

'LDC'. They provide 80 per cent of the world's 'marginal men'. And, if we take another statistic, measuring those who are 'most seriously affected' by the current international crisis, the Commonwealth accounts for 71 per cent of the world's special 'sufferers'. Of the Commonwealth's 950 million people, 845 million, or 89 percent, are from developing countries and, of them, as many as 78 per cent are from among the least developed.

Mindful of these realities, the Commonwealth would be a mere masquerade of community were it not pre-eminently concerned with the issue of poverty and militant in its preoccupation with the promotion of development. The goal of more and just equitable human relationships -- a goal which can only be achieved through development that ultimately eradicates poverty -- is not a goal about which the Commonwealth can be ambivalent. It follows that it could not be true to itself were it to eschew an activist role in any movement for new international economic arrangements that promise a more just and equitable human society. In the war against poverty, in the crusade for real development, in the supportive campaign for a new international economic order, the Commonwealth and its Secretariat cannot be neutral -- nor have they been.

The Commonwealth has worked hard at engendering such a commitment; a year ago, at Kingston, Commonwealth Heads of Government recognised: "the need to take immediate steps towards the creation of a rational and equitable new international economic order". And, to give tangible form to this acknowledgement, they invited a small Group of Experts to draw up for their consideration "in the context of the current international dialogue, a comprehensive and inter-related programme of practical measures directed at closing the gap between the rich and the poor countries". Those decisions were the result of a real dialogue at Kingston between the leaders of the Commonwealth's developed and developing countries. They were responsive, of course, to the aspirations of the poorer states; but they were responsive also to the initiatives taken by the British Prime Minister at that Meeting, particularly in the area of commodities. In totality, they represented a synthesis of Commonwealth views and the first joint political commitment by any group of developed and developing countries to a new international economic order without the kind of reservations that so greatly eroded the conclusions of the Sixth Special Session. Commonwealth Governments are therefore on record as being ready to exercise the kind of political will required to bring about fundamental change in the world's economic system.

And they have endeavoured to exercise that influence. At the Seventh Special Session of the General Assembly, in September 1975, Commonwealth developed and developing countries, building on Kingston and on the work of the Commonwealth Experts' Group (endorsed in general terms by Commonwealth Finance Ministers on the eve of that Session) played a significant role in evolving the consensus with which the Session ended. UNCTAD IV, which followed it, represented an opportunity to begin the process of translating commitment to change into the mechanisms of change, especially in the area of commodities. And, for Commonwealth countries, commodities are of critical importance.

Primary commodities dominate the export trade of almost all Commonwealth developing countries; and three of the four developed members are also important exporters of food and raw materials, while the fourth is a large net importer. Of the ten 'core' commodities included in the UNCTAD Integrated Commodity Programme, Commonwealth countries supply more than 70 per cent of the tea and jute, more than 60 per cent of the tin and rubber, more than one-third of the cocoa, copper and hard fibres and a significant share of the