
RECOGNITION OF FACT COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES SIMULTANEOUSLY OBSERVING
COMMONWEALTH DAY, HOUSE OF COMMONS, OTTAWA, MAY 13, 1977

HON. DONALD S. MACDONALD(ACTING PRIME MINISTER): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise on behalf of the government on this second Monday in March in recognition of the fact that today is Commonwealth Day. This year, for the first time, the 36 members of the Commonwealth around the world are observing Commonwealth Day simultaneously. This is, therefore, a day on which some 900 million people on five continents, who speak different languages, who have diverse cultures, who belong to different races, will take special note of their Commonwealth ties.

There are no superpowers in the Commonwealth; there is no *primus inter pares* -- and that is one of its assets. Rather, it is an association of equal sovereign states which have voluntarily decided to come together and talk and work with each other in an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding. In a world where negotiations among nations are too often a dialogue of the deaf, the Commonwealth provides a forum in which each member can express its views and be assured that its views will be heard. The Commonwealth promotes co-operation in place of discord, consultation in place of ignorance, and consensus in place of disharmony. Last year the Commonwealth was pleased to welcome a new member, the Seychelles which, like Canada and Mauritius, is a bilingual country and which, like Canada and Mauritius, is a full-fledged member of both the Commonwealth and "la francophonie".

We believe the Commonwealth provides an important avenue of attack on several world problems. Secretary General Ramphal recently pointed out:

"The Commonwealth has one-fourth of the world's people, but it has nearly one-half of the world's poor."