

our own case, for example, we have a very close working and practical relationship, and a most friendly one, with the United States whose distinguished ambassador I am pleased to see with us today. Therefore, in the North American context we are constantly literally on an hour-by-hour basis developing a kind of Canada-United States relationship. Similarly, of course, in Africa there are now not only such organizations as the Organization for African Unity, but regional groupings of various kinds are emerging, some of whose members are within the Commonwealth, some are not. South East Asia, where our chairman has had more experience than almost anyone else in Commonwealth affairs or indeed in international affairs, is yet another example where we have the ASEAN grouping, some of whose members belong to the Commonwealth and are long-standing representatives of this organization and yet others who are not and who stem from a quite different kind of tradition.

And then, even within our own countries, the structure of them has altered markedly over the last 30 or 40 years. In Canada, for example, where we have had the very proud tradition of two founding peoples -- the French and the English -- we have since the war had a new infusion and a most valuable one, which now means that something over one-third of all Canadian citizens are neither of French nor English origin and that number, indeed, is increasing on a steady basis. And so, therefore, the character not only of our regional groupings, but of our individual countries, is changing, and consequently we must, in the Commonwealth, be prepared, as we have been, to adjust to these new circumstances, to define new roles for the organization, so that it can maintain the vitality that we talked about back in 1949 when the new organization, in effect, was put into place.

Insofar as I am concerned personally, ever since that day when I talked about the children of the empire, I have been an unashamed and unabashed defender of the Commonwealth concept. Whatever the form it has taken at any given moment in history, it has always seemed to me to be a unique organization and one that it was very much worth our while to preserve. Since I have assumed my present responsibilities and indeed, in all of the years that I have been in government, I have sought out every opportunity that has presented itself in order to advance the Commonwealth cause, not only for its own sake, but for what it can do in terms of the world in general.

Harking back to what I said a moment ago about the changing structures, it will not surprise you -- nor indeed is my experience unique -- to discover that it has not been easy on all of these occasions to get the kind of enthusiasm and the kind of support for the Commonwealth that I believe is essential.