

MEETING OF COMMONWEALTH PRIME MINISTERS, 1946

(London, 23 April-25 May)

FINAL COMMUNIQUE

In the course of the last five weeks the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, the Right Honourable C R Attlee, and several of his Cabinet colleagues, the Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Honourable W L Mackenzie King, the Prime Minister of Australia, the Right Honourable J B Chifley, and the Australian Minister of External Affairs, the Right Honourable H V Evatt, the Deputy Prime Minister of New Zealand, the Right Honourable W Nash, and the Prime Minister of South Africa, Field-Marshal the Right Honourable J C Smuts, have engaged in informal consultations on a number of questions arising in connection with the post-war settlements.

The representatives of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa desire to place on record their sincere thanks to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom for presiding over the meetings and for his constant and valuable help.

The discussions have been in the nature of an informal exchange of views. They have covered a broad field and have contributed greatly to the elucidation of many problems and to a mutual understanding of the issues involved. Among the subjects on which views were exchanged were the draft Peace Treaties with Italy, Rumania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Finland; the future of Germany; security responsibilities and arrangements for liaison between British Commonwealth Governments on military affairs; and economic and welfare co-operation in the South Pacific and South-East Asia. The opportunity was taken for consultations on other current issues and matters of mutual interest, including separate consultations between individual United Kingdom and Dominion Ministers on questions specially affecting one or two countries only.

At the conclusion of the meetings, the assembled representatives of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa place on record their appreciation of the value of this series of consultations, which exemplifies the system of free discussion and exchange of views that characterises the relations of the countries of the British Commonwealth. The existing methods of consultation have proved their worth. They include a continuous exchange of information and comment between the different members of the Commonwealth. They are flexible and can be used to meet a variety of situations and needs, both those where the responsibility is on one member alone and where the responsibility may have to be shared. They are peculiarly appropriate to the character of the British Commonwealth, with its independent members who have shown by their sacrifices in the common cause their devotion to kindred ideals and their community of outlook. While all are willing to consider and adopt practical proposals for developing the existing system, it is agreed that the methods now practised are preferable to any rigid centralised machinery. In their view such centralised machinery would not facilitate, and might even

hamper, the combination of autonomy and unity which is characteristic of the British Commonwealth and is one of their great achievements.

They reaffirm their belief in the efficacy of free and constant consultation and co-operation, not only within the British Commonwealth but also in the wider international sphere. They are determined to do everything in their power to maintain in time of peace the historic co-operation achieved by the Allies in time of war. They look forward to the steady development throughout the whole world of closer international co-operation based on increasing mutual confidence and devoted to the raising of standards of living and the promotion of democratic liberty. Their Governments and peoples are determined to give the fullest support to the United Nations Organisation, not only as a foundation of peace and security, but also as a means of promoting economic progress and social welfare.

23 May 1946

Heads of Delegation

Australia	The Rt Hon J B Chifley, Prime Minister
Britain	The Rt Hon C R Attlee, Prime Minister
Canada	The Rt Hon W L Mackenzie King, Prime Minister
New Zealand	The Rt Hon W Nash, Deputy Prime Minister
Union of South Africa	The Rt Hon Field Marshall J C Smuts, Prime Minister