

~~Blown Essay.~~
Special Prize

B

ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY ESSAY COMPETITION, 1958.

CLASS B

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I liked your essay very much
I wish that a newspaper for
young people sent out one every week
could be started. I shall look
forward to your next year's essay.

A look at a map of the world on which the British Commonwealth of Nations is coloured red will show that the various units making up the Commonwealth are scattered all over the world. They are representative of all five continents, and there is no race, colour, creed or climate which cannot be found within their confines. Indeed, the global distribution of territories, which form the Commonwealth, may be regarded as a microcosm of the whole world. But while it is easy to see and distinguish the respective positions of the various units which make up the Commonwealth, it is far from easy to understand the nature and relationship of the various parts which, united, make the Commonwealth a democratic, solid and workable association - an association which is a living and flexible organism and in which there is to be found "a great multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues". It is, of course, not an easy thing to achieve complete unity or common principles or total understanding among so many peoples and countries of varied outlook, traditions, policies, environment, speech and custom. Yet it is a fact that all these territories and peoples have combined themselves together, freely and voluntarily, and have developed a common outlook and a common objective. People who do not understand the British Commonwealth often ask how this unanimity has been accomplished, for they are impressed by the reality of an almost miraculous achievement which always has attracted and still attracts universal attention.

As a keen student of British and Empire History, I must here and now emphasise that the Royal House of England has always been and still is the greatest influence in forging and keeping united the links in the golden chain of loyalty that binds all the widely scattered units of the Commonwealth to each other, and each and all to the centre and heart of the Commonwealth, that is, to England herself. Another most important cementing influence which has aided unity is the possession and constant use

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of a common language - English. It is used widely nowadays throughout the Commonwealth - even if only as a second language. But, another notable factor which has had and still has an important unifying effect is the natural zeal of the British people for voluntary associations.

Famous among the many voluntary associations is the Royal Empire Society founded in 1868, and which has branches in every nook and corner of the Commonwealth. This Society holds frequent meetings to which are invited distinguished speakers who have a first-hand knowledge of Commonwealth affairs. It possesses also a famous Commonwealth Library, and arranges annually a very elaborate scheme of essay competition available to all the important schools of the Commonwealth. It thus gives an important, though quiet, helping hand in spreading information about the Commonwealth and in creating and maintaining, even in far-off lands, the conception of a great organisation active for peace and brotherhood in the world.

Since each and every one of us should be interested in Commonwealth affairs, we have a duty, as members, to help to create harmony in this great family of ours, and the best and foremost step we ought to take to achieve this end is to promote better understanding among the youth of the Commonwealth, for the youth of the Commonwealth of today will be the leaders of the Commonwealth of to-morrow.

When I have not much to do, I sometimes sit alone for hours at a time and day-dream about what I would do to promote better understanding and fuller appreciation of the sense of brotherhood among the youth of our great Commonwealth if I had a great amount of money to spend on such a worthwhile project. I should like very much to divide my money and spend it in proportion to the importance of the different projects which I have had in mind since I first began to learn and appreciate the

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Commonwealth and what it means or at least should mean to me and to all the youth of the Commonwealth.

Firstly, if I had a "large sum of money to spend" - and by "a large sum" I mean millions of pounds - I would, first of all, build a University in London to be known as the "University of the Commonwealth". It would not be the usual type of University because, as its name implied, it would be open only to Commonwealth students. Also, I give London the preference above all other places because England is the oldest member, in every respect, and is looked upon by all the Commonwealth nations as their 'Mother Country'.

The University would have a teaching staff comprised, not only of Englishmen, but also, if possible, of representatives of every important member of the Commonwealth, regardless of creed or colour so long as the applicants would be qualified to hold the position. I would prefer an international staff so that an example of "equality among brothers" might exist to be followed by the students. There would be numerous scholarships and grants awarded to the students on a competitive basis, and special awards to the more needy students who show promise of a successful future.

I must insist here that no distinction would be made between students of different colour or creed. The constant theme of the University would be that of universal brotherhood, and great emphasis would have to be placed on the fact that man is a rational being and that all are children of the same kind Creator. Discipline I would like to be mild but firm - the whole University being pervaded by a spirit of charity and brotherly love.

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There would, of course, be the usual social gatherings, sports meetings, and various other forms of extra and intra-mural activities so common and useful at universities today. Emphasis, however, would be placed on social studies and a sound training in correct thinking and modern democratic practice. It must be remembered that only a small minority of the youth of the Commonwealth would be able to get such an education and training, hence that training and education should be of such a nature that the student's influence for good when he, or she, should return home would influence thousands of other youths less privileged than he, or she. I have read that many students today who return from Britain, especially after their studies, return convinced Communists and hence my insistence on a sound and solid foundation in correct thinking and modern democratic practice.

The students on return to their respective countries should be advised to keep in touch by forming an Association with national meetings regularly and international gatherings periodically. The chief aim of this Association would be to keep the students in touch with one another and keep them informed of the latest Commonwealth trends in various fields of activity. The international gatherings could be held in a different Commonwealth country each time and that would give all the alumni a grand opportunity to study at first hand the special problems besetting each particular Commonwealth country.

Another effective way to promote understanding among the youth of the Commonwealth would be by means of a Commonwealth Correspondence Club. I would be willing to spend a large sum on the establishment of such a club as I feel it could be of inestimable worth for promoting unity, friendship and understanding. Associated with it, and even more important still, would be a Commonwealth Youth Review to cater principally for

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the youth of the Commonwealth with articles of interest written in English easily understood by the Commonwealth youth of school or college age. Unfortunately, most of the reviews of today are far above the heads of the youth of my own age both in substance and language. Never did I realise this more than when I began to read up all I could lay my hands on to write at this essay. I was often in despair and actually gave up the attempt twice because I was so discouraged on reading the articles which learned men have written and which are being written on Commonwealth topics.

I would consider the establishment of this Commonwealth Youth Review as being a thing of paramount importance and of inestimable worth in the long run. Hence, I would spare neither money nor time to carry out this project and make a success of it. The first numbers of the Review would have to be almost beyond criticism so as to establish its name and popularity, and at the same time be most useful and valuable. A very high standard of production would have to be always maintained, with each issue devoting much space to Commonwealth affairs, Exchange letters, General knowledge and Information sections, Photographic and Quiz contests, etc. The Review would also contain many interesting articles of a general informative nature, quite commonly found in the multifarious types of magazines of to-day. Emphasis would be placed on social questions, especially on the ways to improve living conditions in the more backward and poorer areas of the Commonwealth. The amount of good that would result from stirring up youthful minds to the reality of these problems, is beyond the imagination. I have no doubt but that such a Review as this would be a great success, and that its establishment, upkeep and development would not be any more costly or difficult than that of the many practically useless magazines and reviews of to-day. It would soon speak for itself, and would gradually establish itself, I am certain, as the mouthpiece of youthful millions who seem to be desiring

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and longing for some such method at present to express their opinions and speak out their minds about Commonwealth affairs and problems - a method and a way which at present do not exist in a suitable manner.

These, then, are the principal projects I would set my heart on and spend my money on, to help young people in the Commonwealth to understand and know each other better. I realize they would be difficult to initiate, but I also believe that they would be capable of achievement as they are very practical and, above all, an urgent and immediate necessity. Bigger things have been accomplished in the past and are still being accomplished every year by men of generosity, wisdom and foresight. I have read recently that American industrialists, like Henry Ford, donate huge sums of money annually to the development of educational institutions in the United States, and what Americans are capable of doing in their great country surely could and should be imitated by the wealthier subjects of our proud Commonwealth to help the most worthy cause of uniting more, and helping to understand each other better, the millions of youths who have the privilege of living in and the honour of belonging to the greatest and worthiest Commonwealth the world has ever seen.

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List of Books consulted

The Changing Commonwealth -- edited by F.H. Soward.

The Dominions and Colonial Offices -- by Sir George V. Fiddes,
G.C.M.G., K.C.B.

The British Commonwealth and the Future -- edited by H.V. Hodson.

Responsible Government in the Dominions -- by Arthur Berriedale
Keith (vol. I & II.)

The British Commonwealth -- General Editor, George W. Keeton
(vol. 1 - 4)

The Commonwealth in Asia - by Sir Ivor Jennings, K.C.

Various Encyclopaedia.

Reviews and Digests, such as:-

- a) The Listener
- b) The Atlantic
- c) A Picture of the Commonwealth
- d) Current Affairs (Australia)
- e) Readers' Digest

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