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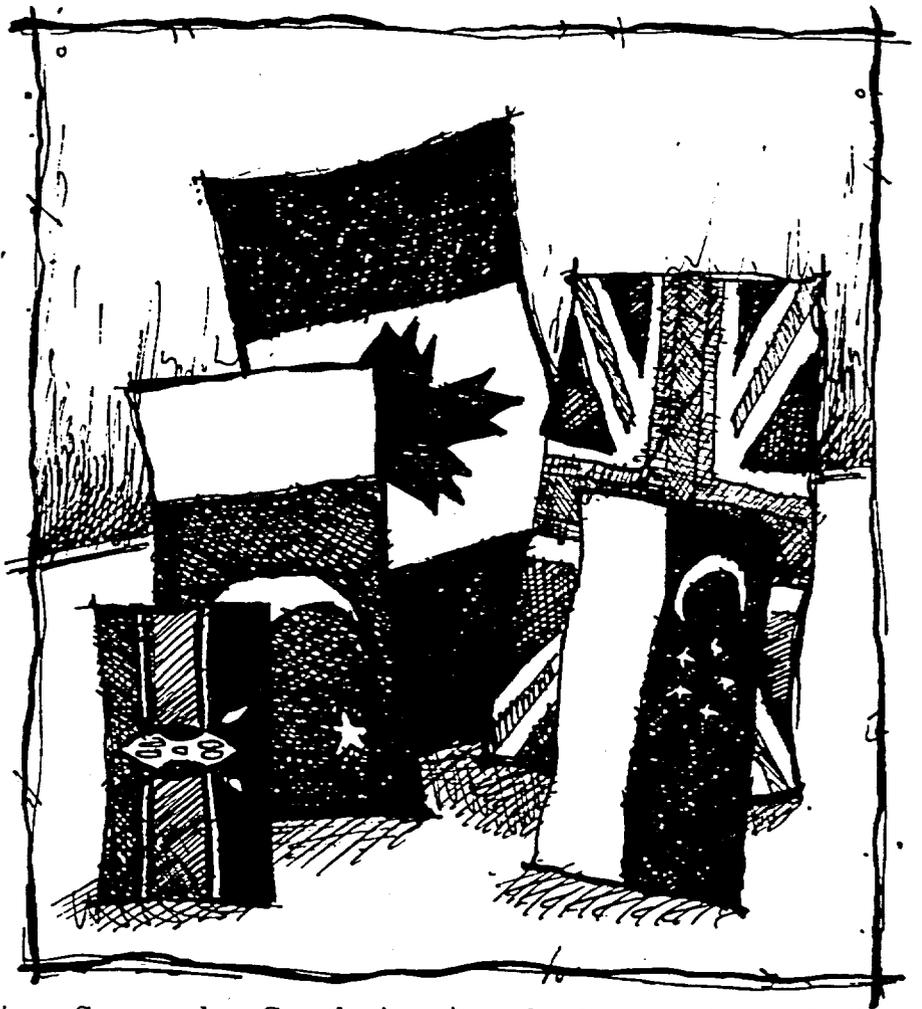
THE MODERN COMMONWEALTH A FAMILY OF NATIONS

As we look toward a new century, former British Empire colonies, now independent nations spanning the globe, are still linked together as members of the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth is a loose association of independent sovereign states. Members consult and co-operate with each other, and try to further world peace, social understanding, racial equality and economic development.

The Commonwealth has no formal constitution, although it does have a set of principles, called the Declaration of Commonwealth Principles. These principles stress peace and order, liberty of the individual, and equal rights for all people. The Commonwealth is not a military alliance. Members can belong to any other group or alliance they wish.

The 50 Commonwealth members include about a quarter of the world's population (more than 1.3 billion people). They form a diverse group, with populations that speak many languages, observe different religions, and have varied racial origins.



Some, such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, are industrialized nations with populations that are mostly of European origin. Many

are developing African or Caribbean countries or tiny Pacific islands. About half the members are small states with populations under one million.

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