

of local costs, and the relatively small start we have made on program assistance. Some of these things are necessary under the Canadian program but I was able to point out the new, more flexible guidelines adopted under the foreign policy review, which will make it possible for Canada to meet some of their concerns.

I know as well that CIDA is examining very carefully possible means of improving the administration of our aid program; and I am confident not only that our aid program has been a legitimate source of pride to us but will be more so in the future, as we adapt it to meet local needs more effectively. The agricultural development fund, for example, which I mentioned earlier, will be substantially untied and will enable us to respond to requests for assistance in the agricultural sector to which we would not have been able to reply positively in the past.

Politically, these countries will want to work out their own destinies, either independently or on some regional basis, without outside interference. The Senate Committee report refers to the "possibility of constitutional links between Canada and countries of the Caribbean area".

In all of my discussions during the tour, there was only one leader who raised this possibility, and even this comment was tempered by qualification. There was certainly no indication of general interest in it, and I am quite sure that the emphasis within the region is at present in directions other than towards constitutional links with Canada. The view of the Canadian Government remains that it is up to the region to take its own decisions about its political future. This is the attitude that we take. It is understandable that this is the attitude that we should understand exists not only on the part of sovereign governments in the area but also on the part of associate states.

Although I have not attempted to relate this statement directly to the Senate Committee report, it must be obvious that most of the comments I have made are relevant to many of its recommendations. The simple fact that the Government decided to send a special mission to the Commonwealth Caribbean -- even though this decision was taken prior to the release of the Senate Committee report -- is an indication of the Canadian Government's awareness of the theme which runs throughout the report, that there was and is a need to maintain a close dialogue with the governments of the Commonwealth Caribbean. The Government's consideration of my report will lead to a positive step, I sincerely believe.

As I indicated, I have made a report. My recommendations are before my colleagues and these are in the process of discussion.

It is not inappropriate to add that I think Canadian interests are well served in the area through the Canadian high commissioners and their staffs who are posted there, and through the various private Canadians I met, whether they were serving under the aid program or were in religious institutions, in business or in other walks of life. I was struck by, and I concur with, the recommendation of the Senate Committee that particular priority should be attached to the selection of suitably-qualified Canadian representatives in the area. In my own experience, we can be proud of the dedication and the competence of our present personnel, both those serving in the Caribbean and those working on Caribbean relations in Canada.