

I am glad to say that that challenge is being met fairly and squarely. It was met in 1960 when, because of the repugnance with which her policies of apartheid and denial of racial equality were regarded by all other Commonwealth countries, South Africa was allowed to withdraw from the Commonwealth. And the Canadian position was of major importance in influencing the outcome of that issue at that time. The challenge was met again last year when the prime ministers of the Commonwealth were faced with another explosive racial situation in Southern Rhodesia. On this occasion, our Prime Minister suggested that the time had come for the Commonwealth to adopt a declaration of racial equality, to reaffirm the principles for which we stand in the Commonwealth on this matter. That suggestion was endorsed unanimously by the other prime ministers, and it was taken up in the communique issued at the conclusion of their meeting. In that communique, the prime ministers of the Commonwealth "affirmed their belief that, for all Commonwealth governments, it should be an objective of policy to build in each country a structure of society which offers equal opportunity and non-discrimination for all its people, irrespective of race, colour or creed". They also went on to express their view that "the Commonwealth should be able to exercise constructive leadership in the application of democratic principles in a manner which will enable the people of each country of different racial and cultural groups to exist and develop as free and equal citizens". I am sure that declaration marks a significant new advance in the evolution of the Commonwealth idea, which is certain to strengthen our association.

There was another development at last year's meeting of Commonwealth prime ministers which I regard as significant in terms of where the Commonwealth is going. Some of the newer Commonwealth countries proposed the establishments of a small central secretariat which could serve as a symbol of our common desire for closer and more informed understanding between Commonwealth governments. The primary functions of such a secretariat, as they envisaged it, would be to provide a broad range of information on issues of common concern, to assist existing Commonwealth agencies to promote co-operation in various areas, and to perform certain responsibilities in relation to future meetings of Commonwealth prime ministers and perhaps also other ministerial meetings.

That proposal has now been carried forward by senior Commonwealth officials, and I should expect it to be translated into a firm decision when Commonwealth prime ministers meet in London this coming June. The intention would be for the secretariat to be recruited from member countries and to be financed by their joint contribution. I want to say that the Canadian Government has approached this proposal in a positive spirit. We regard it as potentially very useful, especially in affording the newer members a greater sense of equality and participation in the Commonwealth. We are prepared to play our full part in the work of the proposed secretariat, and it is in that spirit that we have put forward the name of Mr. Arnold Smith, a distinguished senior official in my Department, as a candidate for the post of Secretary-General.

Of course, there is no intention in all this to bring into being a body that would exercise any kind of directing or centralizing functions within the Commonwealth. That would hardly be in accord with the present realities of the Commonwealth relation and it was certainly not in the minds