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THE OTHER DOMINIONS

THE British Commonwealth is a world in itself, containing peoples of every colour, race, creed and stage of civilization.

This "huge, sprawling friend and hobgoblin of mankind," as C. H. Grattan calls it in his book *Introducing Australia*, takes in 26 per cent of the world's land surface, containing 22 per cent of the world's people.

It is not a despotic state bound together by law, but a natural grouping of human beings who are united by economic, cultural and moral forces. Princess Elizabeth, receiving the Freedom of the City of London, brushed aside the craft of constitution-making when she told her fellow citizens: "Our Commonwealth is not so much a single act of statecraft as a miracle of faith."

No phraseology yet invented seems to describe accurately the collection of states to be examined in this Letter. It is a Kingdom, an Empire, a Commonwealth, and a whimsical mixture of all. The word "Commonwealth" seems to have taken its first bow in print around 1914. Through the efforts of General Smuts and Sir Robert Borden it made its official appearance in 1917 when a declaration of the Imperial War Cabinet said that intra-imperial relationships "should be based upon a full recognition of the Dominions as autonomous nations of an Imperial Commonwealth." In July 1947 the title of the British Dominions Office was changed to "Commonwealth Relations Office."

Whatever they call themselves, we have in the Commonwealth a group of sovereign states working together and living together in peace and in war under a system that has endured the greatest strains. They have developed out of an odd assortment of colonies, dependencies, protectorates, mandates, bases and whatnot. They are still developing, because the Commonwealth is not static but dynamic.

Free and Equal Partners

In his coronation day broadcast, the King referred to the Dominions as "free and equal partners with the ancient Kingdom," and General Smuts declared: "The King who is being crowned today is not the

head of a central kingdom to which many other Dominions and possessions belong, but of a group of equal States, of whose free association together he is the common symbol."

The independent footing of the Dominions has been well described in brief form by R. H. Stewart of Harvard University, in his book *Treaty Relations of the British Commonwealth of Nations*: "The Parliament at Westminster no longer legislates for the Dominions except at their request and with their consent. Nor does the Foreign Office on Downing Street conclude international engagements which are binding upon the Dominions. Each member of the Commonwealth — the United Kingdom and the Dominions alike — participates in treaty making as an individual entity and is in no way responsible for the international obligations undertaken by any other member."

The British Commonwealth and Empire is the product of a long period of experiment and test. It has occasionally passed into a new stage of development while some people were still worrying themselves over ancient controversies. Criticism of it comes mostly from prejudices, while some of its most harmful supporters are philosophers who dream up imaginary constitutions for an imaginary commonwealth and try to fit this very real and actual Commonwealth into their mould.

Political Ties are Slender

This Commonwealth is not a political unit, with a central co-ordinator, a federal charter and the other devices so commonplace elsewhere. Between nations in the Commonwealth, political ties are slender. They appoint High Commissioners to one another, and they send occasional goodwill or trade missions. They are much like members of a large family who all write home to Mother, but rarely to one another.

There is not only a lack of sameness, but there are positive differences. In his book published this year, *Experiment in World Order*, Paul McGuire declares that the British system is an astonishing example of the much-neglected fact that a living community does not depend on political uniformity. Attempts to impose fixed forms have failed, as in America and Ireland.

Vitality is made evident by changing, and Mr. McGuire says of the British system: "It has almost every variety of political organization and social experiment except Totalitarianism. One or other of its parts has pioneered in every phase of labour organization and legislation, in social services, co-operative enterprises, electoral franchises, free and compulsory education, industrial arbitration, and the rest. It embraces the most advanced and the most primitive of social modes and ways of life."

Education in Government

There could be no single pattern of government that would suit all the diversity of people in the Empire and Commonwealth. The Empire of the colonies and dependent dominions stood for a process of education in government which has given birth to more free nations and more freedom and more free governments within those nations, than any other technique of government in history.

Persons who have been inhaling the strong incense of utopian dreams will find it difficult to understand why British colonial officials bother to report the progress of this and that people in such small matters as village and district government, but that is where education for national government starts, at the grass roots. The seeds of freedom, civilization and better living standards are planted and patiently nurtured in small plots, and then transplanted into carefully-prepared ground.

Self-government of the British parliamentary type, which is carried on by means of a technique it has taken centuries to develop, may not be suitable or practicable for every country. Most certainly, it cannot be simply dumped into the lap of a novice country with any expectation that it will work. The federal union of British North American colonies in 1867 was not a sudden signing of papers, but the outgrowth of careful thought by the best minds, and it put into effect the desires of the people. That precedent has broadened down to provide part of the pattern for the much more difficult case of India.

Progress is Constant

A new Empire and Commonwealth arose from the beaches of Dunkerque, one which, said Churchill: "armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle, until, in God's good time, the new world, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old."

Another, and stronger voice, of these united nations spoke on the day Japan attacked the United States: "With the full approval of the nation, and of the Empire," said Churchill, "I pledged the word of Great Britain, about a month ago, that should the United States be involved in war with Japan, a British declaration of war would follow within the hour."

At the wedding of Princess Elizabeth last year, a crowded London, including representatives from all the Commonwealth, gave evidence that these people considered it was a new day that was coming, and not the night of an Empire.

Of course, the new day will bring new problems. The multiplication of sovereign states within the circle of the British System will give rise to new puzzles in constitutional relations. The countries graduating into full nationhood face difficulties, and no better words can be said to them than those with which de Tocqueville concludes his classic volumes on *Democracy in America*: "Providence has not created mankind entirely independent or entirely free. It is true that around every man a fatal circle is traced, beyond which he cannot pass; but within the wide verge of that circle he is powerful and free: as it is with man, so with communities. The nations of our time cannot prevent the conditions of men from becoming equal; but it depends upon themselves whether the principle of equality is to lead them to servitude or to freedom, to knowledge or to barbarism, to prosperity or to wretchedness."

Commonwealth Nations

It can be truly said that the British Commonwealth and Empire is the closest humanity has come to a world community. It is the greatest assurance humanity has squeezed from history that a world order founded upon freedom and upon international decency can be set up.

Let us take a look at the nations which make up the Commonwealth, and then come back to consideration of what holds them together.

Since this article is about "The Other Dominions" it is not intended to deal extensively with Canada, but some figures are given for purposes of comparison. Area 3,690,410 square miles, equal to 28 per cent of the total area of the British Empire and Commonwealth. Population 13,000,000 (Estimate: 1948). Three provinces federated as the Dominion of Canada 1867; later extension of settlement created six additional provinces and two territories.

Commonwealth of Australia

Area 2,974,581 square miles. Population (1947) 7,580,820. Became a Dominion 1901.

Australia is the world's chief producer of wool, and sheep farming is the Commonwealth's most important single industry. About 55 per cent of Australia's total area is suitable only for pastoral pursuits, mining excepted. Manufacturing has made rapid progress, with the value of industrial output increasing threefold between 1915 and 1940.

Australia's position as an outpost of Western civilization in an alien sea has a strong effect on her outlook on world affairs. She became a member of the Pacific Council to co-ordinate the Allied war effort, and in 1946 her Minister for External Affairs foresaw "the possibility of a Dominion acting in certain regions or for certain purposes on behalf of the other members of the British Commonwealth, including the United Kingdom itself."

The Australians have made good headway on their difficult continent despite depressing setbacks. Their confidence was high at the time of federation, and they hoped for a population of 20 million by the half

century. Then came the first world war, in which Australia suffered the irreparable loss of nearly 70,000 dead and twice as many disabled out of a population of $4\frac{1}{2}$ million.

Today, conservative estimates place the number of people who can be supported at current standards of living at 12 to 15 million. Speaking of standards of living reminds us that Australia is well up in the scale. Australians send more telegraphic messages per head every year than any other people in the world; they are seventh in density of telephones, and sixth among world nations in radio sets per hundred of population.

Dominion of New Zealand

Area 103,935 square miles. Population (1945) 1,648,935. Became a Dominion 1907.

New Zealand, made up of two islands, occupies a lonely post in the South Pacific, 1,200 miles east of Australia and 6,000 miles west of South America. More than 96 per cent of her people are of British stock.

About two-thirds of New Zealand is suitable for agriculture and grazing, and 20 million acres of this were under cultivation in 1946. Numerous streams provide a great volume of hydro-electric power. Industrial establishments are small, with localized markets, while there is extreme specialization in a few exportable agricultural products.

Union of South Africa

Area 472,494 square miles. Population (1946) 11,258,858. Dominion status 1910.

The Union is the world's leading producer of gold, the principal source of South Africa's wealth and purchasing power. Coal, which ranks second in minerals, provides fuel for the gold-mining industry, for generation of electric power, and for manufacturing iron and steel. The Union is one of the world's leading producers of diamonds, and in addition yields platinum, copper, iron ore, manganese, asbestos and chrome. Agriculturally, South Africa is a pastoral country, with less than 15 per cent of its area regarded as arable. Sheep and cattle raising are the principal occupations of the rural population.

The recent war developed manufacturing, and by 1942 there were 10,000 factories giving employment to 150,000 Europeans and 264,000 non-Europeans.

Like Canada, the Union is bilingual, the official languages being English and Afrikaans, and about 65 per cent of the population over 7 years old understands both languages.

Newfoundland

Area 42,734 square miles. Population (1945) 318,177.

The island of Newfoundland lies east of Canada at the mouth of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and its dependency, Labrador (110,000 square miles) is on the mainland, adjoining Quebec.

Newfoundland, the oldest colony of Great Britain, obtained responsible government in 1855 and in 1911 was recognized as one of the self-governing Dominions. During the depression she fell into financial difficulties, and asked the United Kingdom Parliament to accept responsibility for administration. Newfoundland is, therefore, a Dominion which at her own request has for the time being given up Dominion status: "a Dominion on leave of absence."

Fishing is Newfoundland's principal industry, providing a livelihood for 40 per cent of her population. More than half the island is forested, and manufacture of newsprint is the second most important industry. The pulp and paper industry employs about 15,000 with further expansion in sight. There are extensive mineral resources, including iron, lead, zinc and copper ores, limestone and fluorspar. It is said in the *Statesman's Year Book* that iron ore reserves on Bell Island total $3\frac{1}{2}$ billion tons. The international airport at Gander is used by half a dozen lines flying the North Atlantic.

Republic of Éire

Area 26,601 square miles. Population (1946) 2,953,452. Dominion 1921.

Éire, formerly the Irish Free State, is an agrarian state that occupies five-sixths of the island of Ireland. Seventy per cent of the people are directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture for a livelihood, and 80 per cent of all exports are livestock and livestock products. Shannon airport is one of the greatest international airports, used by eight major airlines, with more than 100,000 passengers in a year passing through this, the world's first customs-free airport.

Éire is a sovereign, independent, democratic state, named a republic in 1945. It is associated as a matter of external policy with the states of the British Commonwealth, though the King is excluded from participation in internal affairs. By a constitution of 1937, claim is laid to the whole island, but this is denied by the six counties of Ulster, which have their own Parliament and elect representatives to the United Kingdom Parliament.

Ireland is an ancient country. Neolithic lake dwellings were inhabited right up to the days when O'Neill of Tyrone was fighting the British before the settlement of Ulster in the 1600's. The Irish calendar is full of anniversaries of national heroes, and her past gave her many great writers. Gladstone, the English statesman who introduced the first Home Rule Bill in 1886, is said to have remarked: "Individually the Irish are charming, but collectively they are a damned nuisance."

India

The Union of India (Dominion). Area 1,050,000 square miles. Population 295,000,000. Pakistan (Dominion). Area 290,000 square miles. Population 70,600,000.

On August 15th last year there emerged on the sub-continent of India two sovereign independent nations (Union of India, with a majority of Hindus, and

Pakistan, with a majority of Moslems) each a self-governing Dominion in the Commonwealth.

Few westerners realize the antiquity of India's people. Before the first great Egyptian pyramid was built there existed on the west bank of the Indus an ancient civilization. Large and prosperous cities flourished centuries before the Christian era; students flocked from all the world to her universities; the greater part of her soil was under irrigation, and culture was high.

India can be great again. She has all the important natural resources except oil. Her cotton, jute, tea and sugar production provide for self-sufficiency and exports. Her manpower is inexhaustible. Her internal market would be unique in the world, if only the standard of living of the masses could be lifted even a little.

British government took a country that had declined socially and economically, and tried to provide the material environment (railways, irrigation) and the spiritual incentives (education, law and order) which would encourage a revival.

British medical aid in India goes back for three hundred years; it has wiped out scourges and prolonged life and cut down infant mortality. But the people did not respond economically, and the result has been a worsening of conditions going hand-in-hand with increasing population. As was remarked in one of these Monthly Letters five years ago: "When ancestors have been living for centuries on handfuls of rice, when pain and privation and death are fatalistically accepted, it cannot be expected that this generation will suddenly grasp the opportunity to work steadily so as to have steak and onions, medical treatment, and prolonged life."

Dominion of Ceylon

Area 25,332 square miles. Population (1946) 6,695,605. Dominion 1948.

The island of Ceylon lies in the Indian Ocean, off the coast of India. Successive waves of invaders settled there and became the ancestors of the present population, but never grew into a united people.

After 150 years of British rule, Ceylon was offered Dominion status a year ago, and on February 4th this year, the island, famous in history and legend, became an equal partner in the British Commonwealth.

Ceylon's prosperity depends upon agriculture. Tea and rubber, the main products, are grown largely on plantations. When Malaya's loss deprived the Allies of their chief source of natural rubber, Ceylon was the largest producer left. Coconuts are grown on 1¼ million acres; rice takes nearly a million acres; rubber 650,000 acres, and tea 550,000 acres.

Ceylon has created history by making university education free. All schools, from kindergarten up, whether English, bilingual or native, are free. Public health has been well advanced, with anti-malarial research a special feature.

Southern Rhodesia

Area 150,333 square miles. Population (1946) 1,777,000.

Located on the great plateau in south central Africa, Southern Rhodesia is a self-governing member of the Commonwealth. McGuire calls it, in *Experiment in World Order*, "A curiosity. It has representative and responsible government and deals with the United Kingdom through the Dominions Office. It is in fact a Dominion like Australia and Canada, but no one has yet thought to elevate it formally." Its external affairs, and some matters affecting the native population, are administered by the United Kingdom.

Cattle raising is important, particularly in the southern part of the country, which is too arid for crops. The value of gold production normally exceeds that of all other minerals combined. Southern Rhodesia is one of the world's leading producers of high grade asbestos, and it has large deposits of coal.

The Crown

This Commonwealth has not just grown, as some like to say. Britain's political genius has been something to reckon with ever since Queen Elizabeth's day, and it was built on principles that reach back to Magna Carta.

The secret of the success which has attended building of the Commonwealth seems to lie in retaining the substance of unity while relaxing hold on the legal shadow.

J. Ramsay MacDonald said: "The only possible or desirable form of Empire is one of self-governing States kept together by the most flexible bonds of historical co-operation and of common interest." Beyond national self-interest there must be belief in certain spiritual values and ideals, or the structure of the Commonwealth would not hang together.

Symbol of these higher values is the Crown, whose enduring place must be taken for granted. It is the one tangible link in the Commonwealth. It draws the Commonwealth together in what McGuire calls "A warm and companionable spirit, a cosy sense of common comfort." The King and Queen are winning ambassadors who walk in an aura of tradition not easily shattered.

They say there can be no greater test of belief in ideals than to fight for them. Does the Commonwealth pass this test?

From the fall of France to the German invasion of Russia the only nations standing in arms against the Axis were members of the Commonwealth. Five of them declared war by vote of their own sovereign legislatures.

This is an impressive fact, heightened by the supreme crisis in which the British Prime Minister declared on one of the darkest days: "We must not turn from the path of duty. If the British Empire is fated to pass from life into history, we must hope it will not be by the slow processes of dispersion and decay, but in some supreme exertion for freedom, for right and for truth."