

P. B
Name: Dean Alison Thomson

Date of Birth: [REDACTED]

Address: 155, Mt. Pleasant Road, Singapore, 11.

School: Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus, Singapore.

Class B.

How has the development of air transport
affected the Commonwealth?

The Commonwealth has frequently been compared with a large family, the reigning monarch as its head, symbolising the binding power keeping the family together.

This comparison proves useful if we consider a large family. In all large families changes occur. More often only minor ones, but fairly frequently major events take place. The children grow up in age and maturity, and make their own future life, although their loyalties still remain with the family. They always know that they will be welcome and helped, should the need ever arise.

In short, though the family members are scattered, there is still a bond uniting them, and this is the fact that they all belong to the same family, sharing a basic outlook.

So, somewhat, is the Commonwealth. A family on an infinitely larger scale, but basically the same. As the parents, the British Government at first had many dependancies, all of whom leaned heavily upon her for guidance and support.

But as the years progressed, and they grew older, they began to want more and more to do things for themselves, and by themselves. Eventually the larger countries demanded freedom from parental care, asking

to be allowed to fend for themselves in home and foreign affairs.

As with all parents, this demand for freedom created problems for the British Government, prompting her to defer permission for such a drastic act. So urgently, however, did these countries persist in their demands, that they were eventually allowed to be on their own, and free from Imperial Rule, for a wise parent knows that the only way its offspring can learn is by fending for itself.

So to-day, Britain as a proud parent eagerly watches the gradual maturing and progress of all its independent children, while still helping the few little ones left in its care.

With children scattered all over the world, and all desiring contact with each other, Britain has had a difficult task keeping her new nations in touch with herself and each other. These form a knot of nations different in character and circumstances, but sharing problems and dangers. Above all, the spirit existing between these countries is a good example of tranquil relationships existing between diverse peoples, the concept

The Amrita
Bazar Patrika
(Independent
Calcutta
Newspaper)

expressed well by an important Indian newspaper, 'The British Empire is now a fading picture of the unforgettable past, but the Commonwealth is a living and growing.... reality.'

Early communications between these countries was very poor, the only means being slow sailing and steam-ships, and few serviceable roads and railways. The unfortunate result was that colonies, which were brother and sister lands in spirit, knew very little about each other. This often led to discords which could have been avoided had there been a little

2.

more mutual understanding based on closer acquaintance.

It used to be usual for an average English man - in - the - Street to be ignorant of the whereabouts of Kenya or Malaya. India, to him, meant only a country which he knew existed because he knew his tea grew there.

Personal experience recalls New Zealand school - children being ignorant of the whereabouts of Malaya or Singapore, even believing it to be in Sweden, while English children considered Malaya in China or Africa.

It is instances like this, morsels of ignorance, that make for friction and hinder perfect harmony in the Commonwealth.

This would have been for Queen Commonwealth citizens at the turn of the century and in its earlier days. If they hardly knew of the existence of other colonies, they were excused on the grounds that as communications were so bad, very few people knew much about other regions.

But with the arrival of speedy ocean communications, there came a noticeable change. Places began to mean more than merely unfamiliar names to Commonwealth inhabitants. Strange names that used to conjure up romantic ideas became a reality.

More practically - the increased speed of ocean travel helped Commonwealth trade greatly, by allowing the speedy and efficient export of produce from the component countries. These advantages are still being enjoyed today, as refrigerated meat from New Zealand and fruits from South Africa arrive in Britain.

Even more drastic than this mild and pleasant upheaval in world communications was the change air - travel brought about.

Immediately a whole new field of varied possibilities was opened up, changing the world's entire attitudes to

time, travel speed and communication. At last speedy means of travel had been attained, no longer remaining merely a dream.

Since the arrival of air-travel, the pace of living in the world has become faster; standards of life in the civilized world have been greatly raised, and that of under-developed countries greatly improved. With the new kind of aeroplane, it is now possible to fly from Sydney to Singapore in ten hours, or from London to Singapore in twelve.

The member countries of the Commonwealth are so closely ^{united} as the only brotherhood of nations, under one head, that their anxieties and problems, as well as their destinies have great repercussions on each other.

It is because of the very close relationship each country bears to the other that the development of air-travel has had a greater effect on the Commonwealth than on any other nation. Other nations stand alone, but the Commonwealth's good is bound up with that of many nations.

The Commonwealth is based upon the equality of its varied member nations, and not on British supremacy. This is much more useful to world relationships, and sets an actual pattern of harmony between nations. Though this extraordinary concordance is extremely beneficial, it is a difficult and delicate thing to maintain, and it is in keeping up this general feeling of sharing and understanding that air-travel helps so greatly.

Its arrival showed less well developed countries that theirs was not the best way of life. It ~~was~~ ^{became} a ^{pleasure} for them to compare themselves, often

not very favourably with other countries. Indeed, was not the aeroplane itself the fruit of other's brains?

Not wishing to be left behind in the great surge forwards of nations to better living conditions, and in the search for knowledge, these countries have done their utmost to develop their resources.

With the increased production of whatever their country has to offer, the amount of trade they receive has greatly increased. This brings in more revenue, allowing for further development, and so the beneficial circle continues.

This gives to the fast and still developing Commonwealth members a greater sense of responsibility and duty towards their population. They become more aware of the ever changing pattern of affairs in countries around them. They are aware to the merits of other cultures, not their own. They realize the value of education and the effect it would have on their country. In fact, they desire to make their country worthy of being placed among other nations.

The primary way air travel helps is in the speed and ease with which visits between member countries can be arranged. They can hold brisk discussions, exchange ideas and plan educational and cultural programmes, all these promoting better understanding of new cultures and ideas. Ways of life are compared and contrasted, member countries sharing improvement schemes.

Because of the speed of communication by air, and the fast pace it has given to modes of life, there is a constant stimulation in the exchange of ideas, which does not allow any standing or unconcerns falling into a rut.

The facility it provides for visits is not only confined to those by educational and cultural authorities. The ordinary citizen, providing he has sufficient money to spend, can make use of air-travel to visit, and see for himself the progress and life-patterns of brother countries. This, surely, is one of

the best service rendered by the aeroplane, for is it not for the average man that the future and welfare of any country exists? Is it not he who casts the majority vote? Is it not he who comprises what is generally referred to as 'popular opinion'? Does not he support his country by the taxes he pays, and contribute to its welfare by his work?

Surely if he has had knowledge and experience of other countries, the country benefits more than by visits exchanged between ruling powers? Would not his opinions and ~~impressions~~ observations make more impression on his daily contacts than theirs would?

However, the benefit from friendly visits between the ruling powers is certainly most helpful to the general amity and good-will between countries, the ensuing discussions and exchange of ideas being generally successful. Such visits, made doubly possible by the aeroplane, never fail to promote better relationships and understanding between countries.

When the present Prime Minister of Britain visited India and Australia in 1958, it was the first time a Prime Minister in office had ^{ever} visited those countries, and the visit brought about much mutual understanding.

Similarly, the late King George VI's successful visit to India before World War II was made more possible by air-travel. Queen Elizabeth II's recent visit has been much facilitated by the speed and comfort with which she was able to travel.

School-children, with their fast developing and impressionable minds make use of the aeroplane to visit parents abroad during their vacations. Their impressions will help to mould the future relationships between Commonwealth countries. In this way, air-travel helps to keep the future generation of the Commonwealth in touch with their families and the traditions of the

4.

First Empire Builders — those that helped to form the Commonwealth in order that it would truly be a common unity of nations in harmony.

The numbers of Commonwealth Students studying in British universities show Britain's willingness to share all she can with her brother nations. It has only been possible for these young men and women to avail themselves of offered opportunities to further study because of the efficiency with which they are able to ~~study~~ travel by air. These are the future driving forces of their countries — the brain that are being trained to one day give back to their country all they have received from Britain.

Again, the all-important field of mutual understanding enters the scene. This youth will take back to their homes the memory of all Britain did for them, and the experience of personal contacts among youth from other Commonwealth nations. In this field, a very great and valuable part is played by the Colombo Plan student-exchange scheme.

Aid is easily and speedily given among Commonwealth countries, be it economic, educational or cultural aid. The continuous exchange of artists, architects, bankers, engineers, teachers, scientists and many others skilled in their own fields greatly helps existing relationships. No country giving aid to or receiving aid from another can harbor ill-will or grudges.

Economically, resources have been pooled in the Commonwealth and aid freely given. Commonwealth members are trying to achieve a common high standard in every field. Without air-travel to promote friendship between member countries, such free giving would be impossible. It is only because of the common bond these countries share that aid can be so amicably given.

Probably, the most important achievement in inter-Commonwealth relationship that air-travel has afforded has been the feeling of a shared common destiny between member nations.

It has been air-travel that has linked them up together, allowing them to share all they have, so that they are no longer many diverse little nations struggling on their own in the powerful wave of world affairs, but one solid union of friends linked commonly together to face any difficulties, safe in their feeling of brotherhood.