

monwealth trade links remain important, particularly for the developing countries, and Britain has made efforts to help them negotiate terms of association with the EEC that might contribute to an increase in their economic prosperity.

The Commonwealth, it should be remembered, is an international association and not, like the United Nations or the Organization of American States, an international organization. It was not created at any particular time as a result of the desire of its members to pursue a particular policy or to work towards the resolution of specific problems. Instead, the Commonwealth has changed slowly in response to individual stimuli and initiatives and has, at the request of member governments, undertaken a variety of activities and programs in many areas of its operations. Since it is not an international organization, the Commonwealth has no charter outlining jurisdictions and responsibilities, nor has it a structured hierarchy of councils and committees that reach decisions on political and other international issues by formal debate and majority vote. It does not have a continuing executive structure.

Commonwealth Secretariat

However, in 1975, Commonwealth heads of government decided to establish the Commonwealth Secretariat to facilitate communication between member governments and to administer programs of co-operation. The Secretariat exemplifies "the spirit of co-operation which animates the Commonwealth", and is staffed by officers from 20 Commonwealth countries. Its budget is financed by assessments from all member governments. The Secretariat, responsible to Commonwealth governments collectively, is headed by a Secretary-General, who has direct access to heads of government. It works to ensure conditions for the exchange of opinions in a friendly, informal and intimate atmosphere, and, since its establishment, has become the centre for multilateral communication between Commonwealth governments. The Secretariat also serves as the focal-point and link for many of the Commonwealth's functional institutions. Its responsibilities include the following: facilitating and promoting consultation, both bilaterally and multilaterally, among members; preparing and circulating factual papers on international questions of special concern to Commonwealth governments; acting as a focal-point and