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Address by Mr. Sidney E. Smith, Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the VIII Quinquennial Congress of the Association of Universities of the British Commonwealth, The Queen Elizabeth Hotel, Montreal, September 1, 1958.

To extend, on behalf of the Canadian Government, greetings to you is my privilege this evening. In doing so, I use the word greetings in its Sassenach sense, "to salute with words or gestures", rather than as it is used in the Celtic regions north of the Tweed where to greet means to weep copiously. Far from expressing sorrow, my "words and gestures" on this occasion betoken our pleasure and pride at the honour which this Congress has done us in meeting in Canada for the first time.

That distinguished Canadian and Commonwealth citizen, Leonard Brockington, has commented that Canadians indulge in more speeches per square meal than the people of any other nation and although most of the distinguished participants in this Congress represent all the diverse areas of the Commonwealth, I ask them to forego their separate claims to nationality and become forbearing Canadians at least for this evening. Not that it would be such a bad idea over the long term, for in being citizens of the Commonwealth, you are related to us and your mass adoption into the Canadian family would be the most worthwhile single acquisition to our nation since the Scots who settled in my native Nova Scotia. To that event, no other can, of course, compare.

On the eve of the Battle of Waterloo, Byron rhapsodized, Brussels had gathered together Belgium's beauty and chivalry. I do not know what history-changing event is likely to take place tomorrow, but tonight Montreal has certainly assembled a high proportion of the Commonwealth's brain-power and while I seek to cast no reflection on personalities, I am bound to observe that our age is not, alas, a chivalrous one, and that in any event beauty never was an attribute highly prized in the academy, unless perhaps by the poets who often seem to require a pulchritudinous type of inspiration.

It is not often that a Canadian city is given an opportunity to welcome such a distinguished gathering from practically every continent except Antarctica, and with the recent explorations of that continent, I wonder how long it will be before there is a university there too. Reflecting the nature of the Commonwealth, this Congress represents many peoples, and many points of view. I greet you as emissaries of goodwill. An ambassador, observed Sir Henry Wotton, is an honest man sent abroad to lie for the Commonwealth. Let me disavow any suspicion of support for his definition, and greet you as honest men whose main concerns in having ventured abroad as ambassadors - or since you represent the Commonwealth, as High Commissioners - are not the devious diplomatic negotiations of three and a half centuries ago, but rather the candid exchange of views on matters of importance for the educational commonweal of the Commonwealth.

But the Commonwealth is not an exclusive association. Its membership rules are not rigid. Mindful of this tolerant diversity of views, I am happy to extend greetings to our good friends, the representatives from the United States of America and the warmth of our welcome to them is in no way diminished by the fact that they are ambassadors rather than High Commissioners. It is after all the result of one of those aberrations of history that they are not fullfledged members of the Commonwealth. And in any event, they represent the broader republic of learning which embraces the Commonwealth. May I be forgiven for violating the rules of formal logic in saying that in present circumstances the particular includes the general. But logical consistency never was one of the distinguishing marks of the Commonwealth bonds and if I transgress upon logic's prescriptions, it is only because I desire to make our guests from the United States quasi-members at least for this occasion. Even though they may not be card-carrying members, at least they know our game and they play by the same rules. Like the Commonwealth, this association of universities demonstrates that comprehensiveness is more desirable than exclusiveness.

The University Role

The most significant single characteristic of the universities represented here is independence, their freedom from compulsion to pursue purposes not of their own conviction. Their dedication to freedom of thought and the unrestricted flow of ideas is our surest safeguard, against restraining encroachments, of the right to differ and the most precious right of all, the right to be wrong. Our universities have cherished the ideal of independence and encouraged the individual who has the determination and integrity to stand alone if necessary in defending the values and principles in which he believes.

Not that the converse attitude of intellectual conformity is entirely an odious one. There must be broad areas of agreement if society is to possess sufficient cohesiveness to survive; but such agreement is not an unthinking acceptance or acquiescence. The interrelationships within our society require of necessity some sort of mould, but the mould must never become a straightjacket. Conformity in a democratic society is rather a result of active and searching examination of the heritage which has come to us from many times and climes, together with a determination to preserve those aspects of it which are valuable and meaningful to mankind. In this sense, as an intellectual activity, conformity is one of the main concerns of the university, constituting as it does the crucial test of our cultural inheritance. Only someone who has had a close association with the academic crucible can know how astringent, if not acid, a test it can be.

But if our society is held together by broad areas of tacit understandings which form the working basis of our political, social and intellectual existence, it must allow at the same time for the maximum of individual diversity. To you that idea will, of course, be neither new nor paradoxical but rather an expression of enlightened orthodoxy. The landscape of our lives must encompass not just the level sweep of tundra and prairie but also the gently rolling foothills and the spectacular peaks of individual achievements. And it is in pointing the way towards the summits of human endeavour that the university has another and perhaps a more significant role to play.

The conservation of the traditional and at the same time the stimulation of new and creative achievements - surely the nature of the Commonwealth is directly related to these two aspects of the university's function. In this context, it would not be inappropriate I think for me to indulge in some speculation - which is probably well-founded - about the role of the university in the drama of the university in the drama of transforming a great imperial structure into a free association of independent and different nations whose leaders were influenced and shaped by academic discipline in the British Isles. Had the imperial universities been restrained from pursuing the objectives of independent thought, how different the course of history might have been. Instead, the modern Commonwealth has become a vital demonstration of the extent to which the wisdom of the academy has prevailed over the short-term political exigencies of a changing empire.

The transformation of an empire into a free association of states has been one of the most exciting themes in recent history. As new nations emerge, new challenges require new ideas and new solutions. There is little doubt that the university has made a contribution towards meeting these needs, because in the final analysis there can be no fundamental and

lasting difference in directions between public affairs and the academic sphere. A university, it has been said, should not be in the busy world nor quite beyond it. Far from being an ivory tower standing apart from the bustle and the demands of the forum the market place and the highway, I see the university as the very intellectual focus of society, the focus which provides our sense of direction, both individually and nationally. I maintain that, because the interchange between the academic world and public life has been a free and effective one, the Commonwealth has been so successful an undertaking. For the same reason, it continues to show resilience and viability in adapting to the profound changes which have swept the world.

I have spoken of the transformation of the empire and the emergence of new nations but the process has not been entirely one of fragmentation. As in the gyroscope there are within the Commonwealth centripetal as well as centrifugal forces at work. In the propagation of these cohesive forces, the university has played no less a part than it has in the development of diverse nationalities. Although these centripetal forces are intangible and elusive, they are nonetheless very real and impart to the Commonwealth its distinguishing cohesive characteristics.

Commonwealth Cohesiveness

What is the Commonwealth, is a question frequently asked. What holds it together if it has no common institutions and no jurisdiction applicable to all its component parts. The answer is, of course, as simple to explain as it is often difficult to understand. The Commonwealth is a free association of states, of independent governments choosing to remain in a particular and special type of relationship to each other because, even if they may not follow unified or even parallel policies, there are large areas of agreement between the peoples they represent as to values, ideals, principles and long range objectives. The common belief in the values and ideals on which the Commonwealth is based originates not in a political context but stems in large part from the association of students and teachers in academic pursuits. Our universities are not institutions of prescriptive dogma or paralyzing propaganda but centres of independent thought and action where the best is preserved, modified and cast into new configurations to meet the imperious demands of a universe rapidly changing in response to man's restless curiosity and striving.

Shall I say then that the Commonwealth is an attitude of mind, an attitude which does not demand unthinking conformity and which wisely recognizes that we may differ from one another without being divided?

The constant demonstration of this fact represents to me the greatest achievement-if indeed it can be termed such-of the Commonwealth. For that attainment, tolerance was essential, and in this context we must think of tolerance in a positive sense as a willingness and a desire to listen to the other person rather than as a passive swallowing of something essentially distasteful.

Much of the credit for this achievement in the Commonwealth, this acquisition of common attitudes by students and potential leaders from dissimilar and diverse origins, belongs, historically to the older universities.

University Exchange

Until a few years ago, this intellectual traffic was almost entirely in one direction. Recently, however, there has been a noticeable diversification of this pattern and the university-to-university relationship is becoming more truly one of exchange. Just as new centres of political authority have appeared, so too is the intellectual life of the Commonwealth becoming multifocal. Former colonies which are now full member nations of the Commonwealth have developed their own institutions of higher learning and these newer institutions have acquired characteristics of their own. All of us are I think justifiably proud of these advances and we believe in all modesty that each and all of us may have something unique to offer to others. From these multilateral exchanges, I am confident that there will emerge a greater degree of understanding and mutual appreciation of other points of view on the part of those who come from other lands and return home again to play a constructive part in their own nations.

From my own recent experience, I can illustrate in concrete rather than theoretical terms the invaluable contribution which has been and must continue to be made in the field of educational exchange. This Spring, I attended in Trinidad the inauguration ceremonies and celebrations of the new Federation of The West Indies - a new Commonwealth nation in the making. Everywhere there was to be noticed a strong sense of loyalty to the Commonwealth nexus, and a determination to preserve it. I think that this attitude is not unrelated to the close ties which have prevailed between the first Dominion in the western hemisphere, and our emerging sister-nation of the Commonwealth in the Carribean. As a Maritimer, I had been well aware of the important trade connections between the British West Indies and Canada and there can be no doubt that this mutually beneficial economic interchange has had much to do with our closeness. But to the economic historians, I say most emphatically that there is more to it than the exchange of goods. Not once but many times over was it impressed on me that the viability of parliamentary institutions in the broadest sense of the term was attributable

not merely to the attitudes of the students who had studied in Canada or the United Kingdom but to those of a wider segment of the people who had acquired their basic education in schools maintained by Canadian educational missionaries. Their work is a credit to their country - the country of their birth and the country of their adoption. Their work has made an effective contribution to the emergence of this new nation in the sun and at the same time, it has, I hope, brought our peoples closer together in the fulfilment of higher and common ideals.

There can, I reaffirm, be little doubt that the free flow and exchange of ideas has been and will continue to be one of the strongest bonds among the Commonwealth's members. To encourage and facilitate this flow even further, I believe that a programme of exchange of Commonwealth university staff and students, particularly at the graduate level, should be promoted. Such a programme should reflect the pattern already established; rather than the one-way traffic of an earlier time, our exchanges must be multilateral in character. Selections under such a scheme should be made by universities and not by governments. I hope that a fellowship project of that type could be launched, and I believe that my colleagues in the Canadian Government would look at such a project with interest.

The Association of Universities meeting here is itself another manifestation of the closeness of the educational interrelationships within the Commonwealth, and we are honoured that your eighth quinquennial congress has been convened in Canada - not only in Canada, but in this particular city, the surroundings and people of which are a constant reminder of the strength which diversity and tolerance and mutual accommodation impart to our lives as individuals and as nations. This Association, like the Commonwealth it represents, is a voluntary one and its meetings like those of Commonwealth political leaders are not primarily designed to hammer out policies and programmes applicable to all. The responsibility for policy decisions and the burden of implementing those decisions remain with the individual members. The Congresses of Oxford, Cambridge and Montreal are, moreover, invaluable in opening new possibilities to establish direct communications, one with the other. In university affairs as in diplomacy, a talk on a person-to-person basis is almost always more fruitful than a myriad of missives.

In addressing you this evening, I cannot help but feel some nostalgia and regret, that I shall be unable to participate as in years gone by in your proceedings and to renew and to make new friendships. My regrets, I would add, are not entirely personal, for I am deeply aware of the relationships between the problems of my immediate concern and

the matters which you will be discussing. I have no desire to deprecate the role of the diplomat in endeavouring to establish and maintain a peaceful international order. But I believe that peace must be firmly anchored not only in signed agreements and in majority votes in the councils of the nations but more fundamentally in the hearts and minds of men. Wars begin in the hearts and minds of men, and to the universities have been entrusted the enrichment of those hearts and the development of those minds. We have crossed irrevocably into a new age, at once terrifying and enormously exciting and in so doing the challenge and the responsibility for the universities have never been greater.

The challenge is not entirely a local or domestic one, hardpressed though our universities may be to meet the growing demands of society for higher education in this new age. I am thinking rather of its international implications and my concern is of course not unrelated to the translation I have undergone since our last meeting. Lest anyone have the impression that the metamorphosis to which I refer is in any way similar to the translation of the Prophet Elijah, let me hasten to assure you that my portfolio is External, not Eternal Affairs. In the latter field I profess no special competence and leave it to the theologians. Nor do I have any aspirations to prophetic powers but in my new capacity I do appeal to you and to your role in promoting world peace.

Importance of the Humanities

The age into which we have been ushered by hydrogen bombs, intercontinental ballistic missiles and Sputniks is obviously an age marked by the triumph of the physical sciences. If at one time we could luxuriate in the consoling rationalization that somehow the free world's system of education was better than that of its rivals, the recent scientific achievements of the Soviet Union have demonstrated that we can no longer comfort ourselves in this fashion. The problems with which we are confronted are urgent ones indeed but I am not a pessimist and I do not regard them as insoluble. In working towards solutions, however, I express the hope that we will not accept this challenge in a purely competitive spirit and make the galvanometer and the test tube the only instruments by which we measure the achievements of our institutions of higher learning. I plead for the humanities and for the sense of direction which only the humanistic disciplines can give to our actions whether they be personal, national or international. In accepting a challenge of grave international significance in a spirit of competition for self-preservation and in an attitude of intellectual panic, we run the risk of sacrificing as our objective the cultivated mind and substituting for it the mind which is narrow, one-track, biased or even worse, closed. The development of the humanities in close and harmonious relationship with the physical sciences is the main

assurance that we have for the preservation of reason and the rejection of prejudice as a foundation on which a stable and progressive society of nations, no less than of individuals, can be built.

In a world beset by divisions and controversies, humanity yearns for more bridges of understanding similar to those which span the Commonwealth. This is the basis of my appeal to you. Universities must continue to bridge the many gaps in international understanding - gaps which all too easily could become terrible abysses.

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