

dialogue. Many participants in the dialogue have recognized the need for new techniques of conference management, for a new style and format for global negotiations and, in particular, for much more political interaction.

The political actors are unquestionably the ones best equipped to forge consensus; yet more often than not they are barely allowed to try. It is true that they occasionally come on stage to play star roles; but it is almost invariably to read lines scripted by officials trapped within the confines of policy inscribed in musty files or ingrained in the mystique of the status quo. They read their set pieces at each other and depart, leaving negotiation proper to the same officials, for whom the ministerial utterance becomes renewed endorsement of the well-worn wisdoms. Positions become harder through reiteration and rigidity breeds rigidity. There are meetings galore, and forests of paper, but they allow little scope for the meeting of minds at the political level and little opportunity for those with final authority to talk with each other across the divides of interest and the divergences of policy. The process itself reduces the prospects for exploring where interests may converge or where policies might be modified to reciprocal advantage.

### Commonwealth experience

My views are strengthened, of course, by the Commonwealth experience. Indeterminate, intangible, and ephemeral Commonwealth ties that do not bind are yet real enough to make things happen that otherwise might not. But they do not happen by chance. We have worked hard at improving our Commonwealth capacity to do business together with a better prospect of success.

Our dangerously troubled global society must be encouraged likewise to seek out new ways of dialogue and to supplement conventional, and increasingly ineffectual, processes of negotiation with new methods of consensus building, with approaches to international consultation that are more political and less bureaucratic and are made more fruitful through the selective use of summitry. It is not suggested that summitry is a panacea for the world's ills or a means to dissolve all conflicts of interest — but political actors must play more leading roles on the global stage. They are the people with the licence to change their lines. And there is a greater prospect of them doing so if they speak directly with each other, listen to each other and understand each other better.

There is a need to work for at least the limited, informal, North-South summit that the Brandt report has recommended. When that is accomplished there will be a further need to work for success at the summit in the hope that it will summon the political will necessary, but so far lacking, to lift the dialogue from the low road of confrontation to the high road of consensus. But all our hopes must not be invested in a summit or

even in a process of summitry while other opportunities for consensus building are allowed to pass.

For middle powers like Canada, a major and ongoing opportunity exists in exerting influence with northern councils to raise the quality of collective policy on North-South issues. It is important that Canadians not remain inactive, leaving senior partners make the running on group positions and accommodating themselves at each turn to the lowest level response. Canada's own tradition of enlightened policy-making summons it to play an activist and innovative role; so does southern expectation based on the tradition. Canada's decision to resume movement towards accepted targets for Official Development Assistance has been a message of hope to the Third World. It is also seen as a harbinger of other progressive measures.

There is an expectation in the Third World that Canada will use its influence with more powerful nations to encourage a more balanced view of global challenges including the potential of poverty to subvert global order. North-South and East-West are not parallel axes — and countries in the middle rung are perhaps better placed to discern the points of contact.

Canada can also play a role in encouraging countries of the socialist bloc whose arguments that they are without blame because they are not responsible for the present order of economic relationships are wearing thin. The eastern bloc may not have been around to create the present order but they are happy enough to benefit from it in their relationships with the Third World and even with the First World. They too have a duty to respond to the intimations of an interdependent world.

In the South, where each failure in the global negotiating process deepens distress, the solidarity which Canadians can offer is among the few gleams of hope. The South looks to Canada for support in lowering the threshold of international response to the need for social and economic justice world wide.

### Social consciousness

Over the several millennia of man's existence, he has progressively extended the horizons of his social consciousness, fashioning and adapting his institutions, to reflect and support his consciousness. The focus of loyalty has moved over time from family to tribe to nation. Identification with a larger group has brought with it concern for the welfare of those within the group, wider cooperation and progress towards equity in relations among them. The nation state, the institutions of participatory government and the provision for public welfare through progressive taxation are refinements of this long evolutionary movement in human history.

It is a process which must continue, and will continue, unless man commits the final policy of pressing the button to achieve his own destruction. In the un-