

That was Prince Philip, in April 1961. His Royal remarks were representative of the more perceptive warnings that came increasingly from world leaders from that time onwards, and which have crystallised today into the demand for an entirely new economic order.

But while recognition grew that poverty was the morally unacceptable face of our economic and social system, at the international as well as the national levels, and while appeals were made to conscience as well as to self-interest, the problem of poverty persisted - appearing, as it were, to confirm the old saying that the poor will be with us always. By 1971, so strong was Commonwealth feeling on this rut of poverty, that when Commonwealth leaders came to draft a Declaration of Commonwealth Principles at their Singapore meeting, they wrote into it their conviction that "the wide disparities in wealth now existing between different sections of mankind are too great to be tolerated."

It is both right and natural that the Commonwealth should be so involved in the struggle against poverty, for the prevalence of poverty is one of the realities of the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth has one fourth of the world's people, but it has nearly one half of the world's poor. And of those who are classified as the 'absolute poor', the poorest of the poor, those with annual incomes of less than \$200, whom Robert McNamara called the world's 'marginal men' - nearly three out of every four live within the Commonwealth.

There is a coldness about statistics, and repetition tends to create a state of numbness and insensitvity to what they mean. I shall therefore not quote any more statistics; but I invite you to ponder for a moment over the last figure I mentioned. An annual per capita income of 200 dollars or less. What does that mean? It means that there are millions of people in the Commonwealth who must live - if it can be called living - on about 50 cents a day. And this, remember, is an average; more than half of them - some 400 million Commonwealth citizens must live on half that meagre sum - less than what others spend on cigarettes, on bus fares, or on feeding their pets. And they must survive on these margins without the supplements of subsidised housing or health services or education or water supply or transportation - indeed, often without any of these communities at all. These are, indeed, marginal people, subsisting at the periphery of human existence.

Against the background of such pervasive inequality, of deprivation so deep that it diminishes human dignity, it would be a travesty of the very term 'Commonwealth' for us not to be preoccupied with the issue of poverty. And, in that preoccupation, it is logical that the Commonwealth should not only take practical action through its own machinery, but also seek to influence the international community towards the measures that could significantly promote the elimination of poverty. The Commonwealth has sought to make that contribution, using its unique facilities for constructive dialogue among its members, to advance progress towards a consensus on the wider global stage. At Kingston, the Jamaican capital, which provided the setting for last