

Such consultation alone, however, though useful and indeed unique, will not itself ensure survival of the Commonwealth bond in even its present loose form. If disputes between its members become increasingly bitter or deep rooted, or if their policies diverge to a point where they express themselves in opposed actions, the strain on the association may be too great to stand. Also, inability or unwillingness of the older members to understand the economic and social problems of their Asian colleagues and to assist in their solution may result in the latter breaking away from a group membership which seems to them to offer so few advantages.

The most important question mark which hangs over Asia today is uncertainty regarding economic and social progress. Will it be sufficient to keep pace with expanding populations and to enable leaders in the troubled countries of the area to build stable societies of real value to their people? The answer depends to a large extent on the countries themselves, on the wisdom of their leaders and the good sense of their citizens; but it also depends in large measure on the degree to which the resources of the developed countries of the world, both public and private, are brought to bear on the problem.

The United States Government, through its Point IV and other programmes, has given a splendid impetus to this effort, which is of crucial importance to the stability of the free world. In their turn, the Commonwealth countries have also played a part, through contributions to United Nations technical assistance schemes and in other ways. The Commonwealth venture in this field which has engaged our imaginations and interest most closely is known as the Colombo Plan.

This is a Commonwealth co-operative programme which now embraces also several non-Commonwealth countries in Southeast Asia. During the past two years it has provided a substantial amount of technical and capital assistance to countries in South and Southeast Asia, chiefly India, Pakistan and Ceylon, and it is planning to do more. Over the six years of the Plan, external aid and grants by the U.K., Canada, Australia and New Zealand will amount to hundreds of millions of dollars. Because of this fact and because of the systematic and practical way in which it has approached a difficult and complex problem, the Colombo Plan is making a significant contribution to the material development of the whole area and, hence, to the defeat of subversive and revolutionary Communism which would proceed by violent and bloody methods to build its own Marxist Asian world.

From what I have said you will see how this new Commonwealth of Nations differs from the old Empire of not so many years ago. The difference was necessary if the association was to survive. I have also stated by view that such survival is of great importance to more than the members of the Commonwealth; especially in the service it can perform in acting as a bridge between Asia and the West, at a time when there are all too few bridges of this kind. It is as important to the United States as to the Commonwealth itself - that this function should be effectively discharged. If it can be done, then the Commonwealth will be