

La Francophonie

The new Commonwealth Secretary-General made his first official visit to Canada in July, and in August he was the leading speaker at the forty-fourth Couchiching Conference on the theme "Canada and the Third World: What are the Choices". Mr. Ramphal noted that Canada had shown its desire to co-operate with its Commonwealth colleagues in their efforts to lessen the wide disparities of wealth existing in the world, and indicated that Canada possessed "a great potential for moving forward the international dialogue through an unapologetic commitment to change".

On its independence in September, Papua New Guinea was welcomed into the Commonwealth as the thirty-fourth full member.

In 1975, Canada continued its support and co-operation for the activities of international *francophone* institutions, and played a more important part than ever before in the Agency for Cultural and Technical Co-operation, the Conference of Ministers of Education and the Conference of Ministers of Youth and Sports of French-speaking Countries.

Agency for Cultural and Technical Co-operation

The Agency had a notable year in 1975, during which it held its fourth general conference in Mauritius from November 12 to 15. The general conference, the Agency's highest authority, biennially convenes delegations from member states at the ministerial level. The Canadian delegation was headed by Jean Marchand, federal Minister without Portfolio. It also included François Cloutier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs of Quebec, who was elected one of the vice-presidents of the conference, Jean-Pierre Ouellet, Minister of Youth of New Brunswick, and representatives from Ontario and Manitoba. Since the 1971 general conference, Quebec has held the status of participating government in the Agency's institutions, activities and programs.

This conference was particularly important because it sought to give the Agency new means for consolidating and broadening its field of activity as the leading organization of the international French-speaking community.

One important decision of the general conference was to agree in principle to create a multilateral mechanism, in accordance with the basic texts of the Agency, to collect voluntary contributions with a view to furthering development by means of economic, social and cultural co-operation. Canada, one of the main authors of this proposal, is a member of a working group set up to establish the terms on which this mechanism is to be created. The working group's report is to be presented at the next meeting of the Administrative Council, scheduled for the spring of 1976.

Equally important was the adoption of the principle of regrouping the Agency's programs round three main cores — viz., development, education and scientific and technical co-operation — and the promotion of national cultures and languages. The programs will be multilateral in nature and will be directed chiefly to rural populations.