

It is not designed just to guide intergovernmental relations, but depends on public interest, which it reflects, and on public support.

Though largely unperceived outside it, the focus of Commonwealth activity has shifted away from purely political concerns during the last decade. This culminated in the 1973 heads of government meeting in Ottawa, and the specific decision by heads of government "to make maximum use of Commonwealth machinery to put the principles of the Commonwealth Declaration into practice, and to accelerate the pace of social and economic development among the less affluent members". It is this dynamic element and this commitment that provide the key to the understanding and value of the Commonwealth today. Officially this finds expression through the programs administered by the Commonwealth Secretariat. These programs, begun since 1969, include: the Commonwealth Foundation, established to increase exchanges between Commonwealth professional organizations; the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation, with its triple focus of technical assistance, education and training, and export development; the Commonwealth Youth Program, established in 1973 to involve young people in national development; and the Program for Applied Studies in Government, to provide training for middle- and senior-level government officials. Complementing this is the increased activity of non-governmental organizations in such diverse fields as medicine and law, science and education.

During this period leading to a concentration on functional co-operation, political questions were not ignored; the Commonwealth's discussion of *apartheid*, Rhodesia and nuclear testing confirms this. Nor are political questions ignored now, as demonstrated by the decision by heads of government in 1973 to provide humanitarian assistance to the indigenous people of the territories of southern Africa in their efforts to achieve self-determination, a decision prompting considerable change in Canada's own policy on this question. But politics *per se* do count for less, and when political questions arise, they are approached in a manner that enables members to accept different positions, to identify the common elements in them, to determine whether they are amenable to Commonwealth treatment, and then to move forward from this agreed basis to a solution or an amelioration of the problem. The stress increasingly is on practical collaboration and co-operation, and the avoidance of futile political altercations.

The role of Canada, of successive ministers and prime ministers, and of Prime Minister Trudeau in particular, was critical in engineering this change. It was largely through the interventions