

*Commonwealth Conference*

statement is true; just as we are beginning now to realize that man himself is something more than a cog in an economic machine, something other than a mere mechanism. The time has come for us to recognize that this is so with regard to many of our national institutions. In the commonwealth we have something far superior to a mere organization of governmental authority. Instead, we have an institution which contains within itself something which no machinery can have, namely the principle of life; and with life, growth; and with growth, purpose.

This is not a new commonwealth which we have at the present time; it is just a phase in the continuing growth and development of this living organism. Sometimes we forget the great power and potential of living, growing things. I think we often forget that a block of cement or a piece of concrete paving can be broken by the power of a growing mushroom as well as by a pneumatic drill. Neither we ourselves nor our fellow men are automata to be fitted into convenient economic or political principles. We forget we enjoy the divine gifts of life, human nature and free will. This is one of the reasons the commonwealth could be particularly strong at this time.

Like all growing things, the commonwealth has grown from a seed. That seed goes back to the British empire, but it goes back further and deeper than that. It goes back to the basic principles which developed in the empire as far as government and the freedom of individuals are concerned. This seed has been planted in different lands even as it has been planted here in Canada. For all their local differences, those nations which have grown up from it bear a strong family resemblance. We talk about the differences which exist between the new countries and the old, between the underdeveloped countries and those with highly developed technical resources. Nevertheless they all bear a strong family resemblance. This has been a good seed, because the fruit has been nations respected throughout the world for their civilization, their culture, their prosperity, their peaceable conduct in world affairs and, above all, for the basic principles of parliamentary government which we ourselves uphold.

So while this commonwealth has not really been organized—like Topsy, it has more or less just grown up—while it has no clear constitution, no regular schedule of meetings, no clear order of precedence, no binding contracts or agreements, it has something which in my view is even more important. The

fact remains; it is still here. It still exists, and in times of crisis and trial its members have an amazing way of presenting a common front in the interests of the type of civilization they enjoy. I think this has been brought home to us in the words we heard from the Prime Minister today.

So as a means of preserving our common interests the commonwealth may be stronger than many much more carefully organized bodies such as the old league of nations or the United Nations organization today. I think some of the immediate results of this conference will be obvious, even though they may not be apparent to us now. A large number of the heads of government attending this conference left immediately for Cairo to attend a meeting of the organization for African unity which opened today; I am thinking particularly of those who attended from the African countries. I do not think there is any doubt that the effect of the commonwealth conference on the attitude of these men will have a profound relationship to the decisions and discussions which are taking place in Cairo. Perhaps there will be many other far reaching results which are not immediately apparent.

I am sure, too, there will be long range results, but these will only become effective if we follow the spirit which was apparent at this prime ministers' conference by some positive action. One of the most definite opportunities which lies before the commonwealth today is in the realm of economics. It was only a few years ago that we turned out backs on an offer by Britain to take a step toward freer commonwealth trade, and it seems to me that this opportunity still presents itself. It is good to talk about freer trade which may develop from the Kennedy round, but as we consider the objective which we believe is necessary in the field of trade at the present time I think it is necessary for us also to realise that this objective cannot be reached in one big stride. The more logical way of growth and development is to take the step you can at a particular moment. In the commonwealth today there is an opportunity to reach some of the objectives we have in mind on a world basis as far as trade and economics are concerned.

This applies to the underdeveloped nations within the commonwealth. I agree with the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam that we in Canada do not do enough as far as trade with and assistance to the underdeveloped nations of the world are concerned. There are many ways of helping these nations other

[Mr. Thompson.]