

in Commonwealth councils for some time that the most important thing for us to do is to ask in the first instance: What are the levers, in the most appropriate sense of that word, that the Commonwealth possesses? What are those powers — the influences which are identifiable and which then can be honed and sharpened to apply to particular problems? So once we know what we are, once we know what our strengths are, we can then, looking at the panoply, really, of difficult areas, ask ourselves which of those is an area in which our talents can be most useful and most effective. In so far as what our powers are, I think some of them at least can be stated quite simply.

There is unquestionably a community of interest within the Commonwealth. It is not something that is easy to describe. Indeed, I once said to be a group of my colleagues from the Caribbean that we ought not to spend too much time analyzing the Commonwealth, because in some respects it is a very, very nebulous kind of concept. If you really start to spell it out and ask yourself what it is that is holding all of these countries in this relationship and many hundreds of millions of people in this relationship, you start to get into the specifics of it, it is extremely difficult to understand why it has survived for so long. But there are certain things about its character that I think we can state with certain specificity, and one of those is, of course, that we do, in a way, stem from the same kind of origins. I think the traditions, the democratic traditions, that we possess in common are enormously important. There is the fact that we feel at home with each other. I had a gentleman say to me not too long ago that, even when he crossed the border into Canada from the United States, he had a kind of different feeling as a Commonwealth member, and these things, while they cannot be measured in specific terms, are enormously important.

Then, too, there is, of course, the fact that we do have a strong physical presence in some of the most dynamic parts of the world today — Africa being one, Southeast Asia being another — and in Africa, in particular, I believe that the Commonwealth presence and the Commonwealth influence are going to be crucial if we are going to solve the problems of southern Africa.

I have had the opportunity over this past year in particular, in concert with my other colleagues on the Security Council from the West, of dealing at close range with the Namibian situation in particular, but also, of course (peripherally but nonetheless importantly), with Rhodesia, and while I take nothing at all away from the five of us, or indeed from Germany, the United States and France, I think they would be among the first to acknowledge that the United Kingdom's and Canada's presence in the Commonwealth has added a dimension to that effort which is identifiable and which will indeed, if we succeed, prove to have been probably pivotal in bringing about a solution. I believe, despite the conflicts that are in play among the various countries, that the same can be said of Rhodesia. Once again, it is not easy to be precise in defining what those elements are but, if I may use a Canadian example, I think that Prime Minister Trudeau's close personal association with the Commonwealth, the commitment that he has had to it over this past decade, the friendships and the relationships that he has built with various Commonwealth leaders, have on a number of occasions been of great importance in terms of influencing, for example, some of