

Section 3.—International Activities *

Subsection 1.—Canada and Commonwealth Relations, 1950-52

Developments in Commonwealth relations from the end of the year 1949 to mid-1952 were unspectacular in comparison with the period immediately preceding, which saw such remarkable events as the acceptance of the Republic of India as a continuing member of the Commonwealth, the withdrawal of the Republic of Ireland from the measure of association with the Commonwealth which it had maintained up to that time, and the union of Newfoundland with Canada. During the period 1950-52 the members of the Commonwealth maintained their existing system of consultation and co-operation and were chiefly concerned with developments in the outside world.

The tense international situation resulting from the attitude taken by the Soviet Union and its satellites and from the behaviour of the communist régime in China during the past three years was one of the principal subjects of discussion, both by correspondence and at formal or informal meetings, among the Commonwealth group of nations. Both the Commonwealth Meeting on Foreign Affairs held at Colombo, Ceylon, in January 1950, and the Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers held at London, England, in January 1951, devoted much time and attention to the above situation and the problems arising from it. In particular, developments in Asia, where the smaller non-communist countries have been exposed to communist infiltration or open invasion, called for the most careful consideration not only by the Commonwealth countries in that area but also by all members of the Commonwealth, whose ideals of freedom and democracy might be endangered by successful aggression.

It was clear that the backward agricultural and industrial condition of many countries of south and southeast Asia, along with the destruction and impoverishment in that area which had resulted from operations during World War II, would, if ignored, undermine any hope that these countries would have a healthy and continuous development along democratic lines. The 1950 Colombo Conference was greatly concerned with this situation and for this reason among others, urged the necessity of assistance to the nations of south and southeast Asia from the more industrially advanced countries in the Commonwealth and elsewhere. The Colombo Plan (see pp. 122-124) which was fashioned at this meeting and in which Canada is participating, is one of the most promising contributions towards building up the free world and enabling it to stand against totalitarianism.

Another subject which engaged the attention of both the 1950 Commonwealth Meeting of Foreign Ministers and the 1951 Commonwealth Meeting of Prime Ministers was the question of peace settlements, particularly with Japan, and the allied question of security in the Pacific area. While the discussions were helpful in smoothing over some differences of opinion on the Japanese settlement, they did not result in all Commonwealth members reaching a common decision in this matter. The Government of India eventually decided to negotiate a separate treaty with Japan, while the other Commonwealth governments, including Canada, joined the United States and other interested countries in signing a Japanese Peace Treaty at San Francisco on Sept. 8, 1951. At the same time the position of the more exposed Commonwealth countries in the Pacific area was safeguarded by the signature of a Security Treaty by the United States, Australia and New Zealand.

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