

worth while. The Prime Minister of my own country, in a speech at the historic Guildhall the day he received the freedom of the City of London, put it this way:

"This association of nations has in the past rendered great service to a community that is broader than its own boundaries. I believe that it will continue to do so, and this latest series of Commonwealth meetings strengthens me in that belief."

It is difficult for those who are not themselves involved to understand our Commonwealth. And it is not too easy to explain. Even Americans, who for the most part know a good deal more about us than other people, are often confused and sometimes mistaken about the character and working of a political phenomenon which is unique in history. Only recently, for example, I came upon an article in an American magazine which suggested that the pattern employed by the Commonwealth would best solve the problem of Alaskan and Hawaiian statehood. Why, the author enquired, should you seek to add two distant stars to your flag of union when the precedent of the Commonwealth was available - and had already succeeded in Puerto Rico! "Puerto Ricans did not choose statehood," he went on, "they chose to be a dominion - like Canada."

And so I thought that, even if such grosser errors are not shared - as they surely cannot be by such an audience as this - it might be of some interest if I were to take this opportunity to express a Canadian view of an institution by which we in my country set much store. For we believe that the Commonwealth serves more than selfish purposes - that it is and can be in the future a valuable influence for peace and progress throughout the world.

Like all human institutions, the Commonwealth today is the product of its history - a history which extends over two and a half centuries. Its origins are to be found in the process known to historians as "the expansion of Europe" - a process, incidentally, during which the foundations of this nation were also laid.

Nowadays there is a tendency to emphasize the darker side of imperialism and colonialism. It was these expansive forces, nevertheless, which gave the impetus from which the new nations of the Commonwealth were to develop. None of us who live on this continent can look upon the colonial period as by any means wholly negative and bad. We, Americans and Canadians both, inherit valued traditions from the European powers who established their settlements in America in the 16th and 17th and 18th centuries. For you, the journeyings of the little wooden ships - British, French, and Spanish - began the process which led to the founding of a new nation consciously and deliberately separated from entanglements with the Old World. For us in Canada - and in those territories in Africa and Asia into which those early voyagers penetrated and in which they traded and often settled - a similar process led to the development of communities which retained associations with each other and with the European nations