

Commonwealth Conference

could make a major contribution. When one considers that this country is spending in assistance to undeveloped countries only about one half of 1 per cent of our gross national product we must realize we are not doing all we could do to assist the less fortunate areas of the commonwealth.

I had hoped that Canada would have been prepared to put before the conference that has just been held a bold and imaginative program for financial and economic assistance to the developing countries of the commonwealth. I hope that even yet the government will work out a program which can be put before the commonwealth. Instead of scattering our assistance over a very wide area we could make a much more effective contribution by selecting those parts of the commonwealth which lie at our back door—I am thinking particularly of the West Indies and British Guiana—where by means of technical assistance, public and private investment, trade concessions and training programs to bring many of their potential leaders to this country to train them in education, medicine, engineering and administration, we could do a great deal to help those parts of the commonwealth which are in the western hemisphere.

If we were prepared to adopt that part of the commonwealth, if we were prepared to spend a very considerable sum of money, we would not only raise the standard of living in those areas but would demonstrate to the rest of the commonwealth what can be done in a concentrated program and, in the long run, we would develop a market for many Canadian products in an area which is a natural economic one in which Canada should be interested.

I am sure, Mr. Speaker, all of us wish to convey our congratulations to the Prime Minister for the very able report which he has made to the house. I am sure all of us want to assure him that any proposals which the government cares to bring down to advance the propositions that have been outlined in the communiqué will receive our wholehearted support.

As I said when I started, only time will demonstrate whether this free association of free peoples can wield a decisive influence in world affairs. Today three great powers, the United States, the Soviet union and mainland China, tend to hold the centre of the stage because of their vast populations. I still think it is possible for the commonwealth, though not a unitary organization as are these other nations to which I have referred, if it has the vision and the imagina-

tion and the leadership, to demonstrate to the world that free people by consultation, moderation and co-operation can bring about freedom without violence, can bring about independence, and can establish democratic institutions in their respective countries. We have a chance to prove that democracy will work in meeting human problems. We assure the Prime Minister that any steps his government cares to take toward reaching that goal will receive our full support and endorsement.

Mr. R. N. Thompson (Red Deer): We join very sincerely in welcoming the Prime Minister back to our midst. We assure him that as we followed the reports of the prime minister's conference during the first few days we shared even at this remote distance some of the concern about just how this conference would turn out. Then as we read of his own prominent part in the proceedings, and as what was rather a gloomy picture began to develop into a more positive scene, we were pleased at the stand he himself took and at the part he played as the representative of Canada at these meetings. I assure the Prime Minister that he had our support in his efforts to further the cause of world peace and world development, particularly as they relate to the commonwealth. We were interested and concerned.

One thing which disturbs me is this. As I listened to the enthusiastic report, if I may call it that, from the conference and the remarks made by the leaders of the others parties, it seemed to me that our fault with regard to the commonwealth is that we talk about it with great warmth on occasions such as this and then we forget about it between times. In fact I think we have missed a number of most important opportunities during the last several years to take a more positive approach to questions raised and opportunities offered by commonwealth membership. Certainly the time is most urgently with us when the positive recommendations of this conference must be carried out in every possible way so as to further the principles which the commonwealth represents, and discharge our responsibility to them.

The commonwealth is not just an organization. It is something which has grown. The commonwealth, because it is a living institution, has grown even as plants and animals grow. It has grown from a vital principle within it, without conscious direction from man. In this day of organization perhaps that is difficult to understand but I believe my