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Commonwealth an avenue to help resolve North-South problems

The Commonwealth can continue to play a key role in breaking down barriers to international justice and progress, and Canada will continue to work through this institution to help resolve North-South issues, Secretary of State for External Affairs Mark MacGuigan told the Royal Commonwealth Society in a speech delivered in Toronto, October 9.

Excerpts from the speech, The Commonwealth and Global Development, follow:

...From a number of perspectives, the Commonwealth enjoys many advantages for effecting change in North-South relations, even though it is itself composed of nations belonging to both developed and developing nations. For one thing, it serves as a bridge between the two groups of nations, by promoting an awareness of mutual Commonwealth interests and interdependencies — and in this it again mirrors the growing interdependent nature of our world.

The Commonwealth also provides a rare opportunity for high-level consultations in an informal, frank and intimate setting, avoiding the rhetorical or adversary character of certain other international fora. More importantly, it need not be dominated by bloc-to-bloc attitudes or strategies — factors which too often result

in the rigidity and inflexibility which hamper international resolution of problems.

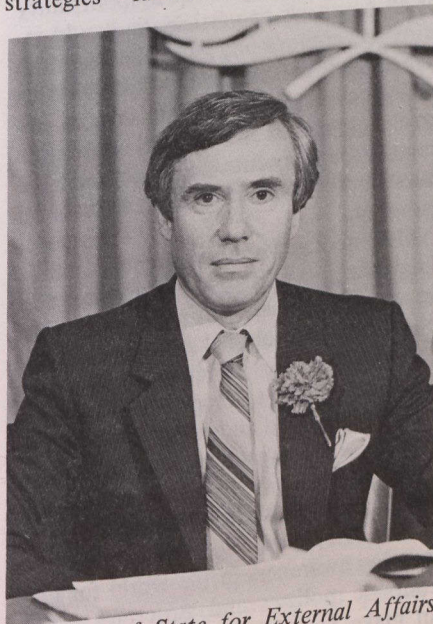
It can also facilitate the mutual influencing of perceptions and the moderating of extreme positions, thereby generating more balanced and pragmatic approaches to problem resolution.

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....

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, to Latin America and to other nations, such as



Secretary of State for External Affairs Mark MacGuigan.

United Nations photo by Saw Lwin

Sixteen years ago this week...

Explorer Henry Asbjorn Larsen, a retired Royal Canadian Mounted Police superintendent and captain of the *St. Roch*, died. The *St. Roch* was the first vessel to navigate the Northwest Passage from west to east.