

colleagues of the Royal Commonwealth Society), to further the debate with NGOs on the banning of landmines. If I may be personal, my task as Chairman of the Committee of the Whole (COW) which drafted the Economic Declaration was enormously facilitated by the unprompted and imaginative help I received from the Canadian delegation, headed by Mr David Malone.

So much for the inner workings of the Commonwealth. Let me now draw up briefly a balance sheet of the strengths and weaknesses of the contemporary Commonwealth, as seen from my desk in Marlborough House. Its assets are important. They include first its diverse, even heterodox and growing membership of 54 states - not, in the event, enlarged further at Edinburgh - a global sub-set which represents more than a quarter of the world's population, ranging from the mighty India to tiny Pacific islets - embracing all the rich tapestry of the world's races, religions, traditions and language groups. A world fragmented in interest groups and regional blocs needs the Commonwealth's model of unity in diversity.

Secondly, it has devised a *modus operandi* which works by the consultative and co-operative pursuit of consensus, giving its smallest members a voice in the ear of some of the world's major industrial nations, and providing technical assistance which is closely focused, flexible, and cheap and responsive for the recipient.

Thirdly, it also has a priceless historical network, whose commonalities of language, law, accountancy, academic standards and business practice, represent an invaluable if often latent asset - a legacy, not a construct. Witness the Commonwealth Business Council, offspring of the Commonwealth Business Forum which preceded CHOGM, which will now activate this network to promote trade and investment between our members.

Fourthly, it has accumulated a wealth of experience in dealing with a wide spectrum of political, economic, social and cultural questions on the global agenda. On the racial issues so ably described in Ali Mazrui's paper, those of Rhodesia and South Africa