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# The Commonwealth

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At first the word « Commonwealth » designed a body politic founded on the law for the common happiness. In English history, it means the Republic established by Cromwell, after the execution of King Charles I in 1649, until the Restoration in 1660. Contrary to USA history where it means religious communities created by the puritans.

## Here are a few dates

1884 : first use of « Commonwealth »

1926 : balfour report which defined the relation between UK and dominions

1931 : statute of westminster which give more autonomy to some dominions

1944 : Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings ( CHOGM ) replace imperial conferences

1958 : Commonwealth Day replace Empire Day on the second Monday in March

1965 : creation of the Commonwealth secretariat

1971 : Singapore Declaration of Commonwealth Principles define goals, objectives and the voluntary character of the association

1983 : Nationality Act

1988 : Immigration Act

But today, it refers to the informal voluntary association of 53 independent countries, most of them are former colonies of the UK. The first person to use the word « Commonwealth » was Lord Rosebury, he called the Empire a « Commonwealth of Nations » in 1884. In addition to that in 1917, a representer of South Africa said « British Commonwealth of Nations » for the British Empire.

Therefore the Balfour report was adopted by Prime ministers in 1926 to set up a new status for the Dominions : they are equal, don't threaten each other, and are united by common allegiance and freely associated to the Crown and to the British Commonwealth of Nations.

But it was definitely the 1930 conference which paved the way for the statute of Westminster of 1931 : Dominions as Australia, Canada, Ireland and others were described as «autonomous communities within the British Empire ». And the Commonwealth dropped the requirement that members hold allegiance to the British monarch.

The Commonwealth countries are around all the world and include some of the biggest countries of the world as well as some of the smallest ones. The Commonwealth has had a secretariat since 1965 which staff comes from member countries which finance it in proportion to their GNP and population size. CHOGM are held regularly since 1944 to control the Commonwealth's structure and to make declarations or statements.

Since its creation, a lot of inter-governmental organisations have been created to assure the common happiness inside the Commonwealth and the Commonwealth Games was created to promote it.