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"The Nations of the British Commonwealth must speak, if
not with one voice, at least in harmony, in the councils
of the world." Discuss this comment in the light of
post-war developments.

The British Commonwealth of Nations is not a single entity
for the Dominions are entirely independent of Great Britain.
The relation between the constituent states of the British
Commonwealth was defined at the Imperial Conference of
1926 and confirmed in the Statute of Westminster in
1931. They are "autonomous communities within
the British Empire, equal in status, in no way
subordinate one to another in any aspect of their
domestic or external affairs, though united by a common
allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members
of the British Commonwealth of Nations."

The process whereby the countries now Dominions

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have become fully self-governing states with their own tariffs, defence forces, foreign policies, and nationality laws, might have spelled the gradual dissolution of the British Empire had it not been accompanied by a new co-operative institution to replace the "imperialistic" ones, the Imperial or Commonwealth Conference. This is not a Parliament but a round-table meeting of the governments, and even though its reports are unanimous they can only be brought about by the independent action of the participating governments. This conference has no statutory existence, no permanent secretariat, nor does it meet regularly. In peace time it is the most important of the modern co-operative institutions of the British Commonwealth because it provides a means whereby all the self-governing nations of the Commonwealth, and also the dependencies, can discuss their common problems together, and such policies as defence and foreign affairs. There are also secondary bodies to which member countries of the Commonwealth belong and which advise them in specialised fields such as Economics, Shipping (for the command of the seas is vital to the defence of the nations of the British Commonwealth both jointly and severally), Agriculture, Forestry, Zoology, War Graves, Medicine and Medical Research.

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However the British Commonwealth of Nations has always presented a united front on the most important of all world issues, such as the war and defence plans, for the unity of the Empire is a fact which has stood the hardest tests and inspires confidence for the future.

It is essential that in these troubled and difficult days the British Commonwealth should stand together and "speak in harmony in the councils of the world" if the world is to regain its former peace and prosperity. The chief council of the world at the present moment is the United Nations Organisation which serves as a meeting place in which international problems can be investigated and discussed, and provides a centre in which the governments of all the nations can consult together, and through co-operation find a just and acceptable solution of difficulties. In the General Assembly of the United Nations the British Commonwealth has five votes so that each of the nations is independent of the other, including Great Britain; but it has generally been proved that they present a united front on most decisions. And as the best possible qualification for membership of this, or any other peace organisation, is the capacity for friendly cooperation between independent nations, the British Commonwealth by its example can

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keep ever before its fellow members of the United Nations the ideal at which all should aim.

Of course Great Britain and the Dominions have been favoured by the conditions under which they have felt their way to so happy a relationship. In most cases they are people of a common origin, for in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand the majority of the population is British, they speak the same language, enjoy the same literature, possess the same or similar codes of law, common traditions and customs, and the same background of history and inheritance of liberty. It is therefore natural that there should be a strong bond between Great Britain, her Dominions, and dependencies.

But there is no reason why the United Nations Organisation should not follow this Commonwealth pattern in the wider sphere of world affairs. For it is evident that there are groups within the nations which are linked together by geographical features, by race, by common interests or policies, and of these the British Commonwealth is the most stable and organically developed. Among other groups there are the Latin-American States which are united by geography and race in the Continent of South America, and also linked by a special relationship with the United States

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because of the Monroe Doctrine asserted in the early nineteenth century, and demonstrated more recently in inter-American conferences. The Arab States have done a service to the general cause, and their own, of peace, by establishing the Arab League, and a West Indian Union has been suggested. There are also likely to be European groupings for on the Atlantic seaboard the war strengthened Great Britain's link with France, and their ~~and~~ link with the allied people of Belgium, Holland and Norway. In South-Eastern Europe the Balkan States are united by geography and a common race, the Slavs, which together with religion they have in common with Russia, whose policy it has always been to protect these states, and it may be that in time these various European groups may form a European Federation. Whenever two or more nations reach a state of mutual understanding so that war between them is unthinkable, as in the case of Great Britain and the Dominions, and Great Britain and America, there is one more step in universal security. Thus if the United Nations can produce such a relationship in a European Federation, peace will be assured.

Method
of
Federation

One of the most important of post war developments

is the attitude of Russia towards her former allies Great Britain and America, and in the United Nations. She appears to be on the defensive the whole time and has repeatedly used the Veto in the Security Council, which Great Britain has not done once yet, and this has frustrated the putting into action of several schemes which might have helped to solve the present economic and political difficulties. Thus it is all the more essential for the nations of the British Commonwealth to speak in harmony to offset this attitude.

The question of the Atom bomb and the control of Atomic energy is another post war development over which Russia has contrived to make herself disagreeable, although she now claims to have experimented successfully with an Atom bomb. If Atomic power can be effectively controlled and put to civilian uses, it will render humanity a great service, but the nations of the world must co-operate to prevent it being used for warlike purposes, as with its terrific power the world would soon be devastated. However as Sir Alexander Cadogan, who represents the United Kingdom's Government on the Atomic Energy Commission, said, there are several encouraging facts; for firstly "To make an Atomic bomb, you have to start from

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certain particular raw materials." Secondly, "present information suggests that Providence has concentrated those raw materials, in sufficient quantities, in certain restricted and rather few areas". And thirdly, "the conversion of the raw material into dangerous material, in dangerous quantities, is a very difficult process, requiring enormous plants which cannot easily be concealed."

As everyone knows Uranium is the chief source of Atomic energy and a fair amount of this mineral is to be found in Canada. Once again to control this deadly force and harness it to the service of the world, the Nations of the British Commonwealth must be in harmony. *Such a move primarily Canada's interest*

The granting of Indian independence is ^{another} one of the greatest post war developments, and certainly the greatest in the history of the British Commonwealth. But this granting of independence has produced difficulties in India itself due to racial and religious diversities. From the partition of British India two states have been formed, the Muslim state of Pakistan and the Hindu State.

There are besides several states such as Bengal and ^{East} Punjab who have decided to stay outside the Constituent Assembly and to form a Constituent Assembly of their own. *I don't know if any part of this was in the original plan before the Partition Plan was announced.*

The representatives of the predominant Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim districts of these provinces, will vote separately as to whether they wish to remain with their province or with the present Constituent Assembly. The North West Frontier Province at present is represented by two members in the Constituent Assembly, but it is to have the opportunity of reconsidering its position by a referendum conducted under the Viceroy's auspices. A similar referendum is to be arranged for the Muslim district of Assam enabling it to join the Muslim part of Bengal if it so wishes.

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Thus Pakistan will be reduced, but will have a better claim to be regarded as essentially Muslim. The position of the Princes is left in the open air; they may come to some arrangement for their inclusion in one or other of the independent India's, or they may form a federated group of states. Some have already joined the Constituent Assembly, while others have announced that they mean to assert their complete independence.

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Violent dissension in the shape of riots and fighting have broken out over the detailed adjustment of boundaries, especially in the Frontier Province where the fiercest tribal and personal rivalries exist.

The two new India's start on their career of full independence still as members of the British Commonwealth

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under a common Crown and with a wide measure of interchangeable citizenship, and they may perhaps hesitate before severing that connection completely in June 1948, when complete power will be transferred into the hands of the Indian leaders.

* This demand was advanced to the British (1947).

The alternatives are one or two Dominions or to speak of the Commonwealth

Besides forming a Dominion of the British Commonwealth or two entirely independent Indias, there is another alternative for India, to form an Indian Commonwealth on the lines of the British Commonwealth. This would solve many of the country's difficulties, for Federation in India has shown how hard it is to reconcile the new democracies and the traditional monarchical systems of many of the states. The basis of an Indian Commonwealth could be

"a declaration of common principles with regard to civil and religious liberties and the rights of minorities, on freely interchangeable citizen rights, on free co-operation in defence and foreign policy, and on effective mutual preference and co-ordination over the whole economic field." This co-operation could be secured by a Conference on the lines of the British Imperial Conference which met regularly.

The problem of the Indian Army would also be solved by an Indian Commonwealth, for it would prevent its division into two forces so far as financial provision and political

but this means a single Indian Dominion

control was concerned, and would permit it to have a joint general staff or a common system of training. This would also preserve the splendid and, in many cases, ancient traditions of individual regiments of the army. Again, on the economic side, the partition of India means separate tariffs, currency and communications which might easily lead to disaster; while in a Commonwealth agreements for mutual tariff preferences, for joint commissions to deal with currency, communications, irrigation, the promotion of scientific research and other important matters, could be made.

The British Commonwealth of Nations, by standing and speaking together, can set the newly independent India an example which they may choose to follow, and which should work very efficiently among units so closely bound together by geographical and economic interests, and inheriting a common system of law, civil administration and defence. However, if India decides to sever completely the ties that bind her to Great Britain, the nations of the British Commonwealth will show that they can work together to overcome the difficulties produced by that decision, for in Australia there is already talk of a new Indian Ocean defence policy to be worked out with the United Kingdom in replacement of that which would be destroyed by the

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disappearance of India as a British base.

The problem of whether South Africa should be allowed to incorporate the mandate of German South West Africa into the Union, is another issue upon which the nations of the British Commonwealth have spoken together in harmony in world councils. For they have stood by South Africa's wish, against countries in the United Nations, to whom the question was submitted, who have argued that the ^xmandate was not being properly handled. It is obvious that German South-West Africa is closely bound to the Union by reason of its geography, race and commercial interests, and in that country it is the people's will that they should join South Africa. The Royal Tour has done much to strengthen the bonds between South Africa and the Motherland, by bringing home more vividly to each the nature and problems of the other, and the tremendous reception which greeted the Royal family proves that the British Commonwealth is doing its utmost to speak and act in harmony for the cause of peace.

There are still many problems to be settled before the world returns to a state of security, and the

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British Commonwealth of Nations will have to play its part in the settling of them. The granting of independence to Burma may raise the same difficulties, the same strife and bloodshed, as it has in India; and the Palestine problem, now submitted to the United Nations Organisation, with its questions of partition between Arabs and Jews, the withdrawal of British troops entirely from the area, or an international army to administer the country, all call for decisions from the nations of the British Commonwealth who must endeavour to speak in harmony. But throughout the ages it has been proved that the Commonwealth pattern gives order, reasonableness, sanity and creative peace; therefore the United Nations Organisation should keep it well in mind in settling world disputes. (2260 words.)

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