



Statements and Speeches

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COMMONWEALTH MEETINGS — THEIR SPECIAL CHARACTER

An Address to the Closing Session of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, Ottawa, by the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, August 10, 1973.

These rooms have witnessed in the past week a wide variety of views on matters political, economic and social. In that respect this international meeting has not distinguished itself from any other. Yet no one here would doubt for a moment that these Commonwealth conferences are distinctive. They are distinctive, I believe, for two reasons that were very evident in our deliberations this past week.

The first is the obvious dedication of Commonwealth leaders to the betterment of their peoples. Not here are there propounded — or vigorously defended — schemes or programs designed for the glory of the state. Here we are concerned with the dignity of individual human beings and the improvement of the lot of ordinary men and women.

The second distinction is a willingness on the part of all of us to believe that, should the policies of other Commonwealth governments sometimes appear misdirected or lead to disappointment, this is as a result of error, or inefficiency, or lack of discipline; it is not the consequence of purposeful intent.

In short, within the Commonwealth there is a willingness to help one another, and a willingness to believe that that help is genuinely offered.

Given those beliefs, this association is far different from those others to which we belong in various groupings. Here we are able to speak to one another with a candour unknown elsewhere. We are not reluctant to describe our individual weaknesses, our dreams for our peoples, our belief in the value of human life, our dedication to the ideals of co-operation and understanding. We are not fearful of admitting that we do not know all the answers, that our ignorance has led to mistakes, that our patience with ourselves and with one another is sometimes sorely tried.

In areas as diverse, yet as interrelated, as the flow of private investment capital and the operations of multinational corporations, on the one hand, and the plight of suppressed majorities in Southern
