

And, at another level, I have also been taking stock. During my first year at Marlborough House I have had particular occasion to look ahead to the future patterns of Commonwealth activity and Secretariat progress -- particular, because sought in the context of an ongoing review of Secretariat activities. At the meeting of Commonwealth Senior Officials just concluded in Canberra, Commonwealth Governments have accepted these projections and endorsed my concept of the philosophy and priorities of the Secretariat's work programme.

The Secretariat itself, which owes so much to the dedicated service rendered to it and to the Commonwealth by my predecessor Arnold Smith, has grown up fairly rapidly over its first ten years. The period immediately ahead, that is the next year or so, must be one of consolidation and rationalisation, with emphasis on the quality of our service. An important element of this pursuit of quality must be our ability to respond with imagination and creativity to the urgent and wide ranging needs of Commonwealth developing countries in particular. In all these countries, for example, there is now a keen awareness that traditional models are not necessarily appropriate to their own milieu and circumstances, and that economic planning and development must be more intimately linked to their own values, resources, skills, and particular needs. As they strive to create truly indigenous patterns of development, each could benefit greatly from joint approaches to common problems and from the experience of others in not dissimilar circumstances. Co-operative programmes and exchanges can be specially valuable in a Commonwealth context, given a broadly similar pre-independence experience and the administrative and educational infrastructure which was its legacy. Intra-regional and inter-regional co-operation between Commonwealth countries demands our urgent practical support, as a meeting just concluded in Marlborough House between the representatives of the regional integration secretariats of Commonwealth countries in East Africa, the Caribbean and the South Pacific has fully demonstrated and confirmed. It was the first of its kind ever held, not just within the Commonwealth but in the wider international community. And there are other ways in which we can help to break new ground. Areas like non-formal education, revision and shortening of medical curricula consonant with rural health care needs, the training and responsibilities of para-medical workers, are illustrations of this approach. Each is of enormous significance to national development efforts, and I envisage the Secretariat giving increasing emphasis to innovative programmes of this nature. They need to be given priority over more traditional approaches. Similar considerations must inform our work in such areas as science and technology, export market development, and food production and rural development.

More generally, over the next few years, the Secretariat's major priority must be to seek to contribute, at the practical as well as the conceptual level, to the strengthening of the socio economic development of member countries and the emergence of more equitable economic relationships at the international level in furtherance of the commitment of Heads of Government to work towards these ends. But the Commonwealth's ability to make this kind of contribution rests essentially on the political commitment of Governments to the Commonwealth itself, expressed through the processes of consultation and exchange of opinions in a friendly, informal and intimate atmosphere -- processes which the agreed Memorandum on the establishment of the Secretariat rightly describes as "the life-blood of the Commonwealth". To nourish these processes and strengthen mutual understanding and confidence between member countries will therefore always be at the heart of the Secretariat's work. Without them, all else will crumble.