

all acknowledge, was an extremely useful instrument at its time and did a profound amount of good around the world). Whatever the downside of that historical perspective may be, we can only conclude today that the world is a far better place than it would have been had the British Empire and everything that it represented not existed at the period that it did.

One of the things, I think, that we have in common in the heritage that we have inherited, in a sense, from that British tradition is genuine healthy respect for what I might describe as "respectable compromise". One of the things that always disturbs me in these terribly complex days around the world is the disuse into which the word "compromise" has fallen if one uses it appropriately, because somehow or other, when one is described these days as being a "compromiser", there are overtones of "sell-out" or there are [a] sort of facets to the use of the word that are most unfair and quite inappropriate, because, if one looks at every one of the challenges that face us in international affairs today, if there isn't an element of what I will call "respectable compromise" introduced into them, then, of course, one gets a rigidity of positions on both sides and the end result is not very pleasant to contemplate. And so, therefore, I think that one of the things that we have learnt from our British background and from the Commonwealth experience is compromise, and also a kind of pragmatism that has enabled us to adjust to new and changing circumstances in a way which has kept the Commonwealth functioning and without which, I suggest, we simply would not be here today talking about this particular institution, because it would not have survived the kinds of trials and tribulations to which the chairman has referred. These, of course, were only a few among a very large number that have occurred since the decision was made somewhere back around 1949 to restructure and to give new vitality and a new sense of direction to the Commonwealth.

In that context, therefore, I think we ought to start asking ourselves: "Where do we go from here?"

One of the problems that I have in seeking to determine a specific and effective and constructive role for the Commonwealth is that I see it as now part of a proliferation of organizations around the world, none of which are mutually exclusive, and which bring into play and into being a whole series of different memberships by different countries. In our own case, for example, we have a very close working and practical relationship, and a most friendly one, with the United States, whose distinguished Ambassador I am pleased to see with us today. Therefore, in the North American context we are constantly literally on an hour-by-hour basis developing a kind of Canada/United States relationship. Similarly, of course, in Africa there are now not only such organizations as the Organization for African Unity, but regional groupings of various kinds are emerging, some of whose members are within the Commonwealth, some not. Southeast Asia, where our chairman has had more experience than almost anyone else in Commonwealth affairs or, indeed, in international affairs, is yet another example, where we have the ASEAN groupings, some of those members belong to the Commonwealth and are long-standing representatives of this organization and yet others who are not and who stem from a quite different kind of tradition.