



# STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

INFORMATION DIVISION

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 66/23

## CANADA AND THE COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES OF THE CARIBBEAN

Excerpts from an address by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Paul Martin, to the Toronto Branch of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs, May 24, 1966.

I wish to say something about the way in which Canada's special relation with the West Indies has been developing. Recently the Prime Minister announced that a conference, to be attended by the prime ministers and premiers of the Commonwealth Caribbean countries and the Prime Minister of Canada, would be held in Ottawa, July 6-8. This will be the first time such a conference has been held, and it is intended that the full range of matters of common interest will be discussed.

Among the subjects on which discussions are planned are trade, development aid, transportation and communications, migration and cultural relations.

It is the earnest hope of the Canadian Government that out of these discussions will emerge a stronger and more meaningful relation between the Commonwealth countries of the Caribbean and Canada, which will continue to be characterized by mutual understanding and respect, and sound practical co-operation. The fostering and maintenance of such a relation is an important objective of the Canadian Government, and we regard the conference to be held this July as only the first of a series, the beginning of a new process of consultation, of a much closer and more significant nature than could have existed up till now.

The relation that we hope to develop with the Commonwealth Caribbean will not be one that can be measured solely by formal agreements or treaties, although there may be a place for such agreements. We are not, therefore, looking to the July conference as a means of defining, once and for all, Canada's relation with the Commonwealth Caribbean countries. We consider it rather as a first stage in what must be a continuing process of jointly seeking to ensure that our relation is not only close and cordial but is kept fully relevant to the changing circumstances of our times.

The most significant development in the Commonwealth Caribbean in recent years has been the coming of independence to several territories in the region and substantial constitutional changes in the others. It is, above all, these processes of change, by which the West Indian territories have assumed increasing responsibility for their own affairs - processes which are still continuing - which make it appropriate for Canada to discuss with them our mutual relations.

Both Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago gained their independence in 1962. This week another Caribbean Commonwealth territory will become independent - British Guiana, which is to be called Guyana. Unlike the other Commonwealth territories in the Caribbean (with one exception), Guyana is not an island but is situated on the mainland of South America. It has experienced a good deal of turmoil in the last few years, but the present Government is making efforts to overcome the problems that have given rise to this turmoil. I am sure that all friends of Guyana, of which Canada is certainly one, will wish this new country well as it embarks on independence.

The presence of Guyana, along with Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica, will mean that there will be four fully-independent Commonwealth countries, including Canada, at the Ottawa conference in July.

One of the other participants, Barbados, is expected to proceed to independence within the next few months. A constitutional conference to discuss the timetable for Barbados's independence is planned for London late in June.

Six other islands (Antigua, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent) that have accepted invitations to the Ottawa conference are now in the process of negotiating a new status with Britain, which will give them a very advanced form of self-government and the opportunity, should they desire it, to proceed to full independence. So long as these proposed new arrangements are in force, Britain will continue to have final responsibility for the defence and external affairs of these islands.

The remaining three Commonwealth Caribbean territories that are expected to participate in the conference in Ottawa - British Honduras, the Bahamas and Montserrat - are in varying stages of constitutional evolution.

In approaching the forthcoming conference, Canada will not be seeking to formulate our special relation in exclusive terms. Nor do we wish in any way to detract from the relations the Caribbean territories have with other countries. In particular, there are the continuing responsibilities that Britain has in the territories that are not fully independent, and it is anticipated that Britain will be represented at the conference in some way.

Lest there be any misunderstanding, I think I should stress an important consideration about our desire to strengthen Canada's special relation with the Commonwealth Caribbean countries. Canada is not seeking to have a relation with any part of the region that would be in any way analogous to that which Britain has with those territories for which it continues to exercise constitutional responsibilities derived from the fact that they have been British colonies. We are thinking rather of close practical co-operation for mutual benefit in the various fields already mentioned.

I think that we must also recognize the interest that the independent Commonwealth countries in the Caribbean have in developing and maintaining their relations with both the United States and the Latin American republics. At the same time, we in Canada have a wide range of interests in other parts of the world - for example, through NATO - that are of no great interest to the Commonwealth Caribbean countries. To recognize these factors is simply to recognize that our relation with the Commonwealth Caribbean can be strong and meaningful without necessarily prejudicing any of the interests and relations either we or they have elsewhere.

There is another aspect of the spirit in which Canada seeks to approach the question of strengthening its ties with the Commonwealth Caribbean that I think might usefully be stressed. It is our conviction that the relation we have and hope to foster must be based on full respect for the identity of the West Indian peoples.

The leaders of several Commonwealth Caribbean countries have made it abundantly clear on many occasions that political independence is the goal for which their countries are striving; this is a goal for which Canada can have only the utmost sympathy. Indeed, as I have already noted, three of the Commonwealth Caribbean countries which will be at the Ottawa conference have, or will by then have, attained this goal, and a fourth seems likely to follow within a few months.

While some of the islands in the Eastern Caribbean may not be endowed with the resources really necessary to sustain the burdens of full independence by themselves, at least not at an early stage, they are, as I have noted, moving towards a relation with Britain that provides them with many of the opportunities and challenges of independence. In offering help and co-operation to the Commonwealth Caribbean countries, Canada is concerned not with providing them with what might be described as a crutch. We wish rather to help them develop the means and provide some encouragement to achieve an increasing degree of self-reliance, so that they can make their special and constructive contributions to the international community.

It may well be that some, or all, of the Commonwealth Caribbean countries will decide that they can overcome the disadvantages of small size by building together on the sense of community which clearly unites them. Canada is particularly anxious not to do anything that could possibly interfere with this.

In this connection, I have noted with interest proposals made on various occasions by Dr. Eric Williams, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, with respect to the desirability of forming a Caribbean Economic Community. I have noted also the recent statements by Prime Minister Burnham of British Guiana in favour of closer economic co-operation among the Caribbean countries.

Of course, we fully accept that the arrangements which the Commonwealth Caribbean countries wish to have among themselves are a matter for them to determine. However, the question is of interest to us since the existence or absence of machinery for co-operation, especially among the territories that have not yet attained independence, obviously will affect the ease and efficiency with which we may conduct our practical relations.

From what I have said, I think it will be clear that the development of our special relation with the Commonwealth Caribbean countries represents a wonderful opportunity for Canada to play a significant role in a region where we have had, and continue to have, many contacts and many friends.

At the Ottawa conference in July, we shall be concerned with translating this special relation into practical measures that will reflect the needs and interests of all the participants. I do not want to single out any particular field to which particular attention might be paid, since I believe that there are numerous aspects of our relations that are important, and that can be strengthened. At the present time, I think what should be stressed is Canada's sincere willingness to explore all paths to co-operation, and our sense of excitement at the prospects for genuine achievements.

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