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Speech by the  
Right Honourable Joe Clark,  
Secretary of State for  
External Affairs, at the  
Commonwealth Conference for  
Young Leaders  
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OTTAWA

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After a week, most of you will have been immersed in the history of the Commonwealth, and rallied to common traditions you might otherwise have never known you had. That is important in a family like ours, because we are far flung, we do not often get together, yet we are unique in both our roots and our relevance. But history is a moving process, and the Commonwealth an actor, not an artifact. So I want to focus my remarks tonight on what we are doing, and can do in the future. Let me place that in the current international context.

Immediately after World War II, an enormous proportion of the world's power rested in two countries - the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. Two military blocs took shape which, in effect, divided world power. The countries not in those blocs were the Third World, and there weren't too many of them in 1945 or even 1955. Since then, dozens of countries have become independent, and stayed out of the military blocs. Many of them have industrialized, and some have become major economic powers.

At the same time, changes in communications and technology created what Marshall McLuhan called "The Global Village", in which our weapons, our subsidies, our successes, our failures, ripple beyond our borders in ways we can't foresee, and can't ignore.

International organizations grew up around these various clusters of countries - NATO, the Warsaw Pact, the OECD, the Non-Aligned Movement. More sets of international rules and standards were agreed to - the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the Non-Proliferation Treaty and, through the United Nations, agreements on standards in Human Rights, the Environment, Refugees, Health and other issues. The UN is a permanent meeting place for all nations, sometimes stronger, sometimes weaker, always essential. For a period, we discussed international issues, particularly economic issues, mainly in a "North-South" context, North being defined more by wealth than by winter; South being defined by underdevelopment. But that line too has started to blur in the last decade or two. We have become more completely a world community, as we grow to understand that the major issues leave none of us alone.

But agreeing to build a system does not necessarily mean agreeing to make it work. There has to be a will to work together internationally, and often that will cannot be created artificially.

Indeed, sometimes the will to work together leads countries to reach beyond old groupings, and form new issue - specific coalitions, sometimes against old friends. That is happening today in agriculture, where an Australian initiative, called the Cairns Group, has drawn together countries like Canada, Hungary, Zaire, Thailand, Argentina - that is to say, countries from NATO, the Warsaw Pact, ASEAN, the Non-Aligned Movement, and others - to try to force changes to the subsidy practices of the European Community, the United States, and Japan.

In these world circumstances, there is an unusual value to international organizations that grew up together, as distinct from international organizations that were put together. It is, indeed, the difference between a family and an organization.

The Commonwealth is a family that works. In addressing major world issues, it has changed the course of events. One example was the problem of the supply of western arms to South Africa. As a result of Commonwealth decisions, in the early 1970's, several countries which were once major arms suppliers joined the military embargo against Pretoria, adding directly to the costs to Pretoria of its racist policies.

The Commonwealth also works in practical everyday ways. One of the best examples is the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation. It is virtually unique in that almost all members contribute, and it makes maximum use of experts from developing countries. Its various programs cover the spectrum of development assistance. The General Technical Assistance Program helps countries obtain qualified experts from abroad. The Program of Fellowships and Training sends students throughout the Commonwealth. The Export Market Development Program offers assistance in promotion, marketing, organizing trade fairs and export regulations. A small technical Assistance Group helps with taxation, law, statistics, and finance. Under this Program Canada has helped Botswana with health planning, Vanuatu with lumber exporting and Tuvalu with free legal services. A Canadian Computer Project helps 17 countries keep accurate and up-to-date statistics on their international debts.

One of the best examples of Commonwealth cooperation is one of its first joint endeavours - the Colombo Plan. In 1950 Canada joined other donors in assisting the three newly-independent countries of India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. This was the first major international initiative to assist third world countries. It became a model of international cooperation, and soon spread to Africa and the Americas. That work continues and the Commonwealth now accounts for 40% of Canada's assistance.

New initiatives continue to be launched, a major one being the Commonwealth Immunization Program which came out of the 1985 Heads of Government Meeting in Nassau. Every year five million children die from preventable diseases and an equally large number are crippled. In response Canada launched a 25 million dollar program which has increased global immunization from 25 to 30% - not perfection, but a significant step in the right direction.

Of course, the Commonwealth family also works politically in developing consensus and in taking concrete actions, such as the process which led to the independence of Zimbabwe, and the action on the NASSAU declaration on South Africa.

It is easy now to think of Zimbabwe as just another independent African state. In fact, some short years ago, it had a white minority government that showed no signs of compromising. The Commonwealth kept that problem in the public eye; achieved agreement on steadily-increasing pressure, both political and economic, undermined international support for the Smith regime; and facilitated the negotiation of a solution. More than anything else, that success carries hope for the future of all Southern Africa.

One of the most interesting features of Commonwealth meetings is they soften sharp edges. They make debate possible among countries who differ in their economic conditions, perspectives, their international affiliations.

I had the honour, in 1979, to lead the Canadian delegation to the Commonwealth Conference in Lusaka. That was a summer of three major international conferences. The first was the Economic Summit, in Tokyo. The second was the Commonwealth Conference in Lusaka and the third was the meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in Havana. No nation attended all three. No one from Tokyo was at Havana; no one from Havana at Tokyo. However, countries from the Economic Summit and the Non-Aligned Movement came together in the Commonwealth - and found ways, in the intimacy of that family meeting, to make progress that would have been impossible issuing communiqués across the distance between the Economic Summit and the Non-Aligned Movement. I think part of Lord Carrington's inspiration in inventing the phrase "megaphone diplomacy" is that he had experience of the opposite, in the intimacy of the Commonwealth, where there is often a real will to work together.

On difficult questions, the Commonwealth must often choose between staying united and being effective. In some cases, obviously we are most effective by being united. In others, unity must prevail, even at the cost of action. But it is Canada's view that, on the question of fighting apartheid, it is more important that the Commonwealth be effective than we be united. In 1961, and certainly since Nassau, this Commonwealth has played a central role in building steady international pressure to end apartheid. The Eminent Persons Group, while it failed to achieve the negotiations it sought, demonstrated the unique credentials and capacity of the Commonwealth in seeking a peaceful end to apartheid. We are, after all dealing with a former member of the Commonwealth family, in a region where our cooperation has already helped achieve profound change in Zimbabwe and real progress in economic cooperation and human development. The pressure against apartheid, by the Commonwealth and others, has unquestionably been effective both economically and psychologically. So far, tragically, the initial reaction in South Africa has been to become more brutal - but that very repression drives more moderate members of the white community to take their own stand for reform. External pressure encourages that internal change, and we must find the ingenuity to apply pressures that contribute materially to the certainty that apartheid cannot endure, and must be ended.

Let's be realistic. South Africa hopes there will be a pause in that pressure. They hope that a disagreement about sanctions will divert us from our central task of continuing to build the pressures that could end apartheid. There can be no pause in that pressure - there can be no levelling off. Our duty is to find effective means to hasten the end of apartheid and to sustain those who fight on the front lines.

At Nassau, the instruments were sanctions, scholarships, and other aid to the victims of apartheid. Those must all be considered as we prepare for the Vancouver meeting. But we should also look to other means, and representatives of several Governments, and the Secretariat, are engaged in that process now.

Clearly, one important challenge is to contribute to stability in Front Line States, to make them less dependent on South Africa. Stability requires, among other things, transportation systems that won't break down and aren't blown up. Many of those systems run through Mozambique, where bombings and sabotage occur every day. Mozambique is not part of the Commonwealth, but it is a key part of the fight against apartheid. For that reason, Prime Minister Mulroney has invited the Foreign Minister of Mozambique to be in Vancouver during the Commonwealth Conference.

Commonwealth countries are already involved in many projects in the Front Line States. Some concentrate on infrastructure; some on security; some on other training. The Non-Aligned Fund, under India's leadership, wants to be active there. SADCC - the Southern African Development Coordination Conference - is a very effective coordinating institution. Despite that interest and activity, the region stays destabilized. The question is whether we can find effective ways of keeping railways running; to use SADCC ports; to protect whole systems against terror and disruption. If we can, the economic effects would be significant. Traffic that now must run through South Africa would be free to move through the Front Line States, shifting the economic balance toward the countries we want to help.

I do not know if we will find a way that works. Certainly, it is easier to pass resolutions than to put together effective packages. A characteristic of the Commonwealth is that we have been as interested in real solutions as in resolutions. That is the spirit in which Canada - and every Commonwealth country I have spoken to - is approaching the Vancouver meeting.

Prime Minister Mulroney has made clear our willingness, if other measures fail, to end completely our economic and diplomatic relations with South Africa. It may come to that, but, before we end our influence, we want to use it in the most effective ways we can. The purpose, after all, is not just to conde to end it.

I want to make one reference to violence. The Canadian Government does not condone violence by anyone - not the Government of South Africa; not the African National Congress; not the violence that is at the core of apartheid. It is that basic violence - the violence at the heart of apartheid - which must be ended if the other is to end. Public opinion, particularly in Western countries like mine, must be brought to understand that organizations like the ANC practised non-violence for decades; that leaders of the UDF, explicitly non-violent, are thrown in prison anyway; that the deaths that shock us all come far more often from the actions of the Government than the actions of the ANC. Since 1976, it is estimated that there have been 100 to 200 deaths attributable to ANC guerrilla attacks. A recent survey by Pretoria University alleges the South African Government was responsible for over 2300 deaths in 1984 to 1986 alone. No discussion of Southern Africa can ignore those facts.

The Commonwealth of nations will be here long after apartheid is gone. A changed South Africa may be a member again, back in the family. And then there will be other dominating issues - as there were when the Colombo Plan was created; when Zimbabwe grew out of Rhodesia; when programs were launched specifically to help small States. The nature of those issues can't be foreseen - but the way of resolving them can be. The best way for the world to solve problems is to bring together the different peoples, the different parties. Most international organizations try to do that. In 1987, and for the foreseeable future, few do it better than the Commonwealth.