

# THE COMMONWEALTH



As the territories within the British Empire became self governing and independent, their tradition of shared values, common language of administration and similar public institutions convinced many national leaders of the value of maintaining some form of association to replace the passing imperial links. The modern Commonwealth, the Commonwealth of Nations to give its full title, a voluntary association of 44\* independent countries is the result. Both the continuing importance and the success of the Commonwealth are indicated by its constant growth. For instance, in 1978 the Commonwealth gained three new members, in 1979 another three and in the first half of 1980 another two.

The Commonwealth is represented on every continent. It

includes approximately one quarter of the world's countries and approximately one quarter of world population. It embraces a rich variety of races, languages, creeds, religions and cultures, and is a unique association in which national representatives meet in an atmosphere of informality and intimacy to exchange views on global and Commonwealth affairs and to determine what may usefully be done together. In a world characterized by divisive interests such as ideology, race, religion and level of economic development, the Commonwealth can transcend such interests and bring a world perspective to matters of concern to all members.

\*Total membership as of 1 August 1980