

It can also facilitate the mutual influencing of perceptions and the moderating of extreme positions, thereby generating more balanced and pragmatic approaches to problem resolution.

Its function is best summed up in the words of its Secretary-General in his report for 1979: "The Commonwealth cannot negotiate for the world; but it can help the world to negotiate."

Special  
interest

From Canada's perspective as a developed nation, we have a special interest in advancing the North-South dialogue — a perspective which emerges from our own history. In my recent speech to the Special Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations on this subject, I expressed it this way:

"In many ways, our national history and culture — and our relative youth — have given us a consciousness of many of the realities of both North and South. Nature has blessed us with an abundance of resources that has enabled us to take a place as one of the world's more industrialized nations. But we remain a heavy exporter of natural resources and an importer of capital and technology, and hence we share many of the concerns of the developing countries about the operation of the international system in these areas. Canadians know that our emergence from colonial status could well have proven to be long and costly had we not had available to us the resources on which to build a stable society for a free and independent people. Today, we feel we owe the same opportunities to those states of the world less well endowed by nature and history, so that they may have access to the resources necessary for their orderly growth and social progress."

Our present policy has evolved in the years since the Second World War. In those early years, Canada provided bilateral development assistance almost exclusively to Commonwealth countries — both to Colombo Plan countries and, later, to the newly-independent Commonwealth countries in Africa and the Caribbean. In 1961, we initiated an assistance program in Francophone Africa. This constituted the first development assistance agreements between Canada and countries outside the Commonwealth. This particular program has grown in scope over almost two decades until it has reached a point today where our aid to Francophone African countries roughly equals the level of aid we provide to Commonwealth African countries. In 1979, it was approximately \$140 million. Subsequently we have extended our efforts to numerous countries of Latin America and to other nations, such as Indonesia and Egypt — countries which belong to neither the Commonwealth or Francophone groupings.

In more recent years, Commonwealth countries have received a declining proportion of Canadian aid, although the over-all level of aid provided has more than offset this. In 1979, Canada provided bilateral development assistance (including food aid) to Commonwealth countries to a total of more than \$236 million — or 36 per cent of all of Canada's official development assistance.

In addition to bilateral assistance, Commonwealth multilateral agencies received some \$10.4 million in 1979. The bulk of this went to the Commonwealth Fund for