

ment, to exert continuing control over CIDA's activities and expenditures.

Madam Chairman, with your permission, I have one more sentence—

**The Assistant Deputy Chairman:** Order, please. The hon. member cannot continue without the consent of the House.

Does the House agree to let the hon. member conclude his remarks?

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Assistant Deputy Chairman:** Agreed.

**Mr. Wagner:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. I just want to finish my speech and I am grateful to my colleagues for their agreement.

I wanted to point out that a \$900 million budget cannot and must not any longer escape as easily the daily scrutiny of members of the House.

[English]

**Mr. Fleming:** Madam Chairman, because I had the privilege of joining the Prime Minister at the recent Commonwealth Conference held at Jamaica only a few weeks ago I should like to take this opportunity, when the House is debating Vote 1 of the Department of External Affairs, to discuss the particular experience I gained during that trip. I hope also to place on the record some points perhaps to enlighten some of my colleagues who have not had the opportunity I have had concerning Canada's particular role in the Commonwealth or to learn of the high regard other members of that organization have for Canada.

Before going into the detail of what I wish to say, perhaps I should mention that during my brief time on that trip I had the privilege of having access to briefing sessions with the Prime Minister and our officials. I also had the opportunity on one occasion, when the Prime Minister had other obligations, to sit in on the private sessions with the heads of state. In this way I had an opportunity to see not only how well the Prime Minister is able to represent our country in such a situation but how outstanding our officials are. The officials, albeit from External Affairs, CIDA, Industry, Trade and Commerce, or Finance, in their dedication and devotion worked day and night—and they did work day and night—in an effort to keep on stream the discussions and to make sure that the talks were productive, that candour was maintained, and that in fact the Commonwealth representatives went away as a useful group still intact, with positive exchanges of thought, and goals to accomplish in the months ahead.

I might say that having been given this opportunity by the Prime Minister this was the first time I have seen him in that particular office on a day-to-day basis from the time one gets up in the morning until one retires in the evening. The day I returned from the conference there was a special program on the CBC about the conference. The reporter, who generally did an excellent rundown of what took place at the conference, again as we so often experience in the press, threw a barb at the Prime Minister in this particular instance suggesting that he preferred sun-

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shine and beaches to the conference table. There are many faults we all have as human beings for which we could be hanged, but I certainly found that very inappropriate. He was at work certainly before I was in the morning, and I was up early. He dealt with his aides while he tried to eat his breakfast. He worked throughout the day and in the evening. I think it is terribly unfair that due respect is not paid to the job he tries to do to.

● (1640)

I simply want to put that on the record because I was able to see him as many backbenchers cannot, in the role of Prime Minister representing our country before a body as important as is the Commonwealth. A great deal of effort was made on his part, and nothing could be more unfair than to accuse him of spending time on the beaches and in the sunshine, because nobody spent less time there than the leader of our country.

Some one opposite ask what he thinks about royalty. As a matter of fact, the one time I had an opportunity of sitting in at a private meeting of heads of government was when the Prime Minister was having an audience with Her Majesty the Queen. I think he has a great deal of respect for that lady and for the institution that she represents, and he recognizes its role within our constitution and parliamentary system.

I believe that the Canadian policy toward the Commonwealth continues to be predicated on our commitment to strengthen the association and encourage a more active participation in it by the members, and to support its development and that of its non-governmental organizations as instruments for greater practical co-operation.

If I could sum up—and I believe I am echoing the government's view which I support—the twin value of discussion in a Commonwealth forum lies in its candour and informality, and in the dispassionate assessment of the different questions under consideration.

With regard to the candour and informality of Commonwealth conferences, let me say that every time a Commonwealth meeting is about to take place, people from the media, who have not had an active involvement or background knowledge of the Commonwealth, and a great many people from the public ask, what good is it? It is not a treaty, no definite things happen, it does not impose any obligation on any state. When we hear reports on the meetings, it seems there is a crisis every time there is a conference, and it is a miracle that the Commonwealth is still together at the end of the conference. In fact it seems to me that the outstanding value of the Commonwealth and Canada's participation in it is just that, namely, the candour and informality of leaders of governments from around the world sitting down, both in private and in public, and exchanging views.

At that meeting in Jamaica there were some 28 heads of states from around the world, and some 33 countries represented. Where else, including the United Nations, can you sit down without a political stance and talk person to person? Where else can you get the developed, the developing, and the less developing nations together, where all the races in the world are represented? There is a great diversity in the development of the democratic process in