

Above all the Commonwealth is concerned with people. As the Prime Minister put it at last year's Heads of Government Meeting, "We are concerned with the dignity of individual human beings and the improvement of the lot of ordinary men and women." In other words, answers to the world's problems which do not confer benefits upon ordinary human beings are not answers at all. And, in this, not only governments are involved but some 250 non-governmental Commonwealth organizations and societies. Here, I suggest, lies the Commonwealth's true strength. Foreign policy is, after all, only a framework: the people must make it live. It is not designed just to guide intergovernmental relations, but depends on public interest, which it reflects, and on public support.

Though largely unperceived outside it, the focus of Commonwealth activity has shifted away from purely political concerns during the last decade. This culminated in the 1973 Heads of Government Meeting in Ottawa, and the specific decision by Heads of Government "to make maximum use of Commonwealth machinery to put the principles of the Commonwealth Declaration into practice, and to accelerate the pace of social and economic development among the less affluent members". It is this dynamic element and this commitment which provide the key to the understanding and value of the Commonwealth today. Officially this finds expression through the programmes administered by the Commonwealth Secretariat. These programmes, begun since 1965, include the Commonwealth Foundation, established to increase exchanges between Commonwealth professional organizations; the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation with its triple focus of technical assistance, education and training, and export development; the Commonwealth Youth Programme, established in 1973 to involve young people in national development; and the Programme for Applied Studies in Government, to provide training for middle and senior-level government officials. Complementing this is the increased activity of non-governmental organizations in such diverse fields as medicine and law, science and education.

During this period leading to a concentration on functional cooperation, political questions were not ignored: the Commonwealth's discussion of apartheid, Rhodesia, and nuclear testing confirms this. Nor are political questions ignored now, as demonstrated by the decision by Heads of Government in 1973 to provide humanitarian assistance to the indigenous people of the territories of Southern Africa in their efforts to achieve self-determination, a decision prompting considerable change in Canada's own policy on this question. But politics per se do count for less, and when political questions arise, they are approached in a manner