

Some will say nobody cares about what the Commonwealth thinks about itself and, besides, it's just self-promotion. Editors, though, are constantly on the lookout for commentary on international subjects. Most of them want to assume a reasonable level of curiosity and sophistication among their readers, so running occasional pieces about the Commonwealth's work would be more welcome than you think. In any case, there is nothing lost by sending the stuff along.

There are flash points that grab the world's attention and they should be used to seize an opportunity to give the reader, the listener or the viewer something more than the headline and the background of the story in the news. A good example is Nigeria. In Canada, the foreign affairs minister made headlines when the Nigerian issue took center stage in the international press. As it happens, Lloyd Axworthy was critical of what he thought was foot-dragging by African leaders. He was also impatient with Britain's position. He led the public fight for tougher measures. Why not take advantage of the controversy and flood newsrooms with background material on how the Commonwealth makes decisions, detailing the process of how consensus is reached on controversial issues. How much tolerance for emerging democracies can the Commonwealth afford? What programs for democratic development exist within the Commonwealth?

Teaching tolerance is something we agree is a noble objective and a natural for the Commonwealth, whose linguistic, cultural, religious and ethnic diversity includes just about everyone on the globe. Yet, when there are debates in Canada, and presumably anywhere else, about race relations, the distribution of hate propaganda or demonstrations