

area and represent so many hundreds of millions of the world's people where there was no need for interpreters. To have a common language, together with many common traditions of government, law, education, and culture, does make it possible for Commonwealth leaders to talk together with perhaps a greater degree of genuine understanding than is possible in any other world forum.

I am not about to recommend to you that we scrap the United Nations, NATO, the Organization of American States *et al.*, and leave the running of the world to the Commonwealth. I am trying to show that this association has, for Canada, a very important place in our view of the world, and by no means only for historical or sentimental reasons. The recent conference in Ottawa — the third only ever to have been held outside London, was for us an important event, even if it did not produce historic decisions, ringing declarations, or any of the other results by which we have become accustomed to judge the success of international conferences. As our Prime Minister, Mr. Trudeau, said in his speech of welcome opening the Conference: "The nature of our meeting does not lend itself to the resolution of any crises, or to the solution of any major problem. By looking to the future, however, we should be able to identify those issues which, if left unattended, could develop into crisis proportions."

This is not to say that the Commonwealth has not had its crises, or that it is in any way immune from the rifts and tensions of the world. Given their composition, it would be surprising if Commonwealth meetings did not reflect the differing attitudes of developed industrialized nations and those seeking aid and opportunities to reach the same level of prosperity. Racial tension in Southern Africa has also been an issue that has more than once threatened the very survival of the Commonwealth. In this forum, as in others, the free nations of Africa have passionately urged stronger measures to bring down the white minority regimes of Rhodesia, South Africa, and the African colonies of Portugal, and have been less than satisfied at the response.

If the Commonwealth has been no more able to solve this problem than has any other international body, it has nonetheless provided a forum in which the heads of government can discuss their differing perspectives informally, frankly, and with a solid basis of mutual sympathy and understanding. African leaders may still think that Britain should use force to topple the Smith regime in Rhodesia, that all of us should break off economic relations with South Africa, and that we have a duty to give maximum support to groups seeking to organize armed rebellion against white minority