



Canadian Press, Commonwealth Secretariat, Oxfam

C. Canada and the Official Commonwealth:

Canada places great value on the unique style and content of Commonwealth consultation. The most important Commonwealth forum is the biennial meeting of Heads of Government, where the atmosphere is informal and the agenda designed to encourage frank and personal discussion of world problems — political, economic and social — as well as to consider a selected range of Commonwealth functional programs of cooperation. These meetings have rightly been described as unique in their family atmosphere. There are no blocs, votes or vetoes and the objective is a better understanding of each other's point of view, including issues on which they may differ. Where differences persist, it is hoped that it will be on a basis of friendship and better mutual understanding. When a decision is reached on common policy for an important issue, it is achieved by consensus. There have been some notable successes, the latest being agreement at Lusaka on how the Commonwealth could assist in solving the Zimbabwe/

Rhodesia problem to the satisfaction of the world community and all parties concerned.

The Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, described as follows the Commonwealth consultation process:

“This is one forum where we can speak frankly and generate less rancour. We have the same backgrounds . . . use the same terms of reference. We inherited basic institutions and concepts of government in society. We understand each other better than any other group does. We use the same diction and concepts. It does not mean that we all stay put. We are all evolving and discovering our own personalities. We have all been brought up in similar institutions, with ideas and ideals which make it possible for us to speak with an informality and intimacy which is not possible elsewhere”.