

Section 2.—International Activities*

Subsection 1.—Canada and Commonwealth Relations, 1957-58

Developments within the Commonwealth during the period under review, mid-1957 to mid-1958, have again demonstrated its vitality and capacity for growth and its continuing significance as a stable political association in the modern world. The process of daily consultation and exchange of information among members of the Commonwealth, an essential feature of their relationship, was continued and strengthened throughout the period. In matters of common concern—defence, foreign policy and economic affairs—Canada maintained, as heretofore, the closest relations with other members of the Commonwealth.

A meeting of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers was held in London, England, from June 26 to July 5, 1957, the first such meeting to be presided over by Prime Minister Macmillan. One of the first official duties of Canada's Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. John Diefenbaker, was to attend this meeting soon after he assumed office. Other Commonwealth Prime Ministers who attended were Mr. Menzies of Australia, Mr. Nehru of India, Mr. Suhrawardy of Pakistan, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, and Sir Roy Welensky of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. The Prime Ministers of New Zealand, South Africa and Ceylon were unable to attend and were represented by senior members of their governments. Valuable discussions were held on international matters of common concern, including the United Nations, disarmament, relations with the Soviet Union, the Middle East and the Far East, and Commonwealth economic development. The final communiqué referred to the broad similarity of approach and purpose in international affairs which such meetings reveal. The Prime Ministers agreed on the need for constructive action to strengthen and improve the United Nations as an instrument for preserving peace. They were deeply concerned about the problem of disarmament and recognized the value of even a limited agreement in creating conditions in which a more comprehensive disarmament scheme could be developed. The changing nature of the Commonwealth was illustrated by the presence for the first time at such a meeting of the Prime Minister of the new state of Ghana and by the formal notice taken of the forthcoming independence of the Federation of Malaya, both of which were specifically referred to in the final communiqué.

The visit to Canada of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and H.R.H. The Prince Philip in October 1957 was particularly noteworthy. It was a historic occasion when, for the first time, the Parliament of Canada was opened by a reigning Sovereign. Her Majesty, on Oct. 14, delivered the Speech from the Throne at the opening of the First Session of Canada's 23rd Parliament. Towards the end of the period under review, preparations were under way to welcome to Canada H.R.H. The Princess Margaret whose visit took place July 12-Aug. 11, 1958.

In August and September 1957 the Hon. J. M. Macdonnell, Minister without Portfolio, headed a Canadian delegation to the ceremonies marking the independence of Malaya and later visited Singapore, New Delhi, Karachi and London. In October of the same year the Hon. W. J. Browne, Minister without Portfolio, represented Canada at the annual meeting of the Colombo Plan Consultative Committee in Saigon, Vietnam. At this meeting the newest member of the Commonwealth, Malaya, was welcomed as a full member of the Colombo Plan. The Hon. Gordon Churchill, Minister of Trade and Commerce, toured the United Kingdom for a month toward the end of 1957 at the head of a Canadian Trade Mission, the objective of which was to investigate the possibilities for expanding trade between Canada and the United Kingdom.

Ottawa welcomed a number of prominent Commonwealth statesmen during this period, including Prime Minister Menzies of Australia; Mr. Selwyn Lloyd, Foreign Secretary, Mr. Peter Thorneycroft, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir David Eccles,

* Prepared by the Department of External Affairs.