

FIRST PRIZE^A

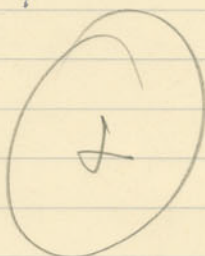
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Do you agree that the British Commonwealth and Empire is getting stronger rather than weaker?

Summary -

Introduction -

- a) Frequency of proclamation of and of Commonwealth.
- b) This due to misunderstanding of its changing nature.
- c) Adaptability to changing circumstances has strengthened rather than weakened it.

Argument -

1. It has solved the problem of "imperium and libertas".
2. It provides its members with tangible benefits denied them in any other World Organisation.
This is illustrated in :-
 - a) Economic cooperation.
 - b) Scientific "
 - c) Military "
 - d) Cultural "
3. It is a dynamic organisation, - it is still growing with the colonies providing an "Emergent Commonwealth".

Conclusion -

- a. Its future imperilled by the problem of the plural society.
- b. Its strong links with the U.S.A. no peril.
- c. As in the past, it should advance empirically.
- d. The world has need of it.

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Do you agree that the British Commonwealth and Empire is getting stronger rather than weaker? -

In recent years many people have mournfully proclaimed the imminent collapse of the British Commonwealth and Empire. They sadly indicate the diminishing amount of red on the map as conclusive proof of their gloomy prophecy, and interpret such events as the granting of independence to India, Pakistan and Ceylon as three more nails in the Imperial coffin. These Jeremiahs, - twentieth century George III's, - reveal that state of mind which lost Great Britain thirteen North American colonies in the eighteenth century. They fail to appreciate that colonies change and develop, just as the mother-country does, and a mother who fails to recognize that children grow up and become responsible adults, inevitably fails to retain their affection. Adaptability to changing circumstances has been the secret of the British Commonwealth, and the Commonwealth will continue as long as we are doing this. Professor Toynbee has argued that the successful civilisations have been those who responded to the challenges provided by changing circumstances, political, economic, geographical and so forth. The theory is certainly true of empires.

Thus, in so far as the United Kingdom has succeeded in discovering a method of transmuting Imperial Sovereignty into free association is striking proof of the strengthening of the Commonwealth and Empire. Diverse peoples, languages and kinds within an imperial system wish to live their own lives. The problem is to reconcile their wish to live their own lives with the

unity of the large association. The problem is to reconcile "imperium" and "libertas". The Romans achieved an approximate reconciliation for many centuries by creating a common citizenship open to the individuals in every province. Our method of achievement - which some far-sighted thinkers envisaged as far back as the American troubles of the eighteenth century - is by turning the British Empire into a Commonwealth of equal nations. Imperial sovereignty is thereby transmuted into free association. This process has created a multi-national polity of a type altogether new in history.

^{"adapted"} The general structure of the Commonwealth is now adapted on demand to meet the needs of any individual member. When India wished to declare herself a republic, and yet remain within the Commonwealth, there seemed to be a danger of a further weakening, but it has now been found possible to ^{harmonize} recognize republicanism with recognition of the Queen as "Head of the Commonwealth". No longer do we fear the coming declaration of Pakistan as a republic, and the possibility of South Africa following suit as inevitably leading to their rejection from membership of the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth finds its increasing strength in the fact that each member is a member of its own free will, being able to leave whenever it minds to do so.

What then holds the Commonwealth together? When the Prime Ministers of the British Commonwealth assembled in London at the end of January, their meeting had none of the character of an "Imperial Grand Assize", to review the conditions of their administrations. Moreover, it was not a court of

arbitration to settle disputes between them, nor a council of state to frame a joint plan of activities for the whole Commonwealth. It was certainly not a legislator for a super-state. Indeed, it is not a state at all. Yet it is difficult to believe that a group of the busiest and most responsible men in the world from all parts of the globe came to London to utter platitudes. It was evidently a conference of vital importance to these practical men. What in fact brings de Prime Ministers willingly together is their sense of common interest in the substance of the matters they need to discuss. This is now the real source of attraction.

Almost every sovereign member of the Commonwealth now has its external commitments and alliances, for the most part considerably more rigid than those which bind it to its Commonwealth partners. These commitments and alliances are, incidentally, clear proof of the independence of the member-countries. By a process of trial and error, responsibility in the field of foreign policy has been divided. It was in relation to the outside world that the "Dominions" established their positions as fully autonomous states. Since the beginning of the second World War this independence has been ~~now~~ demonstrated again and again. In 1940 the Canadian - United States Defence agreement was concluded, and in 1944 the Australian - New Zealand - United States Defence Pact. Commonwealth importance in world affairs developed into a wider field when the non-cooperation of the Soviet Union compelled the free nations of the world to seek security in regional pacts. For the Commonwealth, Western Union followed by the North Atlantic Treaty had far -

reaching implications, even though only two of its members, the United Kingdom and Canada were actual signatories of the Atlantic Pact.

Yet all the members of the Commonwealth, although rigidly bound to these external associations, find it profitable to belong to an association among themselves which does not bind them by anything more than mutual goodwill. The Commonwealth Prime Ministers feel that they can give one another certain benefits not to be found in any other international gathering. The United Nations Organisation has been rendered sterile by the confrontation of diametrically opposed international interests. There is none of the suspicion and opposition common to the meetings of the United Nations Organisation at a Commonwealth Conference. There is present at these Conferences a common habit of thought based upon long mutual familiarity and upon similar parliamentary institutions. In addition, the world-fung nature of the Commonwealth gives a world-eye-view to its Conferences, denied by their very nature to Regional Organisations.

The role of India here is of particular importance. Fortunately for the Commonwealth, her peculiar relationship with China and the U.S.S.R. provide its member-states with a link which goes through both the "Bamboo" and "Iron" curtains. India may yet be the "Deus ex machina" for resolving the conflict between the East and West, and thus solve the world's greatest problem. An organisation which shows promise of reconciling the "Bi-polar" conflict is certainly not awaiting interment.

7. ^{Interment} Again, on economic, scientific, military

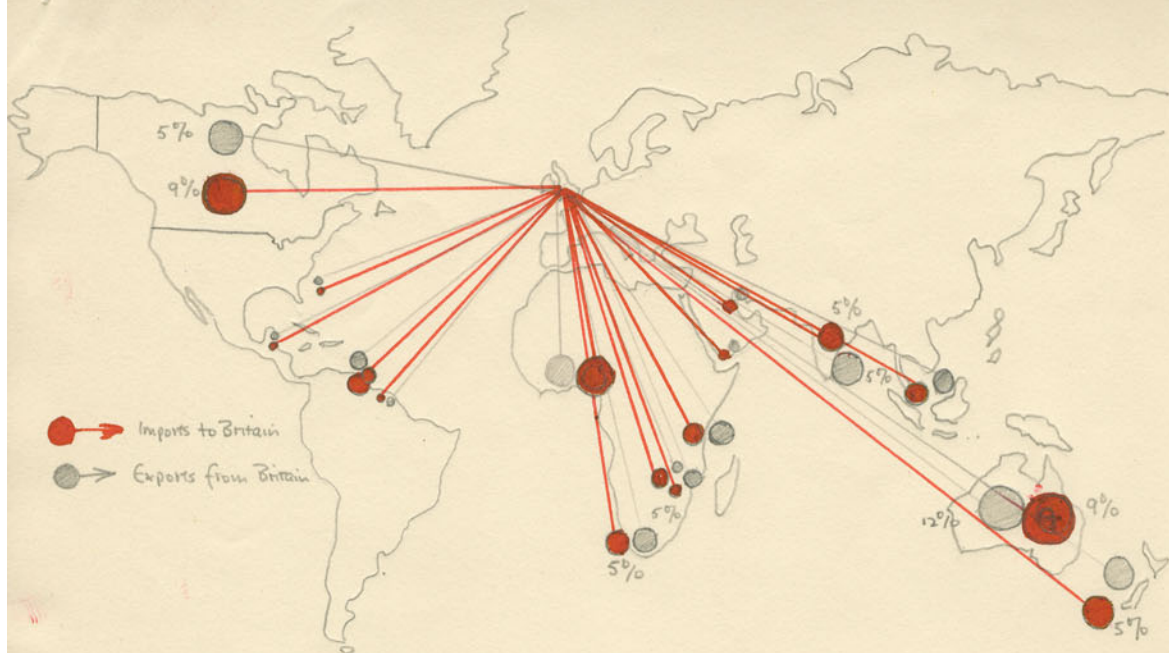
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and cultural planes all the members of the Commonwealth benefit by the exceptional fulness with which they have become aware of each others' needs. The geographical dispersion of the Commonwealth throughout the world and climatic zones is such that there are few products that cannot be found in one or other of the member countries. Their varying needs ~~has~~ led to inter-dependence.

The greater part of the Commonwealth was opened up in the century before 1914, by British capital, and, more particularly in the case of the Old Dominions, by British immigrants, to supply Britain's growing needs for food and raw materials. This pattern of economic relations developed in a period when Britain occupied a unique place as the world's predominant industrial power. Since the end of the nineteenth century conditions underlying this pattern have changed. In the world as a whole, other nations have become industrialised and have established important trading relations with Commonwealth countries. Many of the Dominions have also developed considerable industries and provide for themselves many of the goods previously imported from Britain. But though the content of Commonwealth economic relations is more complicated than before 1914, it remains true that Britain is still the most important market for most of the primary products of the rest of the Commonwealth, while, for Britain herself, the Commonwealth is now relatively more important than in the past, both as a purchaser of our manufactured goods and as a supplier of foodstuffs and raw materials. The economic features of both will continue to be intimately linked together.

The virtue of Commonwealth scientific and economic cooperation is strikingly illustrated in today's [22 February 1955] announcement that energy from the hot springs of New Zealand, 12,000 miles away, is to be harnessed to supply abundant cheap power in Britain. From these springs, a British Company - the Geothermal Developments Ltd., - will extract material for heavy water, which is essential to the production of atomic power. It will mean that Britain will no longer have to pay the world price of heavy water - £75,000 a ton - to Norway, when she can make it at about £40,000 a ton. It will mean that atomic piles to generate electricity for the national grid can be made smaller and cheaper. It will mean a British source of heavy water, which is essential to the construction of the H-bomb. The Company will also produce electricity for New Zealand.

Interdependence is further explained by the growing need for a world security system. Although this need has been expressed by the member-countries in the form of defence pacts with neighbouring countries, there is still an important defensive bond between the member-countries of the Commonwealth. Today we are at a turning point in imperial history - the end of an epoch when the command of the surface of the ocean determined the foundation and maintenance of great empires. But although sea-power has ceased to be the cement of the Empire, the Air and Atomic Age has intensified rather than weakened the need for cooperation, as illustrated alone in the experiments at the Woomera Rocket Station and the Empire Air Training Scheme.

Commonwealth scientific resources are also



GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION OF BRITAIN'S
IMPORTS AND EXPORTS AMONG THE
COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES:- 1949-1950.

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being harnessed to conquer want - the breeding ground of discontent and wars. The Colombo scheme is only one of many which exemplify that British and American knowledge can be usefully employed to give the most effective answers to communist threats. Only by Commonwealth cooperation can the "underdeveloped states" be given their opportunity.

Naturally scientific cooperation demands academic cooperation. This will inevitably bring cultural cooperation in its train. Someone has said that wars are born in the minds of men. It is none the less true that it is the mind of men that peace is born. The constant traffic between the Staffs of the Commonwealth universities ensures that common culture and habit of thought which is the basis of international understanding. This traffic is growing, rather than decreasing, further evidence of the strengthening of the Commonwealth ties. Thus, since the War, schemes have been devised whereby a British schoolboy can go to, for example, to Toronto University to read for his degree; a British schoolteacher can spend a year in one of the Dominions and, of course, the Rhodes Scholars continue to weave the unimpassable pattern of Commonwealth unity.

Again, an institution is alive only when it has power of creation. A static institution soon dies. The dynamic quality of the Commonwealth is illustrated by the ladder of self-government it provides. It is the declared aim of the British Government to bring the Colonial Territories to self-governing status within the Commonwealth itself. The attainment of this status is not just an act of grace or a reward for good conduct. It is the hall-mark set on a territory after it has reached a stage of political, economic and social development which

enables it to meet other independent nations on a footing of equality. The Commonwealth is the only polity which allows for a full-scale education from "Kindergarten" to Great Power. This is by no means an easy task. Thus, firstly, it demands that the people of a territory grow to think of themselves as first and foremost citizens of their country, and only secondly, members of their tribe or local community.

Secondly, there must be an "economic self". A country cannot properly call itself independent unless it can pay its own way. This does not mean that they become completely self-sufficient, ~~for~~ ^{for} there is a sufficient measure of economic independence which will not adversely affect political independence.

Thirdly, there must be a "social self". The people of a territory must feel that they are members of a society where mutual relationships are familiar and whose destiny they can influence.

At each of these three stages, the "mother-country" is helping. In the short run indeed, if the social self, for example, is not to lag behind the emergence of the political and economic selves, some outside stimulus is necessary. It was with this problem in mind that the British Government has made millions of pounds available under successive Colonial Development and Welfare Acts. These sums are intended to "prime the pump" (in both the economic and social sense), to give the Colonial people a push forward in the arduous business of developing their economy and providing at least a minimum of social welfare. The social self cannot however be brought into

being solely by a form of economic charity. It must be accompanied by measures which will encourage the people's own initiative and make them realise that it lies within their power to live fuller lives and to conquer the ill-health, malaria and illiteracy that has been their lot for centuries. This is being tackled by splendid schemes - particularly in the field of education. The foundation and expansion of such ventures as Achimota College, the University of the West Indies, and the recently announced Central African University, are the crowning stones of these unprecedented attempts at providing the colonists with leaders capable of leading them to the goal of self-government. The Commonwealth circle is thus assured continuous expansion.

The Gold Coast and Nigeria are now on the verge of attaining "Dominion" status. Soon they will enter the Commonwealth Conference as equals with the senior members. It will be difficult to decide when the moment is ripe for such a step, and it will have to be with the consent of the other member-states after consultation, ~~that~~ for our leadership is now that of the oldest members and not the principal shareholder. Some people have suggested a "two-tier" Commonwealth as a means of facilitating the maturing of colonies. That seems to be completely contrary to the basic principles of Commonwealth cooperation. A meeting of Prime Ministers and other Commonwealth leaders must be open to all willing to come, although it does not follow that all the committees set up must be attended by all the Commonwealth members. Members will judge for themselves whether or not their interests call for their being represented.

The suggestion of a "two tier" Commonwealth is probably activated by a desire to solve the "coloured" bar. It has the virtue of drawing attention to a problem which provides the greatest menace to the continued existence of the Commonwealth - that of the plural society. Until 1947 all the self-governing states were European peoples, but in that year three new Dominions came into existence - India, Pakistan and Ceylon. Their emergence has made it clear that within the Commonwealth there is no political coloured bar. Independence can be obtained by West Indians, Africans, by Malaysians, by any other people when they reach political maturity. But in Kenya and the Central African Federation, for example, the transition is vitiated by the problem of the plural society. The South African solution of 'apartheid', if extended, would prejudice the future of the whole Commonwealth. For the "raison d'être" of the Commonwealth is the equality of status of all its peoples; the ideological foundation of the institution. It should be its strongest weapon in the conflict with World Communism. There is, certainly, no short term solution. Educational and economic advance of the "coloured" will in the end ensure a wise and abundant proper treatment. But this is a slow process. In the meantime, any suggestion of inferiority of status, based on colour - so reminiscent of the Nazi Superior Race Theory, should be scotched. Indeed, if South Africa continues her present policy, then it is difficult to think that her continued adherence to the Commonwealth can but seriously weaken the whole structure.

If, then, the problem of the plural society

Why
Moses

can be solved rationally, then the future of the Commonwealth is assured. The post-war role of leadership of the Free World assumed by the United States, does not in any way threaten it. Indeed, it could be argued that the close cooperation between Washington and the member-states of the Commonwealth represents the return of the "Thirteen Colonies" to the Imperial family, - a Moses, as it were, returning and assuming leadership. The British Commonwealth and Empire is now a dynamic organisation, its members moving at different rates and along different routes towards the goal of full national status within a Commonwealth of freely united peoples. It is by avoiding the speculative and by concentrating on the practical that the Commonwealth will best fulfill its destiny. And for that reason, the world has need of it.

Books Read

- 1 "The British Family of Nations" -
John Coatsman.
- 2 "The British Commonwealth" -
Jack Simmonds.
- 3 "The British Way and Purpose" -
Directorate of Army Education 1944.
- 4 "Origins and Purpose" -
Edited by Vincent Harlow.
- 5 "The British Commonwealth Today" -
Rt. Hon. P.C. Gordon Walker M.P.
- 6 "The Commonwealth" -
A Times Article.
- 7 "Britain and the Tide of World Affairs" -
The Keith Lectures - Sir Oliver Franks.
- 8 "The British Commonwealth and World Affairs" -
- 9 "The Nationalist Challenge to the Commonwealth" -
Vincent Harlow M.A. D. Litt.
- 10 "Nationalism and the British Commonwealth" -
The Listener - Nicholas Mansergh, R.E. Robinson.
- 11 "The Colonial Dilemma" -
Margery Pelman.
- 12 "Racial Problems in the Commonwealth" -
H.V. Hodson.
- 13 "Racial Ideologies in the British Commonwealth" -
H.V. Hodson.
- 14 "A challenge to the Commonwealth" -
Sir Norman Angell.
- 15 "Migration and Commonwealth Defence" -
Sir Norman Angell -
- 16 "Origins of the Colour Bar" -
R. B. Wellesley Cole.
- 17 "New approaches to World Problems" -

- Hon. P.C. Spender, Australian Minister for External Affairs and External Territories.

18 "The Black Man's myth of the White" -
Hilda Kuper.

19 "What is the Colours Bar" -
Kenneth Little.