

Politically, Canada and the United States, while each drawing the inspiration of their political systems from Great Britain, have grown up by separate and different ways, one achieving its freedom and independence by revolution, the other by evolution -- the United States a Republic, while Canada, an equally sovereign nation, gives its allegiance to the mystic and intangible unity of the Crown in a Commonwealth of Nations joined by no agreement, and maintained by no compulsion, but by the common aspirations of independent people in all parts of the globe...

The Constitution of the United States, and our Constitution, written and unwritten, are based on the belief that law and authority derive from moral principles by which, and in no other way, can freedom and justice be achieved.

The United States owes much to the political genius of British peoples, and British peoples owe much to the wisdom of the Founding Fathers of the United States. Canada is indebted to Franklin, Jefferson, Hamilton, and others of your founders for the federal system of government which we borrowed and applied to the needs of our nation, and without which Canadian Confederation could not have been achieved.

The concept of the Commonwealth of Nations provides freedom and independence to each of its members, while giving to each the enrichment of a partnership in a family of nations global in extent. Few of our people realize that the concept upon which our Commonwealth was built was first enunciated in 1775 when the Olive Branch Petition was signed by forty-six members of the Continental Congress including Elijah Dyer, Roger Sherman and Silas O'Deane of Connecticut, as well as John Hancock, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Patrick Henry, Richard Lee and Thomas Jefferson, and presented to King George the Third.

All of the principles of the Statute of Westminster, which binds the Commonwealth together, were embodied in this Petition delivered to the British after the battles of Lexington, Concord and Bunker Hill had been fought. Had it been accepted it would have brought about the principles upon which the Commonwealth is now built. This was not to be but the ideas of the Founders of this nation, expressed in that petition, in the process of time have become the cornerstone of the Commonwealth.

As Nicholas Murray Butler said, some twenty-five years ago:

"It is one of the most astounding things in the history of government that these men off in this distant series of colonies, economically in their infancy, financially helpless and dependent, had the vision of organization which has come now