

the environment and drugs, promoting the security of small states.

With strong Canadian support, programs such as the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation, the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan and the Vancouver based distance education facility. The Commonwealth of Learning, have immeasurably broadened opportunities and promoted interchanges among their people.

The past eventful year brought the welcome admission of the Commonwealth's 50th member, Namibia, after that country with steadfast Commonwealth support won its independence from South Africa on March 21, 1990. Sustained Commonwealth pressure, including the work of the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers, chaired by my colleague, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, has been instrumental in the historic progress registered in the last year toward the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa.

It has been a year of progress in other sectors as well. My colleague, the Hon. Mary Collins, played host last October in Ottawa to a major conference of Commonwealth ministers responsible for women's affairs, which called for full equality for women and their full integration in the development process.

As we start the countdown to the 1994 Commonwealth Games in Victoria, a Commonwealth working party, chaired by Mr. Roy McMurtry, has proposed an ambitious scheme of amateur sport development in member countries.

A Commonwealth election observer mission, which included a Canadian observer, Mr. Barry Turner, has just two weeks ago travelled to Bangladesh to monitor the recent elections held in that country.

The real strength of the Commonwealth is that it is pragmatically oriented and people driven. It links societies and thousands of individuals in a vast international network of professional, service, cultural and sport organizations. These form the real lifeblood of the Commonwealth and ensure its continuing vitality. One which we in this House know well is the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

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The coming year will be full of challenge for the Commonwealth. Under its new Secretary-General, Emeka Anyaoku, who has our full support and confidence, it must adapt to meet tomorrow's needs and particularly those of its youth. A blue ribbon panel of leaders, including Prime Minister Mulroney, is examining the role of the Commonwealth in the 1990s and beyond, and will make its recommendations to the next Heads of Government meeting in Harare, Zimbabwe this coming October.

Somewhat contrary to the view that states in their external relations have only cold-blooded interests, it is a pleasure to pay tribute to an international association whose virtue is to maintain friendly contacts and fruitful dialogue among states of great diversity. It is this capacity for building bridges which gives the Commonwealth its special importance and potential, and which will make it even more indispensable in the future.

I am sure members will join me in congratulating the Commonwealth, which was born 60 years ago today.

• (1510)

Mr. Jesse Flis (Parkdale—High Park): Mr. Speaker, it is with pride and pleasure that I rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition, together with my colleague who just spoke, to mark Commonwealth Day 1991.

Now when the move among nations is toward broader economic and political alliances, we can look at our 60-year history as one of the 50 members of the Commonwealth, a multilateral organization in its best form.

The Commonwealth has since its adoption been a leader in the global commonwealth toward democracy. It has assisted smaller member countries like Namibia, Maldives, and has by virtue of its existence as a multi-racial, multinational and multi-faith organization—to use Her Majesty's words from her Commonwealth message today—being true to the principles of equality between all, regardless of sex or economic status, and has been a leader in the development of democracy.

The evolution is continuing and today we have the opportunity to prove the continuing vitality of the Commonwealth by declaring specific and current objectives.

This year will be the celebration of science in the Commonwealth. We will have the opportunity to expand on the work done by member countries. Here in Canada