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TEXT OF SPEECH ON "THE EXPANDING COMMONWEALTH"
GIVEN BY MR. ANGUS M. MACKINTOSH, ACTING COM-
MISSIONER-GENERAL FOR THE UNITED KINGDOM IN
SOUTH EAST ASIA AT THE SINGAPORE ROTARY CLUB
ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 29TH, 1957.

The British Commonwealth of Nations is a vast subject and I could not, even if I so desired, adequately cover all its aspects this afternoon. I therefore do not propose to say much about the character of the Commonwealth or its place in the world today. These, I think, are already pretty well understood. Much has been spoken and written on the subject; and only last Friday George Thomson dealt with it admirably in a broadcast over Radio Malaya. Nor shall I try to cover every manifestation of Commonwealth expansion - for example, in the economic and social fields. My object is to illustrate what I regard as the very remarkable scale on which the British dependent territories are moving along the road towards democratic self-government within the Commonwealth, and the steady speed at which almost everywhere their march goes forward.

In choosing to concentrate upon this, I do not mean to imply that Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom believe in political advance to the exclusion of social and economic development. In pursuing their declared aim of assisting the dependent territories to achieve self-government within the Commonwealth, successive United Kingdom Governments, irrespective of party, have taken the line that for political progress to be healthy, and for its culmination in self-government to be secure and durable, it is necessary for social and economic progress to go along with it. Thus, through the expansion of education and the other social services, these emergent nations can consciously prosecute the intellectual and administrative development which will provide them with the apparatus of modern government, with a critical awareness of themselves as distinctive peoples and with a firm understanding of their own destinies. Thus, too, through economic expansion, they can consistently consolidate the material foundations of a mature and vigorous society and a capable and confident polity.

Let me give you one or two illustrations of the extent to which progress in the social and economic fields has been achieved. In the social field, the number of children at school in the Federation of Malaya increased from 400,000 in 1947 to 800,000 in 1954; for Nigeria the figures are 600,000 and 1,300,000. Again, during that same period deaths due to parasitic or infectious diseases went down by 70% in Jamaica; and since 1945 the infant mortality rate has fallen everywhere - in some territories, including Singapore, by nearly half.

In the economic field, the total public revenue of the dependent territories in 1955 amounted to £500 million as compared with £300 million in 1951 and £57,500,000 in 1939. Similarly, capital formation - that is, the creation of new assets by governments and other official bodies, by commercial firms and by individuals - rose from £190 million in 1948 to £450 million in 1955. I might, perhaps, add that between 1949 and 1955 the United Kingdom put \$600 million into the dependent territories, of which almost exactly half came from Government and half from private sources.

/The process

The process by which British dependent territories have gradually, in cooperation with Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, moved forward to independence has been going on for a long time. Some of these territories were never in any sense parts of the Commonwealth. For example, Egypt advanced under British protection from dependent status within the Ottoman Empire to full independence in 1936; under the mandate system of the League of Nations the United Kingdom brought Iraq and Jordan to independence in 1942 and 1946 respectively; It was with the help of an United Kingdom military administration that Libya became independent in 1949; and in 1956 the Sudan emerged as a new nation after a period of mainly British guidance. Within the Commonwealth, India and Pakistan in 1947, Ceylon in 1948 and Ghana this year have all become sovereign states. The fact that when Burma became independent in 1948 she chose not to remain in the Commonwealth underlines the freedom of this great association of nations.

There are today 46 British dependent territories, situated all over the world and comprising peoples and countries of universal diversity. In almost all, recent political progress is being consolidated or plans for progress to come are being worked out: where this is not so, the reason is to be found in the special circumstances of individual territories and not in any reluctance on the part of the United Kingdom Government to see progress take place.

Let us look briefly at some current instances of this continuing and worldwide progress. Here in South East Asia, as a result of the London conference last year, of the Reid Commission and of a long series of informal consultations between the United Kingdom Government, Their Highness the Rulers and the Federation Government, the Federation of Malaya is set firmly on a course which will bring it to sovereign independence in the Commonwealth in a few months' time. In Singapore the London conferences of last year and this year have produced agreement upon a plan for full internal self-government. In Borneo a new constitution is about to be introduced in Sarawak as the result of much debate and consultation in the territory and with Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. All over Africa we find the same sort of picture. As regards West Africa, a major conference of representatives of the Central and Regional Governments of Nigeria and of the United Kingdom Government is now meeting in London to plan the next steps in the constitutional progress of that vast country; while a new and enlarged House of Representatives has just been elected in Sierra Leone. In East Africa, the Governor of Tanganyika has recently announced fresh measures of constitutional development; constitutional changes have lately taken place and others are now impending in Uganda; and in February of this year meetings were held in London between political leaders from Mauritius, the Governor and Colonial Office Ministers to discuss a new constitution to be introduced in 1958. In the West Indies, delegations from Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad, the Leeward Islands and the Windward Islands agreed last year upon the establishment of a British Caribbean Federation, and the practical steps necessary to bring it into being are already being taken. Once the new Federation is established its progress to sovereign membership of the Commonwealth will surely be rapid. In the Mediterranean the United Kingdom Government are seeking agreement upon a new constitution for Cyprus and are deep in consultation with the Government of Malta about their future relationship. These developments are not isolated phenomena - sudden bursts of activity between static periods. Rather, they are stages in a road that is always steadily thrusting forward at such speed as the constitutional engineers engaged in the work can achieve in the given political terrain and with the materials available to them.

I have said that it is the declared aim of Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to assist the dependent territories to achieve self-government within the Commonwealth. I have also said that in pursuing this aim the United Kingdom Government seek to promote political, social and economic advance as three indispensable and inseparable elements in a single grand design. This concept is in turn one of the three of the mainpillars of what may loosely be called British Colonial policy. A second is that the pattern of political progress should everywhere vary in content and in timing to suit the differing circumstances, needs and wishes of different territories (which in a very real sense means having not one but 46 Colonial policies); and a third is that the way ahead should be mapped and the road built by means of constant, close collaboration between the United Kingdom Government and the peoples of the territories concerned.

The story of West Indian federation provides an interesting illustration of variety and flexibility in methods of constitutional advance. Federation has for many years been a living issue in the West Indies, partly because the individual territories recognised that it would be difficult, perhaps impossible, for them - small, scattered and relatively poor - to exist separately as sovereign states in the modern world. It used to be said that when Christopher Columbus first landed in Jamaica no one took any notice of him because they were all so busy arguing about federation; and it was sometimes added that when the last trump sounded the West Indians would still be so deep in the same argument that they would not hear it. We know now, however, that at any rate the second of these statements is untrue. The first material step towards Federation was a large formal conference held at Montego Bay in Jamaica in 1947. At it delegations from all the West Indian territories, meeting under the chairmanship of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, agreed that federation was desirable in principle and that a local inter-territorial committee should be set up to examine its implications in detail. I was lucky enough to be secretary to that conference and I have found it fascinating over the ensuing 10 years to watch the progress made as a result of it. At the conference the Secretary of State made it clear that, while the United Kingdom Government favoured the idea of federation, it would come about only through the willing agreement of the local Governments and their ability to work out a federal scheme acceptable to all of them. It is scarcely surprising that a decade should have passed in the performance of that task. During that time every imaginable expedient of consultation and negotiation has been employed. There have been further formal conferences of representatives of the territories and of the United Kingdom Government both in the West Indies and in London; there has been constant discussion between West Indian and United Kingdom Ministers on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean; there have been local joint committees in the West Indies steadily working away on the details of a suitable scheme; there have been independent commissions of impartial experts going out from the United Kingdom to the West Indies to examine and advise upon some of the more complicated, technical or contentious problems; there have been many debates in the local legislatures and in the United Kingdom Parliament; and there has been much public discussion. Step by step, by these means, the West Indian territories have resolved the differences between themselves and have together reached agreement with the United Kingdom Government on the shape of a federated West Indies. As a result, a Bill to create a British Caribbean Federation received the Royal Assent in August of last year and the first Federal Government will come into being later this year. Meanwhile, it had been agreed at the Montego Bay Conference that it would be open to the individual territories to seek constitutional advance separately, irrespective of any

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developments, or lack of them, in the context of federation; and since 1947 each territory has gradually gone ahead with such measures as the introduction of universal adult suffrage and the establishment of Ministerial systems of government, so that the new Federal Government comes into being when the West Indies have already reached an advanced stage in the evolution of parliamentary democracy.

That is rather a long story but I hope that it may have demonstrated some of the main points which I set out to make this afternoon - first, the universal and continuing movement of the British dependent territories towards self-government within the Commonwealth; second, the variation of the course of that movement according to the different circumstances of the various territories; and third, the fact that at all stages each fresh step is taken after mature consultation, and by agreement, between the Government of the territory concerned and Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. Here is no mechanical order of satellites: no set of rigid political doctrines is imposed from the centre and thereafter enforced through complaisant local instruments as a means of perpetuating central control. Instead, here is a lively and democratic organism expanding by flexible processes of willing collaboration into a free association of friendly peoples with a common basis of belief in what constitutes the good life.

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