

Youth Affairs Council, which has been meeting annually to consider the progress of the Commonwealth Youth Program and to discuss questions relating to the role and needs of youth in the Commonwealth in general.

Besides these regular government consultations, there are other meetings, seminars and workshops on specific topics of interest that involve Commonwealth member governments. Often an issue makes for strange bedfellows. The range and depth of these government consultations, the free give-and-take of ideas and information that characterizes them, and the tangible benefits that result from the implementation of their recommendations all attest to the importance of these Commonwealth meetings as a unique and refreshing example of international co-operation. Canada values these consultative meetings highly, not only as a means of strengthening the Commonwealth association but, and not incidentally, as a means of benefiting from the views and experiences of other countries facing similar problems they must solve from out of a common administrative tradition and structure. Problems relating to the social development of island communities, for example, are of interest to both Newfoundland and Mauritius. Providing health services to communities in remote areas is of as much concern to Canada as it is to Nigeria. An interest in questions of food production and rural development, of youth unemployment and drug use, of civil-aviation safety, is naturally common to all Commonwealth members.

In addition to all the activities already mentioned, Commonwealth governments consult each other on political matters. In the words of the present Commonwealth Secretary-General, Sonny Ramphal:

It is here that the Commonwealth facility for an ongoing exchange of views at all relevant levels of decision-making — but, more specially, its special facility for frank consultation at the level of the political leadership — can be a catalyst in the process of consensus formation. The uniqueness of this special facility which Commonwealth Heads of Government meetings provide should never be overlooked or minimized. It is the world's only opportunity for frank and intimate exchange of views between political leaders of the world's people, representative of almost every single element in the spectrum of international opinions and positions. Not only can Commonwealth leaders influence each other in their periodic face-to-face meetings, but they can greatly extend their collective influence through the regional groupings and organizations in which they separately play roles of great prominence. The Commonwealth is thus the very anti-