

In Vancouver, Canada can be expected to carry forth the commitment to human dignity and equality made by Commonwealth leaders in their Declaration of Commonwealth Principles of 1971. Of particular interest will be continued Canadian leadership on the issue of *apartheid*. This role first emerged at the 1985 CHOGM in Nassau, and again in 1986 at the Heads of Government Review Meeting in London, England.

The Commonwealth: A Focus on Co-operation

The modern Commonwealth has emerged as heir to the many links established by the British Empire. Today's Commonwealth is a multiracial, multicultural association of 49 nations with a common working language, many shared traditions in administration, law and education, and a strong commitment to the principles of responsible government.

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With these strengths it has achieved a unique basis for consultation and co-operation. Members' noted ability to promote the reconciliation of competing interests and regions recently prompted the President of West Germany, Dr. Richard von Weizsäcker, to describe the Commonwealth as "a source of common sense in a world where that quality is sadly lacking."

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"based upon informal consultation; rooted in a common and unifying tradition; and characterized by remarkable mutual respect." The publication, *The Commonwealth Today*, notes that the organization's "combination of contemporaneity and experience gives it a unique dynamism and flexibility. In its vigorous, creative approach to solving problems, it stands for statesmanship in shirt sleeves — leaders talking and working together with the minimum of formality and the maximum of good will."

With a staff of 400 drawn from some 30 nations, the Commonwealth Secretariat, located in London, co-ordinates a wide variety of programs and activities at the request of member governments. Initiatives like the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation, which supports projects in the less-developed member-countries, reflect a strong emphasis on practical achievements initiated by the

Commonwealth's first Secretary-General, Canadian diplomat Arnold Smith, between 1965 and 1975. The present Secretary-General, Shridath Ramphal of Guyana, was appointed to his third five-year term in 1985. Under his strong direction the Secretariat is active in international political and economic affairs, development assistance, and such areas as education, health, law, science, youth and women's role in society.

Beyond the official, government-to-government links, the Commonwealth is a forum for a vast array of non-governmental contacts, from the Commonwealth Games to the Commonwealth Association of Firefighters. Tens of thousands of individuals, working together through a network of over 200 non-governmental organizations, continually give life to the principles of friendship and co-operation that are so crucial to the Commonwealth and its continuing vitality.

The Canadian Role: A Tradition of Leadership

Canada has always been one of the Commonwealth's most solid supporters. Historically, as the first self-governing Dominion within the British Empire, Canada demonstrated a way for other countries to assert their own independence while retaining friendly links to Britain. With the development of the modern Commonwealth, Canada has supported a broadly based association in which all members have a close interest and a contribution to make.

In recent years, Canada has been the second-largest financial contributor to the Commonwealth, and has been deeply involved in pioneering a number of important policy initiatives.

Located in the heart of Vancouver, the British Columbia Convention Centre will be the location of this year's CHOGM. This was the site of the Canadian Pavilion for Expo 86.

