

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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THE NEW COMMONWEALTH BRIDGE BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

Text of an address by the Secretary of State for External Affairs of Canada, Mr. L.B. Pearson, made at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon, on May 25, 1953.

... Only a few days ago, ... a neighbourly visit took place when I accompanied our Prime Minister, Mr. St. Laurent to Washington, where he saw his friend, President Eisenhower. This was one of a long series of meetings between Canadian Prime Ministers and American Presidents - meetings which reflect the closeness of the relationship between our peoples, who for a century and more have shared a boundless community of interest and purpose.

Today, when the United States bears the heavy and honourable responsibility of world leadership - which she did not seek but which she has accepted - the need for mutual understanding between this great country and the coalition of the free world is greater than ever before. Without such understanding, the only thing that might hold the free peoples together would be fear of a common danger. But fear is an insubstantial and unsatisfactory foundation for lasting friendship.

Since the end of the last war, our common history can be written in terms of the search for security. This search is being made in the dark shadow of aggressive world Communism - which constitutes a threat as great as any that free men have ever had to face. Even for a country so powerful in every way as the United States, this search can end in success only if it is made in the company of other states who know the true value of liberty and are willing to defend what they know.

Like the United States, Canada seeks peace and security in a free world. We seek these goals through the United Nations, through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and through associations like our British Commonwealth of Nations, each of which has an important role to play in this interdependent world.

In the United Nations, we are pledged, with you and 58 other nations, to support the obligations and principles of international law and order, and to maintain the purposes of the Charter.

These purposes require the members of the United Nations to keep the peace and if necessary defend it by force in the event of aggression; to respect fundamental human rights and the dignity and worth of the human person; to observe international obligations and to promote social and economic progress. In a word, the United Nations organization

means the application on a world scale of principles, which, although not yet universally or fully accepted in practice, are essential to the building of the kind of world we seek to achieve.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is a second, and a vitally important international association; one central to Canadian foreign and defence policy as it is to yours. For us, NATO is especially significant, as it reconciles the forces of geography and history in our national political evolution. It binds together for the common defence and the common welfare Canada's two mother countries, the United Kingdom and France, with her North American neighbour. In doing so it helps to dissipate the nightmare that used to frighten every Canadian government; a serious divergence in policy between neighbour and mother country.

NATO was the inevitable result of the post-war disillusionment of the North Atlantic nations, and the shattering of war-time hopes that all nations would co-operate to build a peaceful world-wide community. Looking forward in 1949, we believed that our best, if not our only, chance for peace was to be found in a defensive coalition of the free peoples of the North Atlantic community, whose resources in combination could provide strength adequate to deter, and, if necessary, successfully resist aggression and who were willing to use them for that purpose.

Looking back in 1953, it is crystal clear that we have been on the right path and that we should not abandon it for what may seem to be enticing detours.

Today, however, I would like to speak to you more particularly of another world-wide association known as the Commonwealth of Nations - the importance of which should never be under-estimated in adding up the resources on the side of the free world. Here by the shores of the Pacific, it seems to me appropriate that we should examine together the new forces at work in the Commonwealth, which in its modern form, now bridges the East and West.

This Commonwealth of Nations is a group of eight independent and sovereign countries, linked together by the Crown, by past co-operation, by unifying traditions and, even more important now, by a common devotion to freedom. It contains also a large number of dependent territories, nearly all of them linked to the United Kingdom - and all themselves progressing toward complete freedom and self-government, which must be accepted as the ultimate goal of every colonial people.

These independent but associated countries with their dependent territories are to be found in every continent and cover about one-fifth of the land surface of the globe. Their total population, including people of many different races, colours and creeds, is more than 600 million; close to one-quarter of the inhabitants of the world. Their peoples produce a substantial proportion of the world's industrial products and a large part of its food and raw materials. I mention these facts not to suggest, as Kipling did fifty-odd years ago, in a more spacious age, that "we hold Dominion over palm and pine" or to conjure up a picture of red patches all over the globe. This would be inaccurate, inappropriate and foreign to the spirit of the Commonwealth - or of the world - as it is today. I merely wish to remind you that the

Commonwealth is a global association which must be seriously taken into account in any calculation of the forces and resources of the free world.

The countries of the Commonwealth - like the graduates of this University - are made up of the new and the old. The new members are, of course, the three Asian countries - India, Pakistan and Ceylon - which gained their independence in 1947 and 1948. The older members - but newer peoples, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada, won their national status much earlier. They acquired it surely but gradually. Somehow they found it unnecessary to have an all-out revolution to achieve national freedom. They certainly had troubles - rebellions, passive resistance, and conflict - but they did not need a war of independence. So, in the case of Canada, instead of Bunker Hill and the Declaration of Independence, we had such things as a Durham Report - rather dull reading - and the Statute of Westminster - much duller. Instead of generals on horseback leading the tattered but immortal militia to victory over the Red Coats, we had politicians in silk hats securing concessions from the home government in London. The symbols of our nationhood may be less stirring than yours but the reality behind them is the same.

There are many reasons why political change in these particular Commonwealth countries has been gradual. In Canada, for instance, love of liberty, which burned as brightly as anywhere else, was tempered by attachment to a Crown which had learned the lesson of George III's pretensions and failures. We also kept our faith in constitutional processes and the feeling became strong that we could have national independence and Commonwealth association - the best of both worlds at a time when it was becoming clear that independence was not enough for security.

Our acceptance of the Crown as a symbol of this association was based on more than sentiment or on loyalty of the heart. There was this, certainly, particularly among those whose personal histories were not far removed from the British Isles; but there was a great deal more. There was also a conviction that the Crown had a unifying and stabilizing value in our national growth. For countries such as Australia, New Zealand and Canada, the Crown stood not for tyranny but for the British system of parliamentary government, painfully and slowly wrought since the days of Magna Carta. We desired to preserve this for our own use and adapt it to fit our own needs. It represented the continuity of our history and gave depth and solidity to our development. Today we feel in Canada that the Crown - in the person of our gracious and lovely Queen - lends order and dignity to our national life, standing, as it does, above the play of party controversies. We think it is good to be able to honour the head of state - and berate the head of government - at one and the same time. You, whose distant political origins were identical with ours, have created your own system of popular government which has exerted such a profound influence on the development of democratic institutions throughout the world. But the Commonwealth countries, while adhering - with one exception - more closely to the older forms, have achieved an independence and a distinct character no less real and complete than yours; a fact which I find is sometimes not understood in the United States.

Our Queen, who bears the Crown, is the monarch of several nations, each "in no way subordinate one to the other". It is true that it is the Queen of the United Kingdom who is also the Queen of Canada. That, however, is a result of our past history, which the people of Canada gladly accept of their own free will.

In Canada the Queen is represented by a Governor General, who, incidentally and to make matters more confusing to outsiders, is not a general and does not govern. The present Governor General is a distinguished Canadian for whom we have deep respect, and who was the first Canadian diplomatic representative to the United States.

The Queen will shortly proclaim for use in Canada a Royal Style and Title chosen and approved by the Parliament of Canada, and she will do the same for each Commonwealth country which recognizes her as Queen, using the styles and titles desired by the parliament of those countries. One title, which will be used by all, however, is "Head of the Commonwealth". This is because India, which is a republic and has a President as head of state, recognizes the Queen simply as Head of the Commonwealth. The presence at the coronation of June 2, of representatives from all the nations of the Commonwealth, whether monarchy or republic, will be a striking demonstration of that free association of states of which she is the symbol; as well as another indication of the adaptability of the Commonwealth to new political ideas.

At times the idea of the Commonwealth is a puzzling and difficult one for people outside it - and even some inside it - to grasp. Some time ago, I read in an American publication an article entitled "The Commonwealth Cult - What Really Binds Britain and the Dominions". In this article the author says with some cynicism:

"The Commonwealth appears in fact to be no more than an alumni association without an executive committee, by-laws or a programme of concerted action whose individual spirited, self-willed members, presided over by their former headmaster, recognize no other obligations towards one another than may be prompted by the heart or by considerations of far-sighted self-interest."

In another publication (this time a British one) I have seen the Commonwealth described in even more critical terms:

"A sprawling collection of nations with no common obligations, with no co-ordinated line of action in world affairs and at odds with each other, make up an international system which is a travesty of the word 'Commonwealth'".

What these authors have failed to do is to distinguish sufficiently between form and substance. Yet this distinction lies at the root of an understanding of the Commonwealth. This elastic and adaptable association has weathered many storms, and has in the past proved its vigour and usefulness, not only to its own members, but to the world, by its remarkable capacity for meeting and dealing with practical situations; and for altering its outward

forms to meet new problems as they arise. It may well face even more difficult tests in the future. I hope it will meet them successfully because this association has, I think, importance and value for more than its members.

So far, in spite of its anomalies, the Commonwealth has worked. The Prime Minister of Canada, Mr. St. Laurent, in our House of Commons said this:

"I think that the real link between the various members of the Commonwealth is their common ideals, their memories of association in the past, their intimate conviction that that association in the past has been for the benefit of their people, and their desire to conserve that association in the future for the benefit of their people. I do not think that we are being presumptuous or conceited when we believe, and even when we express the belief, that this Commonwealth group not only works for the benefit of its own peoples but is an effective instrument for the good of free mankind throughout the whole world."

Most Canadians would say that the central reason why the Commonwealth persists (despite occasional gloomy predictions that its days are numbered) is due as much as anything to the absence of formal and binding central machinery, and to the flexibility and freedom of its working arrangements. The Commonwealth has, for instance, no common legislation, no binding defence agreements, no Chiefs of Staff Committee, no common tariff structure, no central foreign office.

There seems to be a good deal of perplexity in other countries about this absence of central institutions - of "organization". We feel, however, that everything that it is possible to do through the Commonwealth, can be done without such formal, rigid institutions, which might prejudice the freedom of the separate parts. It is the consensus of Commonwealth opinion that the conduct of each member's own affairs would be made more difficult - if not quite impossible - if such formal institutions existed; and that this, in its turn, would make a free and co-operative association difficult to maintain.

The Commonwealth has shown in the past - and is showing today - that - notwithstanding its informal, almost casual structure - it is an association capable of contributing in no small measure to the strength and stability of the free world.

Defence is an example of this. Twice, in the past thirty years, the countries of the Commonwealth have risen in times of crisis and have given strength to the free world when it was sorely tried. They have repeatedly shown that they can muster great power and resources in war. They have co-operated effectively to resist aggression.

Yet we in Canada have never regarded the Commonwealth, primarily, as an instrument for organizing our common security on the basis of our collective strength. We do not consider it so today. The security of all parts of the

Commonwealth obviously depends to some extent on the right kind of relations with each other. It depends even more on our relations with other nations outside the Commonwealth, particularly with the United States.

This freedom to enter into defence arrangements outside the Commonwealth is of greater importance than any precise set of obligations which could be drawn up - and agreed - on an exclusive Commonwealth basis. Recent developments prove this.

For the defence of North America, Canada and the United States have, for instance, joined their efforts and their resources since 1940. Two members of the Commonwealth, Canada and the United Kingdom, are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and share with the United States in the defence of the North Atlantic area. In the Pacific, Australia and New Zealand have recently joined with the United States in the Anzus pact. In the Middle East, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand have been participating with other states in the planning for a Middle East defence organization. And in the United Nations action in Korea, a number of Commonwealth countries are sharing with the United States and other United Nations governments the task of resisting aggression. If it is true, then, that the Commonwealth is not in itself a closely-knit defence organization, it is also true that adequate defences cannot be built in any area without the participation and the support of at least some of the countries of the Commonwealth.

Another sphere - a new sphere - in which it seems to me that the Commonwealth is an instrument of great potential value is in the complicated and delicate matter of relations between free Asia, on the one hand, and North America and Western Europe on the other.

The new Commonwealth ideal is one of helpful and practical co-operation between Western and Asian nations. It is based upon recognition of the contribution which the three Asian members of the Commonwealth can make to the strength and stability of the free world.

India, Pakistan and Ceylon are over-populated, under-developed countries with political, social and economic problems of a magnitude which would stagger any Western statesman if he were suddenly confronted with them. These countries may be old in the arts of civilization and steeped in ancient culture and philosophy, but as political entities, they are new and are faced with the problem of building in a few years cohesive and stable national societies which will provide a good life for hundreds of millions who have known little but distress and want in the past.

We should remember this when we tend to get impatient at what we consider to be the "neutrality" of a country like India in what is to us a desperate struggle between the forces of Communist imperialism and free democracy. The struggle may not present itself in those simple terms to people who have only recently emerged from colonialism; millions of whom live under the recurring threat of starvation and who may be pardoned for thinking that hunger and want and servitude are a worse enemy than Marxism and the Kremlin.

Lack of understanding on this point may do much damage to the struggle of the Western democracies against aggressive Communism. The Communists realize this. That is why they strive so hard to pose as the defenders of the Asian masses against colonialism, racial inequality and exploitation. They have had more success than they deserve in identifying themselves in Asia with forces which, in the eyes of many millions in that part of the world, seem to be those of freedom and progress. That identification is not as hypocritical and false to the Asian peoples as we know it to be from experience. To an Indian or a Pakistani, for instance, the conflict in Indo-China is not merely - it may not be even primarily - one of Communist aggression. He may see it as one against colonialism and white supremacy in that area. The Communist government in Peking may not be, to them, a mere puppet of Moscow but the regime which now represents the Chinese people and which should be accepted as such.

The Commonwealth, with its three Asian members, can and is doing something to avoid these misunderstandings and thereby is making an important contribution to international co-operation between the West and the free East. Canada's - and Britain's - place in the Commonwealth, for instance, does make it easier for us to understand - even when we may not agree - with the position which Pakistan and India often take at United Nations meetings when Korean and other Far Eastern questions are discussed. At the same time, because we are Western and Anglo-Saxon nations - who have both friendship for and knowledge of the United States - we can do something to remove the misconceptions which these Asian states at times harbour about American motives and attitudes and policies.

We will, however, never bridge this gap between free Asia and the West if we expect these newer - but older countries to develop politically and economically merely as images of ourselves; or if we expect them to share all our fears of the aggressive nature of Communist imperialism - whether of the Russian or Chinese variety, and to act accordingly.

To insist that the Indians should do so is to make close co-operation with them practically impossible and good relations difficult; and this, of course, is exactly what they want in Moscow or Peking. The fact that through the normal processes of Commonwealth consultation we are able to discuss these different points of view and interpretations sympathetically, even when we do not agree, is, I think, a valuable asset to the Western world.

Consultation within the Commonwealth is close and continuous - but may seem strange to an outsider in the way it goes on in spite of strong differences of view and policy which often occur. At United Nations meetings, for instance, it is the custom for Commonwealth delegations to meet together regularly, in informal "family" gatherings. At these meetings we are able to discuss questions very frankly and amicably even when - in public - India may be attacking South Africa bitterly over race questions; or Pakistan may be charging India with threatening the peace by her policy in Kashmir.

Such consultation alone, however, though useful and indeed unique, will not itself ensure survival of the Commonwealth bond in even its present loose form. If disputes between its members become increasingly bitter or deep rooted, or if their policies diverge to a point where they express themselves in opposed actions, the strain on the association may be too great to stand. Also, inability or unwillingness of the older members to understand the economic and social problems of their Asian colleagues and to assist in their solution may result in the latter breaking away from a group membership which seems to them to offer so few advantages.

The most important question mark which hangs over Asia today is uncertainty regarding economic and social progress. Will it be sufficient to keep pace with expanding populations and to enable leaders in the troubled countries of the area to build stable societies of real value to their people? The answer depends to a large extent on the countries themselves, on the wisdom of their leaders and the good sense of their citizens; but it also depends in large measure on the degree to which the resources of the developed countries of the world, both public and private, are brought to bear on the problem.

The United States Government, through its Point IV and other programmes, has given a splendid impetus to this effort, which is of crucial importance to the stability of the free world. In their turn, the Commonwealth countries have also played a part, through contributions to United Nations technical assistance schemes and in other ways. The Commonwealth venture in this field which has engaged our imaginations and interest most closely is known as the Colombo Plan.

This is a Commonwealth co-operative programme which now embraces also several non-Commonwealth countries in Southeast Asia. During the past two years it has provided a substantial amount of technical and capital assistance to countries in South and Southeast Asia, chiefly India, Pakistan and Ceylon, and it is planning to do more. Over the six years of the Plan, external aid and grants by the U.K., Canada, Australia and New Zealand will amount to hundreds of millions of dollars. Because of this fact and because of the systematic and practical way in which it has approached a difficult and complex problem, the Colombo Plan is making a significant contribution to the material development of the whole area and, hence, to the defeat of subversive and revolutionary Communism which would proceed by violent and bloody methods to build its own Marxist Asian world.

From what I have said you will see how this new Commonwealth of Nations differs from the old Empire of not so many years ago. The difference was necessary if the association was to survive. I have also stated by view that such survival is of great importance to more than the members of the Commonwealth; especially in the service it can perform in acting as a bridge between Asia and the West, at a time when there are all too few bridges of this kind. It is as important to the United States as to the Commonwealth itself - that this function should be effectively discharged. If it can be done, then the Commonwealth will be

able to play an essential part in strengthening and increasing co-operation in the whole free world. Only if such co-operation can be deepened and extended can the free world find the peace and security for which it is groping.

There is no single - or simple - path to this end. The goal can be reached by many routes - by developing and strengthening the United Nations, by building up the North Atlantic community through NATO, and by adapting to new conditions and new needs the Commonwealth of Nations which has in the recent past served the world so well.

The associations of the free world to which we belong are not exclusive; nor are they directed against any state or group of states. They have only one purpose - peace and better relations between peoples. The principles which guide them can work wherever the will exists. We cannot force similar arrangements on other people; but we can - and we must - persuade by example, and by the tangible results of our own efforts that co-operation is better than conflict. We must do this not simply because the Communist threat exists in real and terrible form, but because unity and peace are the pre-conditions of survival in the atomic age in which we live.

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