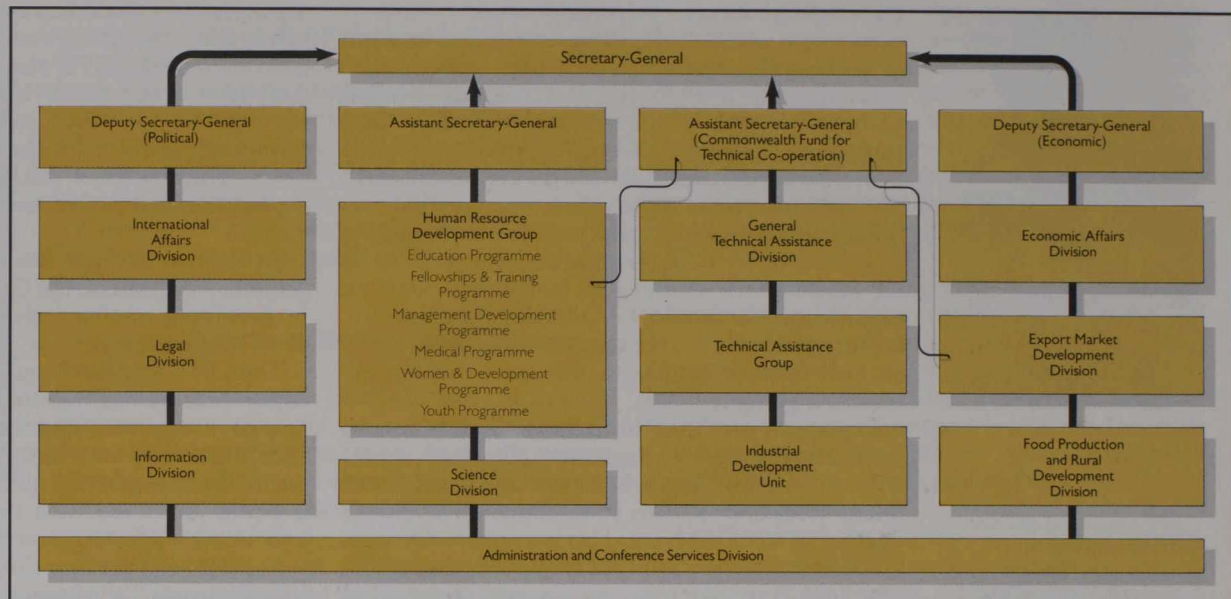


Structure of the  
Commonwealth  
Secretariat

by subscriptions from members assessed according to population and income.

The Secretariat's International Affairs Division assists the consultation between member governments on political issues, in addition to organising meetings and serving committees. The Economic Affairs Division has an analogous role on economic issues and publishes a number of bulletins.

Many of the other divisions are related to development. For example, the Human Resource Development Group brings together six programmes designed to help governments strengthen their manpower capability in key fields. It also includes a Management Development Programme and a Youth Programme.

## Interview with Canada's High Commissioner

### 'Commonwealth more relevant now than it has ever been'

*Just before the Heads of Government Meeting in Vancouver, Canada Today interviewed H.E. Mr Roy McMurtry, Canadian High Commissioner to Great Britain, about the role of the Commonwealth in the modern world and the part that Canada can play in it.*

**Mr McMurtry, does the Commonwealth really have a role to play in the modern world?**

I think the answer to this is obviously, 'Yes'. Because of common bonds of history and language, the Commonwealth is often in a position to contribute to the world's understanding of major issues and to encourage efforts to resolve them. It plays a helpful role in north-south 'bridge-building' by providing a forum for dialogue on how to bring about more equitable distribution of the world's resources.

It is especially suited to cooperate in assisting the development of the many small states within the Commonwealth. It is also taking a lead in international efforts to eradicate apartheid in South Africa and to bring about a peaceful change there to non-racial representative government.

**How do you answer the critics who say that the Commonwealth is largely irrelevant?**

I think the Commonwealth is more relevant now than it has ever been, but like other international organisations it is vulnerable to scepticism and complacency.

The Commonwealth played an active role in facilitating the process toward Zimbabwe's indepen-

dence and I have already referred to its active efforts to bring about the end of apartheid in South Africa. The Commonwealth is thus an important agency for bringing about significant political change.

But it is not only in the areas of highly publicised political issues that the strength of the Commonwealth lies. Much of the solid progress made by the Commonwealth — on such issues as the survival of small island-nations, pioneering studies on the world financial and trading system, and on the indebtedness among developing countries as well as the nurturing of nearly 300 non-governmental Commonwealth organisations — goes unnoticed by the media.

The Commonwealth also has a continuing role in assisting its developing members through the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation.

**What exactly is the Commonwealth? How would you define or describe it? Is it merely a group of countries linked by the accident of history; or is it something more than that?**

The Commonwealth is an organisation with a very special character based on a common language, common aspirations and common elements of history, rather than an accident of history. It is held