

time has there been anything remotely approaching coolness or hostility in our relations with the United Kingdom. We have never tried to make things difficult for the British. On the contrary, we have simply pointed out to them the implications for Canada and the Commonwealth which British accession to the European Economic Community could entail.

In discussing these issues with our British friends we have spoken frankly, but only when they invited us to express our views. No responsible government could have done less. Speaking frankly is a privilege reserved to those who are friends and our British friends were the first to appreciate this.

It is in this spirit of frankness and friendship that all Commonwealth countries participated at the Commonwealth Economic Consultative Council meeting in Accra last September. Some mischievous people in this country have alleged that at the meeting Canada led an attack on the British decision to enter into negotiations for accession to the European Economic Community and confronted Britain with a choice between the Commonwealth and the Common Market. Nothing could be further from the truth. Obviously, the United Kingdom, like any other independent country, possesses the sovereign right to make its own decisions on matters of national policy. We have always recognized that Britain itself must take its own decision on vital matters and we said so plainly at Accra and on other occasions.

British Testimony

Speaking about the Accra meeting which he attended, the Right Honourable Reginald Maudling, then President of Britain's Board of Trade, and a veteran of many such-conferences, said, in a speech delivered at Toronto on September 26, that it was "the best discussion we ever had", and that "everything that was said was reasonable". Similarly, a few weeks ago, Viscount Amory, the British High Commissioner to Canada and a former Chancellor of the Exchequer, said in a press interview in Toronto that Canada was "dead right to speak her mind plainly".

A fortnight ago, the Right Honourable Edward Heath, Lord Privy Seal, who is in charge of the British negotiations in Brussels, paid us a visit in Ottawa to report thereon and to seek our views. Among other things, we discussed arrangements to assist the United Kingdom negotiators in the next phase of the negotiations by making available to them full and up-to-date information about every aspect of Canada's trade interests. We offered to send a high-level team of Canadian officials to Brussels for this purpose and Mr. Heath warmly accepted this offer. This meeting was not only one of the most productive but also one of the most cordial we ever had with out British friends.