

A

✓ PRIZE ^{zone}
JD 23

1ST PRIZE.

BEN SINGER

BORN: [REDACTED]

WEST VANCOUVER SECONDARY SCHOOL
1750 MATHERS AVENUE
WEST VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA
V7V 2G7

CERTIFIED:

[Signature]
(Coordinator of Commonwealth Essay Contest)

ESSAY CLASS: A

ESSAY NUMBER: 4

LENGTH OF ESSAY: 1658 WORDS

FIRST LANGUAGE: GERMAN

Original, honest thinking - fairly + clearly expressed
Only a few minor errors
rather long winded?

But cf. Script 24 - same basis } same short
- and 25 " " }
- also 21 + 22,

Some long 10 paras - too long

Similar to other international
bodies, the concept of the Com-
monwealth as a crisis settling
organization is rooted in the
universal but seemingly un-
realizable dream of interna-
tional understanding, cooper-
ation, and peace. Though there
is great potential in the Com-
monwealth, especially as a
bridge between rich and poor
nations, this potential is some-
how not realized: the Common-
wealth's idealistic intentions
^{having} resulted in a series
of frustrated initiatives.
As a matter of historic-

al fact, the Commonwealth does not seem to have made a notable contribution in resolving disputes between its members, disputes involving its members, or between rival factions within member states. In the two classic instances of intra-Commonwealth disputes; the controversy over Apartheid policy in South Africa and the Indo-Pakistani dispute; the Commonwealth cannot be said to have been instrumental in arriving at a solution in either dispute. On the contrary, it is possible,

that had the Commonwealth
not existed, Britain and pos-
sibly even some of its Africom
members might have been
more inclined to come to at
least a preliminary agree-

ment with South Africa. It is
even more likely that unbur-
dened by pressure from in-
dependent Africom members,
Britain would have found it

simpler to come to an ac-
commodation with the settler's
régime in Rhodesia (now Zim-
babwe). It is also evident
of the Commonwealth's im-
pressive record as a

crisis settling organization
 that it was unable to offer
 any effective mediation in
 the civil war in Britain's
 former model colony, Niger-
 ia.

As more and diverse
 fragments of the old co-
 lonial empire rapidly rose
 to full Commonwealth mem-
 bership, its common charac-
 teristics became more and
 more indistinguishable. The
 problems and priorities of
 Canada are very different
 from those of Australia,
 of African, or of Asian mem-

✓ less. The Commonwealth
 does not have any valid ho-
 mogeneity: its membership
 consists of highly diverse so-
 cial, economic, and politi-
 cal components; nor does
 there exist a unifying sys-

tem of law, defence, or cur-
 rency. Apart from the Com-
 monwealth's regular

Prime Ministers' Conferences
 and its Secretariat, there
 exists no well established

means of settling disputes
 between member states. The
 old divisions between for-
 mer (still suspicious) co-

How often do
 disputes between
 members occur?

series of occupation and colonies of settlement are still reflected in sharp contrasts in approach; consequently the Commonwealth has rarely acted in solidarity. - Solidarity (big head)?

The Commonwealth was believed, by its members, to be an organization 'based on a set of mutually agreed principles', yet aside from a common detestation of apartheid policies, it is not clear what mutually agreed on principles still endure. That members

should remain at peace with one another would seem essential; but in spite of this, in 1965 India and Pakistan (In 1965 Pakistan and India were both Commonwealth members) went to war.

And when mediation between the two members was required, it was not Britain or the Commonwealth, but the United Nations and the Soviet Union that supplied it. The Suez crisis in 1956 saw the mutual agreement on principles, and the often stated common interest once again forgotten, as Commonwealth members

Referred earlier
And when mediation between the two members was required, it was not Britain or the Commonwealth, but the United Nations and the Soviet Union that supplied it. The Suez crisis in 1956 saw the mutual agreement on principles, and the often stated common interest once again forgotten, as Commonwealth members

...which except for minor blunders
 were either condemned Brit-
 ain at the United Nations, or
 ignored her in the political
 arena.

At Suez, in the eyes of the
 Commonwealth's African and
 Asian members, Britain had
 acted as the imperial power
 she once was; and they indeed
 judged Britain, and consequen-
 tly alienated themselves from
 her. The most intense opposi-
 tion to Britain's actions at
 Suez came from Commonwealth
 members; the outrage of Af-
 rican and Asian members
 reached a point, where in Bom-

lay a motion was passed demanding Britain's immediate withdrawal from the Commonwealth.

The Suez crisis did much to lead member countries away from the concept of Commonwealth. Though the Commonwealth itself was not the casualty that had been feared at the height of the crisis, when all too anxious voices in Africa and Asia were predicting its certain demise, the Commonwealth undoubtedly did not emerge unscathed or unharmed. Suez had amplified

differences among Commonwealth
 members which up till then
 had only been half-expressed.
 The crisis also fuelled
 a growing awareness in Aus-
 tralia and New Zealand, of
 their individuality as indepen-
 dent nations; and the realiza-
 tion in Canada that she had to
 play her political cards tot-
 ally independent of her 'em-
 bracing friend'.

The pull of regional inter-
 ests, having priority over the
 Commonwealth have increas-
 ingly weakened the unity of
 the Commonwealth in both

political and economic spheres.

To its members, the Commonwealth is largely of secondary importance; membership in other world bodies like the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations having higher priorities. Since the Second World War, Britain has been turning away from her traditional Commonwealth trading partners. This trend culminated in 1972 when the

British government, ignoring almost unanimous Commonwealth opposition, announced itself a member of the

developed since the war

European Economic Commu-

nity. As a result, tradition-

ally strong Commonwealth

ties were weakened. Canada

has become intensely inter-

grated with the United States

economically, and political-

ly through organizations

such as the North Atlantic

Treaty Organization. Australia

and New Zealand, though

to a lesser extent have also

reduced their dependence on

Britain, and have become in-

creasingly involved in trade

in the Pacific region. The

African and Asian members,

for the most part have become increasingly and intimately dependent on the United States for trade and aid. Such changes have dramatically weakened Britain's power over the Commonwealth, and the cohesiveness of the organization in general - as Commonwealth cooperation is thought, to a large degree to rest on mutual advantages on trade investment and aid.

As the Commonwealth has no specialized format for settling disputes

- all sort of team etc of
 twelve members, it often
 serves as a springboard to
 other world bodies; usual-
 ly being the United Nations.

On most issues which come
 before the United Nations;
 even those which are of par-
 ticular interest to the Com-

monwealth, Commonwealth
 members are hopelessly di-
 vided. Their distribution in
 different ideological compo-
 sitions, different regional groupings,

and overall diverse priori-
 ties, all go towards it be-
 ing virtually impossible
 for the Commonwealth to

ever speak with one voice on any major issue, either at Commonwealth Conferences or at the United Nations. Thus the Commonwealth, even when using the framework of the United Nations, cannot be regarded as a cohesive bloc with common interests, or of being capable of influencing international politics.

Almost every major crisis that has come before the Commonwealth has seen it left involved by the organization, and eventually carried to the United Nations.

The classic example of such
Commonwealth inadequacy
is the Rhodesian crisis. Though
the Commonwealth, including
Britain, imposed wide
economic sanctions and em-
bargoes, (which later proved
to be almost totally inef-
fective) there was continuing
conflict over the Rhodesian is-
sue between Britain and Af-
rican and Asian members,
which at times came close
in bringing about the fre-
quently threatened with-
drawal of some of its mem-
bers. The Rhodesian question

occupied the entire Prime Ministers' Conference of 1966, in fact. When the conference convened again later that year, it was marked by a polarization between Britain on one side and the overwhelming majority of the other members on the other, as members after members expressed their anger and dissatisfaction over British policy regarding Rhodesia. In October, the Commonwealth carried its dispute with Britain to the United Nations, its principal spokesmen being the del-

options from Zambia and Tansania.

The latter introduced

a resolution, unanimously

adopted by the General As-

sembly, condemning the

British government for con-

tinuing further talks with

the Smith régime. This led

to open conflict at the Un-

ited Nations between Bri-

tain and other Common-

wealth members. Other

major issues within the

Commonwealth that have

found their way to the Un-

ited Nations over the years

have included the Kashmir

dispute, apartheid policies in South Africa and the controversy over South West Africa (Namibia); all of which, in Commonwealth theory could have been, and should have been, solved within the Commonwealth.

Four member nations seem to possess a sincere desire to maintain Commonwealth solidarity, nor do they appear to firmly believe in the Commonwealth's potential, not only as a dispute settling organization but as a tool for international relations.

national understanding and
cooperation. Britain's path-
etic determination in main-
taining, somewhat artifi-
cially, its sphere of influence
through the Commonwealth
has repeatedly left Britain
vulnerable as fellow mem-
bers threaten to leave if
their political 'demands' are
not met. The African and Asian
members in particular take
advantage of their relation-
ship with Britain through
the Commonwealth by col-
lectively pressuring Britain
and consequently often suc-

cessfully manipulating
 world politics. In the mid
 1960s the Commonwealth be-
 came a tool of Pan-African-
 ism and the Organization of
 African Unity, who through
 African member nations in-
 fluenced Britain's African
 policy.

Such transformation from
 a dispute-settling organiz-
 ation to an instrument of
 Third World political as-
 pirations, has severely re-
 duced the Commonwealth's
 ability to legitimately solve
 international and intra-Com-

monwealth crises.

* When a dispute between

members does arise, the
countries involved must co-
ordinate the value of the Com-
monwealth to their gen-
eral national purposes. The
less useful the Common-

wealth is for the state's

security and foreign poli-

tics, the more inclined the

states in question will be

to allow their dispute to

effect Commonwealth poli-

ciarity and efficiency. Judging

from the lack of speed in

which the Roshmin crisis

was solved, and the lack of interest both India and Pakistan presented in resolving the crisis quickly, the Commonwealth's solidarity and efficiency must not be of high importance. The Commonwealth's diminished record as a dispute settling organization, and presently prevailing Commonwealth attitudes, certainly question any political necessity for the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth's disunity, lack of purpose and power, and overall

inefficiency, has proved the Commonwealth as a static organization, often incapable of finding solutions to disputes between its members and disputes involving its members.

The initial dream of the Commonwealth offering the framework for man's endless quest for international understanding and peace, has been widely shattered by reality.

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