

### Commonwealth Day – it's official

For the first time in history, the second Monday in March has been designated by the 36 nations of the Commonwealth as Commonwealth Day. Although Victoria Day in May was sometimes referred to as Commonwealth Day, this year March 14 is the official commemoration day for some 90 million Commonwealth inhabitants.

The date was chosen purposely so that young people would be in school to learn more about each other's lands and cultures, explained a Royal Commonwealth Society spokesman. January and February were not acceptable because school children in Australia and New Zealand are on holiday from school during those two months. For the same reason, July and August were ruled out for schools in the northern hemisphere.

Religious holidays – Christmas, Easter, saint's days, Ramadan, etc. – fill many other days in the year. Then with Labour Day, Thanksgiving, the Queen's Birthday and national days, it was no easy task to find a day when all children in all Commonwealth countries, ranging from Tonga to Trinidad, from Sri Lanka to New Zealand, were in school at the same time.

Finally, the Commonwealth heads of government in 1975 decided that March 14 was the best day and 1977 as the year it would be inaugurated. Yet they were not aware that in all the world, March 14 was scheduled as the beginning of the winter break in Canada's Ottawa and Carleton schools.

#### Special poster

Canada contributed to the celebrations by providing a poster, 12 inches by 6 (30 cm by 37.5 cm) showing the 36 flags in small groups under friendly umbrellas, depicting the world we share. It was designed by Peggy Steele Kitcher, who lives in Ottawa.

Prince Charles has said that members of the Commonwealth meet for co-operation, not confrontation. When the need arises, committee structures are created. When the need is no longer present, the committee is dismantled or put away, like an umbrella.

Over 36,000 posters are being distributed throughout the world. In Canada, all public, regional and secondary



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school libraries will receive them, together with a letter describing a ten-minute slide show, *A World to Share*, which will be available to all libraries and school boards through audio-visual centres and provincial ministries of education in each province.

The slide show, a delightful combination of photographs and cartoons, with music in a cassette, was produced in co-operation with the Commonwealth Secretariat in London and the Department of External Affairs in Ottawa.

An External Affairs publication, *Canada and the Commonwealth*, answers questions and gives resumé's of many little known programs that are available to people in the 36 member countries. Included in the package is Reference Paper 95, *The Commonwealth*, for those interested in more in-depth study. A detailed guide, explaining the 35-mm cassette slide show, the reference paper and the booklet are all available in either English or French without charge from many Canadian posts in Commonwealth countries in sufficient quantities to fill needs of groups or educational institutions, on loan. High commissions of Commonwealth countries based in Ottawa will also receive the package for their own use.

Individuals interested in a poster may request it from Commonwealth Folio, Public Relations Division,

Department of External Affairs, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0G2.

Special church services will be held on Sunday, March 13 in various communities throughout the world, and in schools and service clubs March 14, Commonwealth Day, will be marked by special speakers, films and the sharing of family dinners in Canada.

### Silver jubilee stamp

The Canada Post Office joined members of the Commonwealth in saluting Queen Elizabeth's silver jubilee with a new stamp, which was issued on February 4.

The 25-cent stamp, the first to use a full-colour portrait of the Queen, is based on a photograph by British photographer Peter Grugeon. The head-and-shoulders portrait on a deep royal blue background carries the number 25 in silver foil, indicating both the value of the stamp and the anniversary year.

#### Queen Elizabeth II

The Queen was born in London on April 21, 1926, the first child of the Duke and Duchess of York, subsequently King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. Early in 1942 the princess became Colonel of the Grenadier Guards, and on her sixteenth birthday carried out her first public engagement when she inspected the regiment. In a broadcast on her twenty-first birthday, she dedicated herself to serving the Commonwealth, a pledge she repeated on her accession to the Throne on February 6, 1952 when her father died suddenly.

The Queen, as the reigning monarch, upholds democracy and is a permanent

