

Mr. Chairman:

Although this is by no means my first visit to Ottawa as Secretary-General, this is the first occasion on which I have an opportunity to speak publicly in Ottawa since assuming office. What more appropriate, then, than that I should do so at the invitation of the Capital's Branch of the Royal Commonwealth Society and on the occasion of the annual meeting here of the Society's National Council. It is an invitation for which I am deeply grateful.

And what a great honour and joy it is for me to be introduced on this occasion by my good friend and predecessor, Arnold Smith. The entire Commonwealth owes a considerable debt to Arnold Smith and to Canada which gave him to us. In large measure, he was responsible for the Commonwealth coming through a decade of turbulence, not only intact, but stronger than ever before and better equipped to tackle the problems that lay ahead. It fell to him to assist the evolution of a new relationship between Britain and her Commonwealth partners - a relationship that marked a maturing of the Association, so that today there is no senior partner, no distinction between old and new, great and small, rich and poor, in terms of Commonwealth membership.

And, of course, it was Arnold's single-minded commitment to Commonwealth goals, that made it possible for the Secretariat itself to develop as it did over these formative years. I am grateful for this opportunity to pay tribute, here in Ottawa, to his immense contributions.

I represent the official Commonwealth - the Commonwealth primarily of governmental contact and co-operation. You are an example of the unofficial Commonwealth, of that tremendously varied collection of organizations that enrich the life of the Commonwealth at the unofficial or non-governmental level. As the chief servant of the Commonwealth, I acknowledge the enormously valuable contribution these unofficial organizations make to the vitality of our association, by bringing the Commonwealth together at the level of its people, by improving understanding and promoting friendship across national frontiers through contact and practical co-operation in a miscellany of fields.

There are over two hundred Commonwealth organizations of various types, all contributing to stronger Commonwealth links. Their number is steadily increasing. There are a number of non-governmental organizations which facilitate contact among people from particular walks of life - architects, librarians, parliamentarians, nurses, doctors, pharmacists, ecologists, businessmen, magistrates, veterinarians, geographers, ex-servicemen, and so on. Then there are other organizations with broader membership, and your own organization - the Royal Commonwealth Society - has long occupied a special place among them.

At first glance, it may appear that we work at levels - the official and the unofficial - that do not impinge on each other. I am convinced, however, that our activities at our different levels can - and, in the larger interests of the Commonwealth which we all serve, must be made to - reinforce each other.