

The development of the Commonwealth has been in a direction complementary to Canadian interests and attitudes — it is a family association in which we can feel at home. The Commonwealth's frankness, its informality, its freedom from super-power hegemony, its concern with practical co-operation, its diversity, are all aspects that reflect the Canadian approach to international relations.

Canada attaches particular importance to the flexible, evolutionary nature of the Commonwealth. Its foundations do not rest on a formal constitution or a structure of rigid statutes, but rather are rooted in shared values, common traditions and unwritten understandings arising from its historical background. The heritage of shared beliefs provides a unity of purpose for

the Commonwealth which Heads of Government expressed at Singapore in 1971 in the Declaration of Commonwealth Principles, referred to simply as the Commonwealth Declaration. In this declaration, Commonwealth member countries displayed an impressive unanimity in their attitudes to fundamental questions of human freedom, world peace and security. They regarded these principles as valid not merely for themselves but as a contribution to the collective understanding and goodwill of all mankind.

Canada supported this outward-looking role of the Commonwealth. In the view of Canadian Arnold Smith, who served for ten years as the first Commonwealth Secretary-General:

“Our task is to use the Commonwealth construc-

tively as one of the available instruments of world politics, to help us all learn to share a planet. Helping humanity learn to share all the world has to offer, sensibly, justly, creatively, must become the overriding goal of responsible politics, and must become a habitual vision of all those who work in the macro-political field”.

In an era of political, economic and social conflicts that menace global harmony and even survival, the Commonwealth continues to prove that a relationship of understanding and co-operation between peoples of the world is possible when founded, as in the Commonwealth, on attitudes of equality, friendship and mutual self-respect.