

Common interests

Finally, we recognized that intangibles lie at the heart of our relationship: common language, a sharing of institutional structures, affection for and loyalty to the Commonwealth, similar traditions of democracy. A commitment to civil liberties, and widespread and diverse people-to-people contacts have led to the development of a "special relationship" which is unlike that which Canada has with any other part of the developing world. It is in fact, unlike our relationships with all but a few countries anywhere.

Our review took eight months of preparation involving extensive consultations in Ottawa, and the full and active participation of the Canadian High Commissioners in the field.

We built on a foundation established by wise men from your countries and mine. Several of my predecessors in their time commissioned or undertook special reviews of the relationship. Many of you will understand my own regard for the contribution of Paul Martin whose concern and affection for the Caribbean persists to this day.

Our review confirmed as official policy that the Commonwealth Caribbean is and will continue to be a region of major interest to Canada. In fact we went beyond the mere provision of an assessment; Cabinet approved an action plan for a regional policy approach which directed that the Commonwealth Caribbean should be accorded priority. There are two novel aspects to this action plan: it marks the first time Canada formulated such a comprehensive policy towards the Commonwealth Caribbean; and, as I have noted already, we accorded priority to the Commonwealth Caribbean in the over-all external policy of Canada.

As a Cabinet, we concluded that Canada should intensify and deepen our economic and political relationships with the states of the Commonwealth Caribbean. Cabinet further directed that I take this opportunity to announce our position to you collectively and to seek your individual and collective views on the exact nature, scope and form of the role Canada could most usefully play before any announcement is made in Canada. We want this partnership to assist your states to cope with rapid changes and economic difficulties which beset the region. You know how this can best be done and where and how we can be partners in the process. The regional policy approach which the Canadian government is prepared to implement focuses primarily on economic co-operation, both bilateral and multilateral, but calls also for strengthening political and social ties.

Specific programs

The framework we defined for specific programs is as follows:

— The Canadian government has recently taken the decision to increase its global development assistance from the current level of 0.43 per cent to 0.5 per cent gross national product by 1985-86. Within this increased level, a special priority will be given to the Commonwealth Caribbean.

— We will achieve rapid annual increases which will lead to steady expansion in the real value of our aid to the region over the next five years. It is my personal hope that the totality of these flows will double in a very short time frame, perhaps in as little