

Begum Aizaz Rasul (United Provinces: Muslim): Sir, I come to give my wholehearted support to the motion moved by the Honourable Prime Minister yesterday and I join in the felicitations that have been extended to him on the floor of this House. I am rather surprised at the amount of criticism that has been levelled against the action of the Prime Minister in agreeing that India should remain in the Commonwealth. Since this news was published in the papers, the general opinion not only in this country but all over the world has been in favour of the action that has been taken by the Prime Minister and I therefore should have thought that in this House there would have been more unanimous support of what the Prime Minister had done in elevating the position of India in the eyes of the world and raising its prestige. The hearts of Indians have been filled with pride at the very high position that the Prime Minister of India occupied in the deliberations of the Commonwealth Conference and in the Prime Minister's Conference, and there is no doubt that today the position that our Prime Minister enjoys amongst the statesmen of the world is far above that enjoyed by any other Prime Minister. They look up to India for leadership of Asia and I make bold to say that the Prime Minister enjoys that leadership not only by the circumstances in which he is placed on account of the position of India in Asia, but by the statesmanship he has shown in the political arena, not only for the last two years since India achieved independence but during the vast number of years that he has been in the political field under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi. Sir, the main question that is being asked by critics is: what are the advantages that accrue to India by remaining in the Commonwealth? But I ask a counter-question what are the disadvantages that accrue to India by remaining in the Commonwealth? Sir, points regarding the political and economic aspects of this country vis-a-vis Great Britain have been ably dealt with by Pandit Kunzru, Mr. Munshi and others. We cannot forget that inspite or perhaps on account of British rule in India we have come to think on those lines which are very akin to the lines of thought that are followed by people in Britain and in the countries of the Commonwealth and it stands to the credit of Great Britain and to the statesmen of Great Britain that inspite of the fact that they ruled India for 150 years, they have been able to achieve the goodwill and friendship of this country after their departure from here. But I think it stands to the greater credit of India and to its Prime Minister that he has been able to shake away the old ties of suspicion and mistrust that were prevalent in India against Great Britain and has been able to accept the hand of friendship extended to India in order that India may progress on the lines of peace and prosperity. Sir, I believe that criticism and opposition to this is mainly based upon mistrust—not only mistrust but a fear complex.

But I feel that fear complex must be shed and we must realise that conditions now are vastly different to what they were before. India is now a free country, and master of its own destiny, and we who have trust in India's greatness must realise that we cannot go forward unless we do away with small things like suspicion and distrust and accept friendship when it is offered. Sir, I have just said that there are many things akin with British thought in India today. I do not think that we should hesitate in saying that the democratic system as prevalent in India today is exactly on British lines. We are aware that India is the youngest member in the comity of democratic nations. We like the way in which Britain has built up its democratic institutions and has worked them during the last few centuries and therefore if we follow the lines of British democracy, we feel that we are going on right lines. Today in India our institutions, our parliamentary life, our local self-Government, our administrative machinery, etc., are more or less based on British lines. Our army and defence organisations have been built up on British lines. Therefore, remaining in the Commonwealth will certainly be to our advantage.

It has been said that Britain is a poor country and will not be able to help us financially. We do not want Britain's financial help. We certainly can go forward with our own industrial development, and the development of our own resources, and make India rich and prosperous. We do not want any country's financial help. But we want their help and their guidance, their advice and the advice of their technicians, so that India may develop on the lines she desires to develop.

There is also no doubt that Britain and the countries of the Commonwealth are today the greatest factor working for world peace. India has always aligned itself on the side of peace, and it would certainly co-operate with those countries which wish to build up world peace, with countries which have no desire to fight, but which desire only to prosper and let other countries of the world also prosper. Therefore, I think it is in the fitness of things that India should remain in the Commonwealth of Nations. I do not see any disadvantage in it. I feel that it will be to the benefit of India to be associated with countries that are working towards world peace.

We cannot also forget that Indian ideology is opposed to communism. There is no doubt that we do not want communism in our country, and we know that Britain and the countries of the Commonwealth are also opposed to communism. Therefore, that is also a common factor between the two. As has been repeatedly pointed out if at any time there comes a stage when India feels that its association with the nations of the Commonwealth is to its disadvantage, there is nothing to debar it from coming out of it. Therefore, I feel that it is entirely to the advantage of India and consistent with its prestige and dignity to remain in the Commonwealth.

With these few words, Sir, I wholeheartedly support the motion of the Honourable Prime Minister.