speaking of the Commonwealth Caribbean I have not meant to imply that it can be considered as a homogeneous unit. In looking back over my tour, one of my most striking impressions is the differences which exist. The topographies, economies and stages of development vary widely. Clearly they must work out their own political destiny; and they are doing so, both on a national basis and through closer forms of regional co-operation, as witnessed by such institutions as CARIFTA, the Caribbean Development Bank, WIAS, and other forms. On our part, we must obviously judge our own national interests and national priorities. I am only suggesting that there exist, in fact, special connections with the Commonwealth Caribbean, which means we should treat the area under our foreign policy with particular care, and which, in our own enlightened interest, we should preserve and promote.

I formed a high regard indeed for the governments and peoples of this region, countries where I have spent a considerable amount of time since September. With goodwill, understanding and tact, we can and should seek to strengthen our present relations and promote our own national interest. May our efforts bear fruit in the economic development, in the standard of living, and in the improvement of the quality of life in the Caribbean. There will be times in the future, as there have been in the recent past, when the long vines of our linkages with the area are blown and stretched by the hot winds of Caribbean storms. But they will withstand it. The roots are strong and firm. We are all part of the same western hemisphere and of the Commonwealth in this hemisphere. This relationship will grow and prosper for the benefit both of the Caribbean countries and of the people of Canada.

I have tried in the fulfilment of this assignment to understand the nature of the mandate given to me by my colleagues in the Government. Whether my views will prove to be fully acceptable remains to be seen. In any event, I can assure Senators in this interim report that these recommendations are being carefully considered by the Government, and in that consideration I am sure we will be greatly aided by the report of the Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs after such an exhaustive analysis last year of our relationship with this interesting and important part of the world.