

And then, even within our own countries, the structure of them has altered markedly over the last 30 or 40 years. In Canada, for example, where we have had the very proud tradition of two founding peoples, the French and the English, we have since the war had a new infusion and a most valuable one, which now means that something over one-third of all Canadian citizens are neither of French nor English origin, and that number, indeed, is increasing on a steady basis. And so, therefore, the character not only of our regional groupings but of our individual countries is changing, and consequently we must, in the Commonwealth, be prepared, as we have been, to adjust to these new circumstances, to define new roles for the organization, so that it can maintain the vitality that we talked about back in 1948 when the new organization, in effect, was put into place.

In so far as I am concerned personally, ever since that day when I talked about the children of the Empire I have been an unashamed and unabashed defender of the Commonwealth concept. Whatever the form it has taken at any given moment in history, it has always seemed to me to be a unique organization and one that it was very much worth our while to preserve. Since I have assumed my present responsibilities, and, indeed, in all of the years that I have been in government, I have sought out every opportunity that has presented itself in order to advance the Commonwealth cause, not only for its own sake but for what it can do in terms of the world in general.

Harking back to what I said a moment ago about the changing structures, it will not surprise you — nor, indeed, is my experience unique — to discover that it has not been easy on all of these occasions to get the kind of enthusiasm and the kind of support for the Commonwealth that I believe is essential.

Clearly, as countries have emerged, as they have wished to identify more clearly their own character, their own sense of national purpose, they have had to, of necessity, re-examine some of their old relationships. There have always been elements within the various countries of the Commonwealth that have had a dubious linkage with, for example, the origins of the Commonwealth, and so, therefore, it has been for me and for those who share the same kind of views a difficult task, but it is one that is worth persisting in.

I believe that today it is probably, in the words of Charles Dickens, "the best of times" and "the worst of times" in so far as the Commonwealth is concerned. It is the best of times in the context that there are more opportunities now for this unique grouping of people to come together in support of worthwhile endeavours around the world; it is the worst of times for many of the reasons I recited a few moments ago — namely, that there are so many conflicting cross-currents at play, and it is exceedingly difficult for the Commonwealth to find its particular niche.

I think one of the dangers for us as a Commonwealth is that we try to be all things to all people, or that we try as a Commonwealth organization to spread ourselves so thinly in every conceivable kind of trouble-spot, in every conceivable kind of difficult situation, that we fail to have any impact anywhere, and therefore I have been arguing

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