

Declaration by the Commonwealth Prime Ministers (28 April 1949)

Caption: On 28 April 1949, whilst taking into account the Indian people's desire to secure independence, the Commonwealth Prime Ministers formally declare their wish to remain full members of the Commonwealth.

Source: Parliamentary Debates. House of Commons. Official Report. Fifth session of the Thirty-Eight Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. 12 George VI. Dir. of publ. Hansard. 1948-1949, No 464; fifth series. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

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“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 the Head of the Commonwealth.

“The Governments of the 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.”