

Monday, 16th May, 1949

**Volume VIII**

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# **CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY DEBATES**

## **OFFICIAL REPORT**

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THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY OF INDIA

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## CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY OF INDIA

*Monday, the 16th May 1949*

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The Constituent Assembly of India met in the Constitution Hall, New Delhi, at Ten of the Clock, Mr. President (The Honourable Dr. Rajendra Prasad) in the Chair.

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### TAKING THE PLEDGE AND SIGNING THE REGISTER

The following Members took the Pledge and signed the Register :—

- (1) The Honourable Shri Binodananda Jha (Bihar : General).
  - (2) Sardar Suchet Singh (Patiala and East Punjab States).
  - (3) Shri Kaka Bhagwant Roy (Patiala and East Punjab States).
- 

### CONDOLENCE ON THE DEATH OF SHRIMATI SAROJINI NAIDU

**Mr. President :** Honourable Members, this is the first time that we meet in this Assembly since the passing away of Shrimati Sarojini Devi. Her life had been dedicated to the service of the country and her steadfastness during the great struggle through which we had to go was exemplary. She had been one of the makers of the India of today, and the loss which the country has sustained cannot be easily repaired. I wish the Members to show respect to her memory by standing in their places for a moment.

(All the Members stood up in silence.)

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### PROGRAMME OF BUSINESS

**Mr. President :** Before taking up the items on the agenda, I desire, to make few preliminary remarks with regard to the programme for this Session.

Honourable Members will recollect that during the last Session we were able to deal upto the 67th article of the Draft Constitution. Some four articles before article 67 were left over for consideration at a later stage. We dealt with two other articles dealing with the question of elections. The Steering Committee of the Constituent Assembly met the other day and decided that we must take up in the first instance those other articles which dealt with elections so that the preparations for the next elections might go on without interruption. I therefore propose to take up those articles, a list of which I believe has been supplied to honourable Members.

We have still a great deal of work to get through in this Session. Out of 315 articles of the Constitution we have dealt only with 65 upto now and then there are eight Schedules. We have therefore to get through the work as quickly as possible. I do not wish in any way to curtail discussion, wherever discussion is considered necessary, and on questions of vital importance. But I would expect the Members to confine their remarks to the important points and not to repeat themselves. If we proceed in a business like way I hope we shall be able to complete this work before the Anniversary of our Independence on 15th August next. My attempt will be to complete the work before then.

[Mr. President]

A question has been raised about the time of the sitting during this Session. There have been two suggestions made to me: one, that we should sit in the morning and the other that we should sit in the afternoon. It is for the House to decide this. Personally I have no choice in the matter. Whatever the House decides I shall accept. We shall sit for about 4 hours every day. If we sit in the mornings it will be from 8 to 12 noon and if we sit in the afternoon, it will be from half past three to half past seven. I will make the announcement at the end of the day after knowing the views of honourable Members.

We shall now take up the agenda. The first item is the Resolution of which notice has been given by the Honourable Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

**Seth Govind Das** (C.P. & Berar: General) : \*[Mr. President, before you begin the proceedings of the final session today, I would like to remind you of what you have said before and ask what you are going to do in this connection, as this is the only occasion for that.]

**Mr. President** : I do not think that question arises at this stage. We shall take it up when the time comes.

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#### RESOLUTION *RE* RATIFICATION OF COMMONWEALTH DECISION

**The Honourable Shri Jawaharlal Nehru** (United Provinces : General): Mr. President, Sir, I have the honour to move the following motion:—

“Resolved that this Assembly do hereby ratify the declaration, agreed to by the Prime Minister of India, on the continued membership of India in the Commonwealth of Nations, as set out in the official statement issued at the conclusion of the Conference of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers in London on April 27, 1949.”

All honourable Members have been supplied with copies of this Declaration† and so I shall not read it over again. I shall merely point out very briefly some salient features of this Declaration. It is a short and simple document in four paragraphs. The first paragraph, it will be noticed, deals with the present position in law. It refers to the British Commonwealth of Nations and to the fact that the people in the Commonwealth owe a common allegiance to the Crown. That in law is the present position.

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\*[ ] Translation of Hindustani Speech.

†“The Governments of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India, Pakistan and Ceylon, whose countries are united as Members of the British Commonwealth of Nations and owe a common allegiance to the Crown, which is also the symbol of their free association, have considered the impending constitutional changes in India.

“The Government of India have informed the other Governments of the Commonwealth of the intention of the Indian people that under the new constitution which is about to be adopted India shall become a sovereign independent Republic. The Government of India have however declared and affirmed India’s desire to continue her full membership of the Commonwealth of Nations and her acceptance of the King as the symbol of the free association of its independent member nations and as such as the Head of the Commonwealth.

“The Governments of other countries of the Commonwealth, the basis of whose membership of the Commonwealth is not hereby changed, accept and recognise India’s continuing membership in accordance with the terms of this Declaration.

“Accordingly the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India, Pakistan and Ceylon hereby declare that they remain united as free and equal members of the Commonwealth of Nations, freely co-operating in the pursuit of peace, liberty and progress.”

The next paragraph of this Declaration states that the Government of India have informed the Governments of the other Commonwealth countries that India is soon going to be a sovereign independent Republic; further that they desire to continue her full membership of the Commonwealth of Nations, accepting the King as a symbol of the free association, etc.

The third paragraph says that the other Commonwealth countries accept this and the fourth paragraph ends by saying that all these countries remain united as free and equal members of the Commonwealth of Nations. You will notice that while in the first paragraph that is referred to as the British Commonwealth of Nations, in the subsequent paragraphs that is referred to only as the Commonwealth of Nations. Further you will notice that while in the first paragraph there is the question of allegiance to the Crown which exists at present, later of course this question does not arise because India becoming a Republic goes outside the Crown area completely. There is reference, in connection with the Commonwealth, to the King as the symbol of that association. Observe that the reference is to the King and not to the Crown. It is a small matter but it has certain small significance. But the point is this, that so far as the Republic of India is concerned, her constitution and her working are concerned, she has nothing to do with any external authority, with any King, and none of her subjects owe any allegiance to the King or any other external authority. That Republic may however agree to associate itself with certain other countries that happen to be monarchies or whatever they choose to be. This Declaration therefore states that this new Republic of India, completely sovereign and owing no allegiance to the King, as the other Commonwealth countries do owe, will nevertheless be a full member of this Commonwealth and it agrees that as a symbol of this free partnership or association rather, the King will be recognised as such.

Now, I am placing this Declaration before this honourable House for their approval. Beyond this approval, there is no question of any law being framed in accordance with it. There is no law beyond the Commonwealth. It has not even the formality which normally accompanies treaties. It is an agreement by free will, to be terminated by free will. Therefore there will be no further legislation or law if this House approves of this. In this particular Declaration nothing very much is said about the position of the King except that he will be a symbol, but it has been made perfectly clear—it was made perfectly clear—that the King has no functions at all. He has a certain status. The Commonwealth itself, as such, is no body, if I may say so; it has no organisation to function and the King also can have no functions.

Now, some consequences flow from this. Apart from certain friendly approaches to each other, apart from a desire to co-operate, which will always be conditioned by each party deciding on the measure of co-operation and following its own policy, there is no obligation. There is hardly any obligation in the nature of commitments that flow. But an attempt has been made to produce something which is entirely novel, and I can very well understand lawyers on the one hand feeling somewhat uncomfortable at a thing for which they can find no precedent or parallel. There may also be others feeling that behind this there might be something which they cannot quite understand, something risky, something dangerous, because the thing is so simple on the face of it. That kind of difficulty may arise in people's minds. What I have stated elsewhere I should like to repeat that there is absolutely nothing behind this except what is placed before this House.

One or two matters I may clear up, which are not mentioned in this Declaration. One of these, as I have said, is that the King has no functions at all. This was cleared up in the course of our proceedings; it has no doubt

[The Honourable Shri Jawaharlal Nehru]

been recorded in the minutes of the Conference in London. Another point was that one of the objects of this kind of Commonwealth association is now to create a status which is something between being completely foreign and being of one nationality. Obviously the Commonwealth countries belong to different nations. There are different nationalities. Normally either you have a common nationality or you are foreign. There is no intermediate stage. Up till now in this Commonwealth or the British Commonwealth of Nations, there was a binding link, which was allegiance to the King. With that link, therefore in a sense there was common nationality in a broad way. That snaps, that ends when we become a Republic, and if we should desire to give a certain preference or a certain privilege to any one of these countries, we would normally be precluded from doing so because of what is called the "most favoured nation clause" that every country would be as much foreign as any other country. Now, we want to take away that foreignness, keeping in our own hands what, if any, privileges or preference we can give to another country. That is a matter entirely for two countries to decide by treaty or arrangement, so that we create a new state of affairs—or we try to create it—that the other countries, although in a sense foreign, are nevertheless not completely foreign. I do not quite know how we shall proceed to deal with this matter at a later stage. That is for the House to decide—that is to say, to take the right, only the right to deal with Commonwealth countries, should we so choose, in regard to certain preferences or privileges. What they are to be, all that, of course, we shall in each case be the judge ourselves. Apart from these facts there has nothing been decided in secret or otherwise which has not been put before the public.

The House will remember that there was some talk at one stage of a Commonwealth citizenship. Now it was difficult to understand what the contents of a Commonwealth citizenship might be, except that it meant that they were not completely foreign to one another. That un-foreignness remains, but I think it is as well that we left off talking about something vague, which could not be surely defined, but the other fact remains, as I have just stated: the fact that we should take the right to ourselves, if we so chose to exercise it at any time, to enter into treaties or arrangements with Commonwealth countries assuring certain mutual privileges and preferences.

I have briefly placed before this House this document. It is a simple document and yet the House is fully aware that it is a highly important document or rather what it contains is of great and historical significance. I went some weeks ago as the representative of India to this Conference. I had consulted my colleagues here, of course previously, because it was a great responsibility and no man is big enough to shoulder that responsibility by himself when the future of India is at stake. During the past many months we had often consulted each other, consulted great and representative organizations, consulted many Members of this House. Nevertheless when I went, I carried this great responsibility and I felt the burden of it. I had able colleagues to advice me, but I was the sole representative of India and in a sense that future of India for the moment was in my keeping. I was alone in that sense and yet not quite alone because, as I travelled through the air and as I sat there at that Conference table the ghosts of many yesterdays of my life surrounded me and brought up picture after picture before me, sentinels and guardians keeping watch over me, telling me perhaps not to trip and not to forget them. I remembered, as many honourable Members might remember, that day nineteen years ago when we took a pledge on a bank of the River Ravi, at the midnight hour, and I remembered the 26th of January the first time and that oft-repeated



Pledge year after year in spite of difficulty and obstruction, and finally, I remembered that day when standing at this very place, I placed a resolution before this House. That was one of the earliest resolutions placed before this honourable House, a Resolution that is known as the Objectives Resolution. Two years and five months have elapsed since that happened. In that Resolution we defined more or less the type of free Government or Republic that we were going to have. Later in another place and on a famous occasion, this subject also came up, that was at the Jaipur Session of the Congress, because not only my mind, but many minds were struggling with this problem, trying to find a way out that was in keeping with the honour and dignity and independence of India, and yet also in keeping with the changing world and with the facts as they were, something that would advance the cause of India, would help us, something that would advance the cause of peace in the world, and yet something which would be strictly and absolutely true to every single pledge that we have taken. It was clear to me that what ever the advantages might be of any association with the Commonwealth or with any other group, no single advantage, however great, could be purchased by a single iota of our pledges being given up, because no country can make progress by playing fast and loose with the principles which it has declared. So, during these months we have thought and we had discussed amongst ourselves and I carried all this advice with me. May I read to you, perhaps just to refresh your minds the Resolution passed at the Jaipur Session of the Congress? It might be of interest to you and I would beg of you to consider the very wording of this Resolution:

“In view of the attainment of complete independence and the establishment of the Republic of India which will symbolise with Independence and give to India the status among the nations of the world that is her rightful due, her present association with the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth of Nations will necessarily have to change. India, however, desires to maintain all such links with other countries as do not come in the way of her freedom of action and independence and the Congress would welcome her free association with the independent nations of the Commonwealth for their common weal and the promotion of world peace.”

You will observe that the last few lines of this Resolution are almost identical with the lines of the Declaration of London.

I went there guided and controlled by all our past pledges, ultimately guided and controlled by the Resolution of this honourable House, by the Objectives Resolution and all that has subsequently happened; also by the mandate given to me by the All-India Congress Committee in that Resolution, and I stand before you to say with all humanity that I have fulfilled that mandate to the letter (*Loud Cheers*). All of us have been during these past many years through the valley of the Shadow; we have passed our lives in opposition, in struggle and sometimes in failure and sometimes success and most of us are haunted by those dreams and visions of old days and these hopes that filled us and the frustrations that often followed those hopes; yet we have seen that even out of that prickly thorn of frustration and despair, we have been able to pick out the rose of fulfilment.

Let us not be led away by considering the situation in terms of events which are no longer here. You will see in the resolution of the Congress that I have read out, it says that necessarily because India becomes a Republic, the association of India with the Commonwealth must change. Of course. Further it says that free association may continue subject only to our complete freedom being assured. Now, that is exactly what has been tried to be done in this Declaration of London. I ask you or any honourable Member to point out in what way the freedom, the independence of India has been limited in the slightest. I do not think it has been. In fact, the greatest stress has been laid not only on the independence of India, but on the independence of each individual nation in the Commonwealth.

[The Honourable Shri Jawaharlal Nehru]

I am asked often, how can you join a Commonwealth in which there is racial discrimination, in which there are other things happening to which we object. That, I think, is a fair question and it is a matter which necessarily must cause us some trouble in our thinking. Nevertheless it is a question which does not really arise. That is to say, when we have entered into an alliance with a nation or a group of nations, it does not mean that we accept their other policies, etc.; it does not mean that we commit ourselves in any way to something that they may do. In fact, this House knows that we are carrying on at the present moment a struggle, or our countrymen are carrying on a struggle in regard to racial discrimination in various parts of the world.

This House knows that in the last few years one of the major questions before the United Nations, at the instance of India, has been the position of Indians in South Africa. May I, if the House will permit me, for a moment refer to an event which took place yesterday, that is, the passing of the resolution at the General Assembly of the United Nations, and express my appreciation and my Government's appreciation of the way our delegation have functioned in this matter and our appreciation of all those nations of the United Nations, almost all, in fact, all barring South Africa, which finally supported this attitude of India? One of the pillars of our foreign policy, repeatedly stated, is to fight against racial discrimination, is to fight for the freedom of suppressed nationalities. Are you compromising on that issue by remaining in the Commonwealth? We have been fighting on the South African Indian issue and on other issues even though we have been thus for a dominion of the Commonwealth. It was a dangerous thing for us to bring that matter within the purview of the Commonwealth. Because, then, that very thing to which you and I object might have taken place. That is, the Commonwealth might have been considered as some kind of a superior body which sometimes acts as a tribunal or judges, or in a sense supervises the activities of its member nations. That certainly would have meant a diminution in our independence and sovereignty, if we had once accepted that principle. Therefore we were not prepared and we are not prepared to treat the Commonwealth as such or even to bring disputes between member nations of the Commonwealth before the Commonwealth body. We may of course, in a friendly way discuss this matter; that is a different matter. We are anxious to maintain the position of our countrymen in other country in the Commonwealth. So far as we are concerned, we could not bring their domestic policies in dispute there; nor can we say in regard to any country that we are not going to associate ourselves with that country because we disapprove of certain policies of that country.

I am afraid if we adopted that attitude, then, there would be hardly any association for us with any country, because we have disapproved of some thing or other that that country does. Sometimes, it so happens that the difference is so great that you cut off relations with that country or there is a big conflict. Some years ago, the United Nations General Assembly decided to recommend to its member States to withdraw diplomatic representatives from Spain because Spain was supposed to be a Fascist country. I am not going into the merits of the question. Sometimes, the question comes up in that way. The question has come up again and they have reversed that decision and left it to each member State to do as it likes. If you proceed in this way, take any great country or a small country; you do not agree with every thing that the Soviet Union does; therefore, why should we have representation there or why should we have a treaty of alliance in regard to commercial or trade matters with them? You may not agree with some policies of the United States of America; therefore, you cannot have a treaty with them. That is not the way nations carry on their foreign work or any work. The first thing to realise I think in this world is that there are different ways of

thinking, different ways of living and different approaches to life in different parts of the world. Most of our troubles arise by one country imposing its will and its way of living on other countries. It is true that each country cannot live in isolation, because, the world as constituted today is progressively becoming an organic whole. If one country living in isolation does something which is dangerous to the other countries, the other countries have to intervene. To give a rather obvious example, if one country allows itself to become the breeding ground of all kinds of dangerous diseases, the world will have to come in and clear it up because it cannot afford to allow this disease to spread all over the world. The only safe principle to follow is that, subject to certain limitations, each country should be allowed to live its own life in its own way.

There are at present in the world several ideologies and major conflicts flowing from these ideologies. What is right or what is wrong, we can consider at a later stage, or may be something else is right. Either you want a major conflict, a great war which might result in the victory for this nation or that, or else you allow them to live at peace in their respective territories and to carry on their way of thinking, their way of life, their structure of State, etc., allowing the facts to prove which is right ultimately. I have no doubt at all that ultimately, it will be the system that delivers the goods—the goods being the advancement and the betterment of the human race or the people of the individual countries—that will survive and no amount of theorising and no amount of warfare can make the system that does not deliver the goods survive. I refer to this because of the argument that was raised that India cannot join the Commonwealth because it disapproves of certain policies of certain Commonwealth nations. I think we should keep these two matters completely apart.

We join the Commonwealth obviously because we think it is beneficial to us and to certain causes in the world that we wish to advance. The other countries of the Commonwealth want us to remain there because they think it is beneficial to them. It is mutually understood that it is to the advantage of the nations in the Commonwealth and therefore they join. At the same time, it is made perfectly clear that each country is completely free to go its own way; it may be that they may go, sometimes go so far as to break away from the Commonwealth. In the world today where there are so many disruptive forces at work, where we are often at the verge of war, I think it is not a safe thing to encourage to break up any association that one has. Break up the evil parts of this; break up anything that may come in the way of your growth, because nobody dare agree to anything which comes in the way of a nation's growth. Otherwise, apart from breaking the evil parts of the association, it is better to keep a co-operative association going which may do good in this world rather than break it.

Now this declaration that is placed before you is not a new move and yet it is a complete reorientation of something that has existed in an entirely different way. Suppose we had been cut off from England completely and we have then desired to join the Commonwealth of Nations, it would have been a new move. Suppose a new group of nations wants us to join them and we join them in this way, that would have been a new move from which various consequences would have flown. In the present instance what is happening is that a certain association has been existing for a considerable time past. A very great change came in the way of that association about a year and eight or nine months ago, from August 15, 1947. Now another major change is contemplated. Gradually the conception is changing. Yet that certain link remains in a different form. Now politically we are completely independent. Economically we are as independent as independent nations

[The Honourable Shri Jawaharlal Nehru]

can be. Nobody can be 100 per cent independent in the sense of absolute lack of interdependence, but nevertheless India has to depend on the rest of the world for her trade, for her commerce and for many supplies that she needs, today for her food unfortunately, and so many other things. We cannot be absolutely cut off from the world. Now the House knows that inevitably during the past century and more all kinds of contacts have arisen between England and this country, many of them were bad, very bad and we have struggled throughout our lives to put an end to them. Many of them were not so bad, many of them may be good and many of them good or bad whatever they may be, are there. Here I am, the patent example of these contacts, speaking in this honourable House in the English language. No doubt we are going to change that language for our use but the fact remains that I am doing so and the fact remains that most other Members who will speak will also do so. The fact remains that we are functioning here under certain rules and regulations for which the model has been the British Constitution. Those laws existing today have been largely forged by them. Therefore we have developed these things inevitably. Gradually, laws which are good we will keep and those that are bad we will throw away. Any marked change in this without something to follow creates a hiatus which may be harmful. Largely our educational apparatus has been influenced. Largely our military apparatus has been influenced by these considerations and we have grown up naturally as something rather like the British Army. I am placing before the House certain entirely practical considerations. If we break away completely, the result is that without making sufficient provision for carrying on in a different way we have a gap period; of course if we have to pay a price, we may choose to do so. If we do not want to pay the price, we should not pay it and face the consequences.

But in the present instance we have to consider not only these minor gains, which I have mentioned to you, to us and to others but if I may say so, the larger approach to world problems. I felt as I was conferring there in London with the representatives of other Governments that I had necessarily to stick completely and absolutely to the sovereignty and independence of the Indian Republic. I could not possibly compromise on any allegiance to any foreign authority. I did that. I also felt that in the state of the world today and in the state of India and Asia, it would be a good thing if we approached this question in a friendly spirit there which would solve the problems in Asia and elsewhere. I am afraid I am a bad bargainer. I am not used to the ways of the market place. I hope I am a good fighter and I hope I am a good friend. I am not anything in between and so when you have to bargain hard for anything, do not send me. When you want to fight, I hope I shall fight and then when you are decided about a certain thing, then you must hold to it and hold to it to the death, but about other minor things I think it is far better to gain the goodwill of the other party. It is far more precious to come to a decision in friendship and goodwill than to gain a word here and there at the cost of ill-will. So I approached this problem and may I say how I felt about others. I would like to pay a tribute to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and to others also there because they approached this in that spirit also, not so much to get some debating point or a change of a word here and there in this Declaration. It was possible that if I had tried my hardest I might have got a word here and there changed in this Declaration but the essence could not have been changed because there was nothing more for us to get out of that Declaration. I preferred not to do so because I preferred creating an impression, and I hope a right impression, that the approach of India to these and the other problems of the world was not a narrow-minded approach. It was

an approach based on faith and confidence in her own strength and in her own future and therefore it was not afraid of any country coming in the way of that faith, it was not afraid of any word or phrase in any document but it was based essentially on this that if you approach another country in a friendly way, with goodwill and generosity, you will be paid back in the same coin and probably the payment will be in even larger measure. I am quite convinced that in treatment of nations to one another, as in the case of individuals, only out of goodwill will you get goodwill and no amount of intrigues and cleverness will get you good result out of evil ways. Therefore, I thought that that was an occasion not only to impress England but others also, in fact to some extent the world, because this matter that was being discussed at No. 10 Downing Street in London was something that drew the attention of the entire world. It drew the attention of the world, partly because India is a very important country, potentially so, and actually so too. And the world was interested to see how this very complicated and difficult problem which appeared insoluble, could be solved. It could not be solved if we had left it to eminent lawyers. Lawyers have been their use in life; but they should not be spread out everywhere. It could not have been solved by these extreme, narrow-minded nationalists who cannot see to the right or to the left, but live in a narrow sphere of their own, and therefore forget that the world is going ahead. It could not be solved by people who live in the past and cannot realise that the present is different from the past and that the future is going to be still more different. It could not be solved by any person who lacked faith in India and in India's destiny.

I wanted the world to see that India does not lack faith in herself, and that India is prepared to co-operate even with those with whom she had been fighting in the past; provided the basis of co-operation today is honourable that it is a free basis, a basis which would lead to the good not only of ourselves, but of the world also. That is to say, we would not deny that co-operation simply because in the past we have had a fight, and thus carry on the trail of our past "karma" along with us. We have to wash out the past with all its evil. I wanted if I may say so in all humility, to help in letting the world look at things in a slightly different perspective, or rather try to see how vital questions can be approached and dealt with. We have seen too often in the arguments that go on in the assemblies of the world, this bitter approach, this cursing of each other, this desire not, in the least, to understand the other, but deliberately to misunderstand the other, and to make clever points about it. Now, it may be a satisfying performance for any of us, on occasions to make clever points and be applauded by our people or by some other people. But in the state of the world today, it is a poor thing for any responsible person to do when we live on the verge of catastrophic wars, when national passions are roused, and when even a casually spoken word might make all the difference.

Some people have thought that by our joining or continuing to remain in the Commonwealth of Nations we are drifting away from our neighbours in Asia, or that it has become more difficult for us to co-operate with other countries, great countries in the world. But I think it is easier for us to develop closer relations with other countries while we are in the Commonwealth than it might have been otherwise. That is rather a peculiar thing to say. Nevertheless I say it, and I have given a great deal of thought to this matter. The Commonwealth does not come in the way of our co-operation and friendship with other countries. Ultimately we shall have to decide, and ultimately the decision will depend on our own strength. If we are completely dissociated from the Commonwealth, for the moment we are completely isolated. We cannot remain completely isolated, and so inevitably by stress of circumstances, we have to incline in some direction or other. But that inclination in some direction or other will necessarily

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be a give-and-take affair. It may be in the nature of alliances, you give something yourself and get something in return. In other words, it many involve commitments, far more than at present. There are no commitments today. In that sense, I say we are freer today to come to friendly understandings with other countries and to play the part, if you like, of a bridge for mutual understanding between other countries. I do not wish to place this too high; nevertheless, it is no good placing it too low either. I should like you to look round at the world today and look more especially during the last two years or so, at the relative position of India and the rest of the world. I think you will find that during this period of two years or even slightly less, India has gone up in the scale of nations in its influence and in its prestige. It is a little difficult for me to tell you exactly what India has done or has not done. It would be absurd for anyone to expect that India can become the crusader for all causes in the world and bring forth results. Even in cases that have borne fruit, it is not a thing to be proclaimed from the housetops. But something which does not require any proclamation is the fact of India's present prestige and influence in world affairs. Considering that she came on the scene as an independent nation only a year and a half or a little more ago, it is astonishing—the part that India has played today.

One thing I should like to say, and it is this. Obviously a declaration of this type, or the Resolution that I have placed before the House is not capable of amendment. It is either accepted or rejected. I am surprised to see that some honourable Members have sent notices of amendments. Any treaty with any foreign power can be accepted or rejected. It is a joint Declaration of eight, or is it nine, countries—and it cannot be amended in this House or in any House. It can be accepted or rejected. I would therefore, beg of you to consider this business in all its aspects. First of all, make sure that it is in conformity with our old pledges, that it does violence to none. If it is proved to me that it does violence to any pledge that we have undertaken, that it limits India's freedom in any way, then I certainly shall be no party to it. Secondly, you should see whether it does good to ourselves and to the rest of the world. I think there can be little doubt that it does us good, that this continuing association at the present moment is beneficial for us, and it is beneficial in the larger sense, to certain world causes that we represent. And lastly, if I may put it in a negative way, not to have had this agreement would certainly have been detrimental to those world causes as well as to ourselves.

And finally, about the value I should like this House to attach to this Declaration and to the whole business of those talks resulting in this Declaration. It is a method, a desirable method, and a method which brings a touch of healing with it. In this world which is today sick and which has not recovered from so many wounds during the last decade or more, it is necessary that we touch upon the world problems, not with passion and prejudice and with too much repetition of what has ceased to be, but in a friendly way and with a touch of healing, and I think the chief value of this Declaration and of what preceded it was that it did bring a touch of healing in our relations with certain countries. We are in no way subordinate to them, and they are in no way subordinate to us. We shall go our way and they shall go their way. But our ways, unless something happens, will be friendly ways; at any rate, attempts will be made to understand each other, to be friends with each other and to co-operate with each other. And the fact that we have begun this new type of association with a touch of healing will be good for us, good for them, and I think, good for the world (*Cheers*).

**Prof. Shibban Lal Saksena** (United Provinces: General): Sir, I beg to move the following amendment to the motion:—

“(1) That in the motion, for the words ‘do hereby ratify’ the words ‘has carefully considered’ be substituted:

(2) That the following be added at the end of the motion:-

“and is of opinion that membership of the Commonwealth is incompatible with India’s new status of a Sovereign Independent Republic. Besides, the terms of membership are derogatory to India’s dignity and her new status, and as such are bound to circumscribe and limit her freedom of action in international affairs and tie her down to the chariot-wheel of Anglo-American power bloc. India with a population of 350 millions out of a total population of about 500 millions of the whole of the Commonwealth cannot accept the King of England as the Head of the Commonwealth in any shape or form. Also, India cannot become the member of a Commonwealth, many members of which still regard Indians as an inferior race and enforce colour bar against them and deny them even the most elementary rights of citizenship. The recent anti-Indian riots in South Africa, the assertion of the all White policy in Australia and the execution of Ganapathy and the refusal to commute the death sentence on Sambasivan in Malaya in spite of the representations of the Indian Government clearly show that India cannot derive any advantage from the membership of the Commonwealth and the Britain and other members of the Commonwealth cannot give up their Imperialist and racial policies.

Considering all these facts, and also considering the fact that the Congress Party, which is in an absolute majority in the Constituent Assembly and in other provincial legislatures in the country, has had the complete independence of India with the severance of the British connection as its declared goal at the time of the last general elections, any new relationship in contravention of that policy with the British Commonwealth can only be properly decided by the new Parliament of the Indian Republic, which will be elected under the new constitution on the basis of adult suffrage.

This Assembly therefore resolves that the question of India’s membership of the Commonwealth be deferred until the new Parliament is elected and the wishes of the people of the country clearly ascertained. The Assembly calls upon the Prime Minister of India to inform the Prime Minister of Great Britain and other members of the Commonwealth accordingly.”

Sir, I have heard with great attention the historic speech of my Leader, the Prime Minister. He himself said that this is a historic occasion and the Declaration he has asked us to ratify is also a historic Declaration. In the recent past there have not been many such occasions when we have been called upon to decide issues of such great moment; perhaps the most recent occasion comparable to it was that when the country was called upon to decide the issue of India’s partition. That issue was not discussed by this House but was decided by the All-India Congress Committee. We know the fruits of the decision that was taken on that occasion have not been very good. I was one of the most bitter opponents of the partition plan. Today also I have to voice my disagreement with my leader on this London Declaration to which he has agreed already and which he wants us to ratify.

**Pandit Balkrishna Sharma** (United Provinces: General): Sir, on a point of order, I should like to know whether in view of the almost negative character of the amendment it is in order.

**Mr. President** : The honourable Member himself said that it is “almost a negative” and not “a negative”; so I have therefore allowed it.

**The Honourable Shri Jawaharlal Nehru** : Sir, I should like to have your ruling regarding international treaties and whether such an amendment would be in order when a treaty of this type by the Government of the day has been concluded. I do not know a treaty can be accepted or rejected; amendment cannot be made to a treaty.

**Mr. President** : Here we go by the rules and I have to see whether under the rules the amendment is in order. What the effect of that on the treaty will be I do not know but I think under the rules the amendment is in order

[Mr. President]

and therefore I have allowed it. Of course it is for the House to reject it if it thinks it should not be passed.

**Mr. Z. H. Lari** (United Provinces: Muslim): May I know whether the ratification of this Declaration is within the province of his House as a constitution-making body?

**Mr. President** : Yes, I think it is.

**Prof. Shibban Lal Saksena** : I am asking this House neither to accept this Declaration nor to reject it but only to postpone its consideration until the country has given its verdict upon this momentous issue. The Prime Minister himself said just now that when he was negotiating this Declaration alone in London, he felt the burden of a heavy responsibility on his shoulders, but the feeling that he had consulted his colleagues here before he went helped him to shoulder the burden. I think this Declaration is a violation of the election pledges contained in the election manifesto of the Congress Party on which the overwhelming majority in this House was elected and this House is therefore not competent to ratify this declaration. My amendment only embodies what my Leader the Prime Minister has himself taught us all his life. I shall quote from his address to the All India Convention held in Delhi on March 19, 1937 where all the legislators elected on Congress ticket had assembled and he reminded us of our election manifesto. This is what he said then:

“I would have them remember the Election Manifesto and the Congress resolutions on the basis of which they sought the suffrage of the people. Let no one forge that we have entered the legislatures not to co-operate in any way with British imperialism but to fight and end this Act which enslaves and binds us. Let no one forget we fight for independence.

“What is this Independence? A clear, definite, ringing word, which all the world understands, with no possibility of ambiguity. And yet, to our misfortune, even that word has become an object of interpretation and misinterpretation. Let us be clear about it. Independence means national freedom in the fullest sense of the word; it means, as our pledge has stated, a severance of the British connection. It means anti-imperialism and no compromise with empire. Words are hurled at us, - dominion status, Status of Westminster, British Commonwealth of Nations, and we quibble about their meaning. I see no real commonwealth anywhere, only an empire exploiting the Indian people and numerous other peoples in different parts of the world. I want my country to have nothing to do with this enormous engine of exploitation in Asia and Africa. If this engine goes, we have nothing but good-will for England, and in any event we wish to be friends with the mass of the British people.

“Dominion status is a term which arose under peculiar circumstances and it changed its significance as time passed. In the British group of nations, it signified a certain European dominating group exploiting numerous subject peoples. That distinction continues whatever change the Status of Westminster might have brought about in the relations *inter se* of the members of that European dominating group. That group represents British imperialism and it stands in the world today for the very order and forces of reaction against which we struggle. How then can we associate ourselves willingly with this order and these forces? Or is it conceived that we might, in the course of time and if we behave ourselves, be promoted from the subject group to the dominating group, and yet the imperialist structure and basis of the whole will remain more or less as it is? This is a vain conception having no relation to reality, and even if it were within the realms of possibility, we should have none of it, for we would then become partners in imperialism and in the exploitation of others. And among these others would probably be large numbers of our own people.

“It is said, and I believe Gandhiji holds this view, that if we achieved national freedom, this would mean the end of British imperialism itself. Under such conditions there is no reason why we should not continue our connection with Britain. There is force in the argument for our quarrel



is not with Britain or the British people but with British imperialism. But when we think in these terms, a larger and a different world comes into our ken, and dominion status and the Statute of Westminster pass away from the present to the historical past. That larger world does not think of a British group of nations, but of a world group based on political and social freedom."

**Mr. President :** Is the honourable Member going to read out the whole speech?

**Prof. Shibban Lal Saksena :** No. I have only one more paragraph.

"To talk, therefore, of dominion status in its widest significance, even including the right to separate, is to confine ourselves to one group, which of necessity will oppose and be opposed by other groups, and which will essentially be based on the present decaying social order. Therefore, we cannot entertain this idea of dominion status in any shape or form; it is independence we want not any particular status. Under cover of that phrase, the tentacles of imperialism will creep up and hold us in their grip, though the outer structure might be good to look at."

"And so our pledge must hold and we must labour for the severance of the British connection. But let us repeat again that we favour no policy of isolation or aggressive nationalism, as the word is understood in the Central European countries today. We shall have the closest of contacts, we hope, with all progressive countries, including England, if she has shed her imperialism."

This was in 1937. I will now quote a small paragraph from the declaration of the 10th August 1940. This is the conclusion of a long article that Panditji wrote on "The Parting of the Ways." He said:

"That is the goal of India—a united, free, democratic country, closely associated in a world federation with other free nations. We want independence, but not the old type of narrow, exclusive independence. We believe that the day of separate warring national States is over."

"We want independence and not dominion or any other status. Every thinking person knows that the whole conception of dominion status belongs to past history: it has no future. It cannot survive this War, whatever the result of this War. But whether it survives or not we want none of it. We do not want to be bound down to a group of nations which has dominated and exploited over us: we will not be in an empire in some parts of which we are treated as helots and where racialism runs riot. We want to cut adrift from the financial domination of the City of London. We want to be completely free with no reservations of exceptions, except such as we ourselves approve, in common with others, in order to join a Federation of Nations, or a new World Order. If this new World Order or Federation does not come in the near future we should like to be closely associated in a federation with our neighbours—China, Burma, Ceylon, Afghanistan, Persia. We are prepared to take risks and face dangers. We do not want the so-called protection of the British army or navy. We shall shift for ourselves."

"If the past had not been there to bear witness, the present would have made us come to this final decision. For even in this present of war and peril, there is no change in the manner of treatment accorded to our people by British imperialism. Let those who seek the favour and protection of this imperialism go its way. We go ours. The parting of the ways has come."

Sir, it is a most serious thing to oppose a Resolution moved by no less a person than Panditji, but I have felt that the occasion is such that I must voice what I feel. I feel from the innermost depths of my being that we are committing a mistake, a mistake as great as that which took place on the occasion of accepting the Mountbatten plan accepting the partition of the country. There are occasions in history when men must voice what they feel without care for consequences. I feel that this amendment which I have placed before you should be considered calmly and coolly.

Sir, since our leader signed the Declaration on the 27th April, I have carefully read and studied, every speech that he has delivered in party meetings and in public, and heard every talk of his that has been radio-ed. I have read all

[Prof. Shibban Lal Saksena]

the comments in the papers on this Declaration. I have also read what Sardarji has had to say upon it. I have very seriously considered whether we were really gaining something for our country, but I feel that the gains are so little compared to the losses that a ratification of the Declaration would be suicidal.

Our leader has just now told us that critics like me are living in the past, that they are not living in the present and that they cannot see the future. That is the charge he made against some of the leaders for whom we and he both have great respect and I have deliberated upon it very coolly. I have tried to see that the extracts I have quoted were only meant for the past and do not hold true for the present. But I find they enunciate principles which do not change. Also I feel that the present has not changed. Almost as soon as the Prime Minister had signed the Declaration, that brave Indian leader of Malayan Trade Unions, Ganapathy, was executed, and today when we are going to pass this resolution, Sambasivam, another brave Indian in Malaya, may have been either already executed this morning or may probably be waiting to be hanged today. I feel that British imperialism goes its own way and it will not be deflected no matter what we do to try to cajole it or to win it over. It has its own purpose. I am surprised that our Prime Minister, who is respected all over the world for his idealism sometimes forgets these simple things. See what is happening in South Africa where Indians are being bounded out like an enemy. We can forget the past, but how can we shut our eyes to the present? True, we must not allow sentiment to come in our way in deciding great issues. And even though the whole country is sentimentally against the ratification of this declaration, I will now look at it from the point of view of the concrete advantages that we are told we shall get from it. Personally speaking, I could not find any advantages. Suppose we cut ourselves away from the Commonwealth. Suppose we say that we are an Independent Republic, and a Republic is completely incompatible with monarchy. What will happen? It may be that there will be certain difficulties in the beginning but have we not pledged ourselves to overcome all difficulties incidental to freedom? Therefore, these temporary difficulties will have to be overcome: but our great nation must not continue to be bound down to a small country like England for ever. I feel Sir, that when India cuts herself away from the Commonwealth, she shall have the respect of the world which is due to a completely free nation and she shall inspire confidence in the world when it knows that she is really unattached to any bloc. By aligning ourselves with the Commonwealth we certainly join one power bloc. We cannot get rid of this fact. We are joining the Anglo-American power bloc. We cannot take any decision which is against the decision of this power bloc.

**Pandit Balkrishna Sharma :** May I know, if the honourable Member is aware that even Members of the Commonwealth differ in the United Nations Organization on international questions?

**Prof. Shibban Lal Saksena :** I fully know that they differ but only on unimportant details. But I say that being in the Commonwealth we shall have to go with them on major issues. We cannot oppose them unless we want to break with them. Therefore by being in the Commonwealth, we will have to follow them and to that extent our independence will be circumscribed. Already Russia feels that we have joined the Anglo-American power bloc. Observer M. Marinin, writing in Monday's *Pravda* of Moscow, on the 30 April declared "that however Constitutional Forms are altered, the relations between Britain and India remained unchanged except for the introduction of a new military political basis. India's reform as a republic was being used to strike a new bargain between the British and Indian leaders involving the transformation of this "Republic" into an "Anglo-American lever in Southeast Asia." British observers regarded India as the 'Key to Asia which is the

Eastern Front in the present cold war' and naturally the United States and Britain wished to own this key. For this purpose they were employing economic pressure through loans and frank intimidation.

“The Basic purpose of the London meeting is the Labour Government’s desire to bind the Dominions with a chain of new far-reaching military obligations including them in the system of aggressive policy of the Anglo-American bloc thus striving to weaken the action of centrifugal forces now destroying the British Empire.”

Sir, communist China has also declared that by signing this declaration, our country has joined the Anglo-American power bloc. We have always hoped and imagined that India and China will work together. That hope is now shattered. Indo-China, Siam, Malaya and Burma are already under communist influence. What then becomes of India’s leadership of Asia? One-third of Asia is part of Russia. China forms another one-third of Asia, and it is going communist. Of the remaining one-third, only India and Pakistan and some middle-east countries remain outside the communist away. By joining the Commonwealth, India becomes hostile to this major part of Asia which is under communist influence. So our leadership of Asia goes with our membership of the Commonwealth. If we sever connection with the Commonwealth and remain really unattached, we earn the respect of Russia and other countries under communist influence also and then the countries in the Anglo-American bloc will also woo our friendship.

By joining the Commonwealth we lose our bargaining power with all the countries in the world. We sell our hard-won freedom and do not get even the proverbial mess of pottage in return. In fact, India becomes the last bastion of Anglo-American Imperialism in its fight against Russia. So far China was the frontier of Soviet influence in the east, and was the battle-ground where American forces were fighting communism behind the Kuomintang. China is now lost to America. India is therefore best fitted to be the new battle-ground from where Anglo-American forces can fight the advancing tide of communism. By joining the Commonwealth therefore, we are joining the third world war on the Anglo-American side against Russia. That is why I am so strongly opposed to this motion and desire my amendment to be accepted.

Sir, I agree with Acharya Narendra Dev that Russia does not want war and we would be in a much better position to promote world peace and maintain world peace if we say that we will not be in the Commonwealth. I have said that I honestly feel. I feel that if I did not say this I would not have done my duty. From the 26th January 1931 I have been taking the Independence Pledge—our leader made a reference to it—and that Pledge says that this British Empire has ruined India economically and politically and spiritually and therefore severance of the British connection is essential for our independence. I, therefore feel that as one who has taken that Pledge I cannot with a clean conscience support this Resolution. I therefore wish that this amendment of mine be accepted and a decision on this issue be deferred and the country be called upon to give its decision on this momentous issue.

**Shri Lakshminarain Sahu** (Orissa: General): \*[Mr. President, I only wish to move that the following be added to the Resolution moved by Pandit Jawaharlal Ji.

“Provided the Commonwealth does not allow discrimination of Indians in South Africa and Australia and also metes out equal justice to all the component units of Commonwealth in social and economic matters.”

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\*[ ] Translation of Hindustani Speech.

[Shri Lakshminarain Sahu]

While moving this, I am already feeling a bit apprehensive, because Pandit Nehru has just told us that it would not be proper to change what has been decided upon in an international gathering. I therefore wish to draw his attention to the fact that the proviso moved by me does not alter the implications of the international decision. But I wish to insert this provision in order to avoid the doubts that have arisen in our minds.

First of all, I want to say that it has always been the view of the society to which I belong, the Servants of India Society, that the association between India and Britain is due to some deep mystery. I personally believe it is due to Divine Providence, and with this idea, Mr. President, I wish to say, that the former anarchists have now become moderates. But I have, and many people have, misgivings in their minds on account of the change that has come about in the views of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who used to be till recently an anarchist. When I think of the Resolution moved just now, I am reminded of a function called Phool Sabha (Entertainment Function) which is held at the time of marriage celebrations. In this Phool Sabha every one talks of nice things and each and all are lost in mirth. I feel that the recent Commonwealth Conference was like that Phool Sabha. I wish that the Constituent Assembly should complete the Constitution first and after that we should go out of the Dominion Status for a day and the next day we should join it again. If that happens, we can consider ourselves to be independent, and later on join the Commonwealth of our own will. It appears to us that we have been caught unawares in the meshes of the trap that the British have so cleverly and secretly laid for us. Such a doubt, in any case, does arise at times in our mind. My own fear is that all this has been done to break into pieces the United India with which we had been so far familiar. It was for the first time in the viceroyalty of Lord Curzon that it had been decided to partition Bengal into two fragments. That partition gave birth to a genuine Indian national movement. Long after that, Burma was separated from us—Burma which had been an integral part of our State. Again we have witnessed the partition of India itself at the time when the British found themselves compelled to give *Swaraj* to India. In a way this partition was effected by exploiting our intense eagerness for *Swaraj*. The country came to be divided into two parts, and millions were ruined as a consequence of that division. It is my feeling that only a few have yet had a consciousness of the freedom that has come to us. But the common people, those whom we term as the masses, have not their life affected in the least by this advent of freedom.]

**Mr. President :** \*[Please excuse me. Are you speaking on the amendment or on some other subject?]

**Shri Lakshminarain Sahu :** \*[This is my amendment :

“Provided that Commonwealth does not allow discrimination of Indians in South Africa and Australia and also metes out equal justice to all the component units of the commonwealth in social and economic matters.”

**Mr. President :** \*[I know that.]

**Shri Lakshminarain Sahu :** \*[I want equal justice. When we remain in the Commonwealth I must say that we should receive equal justice. If we do not get equal justice, what is the advantage of remaining in the Phool Sabha? Phool Sabhas are held during marriages and people chew betel leaves and enjoy it. It is said that after attaining independence we have attained a very high prestige. But I do not understand in what way we have attained a high prestige. I do not want that we may become superiors and others may go

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\*[ ] Translation of Hindustani Speech.

down but I do want that justice should be done to us. Unless this is done, nothing would have been gained. We do not get civil rights in Africa; we cannot purchase land: colour bar is prevailing there. Pakistan too, which was with us a few days back and rather belonged to us, has also joined the Commonwealth. We know how we have been treated in the Kashmir affair. We know that we joined the U.N.O. but gained nothing thereby. That is a very big organisation. The Commonwealth is comparatively a smaller one. If we gain anything out of it, I can understand that we have gained independence. I only want that while we remain in the Commonwealth, we should surely demand that we should not be ill-treated in any way anywhere. When there is no such machinery in the Commonwealth which can compel South Africa to behave, there appears to me to be no reason why we should remain in it. We should try to create such a machinery and should raise this point again and again there, otherwise there can be no gain out of it.

I do not want to speak at length, Mr. President, for want of time; but I would like to know whether we have joined the Commonwealth because England wanted us to do so or because we desired to do so. I understand England desired it since long and Mr. Churchill desired the same from the year 1944. He stated in his speech in 1944:—

“The vast development of air transport makes a new bond of union, and there are new facilities of meeting, which will make the councils of the British Commonwealth of Nations a unity much greater than ever was possible before, when the war is over and when the genius of the air is turned from the most horrible forms of destruction to the glories of peace.”

“When peace returns, and we should pray to God it soon may, the conference of Prime Ministers of the Dominions, among whom we trust India will be reckoned and with whom the colonies will be associated, will, we hope, become frequent and regular facts and festivities of our annual life.”

I would like that instead of remaining festivities of our annual life, these should be of some advantage to us and we should get our due rights. Until we create such an atmosphere, there is no difference between remaining in or out of the Commonwealth. It appears that we are afraid of Russia's advent. Uptill now we had been saying that we will not join any bloc of the U.N.O. and had spirited discussion over this question, but today it appears to have been decided that we are against Russia and in favour of the Anglo-American bloc. There can be no doubt about it. Whatever it may be, I am neither a supporter of Russia nor am I a supporter of Anglo-American bloc. I want that my country should be in line with others, but by the British policy we lost Pakistan, we lost even Ceylon which had remained with us since the days of Shri Ramachandra and we lost Burma. This is my amendment and to gain this end I have moved it. I do not want to say anything more but I want that our Prime Minister should certainly bear it in mind that our representative, joining the international conferences, should not be deluded by feast and festivity, but he should try to raise the prestige of our country.]

**Shri H. V. Kamath** (C.P. & Berar: General): Mr. President, referring to the second supplementary list of amendments, I am not moving Nos. 1, 2 and 3. As regards No. 4, I find that Mr. Sahu's amendment is on the same lines. So I am not moving that amendment also, but by your leave, Sir, I will speak on the motion.

**Mr. President** : As there are no other amendments, Mr. Kamath may continue the discussion.

**Shri H.V. Kamath** : Mr. President, let me at the outset felicitate the Honourable Shri Jawaharlal Nehru on the energy of body and mind that he has expanded during the last month, may, during the last year or more, as a result of which the London decision has emerged into light and reality. His

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achievement at this conference has been referred to or criticised by various people in various ways. The truth or the quality of the achievement to my mind lies between the description given to it by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel referring to it more or less as a personal triumph and the reference to it made by the Congress President, Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya as nothing new. The truth or the equality of it lies somewhere between these two opinions or views of the London achievement.

The declaration which is referred to in this motion has three concrete aspects. Firstly, if we cast a glance at paragraph 1 and the subsequent paragraph, we find that the Commonwealth is described as the British Commonwealth of Nations in paragraph 1. It is later referred to as merely the Commonwealth of Nations. That is to say that the first aspect of this London decision or formula is the dropping or the deletion of the word "British" from the designation of this group of nations. Secondly, the formula has attempted in a subtle manner, perhaps not very easy to understand for a lay man, to reconcile the sovereign independent Republic, that we are going to be in a short while, with continued association or membership in this Commonwealth of Nations with the King as its Symbolic head.

It is a new development, may I say, in political theory, this association of an independent Republic with the Commonwealth of Nations, which has a king at its head. The last aspect of the Declaration is that this Commonwealth of Nations which we have joined as a full member will co-operate, will strive, will endeavour in the path and in the pursuit of peace, liberty and progress. We have to examine this Declaration in the light of these three aspects to which I have referred. The first one deals with the title which is a formal one, just a change in the facade in the appearance of this group of nations. But I was rather disconcerted to read the other day Mr. Attlee's answer to a question in the House of Commons on the 2nd of May. Hardly was the ink dry on the paper on which this Declaration was drafted and signed, only five days later, Mr. Attlee in answer to a question said that there had not been an official change in the designation of this group of nations. By your leave I would like to quote verbatim this reply given by Mr. Attlee to a conservative Member of the House of Commons, Mr. Walter Fletcher. The Prime Minister, Mr. Attlee, on the 2nd May, five or six days after this Declaration was proclaimed to the world said in a Parliamentary reply:

"There was no agreement to adopt or exclude the use of any other terms, namely Commonwealth, British Commonwealth or even Empire....."

"The terminology, if it is to be useful keeps pace with developments, without becoming rigid or doctrinaire, with constitutional developments in the Commonwealth, the British Commonwealth and the Empire." Again he refers to all these three, the Commonwealth, the British Commonwealth and the Empire. "This has been the subject of consultations between H.M.G. and other Commonwealth countries and there has been no agreement to adopt etc." This is the official reply given by him (Mr. Attlee) to a Member of the House of Commons. "There has been no agreement to adopt or exclude the use of any one of these terms nor any decision in the United Kingdom to do so."

Mr. Fletcher further asked if it was appreciated that the words 'the British Empire' were held in high respect by many throughout the Empire and would the Prime Minister (Mr. Attlee) see that by daily use they were not pushed out of the picture? Mr. Attlee replied that "opinions are different in different parts of the Commonwealth and Empire and it is better to allow people to use what they like best;" that is to say, he said that there had been no official change in the description or the designation of this group of nations, called "the Commonwealth of Nations."

So far as the content of this particular change, namely the deletion of the word "British" in the declaration, is concerned, I am not at all satisfied. Have we by agreeing to drop the word "British" done away with all racial policies in the Commonwealth? If it is going to be a Commonwealth of Nations, where East and West, British, Indian and even others, may be associated, have we guaranteed or have we made sure that all anti-non-white,—I will not say pro-British or pro-white, policies have been completely given up? I was happy to learn from the Honourable Pandit Nehru that our fight against the Apartheid or fight against racial fascism in South Africa continues, but may I ask in all humility, Sir, why this issue, vital as it is, was not broached and why this was not raised at all in this Conference in London, where Mr. Malan and his opposite members in various countries were present? There were no reasons given either by Pandit Nehru or anybody else why this was not pressed at this Conference. Perhaps the only reason given against raising that issue was that we are fighting on other planes and that there was no need to raise this issue in this Conference. I wish that a serious attempt had been made to raise and discuss the racial policies within the Commonwealth countries at this London Conference, but as it is, it has not been done and our only hope is that at an early date this Commonwealth guided or goaded by world events, world developments, will abandon racial policies in favour of a really democratic policy and in favour of a really non-racial policy.

Then, Sir, I come to the second aspect of it. We as a sovereign Independent Republic are going to continue as a Member of this Commonwealth of Nations, a full member. The only change that has been made is a change between the past and the present. I am no prophet and I think nobody can say what the future will bring and so I am talking only of the past and the present. The only change to my mind between the past and the present so far as this aspect is concerned is that we hold no longer any allegiance as such to the Crown, but the King as a symbolic head of this group of nations remains. Now, Sir, as a Republic, we are going to have our own Head; the Head of the Federation, the Head of the Union of India will be our Head. I would not have minded this Declaration if it had merely stated "The Government of India have declared and affirmed India's desire to continue her full membership of the Commonwealth of Nations and her acceptance of the king as the symbol of the free association of its independent member nations." If that has stopped there, I think it would have been far happier, but to tag on a later clause "and as such as the head of the Commonwealth" was not desirable. What is the position? We are in the Commonwealth, a full member and not a member nation which is bound by close association or a close tie as Eire has done recently. Eire has ceased to be a member and Mr. Costello said when he moved the Republic of Ireland Bill—I am reading Sir, from a copy of the memorandum circulated to the Members of the Assembly in the last session. The Honourable Pandit Nehru referred to this in a speech during that session, and he quoted from Mr. Costello's speech.

Mr. Costello, moving the Bill, said:

"The position of the Irish Government is that while Ireland is not a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations, it recognises and confirms the existence of a specially close relationship arising from traditional and long established economic, social and trade relations, based on common interests with the nations that form the British Commonwealth."

This is the formula that Eire has adopted. I fail to see why a similar formula could not have been evolved for India as well without our being a full member of the Commonwealth, and as such a party, though not directly, but indirectly to all that is going on within this Commonwealth. Pandit Nehru referred to the bad things, evil things, many undesirable distasteful things that are going on in

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this Commonwealth. He said, we are all concerned about this; we are all anxious; we are exercised about these matters; but we will fight them in another way. Sir, was it not possible for us, as Eire has done, to enter into a specially close relationship, without continuing as a full member of the Commonwealth subject to all the limitations and restrictions and various commitments that may be made within the Commonwealth amongst its members? In this connection, Sir, I should like to bring to your notice and to the notice of the House one significant development that took place in the London Commonwealth Premiers Conference of October. We were told, at least in the Press and in other ways, that there were no defence commitments of any sort, neither tacit nor explicit. I would like to place before the House for its consideration an important paragraph in the communique issued at the close of the London Conference. I am reading from an American Paper which published the full text of the communique issued on October 22 at the close of the London Conference which Pandit Nehru attended as the Prime Minister of India. I do not know if this appeared in the Indian papers; I am quoting from an American paper which published the whole of the communique. The relevant paragraph reads thus:

“The United Kingdom Government outlined the nature of its association with other Western European nations under the Brussels treaty as a regional association within the terms of the United Nations Charter. There was general agreement,”—mark the words “there was general agreement”—I do not know if the words “general agreement” mean unanimous or whether our Prime Minister differed on this point—“that this association of the United Kingdom with her European defence neighbours was in accordance with the interests of the other members of the Commonwealth, the United Nations and the promotion of world peace.”

I do not know if this position stands today, whether we approve or we agree with whatever commitments have been entered into by the United Kingdom Government with her European neighbours, whether they are in our own interests or whether we wash our hands clean of them. If we are pursuing an independent positive foreign policy, neither allied to the Western Bloc nor to the Eastern Bloc, how can we say that we approve or we agree that your contract, your defence commitments with your European neighbours are in our own interests also and that this agreement will promote world peace, because this agreement which later resulted in the Atlantic Pact, has been fiercely attacked by some other European nations? The U.S.S.R. went so far as to say that they were not even consulted about this Atlantic Pact and had they been consulted, certainly they would have been a party to it and that they might have guaranteed the collective maintenance of world peace. They were not consulted and it had been concluded behind their back; I do not wish to sit in judgment; but the Soviet Government did say that this pact was aimed at them because it was signed behind their back.....

**Pandit Balkrishna Sharma :** May I, on a point of information, Sir, know from the honourable Member if we have accepted either the Brussels Treaty or the Atlantic Pact?

**Shri H. V. Kamath :** If my honourable Friend had followed me aright, I am sure he would not have raised this point.

**Pandit Balkrishna Sharma :** There is no Atlantic Pact here.

**Shri H. V. Kamath :** I am not discoursing on the Atlantic Pact. I would request him to follow closely what I say and not keep on writing and now and then get up and make a remark.

The point I am making out is how far we are committed to the maintenance of the *status quo* of the Commonwealth generally, and particularly in Malaya.



in South-East Asia and perhaps in Burma, and also Africa. We read in this morning's papers that in another two years, Britain will transfer Tripolitania to Italian trusteeship. The old mentality, the old outlook of the 19th century persists. As if they are mere chattel, they transfer a country from one trusteeship to another, as if the people are not concerned at all. This is the British policy even today. Colonialism is rampant; imperialism is rampant in most parts of Asia. Are we subscribing to this? Are we going to be a party even impliedly though not explicitly, indirectly if not directly? Are we going to be a party to all that is going on, racialism, colonialism, imperialism, in this Commonwealth, because Attlee has said, "we can call it Empire if you like; it is an Empire, may be a Commonwealth; we have not made any official change at all." Here comes the part that is being played by Britain today in Malaya and also in Burma. Burma is our neighbouring country, and a good neighbour at that. We have had very cordial relations, not merely political—after all these are evanescent and fleeting—but deeper spiritual and cultural relations with Burma. It is natural for us to be interested in Burma, in the welfare of the Burman people and the defence of a Government that will ensure the peace and security in our neighbouring country. So is Pakistan, I can understand; so is perhaps Ceylon. Britain says they have given up imperialism, colonialism, racialism; why on earth then should Britain be interested in this Burma affair? To my mind, there is only one answer to this, and that is, Britain is interested in Burma because Burma borders on Malaya. Malayan tin and Malayan rubber are far more important to Britain than perhaps even Burmese peace or Burmese security or Burmese freedom. Therefore when they see that Burma is threatened, that Burma is going down—God forbid that—then they wake up and tell themselves, "Here we are, if Burma goes under, Malaya is all but lost; and Malaya should not be lost". That is why today Malaya is following a policy of terrorism, suppression and repression of democracy and nationalism, and the entire nationalist movement is being attempted to be suppressed in Malaya. We have no reason to complain that communism is gaining ground in South-East Asia, in Siam and in other parts, because the French, the Dutch, and the British imperialists have not given up their old game. They are still at it. Therefore, when I read in the papers that Britain, India, Pakistan and Ceylon are going to aid Burma, I felt there was something fishy, because Britain to my mind has got ulterior motives because of her interest in Malaya and her brother imperialists of France are concerned in Vietnam Indo-China, and the Dutch in Indonesia. If Britain had washed its hands of Imperialism and Colonialism in Asia, then certainly she could tell the Malayan people to set up their own Government and withdraw as they did from India but they do not say so. They say 'We are sticking on in Malaya' and the French say 'We are sticking on in Indo-China' and the Dutch say 'We are going to stay on in Indonesia'. The development in South East Asia is a portentous development and so long as the U.K. Government is a party to all these that are going on—and the U.K. is a brother member of the Commonwealth, and whatever U.K. may say that the Malayan Government may decide what they like, U.K. cannot wash its hands clean of the blood of Ganapathy who was executed a few days ago and of another Indian who is perhaps being executed today. The U.K., through its Colonial Office, is responsible for what is going on in Malaya. Can we say with our hand on our heart that so long as U.K. Government follows such policy in Malaya, Australia flaunts its "White Australia" policy, and South Africa follows its anti-Indian policy, that we freely and willingly continue to be members of the Commonwealth, because this declaration does not lay down any conditions whatever for our continuance as members of the Commonwealth? It only says that the Government of India have declared and affirmed their desire to continue as a member. Nothing is laid down beyond a bold and blank statement that we will continue as members of the Commonwealth irrespective of what may happen in the Commonwealth. That, Sir, is something which I do not like, and my personal fear is that Britain is anxious that India should pull her chestnuts out of the Asian fire. Britain is interested in this that India

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should help her to maintain *status quo* in Asia. I hope we will not do it but Britain is interested in this, I am sure. I hope we shall not help Britain to pull her chestnuts out of the Eastern fire and that we will follow our own independent foreign policy.

Then I come to the third aspect of it and that is that we have agreed to freely co-operate in the pursuit of peace, liberty and progress. Very fine words but fine words butter no parsnips. Britain has always stated that she stands for progress, liberty and peace and what not. George Bernard Shaw, to whom Pandit Nehru presented a few mangoes the other day, once wrote in one of his plays—it is, I believe, in ‘Man and Super Man’—to the effect that it is amazing how Britain adapts her diplomatic policy. When Britain wants to behead a king, she does it on Republican principles. When Britain wants to restore a king, she does it on Royalist or monarchical principles. When Britain wants to colonise another country, she does it on humanitarian principles and when she wants to commit any outrage or crime, she does it on the eternal principle of justice. I am sure that today Britain can very well say after accommodating Republican India in the Commonwealth that they have done what they have done in Commonwealth principles, on libertarian principles, and on the principles of peace. She may even say on fraternal principles but we have to go deeper into this and search for the content of this formula that has been placed before us. We must see how far this group of Nations will co-operate in the pursuit of peace, liberty and progress. This Commonwealth is a house divided against itself. It is half-slave and half-free. A house divided against itself cannot stand and a group of nations half-slave and half-free cannot endure. Therefore unless these cankers within the Commonwealth are surgically removed or somehow or other put an end to, I am sure in my own mind that this Commonwealth of Nations can never go freely in the pursuit of peace, liberty and progress. I do not want to be a prophet of evil or to forebode evil tidings or evil things to come, but my own misgiving is so long as the Commonwealth remains what it is, so long as Australia follows its all White policy, so long as the Apartheid policy is pursued by South Africa and Britain herself follows her colonial and Imperialist policy in Asia, this heterogeneous body can never work together for the pursuit of world peace and welfare of mankind. It may be that Britain has in mind peace, that is, the *status quo*, for her own territories and her Empire but what we are aiming at is laid down in the Objectives Resolution *viz.*, we will co-operate and we will strive our very best for the promotion of world peace and welfare of mankind. Are we going to do that under the present arrangement? Shall we be able to do it and how far shall we be able to do it? I wish more light is thrown on this matter by the Prime Minister. The crucial test to my mind is how far we will be able to follow our own policy because we are wedded—our India with her ancient heritage—to peace, to world peace, how far we can follow a policy both in foreign affairs and in defence matters which will conduce to the promotion of world peace and welfare of mankind, and how far we will not be tied down to some bloc of nations. We are anxious not to join either the Eastern or Western bloc but we have created a new bloc. I hope this new group or bloc will not work to our detriment nor will come in the way of our evolving a sound foreign policy and a sound defence policy. It has been stated that there are many advantages that may accrue from this union. What advantages they are I want to know, whether in foreign affairs or in defence or in economic matters. Is it because our Sterling balances are lying there that we want to be in the Commonwealth till we recover every pie of it? It is common knowledge, and the whole world knows it that the policy pursued in this matter by the U.K. Government has not been characterised by sterling integrity. I hope the Financial Delegation which is going shortly to London will be able to prevail upon the U.K. Government to follow a more honest policy with regard to our Sterling balances.

Again, it is suggested that India cannot afford to live in isolation. That is one argument put forward. It is seriously suggested that those nations which are not in this group or on that group or the Commonwealth—and there are many like that—are all living in isolation? In the world today, whether you join one group or not, in the world as it is constituted today, no nation can be in isolation. If a country does not join this Commonwealth of Nations, does it mean that it is in isolation? The Commonwealth of Nations needs India far more than we need the Commonwealth. If this psychological fact had been kept in mind, perhaps we might have had a far better deal. If this fact had guided our policy, we might have fared better. We must not forget that little nations like Turkey in the world have at times stood alone. At the close of World War I, Kemal Ataturk with his ragged army stood alone against many of the powerful countries of Europe and beat them back. The Russian army, ill fed and ill-clad, similarly stood alone against England, France and many other countries after the Revolution, and it triumphed. It is the spirit that ultimately counts. This spirit of defeatism that has gripped us, must be shed. It is weakness, it is cowardice in our minds, hearts and in our spirit. I feel that what we need today is the advice which Sri Krishna gave to Arjuna on the field of battle, just before the battle of Kurukshetra began:—

क्लैव्यमास्मगयः पार्थ नैतत्त्वच्युपद्यते ।

क्षुद्रं हृदयदौर्बल्यं व्यक्तवोतिष्ठ परंतप ॥

And lest my Friends should complain that I quote a shloka and do not translate it, let me, Sir with your permission give the gist of this shloka. Shri Krishna here asks Arjuna not to give way to weakness or cowardice. He says, “it does not befit you, Arjun. This weakness of heart is shameful. Give it up at this moment. Stand up and fight.” This should be our outlook, and I hope that at least in future it will guide our policy. We are a nation of at least 300 millions and more and we can fight any evil in the world, alone if need be. I would rather stand alone than surrender my ideals of democracy, and of equality and liberty for which we have stood and fought and sacrificed all these years. If the Commonwealth stands in the way of these ideals, if it stands in the way of these ideas being implemented, I would rather stand alone. Mahatma Gandhi taught us to do so. Lokamanya Tilak taught us this Mahayogi Arabindo taught us this. Netaji Subhas taught us this. You, Sir have always advised us so. We must be strong in our hearts and rely on our own strength, and our leaders Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel have ever told us that the world can do us no harm. It is only our own inner weakness that can crush us, not any external danger. If we are strong in our own inner strength, nobody can prevail against us. I hope this fact will guide us in the future in our relations with the Commonwealth of Nations. I am not at all happy over the formula, and over the declaration placed before the House. I think it might have been more happily worded. I feel we could have had a better deal. But it is a *fait accompli* with which we are faced. As Pandit Nehru says, it is a treaty which has been concluded. At any rate, I will only say this much, that I accept the Declaration in the hope that the policies of the Commonwealth of Nations will be guided by human considerations in future, and that racialism, colonialism, and imperialism will all be shed and abandoned, and that the Commonwealth of Nations will lead the world on these right lines. I fear it is a distant ideal, but with God all things are possible; and I hope God will guide us aright so that we shall have a real human brotherhood—not a brotherhood of Commonwealth nations only—but a real human brotherhood in this world, in one free world, ere long.

**Mr. President :** Shri Ananthasayanam Ayyangar.

I would request Members now to confine their speeches to fifteen minutes.

**Shri M. Ananthasayanam Ayyangar** (Madras: General): Sir, I wish to congratulate the Honourable the Prime Minister for the statesmanlike manner in which he has entered into the arrangement the Declaration of which this House is asked to ratify. It is a natural consequence of our declaring this country as a sovereign, independent Republic. No country in the world can afford today to live isolated. It is necessary for us to get into some kind of arrangement with other free nations of the world, by some pact of friendship by which we can be bound together with those who are trying to establish permanent peace in the world. Therefore, nobody in this country need feel sorry for the arrangement that has been made. On the other hand, if we had not entered into some such arrangement, we would be failing in our duty, to restore and re-establish peace in the world. I felt at one stage when the negotiations were going on, and for some time before that even, when there were some rumours that there would be a common or dual citizenship established, I felt a little nervous. What kind of citizenship would it be, and what commitments and obligations would be put on our country, these we could not envisage. But now I have a sense of relief. There is no such dual citizenship, and no commitment whatsoever. We are absolutely free. It is not a constitutional or political relationship whatsoever. We are friends, and that has been recognised by this arrangement which we are asked to ratify in the form of this Declaration. In the matter of war, and in all other matters also, and in trade relations, we are absolutely free. We may remember that during 1939, all the Dominions passed in their respective parliaments their decision to enter into the War. In South Africa, we all remember, by a narrow majority, Smuts was able to bring South Africa into the War. It was open even to Dominions to stay out of the War. When we declare ourselves to be a Free, Independent Sovereign Republic, it is always open to us to keep ourselves free. We are not tied to one bloc or other. We are not tied to the apron strings of the British Government. We are not longer under the domination of Britain. We are equal partners, if these can be partners without any kind of obligations. It is only a question of friendship. We can choose our relations. This has brought a sense of relief to the whole world. There were war clouds and gradually they are dispersing, and this act of statesmanship makes it more probable and possible that war would recede very much into the background. War is put off by this act of statesmanship. I understand from some persons who have recently come from England, the European continent and from America that they are extremely satisfied with this act of our Prime Minister. Long ago some one said, the East and West can never meet. But by this act of statesmanship, the East and West have met. I am sure this meeting will be permanent, and the chords of friendship will become stronger and stronger.

I do recognise that in the speeches made here, by some Members, there is a touch of suspicion. We have been for a hundred and fifty years under the domination of Great Britain. I am not accusing my friends, but they are not alive to the changed circumstances. They are still staying and thinking in the old state of affairs when we were subjected to the domination of Great Britain. Speeches made here have tended in that direction. They have also some justification in that there is racial discrimination persisting in one of the members of the Commonwealth South Africa. Another member of the Commonwealth, Australia, is insisting upon the white-man policy. A third member, Malaya, is ruthlessly destroying some of our people for trivial things, even for carrying a weapon. These things exist, but the moment we enter into some relationship we cannot expect at these to fade away in a trice. I am sure there will be a change of heart among the other members of the commonwealth and even the so-called anti-Indian propaganda will not here after continue. So long as relations are strained between one country and

another a number of unpleasant things might be said; but there will soon be a change-over. I am sure even in England a volume of sensible opinion is in favour of continuing this relationship. I am confident that no Englishman and no person who is interested in peace in the world will hereafter speak unwisely a word against the interest of India. I was glad to see in this morning's paper that some Resolution was passed in the U.N. Assembly at the instance of Mexico and another country that there must be a kind of arrangement, a round-table conference, to look into the affairs of South Africa. I am sure that before long the affairs of South Africa will be settled amicably. I was told by the Prime Minister on another occasion that Australia and New Zealand were anxious that we should continue as members of the Commonwealth of Nations. If so, I am sure they will change their policy towards India; but we must give them some time. They started in an era of suspicion but that will gradually disappear. Love or affection or friendship is not one-sided; it must be mutual. We have started in the right direction, we have nothing to lose but everything to gain. In regard to defence and many other things we cannot cut ourselves adrift from the many advantages to be gained. Our nationals are strewn over the length and breadth of the world. What is to happen to them the moment we declare ourselves as a sovereign independent Republic and do not enter into an arrangement of this type? In Mauritius and other places there are many of them; they will be turned out as aliens. They are not nationals of those countries and they have not given up their nationality of this country. So this arrangement will be good for our nationals in these other countries.

There is another advantage. If we do not have this, a number, of onerous obligations will be placed on us. America does not easily enter into an arrangement of help with any other country. I still hold that so far as our foreign policy is concerned it should be a policy of strict neutrality. We are entitled to join or not to join any power bloc. I am sure with the help of Providence we will be able to stand between two warring countries and establish permanent peace and avoid war altogether. I say that even those persons who have referred to Malaya, Australia and South Africa are not against this Declaration. They only want that it should be modified to this extent that there must be a change of heart in this matter. But let us not put any conditions; let us trust to the good will and good sense of those persons who wanted us to be members of this Commonwealth along with them. In this Declaration it may appear as if it was India who was anxious to continue this relationship with the Commonwealth. That may be the language but we should not be led away by the language alone. The other side was equally anxious; otherwise there could not be this Conference of Premiers and this Declaration could not be brought out. It may read as if before we became a sovereign republic we were anxious to make this declaration. But they tried out a formula and the British Commonwealth of Nations was changed into the Commonwealth of Nations. Now we cannot deceive ourselves that we have no foes in the world; there are many enemies who are jealous of our position in the world. Our prestige and stature have gone up and in a very short time we have grown very tall. It is up to us not to do anything which will be derogatory to that stature.

Then there is another consideration. Irrespective of anything else, if I am asked on which side I lean I shall surely declare that I shall only lean towards the side of democracy, and will not align myself with any dictatorship. That matter is not coming up before us now; but all the same if there is any reason for entering into a kind of association with the Commonwealth of Nations it is exactly because this Commonwealth is wedded to democracy pure and simple. Look at this democracy that prevails in Great Britain. I wonder at the manner in which they exercise this democracy. There were several

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heroes of the war, Stalin and Churchill, etc. But what happened to Churchill? Overnight they threw him overboard and he is now in the opposition without a following. It is that kind of democracy that we should join; and so we should join hands with Great Britain which has the mother of parliaments, the forerunner of democracies throughout the world.

As for the amendment of my Friend Prof. Shibban Lal Saksena, I do not think there is any need for it. What he says is that soon after the constitution is passed there will be an election on adult franchise and it should be decided then whether we should continue our membership or not of the Commonwealth. To that my answer is that if we say that we continue our membership of the Commonwealth now there is nothing to prevent a future Parliament snapping it. Immediately they take office they can in the very first meeting of the legislature pass a Resolution discontinuing their membership of the Commonwealth. Between now and then there will be enough time to see whether the other members of the Commonwealth change their attitude towards India. If their attitude does not change by that time we will be on firmer ground in telling them that they are not our friends. Therefore, we are not committing ourselves to any course of action which is irrevocable. I therefore appeal to my honourable Friend not to press his amendment. I would have been glad if he had not moved it. Naturally this is born out of suspicion. Hitherto the meaning of Commonwealth was that our wealth was their wealth and their wealth was their own. Hereafter that will change and it will be a Commonwealth for all. I appeal to the House to accept the Prime Minister's motion without any alteration.

**Shri Damodar Swarup Seth** (United Provinces: General) : \*[Mr. President, with your permission, Sir, I would like to oppose the motion moved by the Honourable Prime Minister of India for the ratification of the Declaration made by him at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference in London. Sir, you have just said that the question whether India should remain in the Commonwealth or not has a direct bearing on the Constitution we are going to frame. I, therefore, feel that our Prime Minister in making a commitment that India would continue to remain in the Commonwealth, even before any decision had been taken on this question by the Constituent Assembly, has acted beyond his authority. It was not within his competence, Sir, to do so. If I remember aright, prior to the Commonwealth Premiers Conference our Prime Minister had repeatedly assured us, that the question whether India should remain in the Commonwealth or not would ultimately be decided by the Constituent Assembly. It may be argued, Sir, that this Declaration made there by our Prime Minister is not by itself the last word in the matter and that is why its ratification by this Assembly is sought. I would, most humbly submit Sir, that by agreeing to remain in the Commonwealth the Prime Minister has most adversely affected the sovereign character of this Constituent Assembly and has put it in a situation in which it is forced to ratify the declaration made by him at the Commonwealth Conference. This is so because the refusal of the Assembly to ratify the declaration would amount to a loss of confidence of the Assembly and of the people of India in him. Therefore, the Constituent Assembly has now no alternative but to ratify the agreement made by him. I am fully aware of the condition in which this Assembly was elected. It is almost a one-party body and it can easily be led to do what the Government in power may desire to do. But even then, I would say the Prime Minister should not have agreed to remain in the Commonwealth without the Constituent Assembly having taken a final decision on the question. He could have waited for a few days more. He could have made the Declaration he gave at the London Conference after the Constituent Assembly had formally

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\*[ ] Translation of Hindustani Speech

accepted it. But he thought it proper, for reason best known to him, to make that Declaration and thereby he virtually agreed to keep India a member of the Commonwealth.

I would submit to the House, Sir, that the Declaration made by our Prime Minister at the London Conference is not an unimportant or ordinary matter. It is in utter violation of the pledge that our leaders had been repeatedly taking and making the people of this country to take for the last seventeen years on the 26th January under the National Flag.

Sir, today when the Father of the Nation is no more physically amongst us, we see that in his name, in the name of truth and non-violence, every day sermons are given to the people to follow the ideal path shown to us by him, We are not content with that alone. We even give sermons to the other countries of the world and tell them that the only way to establish peace and security in the world is to follow the ideals of truth and non-violence enunciated by Mahatma Gandhi. I fail to understand how, after the pledges reiterated by millions and millions of people for the last seventeen years, we can expect the people of other nations to follow the ideals of the Father of our Nation and with what face we can ask the world to follow the path which we are ourselves giving up so shamelessly.

Sir, the Declaration that India would remain in Commonwealth has been made by our Prime Minister but we are not told what special benefits we are likely to have by remaining in it. We are told that whatever has happened at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in no way entails any commitment or imposes any restriction on the Indian people or the Government of India. Most humbly I would submit Sir, that a common person like me is unable to appreciate how we can remain free from obligations and restrictions after having joined a particular bloc. If really we are free from such entanglement I do not see the reason of our joining that particular bloc, nor can I understand why the other members of the bloc want you to be in it. In my opinion the membership of a bloc logically implies certain obligations on the part of any new state which joins it as also on the other members of the bloc which induce a new state to join the bloc. It is another thing that the terms and conditions of joining the bloc may not be placed before us today. It may be argued that it is only two years ago that we secured our independence and as such it is not possible for us to maintain it against the aggression of other countries. It may also be that our leaders have in mind that if any war breaks out, India would not be able to protect herself without the help of the British Navy. If really this idea has influenced us to join the Commonwealth, I would like to submit that no country in the world of today, can rely on another country for securing its protection. Have we forgotten the events that took place during that last War? The British navy could afford to send only two battle ships to protect Singapore and these two had no aircraft carriers with them, and everyone knows that they failed to defend Singapore. The position that the British Navy and the British Government will grow stronger in future and will be in a position to render us more help for the protection of our land is, in my opinion as also in the opinion of my colleagues, an extremely doubtful one.

Besides, all the member countries of the Commonwealth barring India, Pakistan and Ceylon are, members of the bloc known as the Anglo-American bloc. Thus it is not very difficult for us to understand that there can be no other meaning of binding India with the tail of Commonwealth except that of joining the Anglo-American bloc.

It is urged that India can gain many advantages by remaining with England and America She can receive financial aid. She can receive aid for promoting her industrialisation. It can also be said that a powerful country like America

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can give adequate aid to India in the next war and she will do so. Sir, for the moment I accept that America will give us the aid that we ask for. I admit that American aid in times of peace would be very beneficial to India. But I think that in times of war it would be in a way suicidal for us to depend on American aid. The way American aid has been given to China is a lesson to us. No sooner did the American government see that the power of the government headed by Chiang Kai Shaik was failing, than it left that government to the mercy of the Communists. I can also accept that during a period of war America will strive its best to supply arms and other things to India; but Sir, we should not forget that oceans roll between India on the one side and America and England on the other. It would not be easy matter for aid to flow to India in such troubled times. There would be sub-marines operating on the seas and bombs and atom-bombs would be raining from the skies. Therefore even if America sincerely wants and strives its best to aid us, it can be doubted whether that aid would reach us at all. Then, as I have said, a great distance separates us from these countries and it will be a long time before the aid reaches us. But, Sir, if we take into consideration the present circumstances, we find that we are surrounded by Communist powers and their sympathisers. We see Russia on the border of Pakistan and we see her on the border of Kashmir too. The Chinese Communists are gaining more and more strength every day. We are not blind to what the Communists are doing in Malaya and we are aware that Burma too is not free from the Communist danger. I do not think that any one amongst us can like or entertain the prospect of the Russian troops entering the borders of India within a week of the outbreak of a war at some future date, while we expect aid from U.S.A. as a result of having joined the Anglo-American bloc. Why should we then place ourselves in a situation which may lead the Russian bloc to think that we are setting up ourselves against it? It is the misfortune of our people or in other words I may say that our foreign policy has been such as to create misgiving in my mind. Even today circumstances do exist which make Russia doubt our intentions and consider us to be allied with the bloc opposed to her. It was probably for this reason, if I mistake not, that our Ambassador, who stayed in Russia for about an year and a half, was not even once given the opportunity of having an audience with Mr. Stalin, the highest dignitary of the Russian Government. Now that we have linked ourselves to the Commonwealth it can be said that we have openly declared that we have joined the Anglo-American bloc. We can imagine to some extent the danger that is likely to follow.

Besides, Sir, if we leave aside the countries which I have just now mentioned, that is to say Pakistan and Ceylon, what concern have we with the commonwealth? We have nothing to do with them even from the point of view of culture, civilization, language, colour and race. Still the members of the Commonwealth are desirous of our association. There appears to be something wrong at the bottom. Our Prime Minister may not have told us in clear words the details of the Prime Ministers' Conference but the Prime Minister of South Africa openly said that they needed to retain India in the Commonwealth and that if she had not stayed on, it would have meant damage to the Commonwealth. He added that it would have been to the detriment of everyone of them and that was why they all tried to retain her and now they were all happy about India's staying in the Commonwealth.

Sir, it is not a hidden fact that whatever is happening in China is a two-sided affair. On the one hand, the Communist power wants to bring the whole of China under its authority and on the other, America wants to bring it under its influence by helping Nationalist China. When America saw that Nationalist China was slipping out of its hands she, I believe, felt the necessity of bringing



round India into its bloc through the Commonwealth. The reason for it is that India occupies a strategic position in Asia. We should keep this in mind, Sir, as also every impending danger.

I just now remarked; have we any such relation with the other Commonwealth Countries as may compel us to remain with them, especially when we see that our brethern are being very much ill-treated in South—Africa? We have not forgotten the incidents that occurred in Durban recently. The White Australian policy is still being followed in Australia.

In the lands our brethern reclaimed by their labour—the barren land of Africa, that labour is being paid back to them today by not allowing them even to sit with the whites in hotels, trains, buses etc. There appears to be no reason for that and while maintaining our national dignity and remaining in the Commonwealth it is intolerable to us that such treatment should be meted out to our brethern. It is also intolerable to us that we should associate with those people in the Commonwealth who treat our countrymen worse than dogs. The British Government may be styling itself as a Socialist government but it cannot be denied, that Socialist Government is in no way different from an Imperialist government. No doubt the British Government has quit India but even today fifteen to twenty countries are being exploited by Britain. Sir, for the last fifteen or twenty years, we have been opposed to Imperialism. We have opposed it and we have taken pledges to end Imperialism to help the people who were groaning under the heels of Imperialism. Then how can we bind ourselves to the British Commonwealth with Britain as one of its members? How can we say it to the world that we are the opponents of imperialism and that we will defend the countries which are being exploited by her?

All these things, Mr. President, are such as I think deserve our serious consideration. If the House is able to realise this and feel these dangers, it should never ratify the motion moved by the Prime Minister, but should rather give a mandate that after the adoption of this Constitution, India will have the same Status in the world as an independent Republic has, that is, India would have nothing to do with the British Commonwealth after the adoption of this Constitution.

Mr. President, I know, that in the present context my words are perhaps a cry in the wilderness. But I have to say with regret that after the attainment of India's independence, our view-point itself has undergone a change amongst our leaders,—who used to talk of revolution till yesterday, Every thing revolutionary now seems to be reactionary and all their reactionary acts seems to them as progressive. This fact needs hard thinking, because owing to this, our future seems to be very dark. You will excuse me if I say that our Prime Minister has recently said about the party to which I am proud to belong, that it is a reactionary party, which still has about itself, the bad odour of old things, and is therefore unable to feel the fragrance of the garden of Commonwealth. But I would say that the idea of Commonwealth is not new. It has not been conceived by Mr. Attlee or by our Prime Minister. Our Prime Minister would not have forgotten that in July, 1944, the then Prime Minister of Britain Mr. Churchill, while speaking on the Empire units had drawn a certain picture of Commonwealth, which was not different from the picture that has emerged today. Mr. President, it may be that the view our Prime Minister has expressed about the Socialist party may be correct in his opinion, but what I am saying is that by crying down old things we do not mean that we should given up our beliefs, that we should forget our principles. Principles are always old, beliefs are always old, but to leave them, to be driven away by the current of changing world without caring for principles or beliefs, does not become a living nation. Such a course may suit a people who have no principles but is unbecoming for us. Mr. President, I therefore would like to conclude these

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remarks with an appeal to this House to take a decision on this Resolution in the light of the need of the hour.]

**Mr. President :** Please stop. Now, we leave only five minutes to one. So we shall have to stop, but before we adjourn I have to communicate to you a sad news which has just been communicated to me. One of our members, Shri F. Kothawala, was travelling yesterday from Bombay and coming to Delhi to attend this meeting. On the way he developed heart trouble and expired in the railway train. I wish Members to stand in their places to show our respect to his memory.

(All the Members stood up in silence)

**Mr. President :** I take it that the House will permit me to convey our sympathies to the members of his family.

We have now to fix the time for the meeting tomorrow. I mentioned earlier in the day that two suggestions had been made, morning session and afternoon session. I am told that the majority of Members are in favour of the morning session from eight to twelve. Is that correct?

**Many Honourable Members :** Yes.

**Mr. President :** If that is so, we shall sit from eight A.M. tomorrow. The House is adjourned till 8 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The Assembly then adjourned till Eight of the Clock on Tuesday, the 17th May 1949.

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