

“To Tidy Minds it May Appear Illogical”:
How the Commonwealth Evolved from an
‘Imperial Club’ to an International Organisation

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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Abstract

The history of the Commonwealth is vast and multifaceted. It touches on myriad fields, actors, and eras, and reaches from the local to the global. Amidst the Gordian knot of Commonwealth history this thesis is about understanding the organisational history of the Commonwealth on its own terms, rather than as a derivative topic of other fields. Building on the premise that the Commonwealth today is an international organisation (IO), this thesis argues that the Commonwealth transitioned from an imperial club to an international organisation in the 1960s, hinging on the creation of the Commonwealth Secretariat in 1965. The creation and subsequent growth of the Secretariat was negotiated between the “expansionist” members who viewed the Commonwealth as an international organisation and argued for a strong, expanded Secretariat, and the “restrictionist” members who opposed Secretariat growth. The Secretary-General and his staff were a third group of actors that mediated between the expansionists and restrictionists and pursued a vision for the organisation that would appeal to all members. The weight of this project rests on case studies in logistics, membership applications, the Rhodesian crisis, and Commonwealth technical cooperation. These topics help foreground *how* the transition from club to IO took place. Through these case studies I argue that the management of Commonwealth meetings decisively influenced the future of the organisation and was instrumental in the expansionists’ vision of the Commonwealth as an IO prevailing by 1970. The debates and decisions of Commonwealth meetings are well known, but the process of planning and managing those meetings has shaped the evolution of the Commonwealth as much, if not more than the content of the meetings themselves.

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List of Abbreviations

BBC.....	British Broadcasting Corporation
CAF.....	Central African Federation
CEC.....	Commonwealth Economic Committee
CECC.....	Commonwealth Economic Consultative Council
CELU.....	Commonwealth Education Liaison Unit
CHOGM.....	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
CIDA.....	Canadian International Development Agency
CO.....	Colonial Office
CO.....	Commonwealth Office
CRO.....	Commonwealth Relations Office
EEC.....	European Economic Community
EMB.....	Empire Marketing Board
FCO.....	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FO.....	Foreign Office
GATT.....	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
HMS.....	Her Majesty's Ship
IEC.....	Imperial Economic Committee
IO.....	International Organization
NATO.....	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NIBMAR.....	No Independence Before Majority Rule
OAU.....	Organisation for African Unity
ODM.....	Overseas Development Ministry
SCAAP.....	Special Commonwealth African Assistance Plan
SEATO.....	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
UDI.....	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
UN.....	United Nations
UNCTAD.....	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UK.....	United Kingdom
WHA.....	World Health Assembly
WHO.....	World Health Organization
ZANU.....	Zimbabwean African National Union
ZAPU.....	Zimbabwean African Peoples' Union

”The more severe international stresses may prove to be from time to time – and there will be stresses also in the future – the greater, I suggest, is the need for bridge-building institutions and associations to try to resolve them. Our basic need is to learn to share the world.

You can’t opt out of the planet.”

Arnold Smith, 1966

Introduction

The Commonwealth is one of the world's largest international bodies with 52 member nations representing some 2.4 billion people. It is one of the oldest international entities and encompasses a vast diversity of histories, geographies, and peoples. Its members share goals such as development, democracy, and peace, and are supported by more than 80 affiliated intergovernmental, professional, and civil organisations.¹ With such a broad scale, the Commonwealth itself is difficult to define. Margaret P. Doxey most succinctly describes the organisation as “a conglomerate of structured and unstructured official and unofficial relationships of a political, economic and cultural nature,” adding that that conglomerate has a symbiotic relationship with a physically manifested Secretariat.² Arnold Smith, the organisation's first Secretary-General, reflected that “almost everything about it [the organisation] is hard to define for the excellent reason that the Commonwealth itself is hard, or indeed impossible to define.”³

Reflecting on her work with the Commonwealth Oral History Project in 2017, Sue Onslow variously described the Commonwealth as a diplomatic actor, an institution, an association, and a fluid concept, while also juxtaposing the Commonwealth with other international summits, organisations, and regional groups.⁴ With these various descriptors, Onslow echoed both the accounts of the project participants and an ongoing historiographical discussion about what the Commonwealth actually is.

¹ “About Us,” The Commonwealth, last modified 2020, <http://thecommonwealth.org/about-us>.

² Margaret P. Doxey, *The Commonwealth Secretariat and the Contemporary Commonwealth* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 12.

³ Library and Archives Canada [LAC], Arnold Smith Fonds, MG 31 E 47, Commonwealth Series, Volume 1, File 8 “Diary 20-28 Jan 1966,” The Political Use of the Commonwealth: Verbatim Transcript of a lunch-time lecture given at the Royal Commonwealth Society on Thursday, 20th January, 1966.

⁴ Sue Onslow, “Voices of the Commonwealth: An Oral History of the Modern Commonwealth 1965-2012,” *The Round Table* 106, no. 1 (2017), 47, 50, 51, 57.

Discussion aimed at defining the Commonwealth and vignettes (as the one above) describing how difficult the organisation is to define have become standard features of Commonwealth historiography. These two historiographical features originated in works speculating about the future of the Commonwealth in the 1960s and have persisted because the Commonwealth continued to change so much through the 20th century. As Lorna Lloyd notes, the interwar years were a period of “real, fundamental change” which saw the shift from Empire to Commonwealth, only to be followed by a further period of “radical change” from 1945 to 1952.⁵ Lloyd argues that up to the mid-twentieth century, the Commonwealth had only ever been a reflection of transition, rather than stability, and that as a legacy of the British Empire it was “a species of international organisation, [though] not a uniquely well-integrated and cosy association of a familial kind.”⁶ In her subsequent work on the Commonwealth Office of High Commissioner, Lloyd characterises the Commonwealth as having transitioned from a small, intimate club in the 1950s to a larger, noisier, less-homogenous association by the 1980s.⁷ Through these three works, Lloyd echoes the definitional ambiguity outlined by Onslow, noting that at different times the Commonwealth could be characterised as something an imperial club, a type of an international organisation (IO), or a loose association, depending on the era in question and the stance of the historian. Lloyd’s emphasis of change in the Commonwealth underscores the need for definitional discussion when studying the history of the organisation, but also suggests a basic evolutionary progression from imperial club to either a loose international association, or a more formal international organisation.

⁵ Lorna Lloyd, “Loosening the Apron Strings: The Dominions and Britain in the Interwar Years,” *The Round Table* 92, no. 369 (2003), 279; Lorna Lloyd, “Britain and the Transformation from Empire to Commonwealth: The Significance of the immediate post-war years,” *The Round Table* 86, no. 343 (1997): 350.

⁶ Lloyd, “Britain and the Transformation from Empire to Commonwealth,” 333.

⁷ Lorna Lloyd, *Diplomacy with a Difference: The Commonwealth Office of High Commissioner, 1880-2006* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2007), 264.

Of the interpretations of Commonwealth evolution exemplified in Lloyd's works, this thesis argues that the Commonwealth evolved from an imperial club to an international organisation rather than a loose network or association. The bulk of this project focuses on *how* that evolution took place. However, before further outlining this project, it is worth tracing the origins of these definitional debates to better place this project in the wider field of Commonwealth historiography. To that end, works by the eminent Commonwealth historian W. David McIntyre are particularly useful. Not only are McIntyre's works a wealth of information about these changes through the history of the Commonwealth, but they can also be used to chart historiographical currents since the 1960s. The evolution of McIntyre's own thinking about the Commonwealth is particularly constructive in outlining the definitional conventions of Commonwealth history.

McIntyre's 1966 book *Colonies into Commonwealth* was written as many changes in the Commonwealth were still unfolding. In that volume McIntyre asked what the Commonwealth was in the 1960s, and answered that it was a loose voluntary association of states.⁸ McIntyre's answer echoed both Commonwealth rhetoric and contemporary historians such as the great Commonwealth historian Nicholas Mansergh.⁹ *Colonies into Commonwealth* also responded to contemporary public debates about the future of the Commonwealth. McIntyre echoed questions raised in works by Australian statesman Lord Casey and British political writer Guy Arnold. Both Casey and Arnold sought solutions to the perceived stagnation of the Commonwealth. These writers also echoed older definitions of the Commonwealth from the interwar period and underscored a concept of the Commonwealth as a voluntary association of nations evolved from

⁸ W. David McIntyre, *Colonies into Commonwealth* (London: Blandford Press, 1966), 338-339.

⁹ Nicholas Mansergh, *The Commonwealth and the Nations: Studies in British Commonwealth Relations* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1948), 25; Shridath Ramphal, "The Second Commonwealth of Nations," *The Round Table* 98, no. 401 (April 2009), 217.

the British Empire.¹⁰ Both Casey and Arnold argued that the Commonwealth was a British legacy and that it would need British leadership in order to play any significant role in world politics.¹¹ Although McIntyre was not prescriptive in his analysis, he agreed with Casey and Arnold that as of 1965 the Commonwealth had no clear purpose but that it had great productive potential in world politics.¹² His 1966 work also echoed politico-legal analyses like those by John Holmes and S.A. de Smith by noting that traditional Commonwealth commercial, legal, and military links had been eroded, but that the flexibility of the Commonwealth was proving to be one of its greatest strengths.¹³ In 1966 McIntyre reiterated traditional definitions of the Commonwealth, but he also brought his analysis up to the present and incorporated discussion from political and legal commentators.

Published just over a decade later, McIntyre's next book, *The Commonwealth of Nations: Origins and Impact* (1977) maintained many of the major historical arguments put forward by his contemporaries. McIntyre again echoed Mansergh, who had maintained in his 1969 book *The Commonwealth Experience* that the mid-1960s had constituted the climax of decolonisation and an age of British disillusionment with the Commonwealth.¹⁴ In characterising phases of

¹⁰ The Rt. Hon. Lord Casey, *The Future of the Commonwealth* (London: Frederick Muller Limited, 1963), 26; Guy Arnold, *Towards Peace and a Multiracial Commonwealth* (London: Chapman & Hall Ltd, 1964), 79.

¹¹ Casey, *The Future of the Commonwealth* 17, 19-20, 26; Arnold, *Towards Peace and a Multiracial Commonwealth*, 20, 24, 78, 143.

¹² McIntyre, *Colonies into Commonwealth*, 340, 358.

¹³ Ibid., 338, 343, 349, 353; John Holmes, "The Impact on the Commonwealth of the Emergence of Africa," *International Organization* 16, no. 2 Africa and International Organization (Spring 1962), 293, 301; S.A. de Smith, *The New Commonwealth and its Constituents* (London: Stevens & Sons, 1964), 36; See also: W.B. Hamilton, Kenneth Robinson, and C.D.W. Goodwin, eds. *A Decade of the Commonwealth, 1955-1964* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1966), vi; John Holmes, "The Commonwealth and the United Nations," in *A Decade of the Commonwealth, 1955-1964*, eds. W.B. Hamilton, Kenneth Robinson, and C.D.W. Goodwin (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1966), 364.

¹⁴ Nicholas Mansergh, *The Commonwealth Experience, Volume Two: From British to Multiracial Commonwealth, Revised Edition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 188.

Commonwealth evolution he characterised 1966-69 as a phase of disillusionment.¹⁵ McIntyre also agreed with J.D.B. Miller's 1974 iteration of the *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs* in which the latter emphasised the importance of changing relationships between Commonwealth members through the 1960s as a key theme of the organisation's overall evolution.¹⁶

However, in 1977 McIntyre also further developed an idea he had first put forward in 1966. In particular, he maintained that the formation of the Commonwealth Secretariat in 1965 was the most significant development in the history of the modern Commonwealth. He elaborated that the formation of the Secretariat had ushered in the modern Commonwealth by providing a centre for many disparate aspects of Commonwealth affairs.¹⁷ This contrasted with Miller's interpretation which held that the formation of the Secretariat was significant as a centrifugal force that promoted a latticework of Commonwealth relations, rather than a hub and spoke model.¹⁸

McIntyre's focus on the role of the Commonwealth Secretariat echoed more political works like those by Tom Soper, B. Vivekanandan, and Derek Ingram, which focused on the operations and future of the Commonwealth and maintained that the Commonwealth had fully evolved from an imperial club to a voluntary international association.¹⁹ These authors still maintained that the Commonwealth was a voluntary association born of empire but their works focused on the

¹⁵ W. David McIntyre, *The Commonwealth of Nations: Origins and Impact, 1869-1971* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 449-450.

¹⁶ J.D.B. Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of Expansion and Attrition, 1953-1969* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 412-417; McIntyre, *The Commonwealth of Nations*, 7.

¹⁷ McIntyre, *Colonies into Commonwealth*, 353; *The Commonwealth of Nations*, 6, 471.

¹⁸ Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, 416-417.

¹⁹ Tom Soper, *Evolving Commonwealth* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1965), 121; B. Vivekanandan, "The Commonwealth Secretariat," *International Studies* 9, no. 3 (July 1967): 301; Derek Ingram, *The Commonwealth at Work* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1969), 14; McIntyre, *The Commonwealth of Nations*, 4, 7.

“machinery” of the Commonwealth and the practical workings of the Secretariat.²⁰ Such political analyses opened the door to new interpretations of the Commonwealth. Drawing on De Smith’s 1964 argument that the Commonwealth was a loose knit international organisation with certain unique characteristics, in 1971 M. Margaret Ball introduced a “study of the Commonwealth of Nations as an International organization rather than an inquiry into decolonization as it pertains to the British Empire.”²¹ In her book, *The “Open” Commonwealth*, Ball posited that the Commonwealth was no longer a constitutional organisation as it had been in the past and was now an international organisation “of a traditional sort.”²² Ball noted that recent advances in political science were moving away from older definitions of international organisations (requiring that such organisations have a constitution, for example), and instead emphasising international systems and subsystems. With a systemic definition based on well-defined operational mechanisms, she argued that the Commonwealth could be considered an international organisation.²³ Much of Ball’s work was descriptive and described the operations of the Commonwealth with a new definitional lens, but her overriding conclusion was that the Commonwealth was not an exclusive organisation and would likely develop along the lines of other international organisations.²⁴ Ball’s arguments reflected Secretary-General Arnold Smith’s view that the Commonwealth was a complementary rather than exclusive organisation, and she made a compelling analytical case for the Commonwealth as an IO.²⁵

²⁰ Vivekanandan, “The Commonwealth Secretariat,” 323; Ingram, *The Commonwealth at Work*, 1, 14, 20; see also: Andrew Walker, *The Commonwealth: A New Look* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1978), 2.

²¹ M. Margaret Ball, *The “Open” Commonwealth* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 1971), v.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, 33.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 201, 246.

²⁵ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 2, File 10 “Diary June 1967,” Notes for address by Mr. Arnold Smith, Commonwealth Secretary-General, to the Annual Conference of the Commonwealth Press Union, Marlborough House, London, 13 June, 1967.

The Commonwealth of Nations: Origins and Impact, reflects the influence of political scientists on McIntyre through the 1970s. By 1977, his work differed from other historical works like those by Mansergh and Miller by shifting focus away from the United Kingdom in favour of the Commonwealth Secretariat. For example, while in 1974 Miller's work focused on the Secretariat's impact on the Commonwealth Relations Office through the 1960s, McIntyre focused on the Secretariat's impact on Commonwealth relations more broadly and afforded more attention to the hitherto overlooked administrative needs of the Commonwealth.²⁶ While McIntyre himself did not argue that the Commonwealth was an international organisation, he embraced Ball's argument that the Commonwealth was an "open" organisation and he felt that her characterisation aptly described the "return of realism" he proposed took place in Commonwealth relations between 1969 and 1971.²⁷ In the 1970s McIntyre's work was shifting to reflect a broader interest of political analysts of the workings of the Commonwealth (and the Commonwealth Secretariat in particular) in its own right, rather than as an extension of British imperial history.

In his 1991 work *The Significance of the Commonwealth*, McIntyre more fully accepted the work of political analysts. In contrast to contemporary imperial historians like L. J. Butler, who continued to assert that the Commonwealth was a voluntary association, McIntyre himself argued that with the establishment of the Secretariat the Commonwealth had become an international organisation.²⁸ He noted that the Commonwealth "has a symbolic head, an agreed membership, a Secretariat and Secretary-General, principal and subordinate organs and agencies, budgets, a legal personality, diplomatic privileges and immunities. Through an impressive series

²⁶ McIntyre, *The Commonwealth of Nations*, 454.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 456, 473.

²⁸ L.J. Butler, *Britain and Empire: Adjusting to a Post-Imperial World* (London: I.B. Taurus & Co., 2002), 188.

of declarations, it has well publicized purposes and principles” although it still did not have a charter.²⁹ McIntyre echoed M. Margaret Ball’s argument from 20 years prior and restated his ongoing argument that the formation of the Secretariat was “the single most important landmark in the evolution of the Modern Commonwealth.”³⁰

The shift in McIntyre’s thinking between 1977 and 1991 reflected changes in the field of imperial and Commonwealth history, but also developments in political science. As noted by David Fieldhouse in 1984, imperial history was undergoing a period of fragmentation with more attention being paid to national histories within the former British Empire.³¹ While Fieldhouse asserted that there was still much to be studied in “the ‘area of interaction’ between the component parts [namely center and periphery] of imperial systems,” he nonetheless bemoaned the fragmentation of the field and asked whether it could be put together again.³² McIntyre continued to produce some of the most authoritative historical research on the Commonwealth, but he also incorporated the ideas of non-historians who argued that the Commonwealth was an IO.³³ For example, in *The Significance of the Commonwealth* McIntyre discussed the works of Stephen Chan and A.N. Papadopoulos, two former Secretariat staff members whose works focused on the Secretariat itself.³⁴ Like McIntyre, Papadopoulos maintained that the Secretariat was of central importance to the Commonwealth, and sought to document the workings of

²⁹ W. David McIntyre, *The Significance of the Commonwealth, 1965-90* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991), vii, 4.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

³¹ David Fieldhouse, “Can Humpty-Dumpty be put Together Again? Imperial History in the 1980s,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 12, no. 2 (1984), 10.

³² *Ibid.*, 11.

³³ See for example, McIntyre’s engagement with works by Michael O’Neill who argues that Commonwealth-as-IO was fact as of the 1980s. See: Michael O’Neill, “Militancy and Accommodation: The Influence of the Heads of Government Meetings on the Commonwealth, 1960-1969,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 12, no. 3 (1983), 211; Michael O’Neill, “Continuity without Consensus: the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings, 1971-81,” in *Commonwealth in the 1980’s: Challenges and Opportunities*, eds. A.J.R. Groom and Paul Taylor (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 1984): 185-224; McIntyre, *The Significance of the Commonwealth*, 273.

³⁴ McIntyre, *The Significance of the Commonwealth*, 55, 114, 125, 265.

Commonwealth diplomacy.³⁵ Works by Stephen Chan were even more influential on McIntyre's argument of the Commonwealth as an IO. In his 1988 book, *The Commonwealth in World Politics*, Chan made a strong case that structurally, the Commonwealth had evolved into an IO.³⁶ Chan further developed these arguments the following year. Citing the International Law Commission's definition of an international organisation, he argued that the Commonwealth had become an IO by the mid-1980s. According to the International Law Commission, an international organisation had "a distinct international personality and an ability to take independent initiatives on behalf of its members and in its own name."³⁷ This definition was the basis for Chan's unambiguously titled article "The Commonwealth as an International Organisation," in which he explored how the Commonwealth as an organisation functioned in its relations with South Africa.

McIntyre's 1991 work also heavily relied on Margaret P. Doxey's thoroughly detailed account of the formation of the Commonwealth Secretariat.³⁸ Rather than a strictly historical account, Doxey sought to fill gaps in both the historical and international relations literature by making the case for the Commonwealth as an IO. Such an analysis, she hoped, would serve as a basis for more constructive comparisons between IOs (including the Commonwealth) in the field of political science.³⁹ McIntyre's 1991 characterisation of the Commonwealth as an IO directly

³⁵ See: A.N. Papadopoulos, *Multilateral Diplomacy within the Commonwealth: A Decade of Expansion* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982).

³⁶ Stephen Chan, *The Commonwealth in World Politics: A Study of International Action, 1965-1985* (London: Lester Crook Academic Publishing, 1988), 15.

³⁷ Stephen Chan, "The Commonwealth as an International Organization: Constitutionalism, Britain and South Africa," *The Round Table* 78, no. 312 (1989), 393; Giorgio Gaja, "Articles on the Responsibility of International Organizations: Introductory Note," Audiovisual Library of International Law, last modified 9 December, 2011, <https://legal.un.org/avl/ha/ario/ario.html>; Michael Palliser also argues that by the mid-1980s the Commonwealth had undergone a fundamental change, although Palliser asserts that the Commonwealth was more of a regional organisation than anything else. See: Michael Palliser, "Diplomacy Today," in *The Expansion of International Society*, eds., Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 378.

³⁸ See: McIntyre, *The Significance of the Commonwealth*, 270-291.

³⁹ Doxey, *The Commonwealth Secretariat*, 4-5.

echoed Doxey's own conclusion that even though it lacked a charter the Commonwealth had a "basic set of traits which bring it well within the definition of an international organisation."⁴⁰

Much of Doxey's work was descriptive (much like M. Margaret Ball's 1974 book), and focused on the structure and functions of the Secretariat, and related to McIntyre's own interest in the history of the Secretariat, and the contributions of Arnold Smith as the organisation's first Secretary-General.⁴¹

The influences evident in *The Significance of the Commonwealth* reflected a sense of crisis in imperial history during the 1980s, but also reflected that advances in imperial and Commonwealth history were taking place in other academic fields and disciplines.⁴² Throughout his career McIntyre remained in-tune with contemporary political analyses and incorporated them into his historical works. In 1966's *Colonies into Commonwealth*, McIntyre advanced his analysis of Commonwealth history to include the formation of the Commonwealth Secretariat which had only occurred the year before. In the 1980s he remained attuned to political analyses that were exploring new perspectives on the history of the Commonwealth, including the argument that it was an international organisation.

Up to the turn of the millennium McIntyre continued to reflect both historiographical trends, and influences from political science. In his 1998 book on British decolonisation he again argued that the Commonwealth had evolved into a multilateral international organisation.⁴³ In 1998 and 2000 he wrote two further articles respectfully expounding on the Canadian and British roles

⁴⁰ Ibid., 5; McIntyre, *The Significance of the Commonwealth*, 4.

⁴¹ Doxey, *The Commonwealth Secretariat*, 42, 134; McIntyre, *The Significance of the Commonwealth*, 52, 56.

⁴² Dane Kennedy, "The Imperial History Wars," *Journal of British Studies* 54 (January 2015), 7-8.

⁴³ W. David McIntyre, *British Decolonization, 1946-1997: When, Why and How did the British Empire Fall?* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 119.

creating the Secretariat.⁴⁴ Yet McIntyre's arguments about the Commonwealth as an IO were scaled back in his 2001 work *A Guide to the Contemporary Commonwealth*. In this book McIntyre took a more general approach and argued that "in the broad historical perspective, the Commonwealth changed, during the middle third of the century, from being a small, white, imperial club to a large multicultural, multilateral, international association."⁴⁵ The shift from his previous stronger assertions that the Commonwealth was an international organisation again reflected the trend in the literature on the Commonwealth, including ambivalence over the future of the Commonwealth and the functions of imperial history.

McIntyre's shift to a looser definition of the Commonwealth coincided with historiographical developments of the 2000s. Dane Kennedy has described the historiographical developments of this period as the "imperial history wars," denoting a protracted, transatlantic debate about the nature and use of British imperial and Commonwealth history.⁴⁶ These debates were closely tied to British and American politics and often pitted celebrants of empire against critics and those pursuing the "new imperial history" which injected postcolonial theory, sex and gender, and cultural interpretations into the field of British imperial and Commonwealth history. Antoinette Burton's 2003 work *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and Through the Nation*, for instance, emphasised the Imperial Turn as "the accelerated attention to the impact of histories of imperialism on metropolitan societies in the wake of decolonization, pre- and post-1968 racial struggle and feminism in the last quarter century."⁴⁷ The new imperial history and the imperial history wars answered David Fieldhouse's 1984 question by showing that the Humpty Dumpty

⁴⁴ See: W. David McIntyre, "Britain and the Creation of the Commonwealth Secretariat," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 28, no. 1 (January 2000): 135-158; W. David McIntyre, "Canada and the Creation of the Commonwealth Secretariat, 1965," *International Journal* 53, no. 4 (Autumn, 1998): 753-777.

⁴⁵ David McIntyre, *A Guide to the Contemporary Commonwealth* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 27.

⁴⁶ See Kennedy, "The Imperial History Wars."

⁴⁷ Antoinette Burton, ed. *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking With and Through the Nation* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003), 2.

fragments of imperial history could be put together again, and could even be marshalled into a role in contemporary politics.⁴⁸

Reflecting on these developments in 2007, S.R. Ashton felt that “Imperial and Commonwealth history continues as a thriving subject but historians of the Commonwealth as an idea, a movement or an organisation are nowadays rather thin on the ground. It seems as if David McIntyre has been a lone torch-bearer for several years.”⁴⁹ Ashton’s observation, and McIntyre’s somewhat vague description of an international association in 2001 brings to mind Lloyd’s varied descriptions of the Commonwealth a species of IO or some sort of association.⁵⁰ As imperial histories again took centre stage in the first decade of the 2000s, such definitional uncertainty became a more prominent feature of Commonwealth histories. For instance, David Armstrong argued in 2001 that the Commonwealth had most certainly become an intergovernmental organisation with the formation of the Secretariat, but that it was not clear what kind of intergovernmental organisation it was or whether it still had any sort of purpose.⁵¹ Armstrong elaborated on this uncertainty in a collaborative book project with Lorna Lloyd and John Redmond in 2004 by citing the Commonwealth as an example of an intergovernmental organisation that had lived past its original purpose.⁵²

Yet Armstrong, Lloyd, and Redmond otherwise excluded the Commonwealth from their broad theoretical study of international organisations. Other writers that decade agreed that the

⁴⁸ See: Fieldhouse, “Can Humpty-Dumpty be put Together Again?”; Douglas M. Peers, “Review: Is Humpty Dumpty Back Together Again?: The Revival of Imperial History and the “Oxford History of the British Empire”,” *Journal of World History* 13, no. 2 (Fall 2002): 451-467.

⁴⁹ S.R. Ashton, “British Government Perspectives on the Commonwealth, 1964-71: An Asset or a Liability?” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 35, no. 1 (2007), 73.

⁵⁰ Lloyd, “Loosening the Apron Strings,” 279; Lloyd, “Britain and the Transformation from Empire to Commonwealth,” 333, 350; Lloyd, *Diplomacy with a Difference*, 264.

⁵¹ David Armstrong, “From International Community to International Organisation?” *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 39, no. 3 (2001), 37, 39, 44.

⁵² David Armstrong, Lorna Lloyd & John Redmond, *International Organisation in World Politics, Third Edition* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 7.

Commonwealth was some sort of IO, but that its original purpose was tied to the British Empire. James Mayall characterised the Commonwealth as an IO that was a “happy accident” borne of the dying embers of the British Empire.⁵³ Former Secretariat staffer Krishnan Srinivasan also argued that the Commonwealth was designed by Britain to ease the loss of empire and speculated that without British leadership it would fade away.⁵⁴ S.R Ashton also focused on British Government perspectives of the Commonwealth during the 1960s in particular and agreed, as many authors had done in the 1960s, that British interest and engagement was central to the history of the Commonwealth.⁵⁵

The historiographical landscape in the past decade thus includes a wide variety of topics with comparatively little focus on the Commonwealth as an institution or organisation. Contemporary works echo their predecessors like Mansergh or Miller by connecting Commonwealth history to the history of the British Empire, although with much less Whiggish conclusions. For example, Carl Watts’ 2012 study on Rhodesia’s unilateral declaration of independence reasserted the case for the Commonwealth as an IO, but did so in dialogue with developments in Rhodesia.⁵⁶ Works published in 2019 by Johnathan Fennel and by Richard T. Ashcroft and Mark Bevir respectively focus on Commonwealth military forces during the Second World War, and the theory and practice of multiculturalism in the postwar Commonwealth.⁵⁷ While these works contribute to Commonwealth history, they do so in relation to other themes, case studies, and topics under the

⁵³James Mayall, “Introduction” in *The Contemporary Commonwealth: An Assessment, 1965-2009*, ed. James Mayall (London: Routledge, 2010), 3.

⁵⁴ Krishnan Srinivasan, *The Rise, Decline and Future of the British Commonwealth* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 1, 107, 159-160.

⁵⁵ Ashton, “British Government Perspectives,” 7.

⁵⁶ See: Carl Peter Watts, *Rhodesia’s Unilateral Declaration of Independence: An International History* (Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

⁵⁷ Jonathan Fennell, *Fighting the People’s War: The British Commonwealth Armies and the Second World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Richard T. Ashcroft and Mark Bevir, eds. *Multiculturalism in the British Commonwealth: Comparative Perspectives on Theory and Practice* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019).

broad umbrella of imperial and Commonwealth history. Philip Murphy's most recent book, *The Empire's New Clothes*, is perhaps one of the only recent books on the history of the Commonwealth as a standalone topic. Even so, as Murphy's title suggests, this work is in dialogue with the Commonwealth's imperial origins and the contemporary implications of how those origins are remembered and represented today.⁵⁸

Although the debates of the imperial history wars have produced "intense and immensely productive engagement in the history of British imperialism" in the past two decades, the resurgent attention given to the British Empire's place in history clearly corresponds with a decrease in histories about the Commonwealth in its own right.⁵⁹ McIntyre's own works have shifted focus to case studies under the umbrella of imperial and Commonwealth studies rather than focusing on the Commonwealth as a topic unto itself.⁶⁰ Saul Dubow and Richard Drayton's forthcoming edited volume *Commonwealth History in the Twenty-First Century* actively adopts "oblique de-centred, approaches to Commonwealth history" and "focusses less on the Commonwealth as an institution than on the relevance and meaning of the Commonwealth to its member countries and peoples."⁶¹

Organisational histories of the Commonwealth are particularly rare as they fall at the intersection of history and political science. As Edward Ingram argued in 1997: "[w]hereas political scientists (standing aloof from the material they propose to organize) theorise first and then illustrate the theory, historians usually plunge in, then try to explain where they are, what is going on, and

⁵⁸ Philip Murphy, *The Empire's New Clothes: The Myth of the Commonwealth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 224, 231.

⁵⁹ Kennedy, "The Imperial History Wars," 22.

⁶⁰ See: W. David McIntyre, *Dominion of New Zealand: Statesmen and Status, 1907-1945* (Wellington: New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, 2007); W. David McIntyre, *The Britannic Vision: Historians and the Making of the British Commonwealth of Nations, 1907-48* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); W. David McIntyre, *Winding up the British Empire in the Pacific Islands* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁶¹ "Commonwealth History in the Twenty-First Century," Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies Series, Palgrave Macmillan, <https://www.palgrave.com/gp/book/9783030417871#aboutBook>

how they might explain what they have seen. Sometimes they turn to the political scientist for help, but whenever they do, they place themselves at risk of catching the disease of backward projection.”⁶² The methodological difference between historians and political scientists are clear in the arguments that influenced David McIntyre’s bibliography over the past 60 years. Works by political scientists tracing the Commonwealth backwards from the present have generally concluded that the Commonwealth is an IO, whereas historians tracing the history of the British Empire have generally maintained that the Commonwealth is some sort of association (per its original definition).

The differences between these disciplinary stances and how they have been incorporated into definitional debates about the Commonwealth are important contextual referents for this study. Like Murphy or Ashcroft and Bevir, this thesis traces a single theme through Commonwealth history. However, rather than responding to contemporary political debates about the Commonwealth as Murphy does, this project responds to the definitional questions exemplified by Onslow and Lloyd and evident through McIntyre’s bibliography. Of the various potential definitions of the Commonwealth (including an imperial club, a type of IO, a voluntary association, a diplomatic actor, an institution, and a fluid concept), I agree with McIntyre’s 1991 assessment and Carl Watt’s more recent case that the Commonwealth evolved into an international organisation.⁶³ Of the features of an IO observed by McIntyre, Doxey, Chan, and Ball since 1971, the Commonwealth maintains “a symbolic head, an agreed membership, a Secretariat and Secretary-General, principal and subordinate organs and agencies, budgets, a legal personality, diplomatic privileges and immunities... [and] well publicized purposes and

⁶² Edward Ingram, “The Wonderland of the Political Scientist,” *International Security* 22, no. 1 (Summer 1997), 58; see also, Thomas W. Smith, *History and International Relations* (London: Routledge, 1999), 1.

⁶³ McIntyre, *The Significance of the Commonwealth*, 4; Watts, *Rhodesia’s Unilateral Declaration of Independence*, 112.

principles.”⁶⁴ In a sense verifying M. Margaret Ball’s 1971 prediction, the Commonwealth has continued to develop along the lines of other traditional international organisations.⁶⁵ In 2013, the Commonwealth adopted its own charter, thus resolving the central definitional caveat about the Commonwealth’s status as an IO.⁶⁶ In the most basic sense, the abductive reasoning of the classic duck test applies. If it looks, functions, and is structured like an international organisation, it is probably an international organisation.

Classifying the Commonwealth as an international organisation is more than a point of historiographical nomenclature. The idea of the Commonwealth-as-IO helps address the aforementioned lack of dedicated studies on the Commonwealth itself. Rather than a derivative topic of political science, the history of the British Empire, decolonisation, or members’ national histories, the Commonwealth-as-IO begets a focus on the development of the organisation itself. By focusing on the organisational history of the Commonwealth this project draws from the interdisciplinary methods outlined by David McIntyre and Carl Watts. McIntyre’s work draws from literature in political science and incorporated the most from political science in the wake of an ostensive slump in imperial and Commonwealth history in the 1980s. Watts more intentionally emphasises his combination of traditional international history and IR theory.⁶⁷ In both cases these authors source valuable analytical frameworks from political science while grounding their work in historical perspective so as to avoid the “disease” of backward projection characterised by Ingram.

⁶⁴ McIntyre, *The Significance of the Commonwealth*, vii, 4.

⁶⁵ Ball, *The “Open” Commonwealth* 201, 246.

⁶⁶ “Commonwealth Charter,” The Commonwealth, last modified 2020, <https://thecommonwealth.org/about-us/charter>. McIntyre, *The Significance of the Commonwealth*, 4; Ball, *The “Open” Commonwealth*, v, Chan, “The Commonwealth as an International Organization,” 393; Doxey, *The Commonwealth Secretariat*, 5.

⁶⁷ Watts, *Rhodesia’s Unilateral Declaration of Independence* 8-9.

Beyond the premise that the Commonwealth today is an IO, this study focuses on *how* the evolution from imperial club to international organisation took place. In doing so, this thesis builds on McIntyre and Watts' approaches, and adds a new dimension to traditional histories of the Commonwealth in the 1960s.

This project expands on McIntyre's focus on the centrality of the Commonwealth Secretariat by focusing on the practical formation of the Secretariat. McIntyre has extensively detailed the decision making process behind the Secretariat and the major contours of its formation. This thesis goes further to look at the practical administrative details that shaped the Secretariat's formation and the Secretariat's subsequent expansion and management of Commonwealth meetings. Ultimately, this project focuses on the administrative management of the Commonwealth and how administrative details influenced the shape of the Commonwealth as much as the major events of the day.

This project also echoes several methodological tools employed by Carl Watts. Watts asserts that the Rhodesian crisis constitutes a single case study that can be analysed from multiple theoretical perspectives, including international relations theory. He notes however, that at a domestic level, there is room for further research on how bureaucratic politics affected the Rhodesian crisis as it unfolded through the 1960s and 70s.⁶⁸ This thesis is not centred on interstate relations, nor does it wholly focus on the Rhodesian crisis. However, it echoes Watts's use of case studies to illuminate Commonwealth history. Both the Rhodesian crisis and projects of Commonwealth cooperation are recurring case studies through this thesis. While this project focuses on bureaucratic politics, it differs from Watts' inter-state framework by asserting the Commonwealth Secretariat was an actor in bureaucratic politics in its own right. Thus, beyond

⁶⁸ Watts, *Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence*, 208.

domestic bureaucracies, this work responds to Watts calls for further research by highlighting the role of the Secretariat in keeping Commonwealth members engaged with one another during the early stages of the Rhodesian crisis.

The Commonwealth may be “hard, or indeed impossible to define” but the definitional debates about the nature and origin of the organisation are a productive avenue for exploring imperial and Commonwealth history and the history of international relations and organisations.⁶⁹ By engaging in these debates, this study complements the existing literature by shedding new light on the administrative history of the Commonwealth. In a broader sense this thesis also echoes the works of Mark Mazower, Zara Steiner, and Patricia Clavin, who explore the origins of postwar international organisations in the imperial context of the early to mid-twentieth century.⁷⁰ This study complements these authors’ work in two main ways.

First, by tracing the evolution of the Commonwealth from an imperial club to an international organisation, this study more firmly links the imperial context of the early twentieth-century with the formation of a postwar international community. The Commonwealth is perhaps the only international organisation to have undergone such an evolution without significant rupture and linking it to the wider history of international organisations highlights a historical connection useful to understanding the origins and evolution of the postwar international system.

⁶⁹ Library and Archives Canada [LAC], Arnold Smith Fonds, MG 31 E 47, Commonwealth Series, Volume 1, File 8 “Diary 20-28 Jan 1966,” The Political Use of the Commonwealth: Verbatim Transcript of a lunch-time lecture given at the Royal Commonwealth Society on Thursday, 20th January, 1966.

⁷⁰ See: Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological origins of the United Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea* (London: Penguin Press, 2012); Zara Steiner, *The Lights that Failed: European International History 1919–33* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Zara Steiner, *The Triumph of the Dark: European International History 1933–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Patricia Clavin, *Securing the World Economy: The Reinvention of the League of Nations, 1920-1946* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013).

Second, the lens of administrative history adds a further layer of depth to the study of international organisations. This project underscores how organisational evolution occurred through the day-to-day management of Commonwealth affairs, and demonstrates that even new, small member states could exert considerable influence through managerial politicking, and that as the Commonwealth Secretariat bureaucracy grew it became an international relations actor in its own right. By contributing to longstanding discussions about the nature and origins of the Commonwealth, I hope this project will prove useful to scholars interested in both the history of the Commonwealth, and the history of international relations and organisations.

In order to emphasise the organisational history of the Commonwealth, this project relies as much as possible on centrally produced Commonwealth records in three main repositories. Prior to 1965, Commonwealth materials were produced and managed by the Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO), and were intermingled with documents for British eyes only. These records are housed in the British National Archives at Kew. Sources produced by the Commonwealth Secretariat itself are patchy prior to 1969 when the Secretariat was staffed to the point of maintaining its own archives. The Commonwealth Secretariat Library and Archives keep these records at Marlborough House, Westminster. During the formation of the Secretariat itself, the first Commonwealth Secretary-General, Arnold Smith, reliably kept copies of Commonwealth documentation which are now housed with his personal papers at Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa. Taken together these sources provide considerable coverage of the Secretariat's early organisational activities and are the core of this project.

Many of the documents in the aforementioned collections are Western sources drafted by Western officials and administrators. While many of these materials stress the perceptions of non-Western Commonwealth members, there are clear limitations to the source base. That being

said, this thesis contends that the formation of the Commonwealth Secretariat at the behest of the newer, non-Western members helped democratise the operations of the Commonwealth. These members trusted the Secretariat to operate in their interests as members, as opposed to British management of Commonwealth operations. In consequence, while recognising the limits of these materials, for the purposes of this project I take Secretariat-produced documents to more accurately represent the stance of former colonies.

Outline

This thesis is essentially an administrative history that demonstrates how the Commonwealth transitioned from an imperial “club” to an international organisation. Its 12 chapters are organised into two parts which hinge on the formation of the Commonwealth Secretariat in 1965. By using 1965 as a turning point, I agree with David Armstrong and David McIntyre that the formation of the Secretariat was the moment the Commonwealth became an international organisation.⁷¹ Thus, contrary to conventional interpretations of Commonwealth history, the beginning of the “modern” Commonwealth was not the London Declaration of 1949 (which facilitated South Asian membership after decolonisation).⁷² While the London Declaration was an important step in the evolution of the organisation, it did not fundamentally change how the Commonwealth functioned. The membership of activist Afro-Caribbean members and small states like Cyprus (1960) arguably had more impact on the workings of the Commonwealth.⁷³ However, it was the formation of the Secretariat at the behest of new Afro-Caribbean members that changed both the structure and operation of the Commonwealth. These changes marked the

⁷¹Armstrong, “From International Community to International Organisation?,” 31; McIntyre, *The Significance of the Commonwealth*, vii.

⁷² Lloyd, “Britain and the Transformation from Empire to Commonwealth,” 339.

⁷³ Philip Murphy, *Monarchy and the End of Empire: The House of Windsor, the British Government, and the Post-War Commonwealth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 107.

transformation of the Commonwealth into an international organisation and thus marked the beginning of the modern Commonwealth.

Part one sets the stage for the transformation of the Commonwealth by tracing the values, structures, and actors involved in the formation of the Secretariat. Chapter One looks at the mutually constituted values and structures of the Commonwealth up to the late 1950s and demonstrates that the London Declaration modified, but did not significantly alter the operation of the organisation in the 1950s. Rather, it was African decolonisation and the subsequent Commonwealth membership of these new nations that precipitated real change. Chapter Two analyses the origin of the Secretariat idea and argues that the vision and activism of African members was decisive in the formation of the Secretariat. These members saw the Commonwealth as an international organisation and pursued structural changes to match their vision. How various members received the Secretariat proposal created two main camps (expansionists and restrictionists) among the membership.⁷⁴ Chapter Three shows how the process of planning the Secretariat consolidated the aforementioned camps among the members. The planning process also brought problems with British management of Commonwealth administration to the fore, and foreshadowed conflict between the new Secretariat and the British Government. Chapter Four shows how Secretary-General Arnold Smith developed his own vision of the Commonwealth that encompassed both expansionist and restrictionist visions of the organisation. This chapter demonstrates that Smith and the Secretariat had agency in the debates over the direction of the organisation. Smith's own vision of the Commonwealth and the Secretariat's role both as a mediator between members and an oppositional force to the British Government shaped the transition period of the late 1960s.

⁷⁴ Watts, *Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence*, 111.

Before outlining the second part of this project, here it is worth noting some definitional conventions. Officials in the Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO) once concisely described the two camps discussed in Chapter Two as “expansionists” and “restrictionists.”⁷⁵ This characterisation referred to these groups’ respective views on the scope of the proposed Secretariat. The restrictionists included the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and India. These members opposed a strong Secretariat (albeit for differing reasons) and sought to maintain the club-like status quo of the 1950s. The expansionists included the growing cadre of newer members and Canada. This group advocated for a strong Secretariat and viewed the Commonwealth as an international organisation.

These categories complicate the existing historiography on the Commonwealth as they do not match the familiar paradigm of the Old Commonwealth versus the New Commonwealth. The exchanged places of India and Canada frustrate the Old versus New Commonwealth binary, just as it prevents the use of labels such as the Third World or Global South among the expansionists. Nor do these categories support definitions like the “postwar” or “1949” Commonwealth. The departure of Burma in 1948, the Irish Free State in 1949 (Newfoundland joined Canada in 1949 as well), and the eventual departure of South Africa in 1960 frustrate these temporal and regional definitions. Among the South Asian members who joined following the London Declaration, the Governments of Pakistan and Ceylon sided with the expansionists, while India remained in the restrictionist camp.

Owing to these complexities, for the purposes of this project I retain the CRO’s characterisations. Because it represents a relatively constant finite group, unless otherwise indicated, I use the term

⁷⁵ The National Archives [TNA]: Dominion Office [DO] 156/25, Confidential Cypher from Commonwealth Relations Office to British High Commissions, No. Y Circular 8, 15 January, 1965.

“restrictionist” or “restrictionist camp” as described above. Among the expansionist group, I generally differentiate between the Canadian Government and the “new” or “newer” members. The latter group, centred in the Global South, provided the vision for the Commonwealth as an international organisation, while the Canadian Government was instrumental in supporting and advocating for that vision. The term “expansionist” refers to both Canada and the newer members.

The second part of this dissertation explores *how* the Commonwealth was transformed from an imperial club to an international organisation. That transformation was negotiated between the expansionist and restrictionist groups, as well as between the British Government and the Secretariat. Chapter Five traces the logistical and administrative formation of the Secretariat from 1964. At its core, the practical implementation of the Secretariat involved transferring long held administrative functions from the British Government to the new Secretariat. While the British Government was generally unenthusiastic about the Secretariat, outright opposition was concentrated in the governmental departments that had the most traditional authority to lose. The management of Commonwealth membership applications was also negotiated between the Secretariat and the British Government. Chapter Six details how the formation of the Secretariat called into question British management of membership applications.

Of the Secretariat’s proposed functions, servicing Commonwealth meetings was the most important. Consultation during meetings was the “lifeblood” of the organisation, and servicing meetings was the most practical way for the Secretariat to impact the evolution of the Commonwealth in the widest range of areas (including political and socio-economic affairs). Chapters seven through twelve cover a range of case studies in the Secretariat’s management of Commonwealth meetings. Chapters seven through nine cover the three Prime Ministers’

Meetings between 1965 and 1969, and focus on meeting logistics, the Rhodesian crisis, and proposals for Commonwealth cooperation. These case studies illustrate how meetings were central to the expansion of the Secretariat, as well as the push and pull between the expansionists and restrictionists, and between the Secretariat and the British Government. Chapter 10 looks at the development of Commonwealth Law and Health Ministers' Meetings and traces the expansion of the Secretariat's responsibilities to include other ministerial meetings. Chapters 11 and 12 focus on the management of economic meetings (Finance Ministers' Meetings in particular), and trace the establishment of the Commonwealth Technical Assistance Programme. These chapters show how the newer members' vision for the organisation was facilitated by the Secretariat and implemented through the Secretariat's management of Commonwealth meetings. The debates and major decisions taken at Commonwealth meetings are well documented. This project shows that the management of those meetings was as, if not more important to the future of the Commonwealth as the topics discussed during the meetings themselves.

Part One

Chapter One: Commonwealth Values

“What matters most, in shaping history are such intangibles as attitudes, values, intuitions, motivation, faith. It is in this field that the Commonwealth operates.”⁷⁶ This was the impression of Arnold Smith as he settled into his role as the first Commonwealth Secretary-General in the spring of 1966. Smith’s emphasis on the intangibles underpinning the Commonwealth reflects the importance of those values as the Commonwealth underwent significant changes through the 1960s. Intangible values were foundational for the Commonwealth. Those values served both as aspirational ideals and measures to define and govern the organisation. The transformation of the Commonwealth from an imperial association to an international organisation involved reinterpreting those values to better suit the vision of the membership regarding what the organisation was, and what it should be.

Commonwealth Values and Structure to 1949

The values and structures of the early Commonwealth were a product of British imperial thought. The six Colonial and Imperial Conferences held between 1887 and 1911 set the basis for the idea of the Commonwealth and were couched in terms of imperial patriotism and loyalty to the Crown.⁷⁷ The meetings were an occasion for the leaders of the self-governing (white) parts of the Empire to discuss matters of common concern in an informal, fraternal setting. In 1897 the Secretary of State for the Colonies even rejected the idea of hosting a formal conference so that

⁷⁶ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 11 “Diaries April 1966 (1),” The Commonwealth in World Politics, by Arnold Smith, Commonwealth Secretary-General: Address prepared for delivery to Honours Convocation, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, on April 1st, 1966, 1 April, 1966.

⁷⁷ The term “Commonwealth of Nations” was first used by Lord Rosebury on a visit to Australia in 1884. See: “Our History,” The Commonwealth, last modified 2020, <https://thecommonwealth.org/about-us/history#1>.

meetings would keep their personal character, and friendly conversation could occur without the subject matter being forced.⁷⁸ Within this informal setting, members could discuss and build consensus for joint proclamations or actions rather than voting on such measures. Reflecting on the broad scope of discussion at the 1897 meeting, the Secretary of State for the Colonies concluded that “undoubtedly the greatest, the most important, and at the same time the most difficult of all the subjects which [the meeting] could consider [wa]s the question of the future relations, political and commercial, between the self-governing Colonies and the United Kingdom.”⁷⁹ Although it was only the third Colonial Conference, by 1897 the themes of informal exchange of views on matters of common interest, loyalty to the Crown, and the need for better consultative machinery as the self-governing colonies evolved were already prominent. These themes were framed in terms of showing the world “the strength, the power, the resources, and the loyalty of the British Empire.”⁸⁰ Although the Commonwealth was still not a formally defined entity, the above values stressed membership based on imperial loyalty and action based on imperial consultation. These values were also prescriptive in how member consultation should be carried out.

The First World War precipitated a more concrete definition of the Commonwealth that began to move beyond the club-like atmosphere of the pre-war meetings. The war was a time of unprecedented imperial cooperation but also of unprecedented demands on the self-governing Dominions. The idea of the Commonwealth underscored the utility of practical cooperation between the self-governing parts of the Empire, while simultaneously expressing the Dominions’ reservations about the extent to which they were willing to cooperate in imperial ventures

⁷⁸ *Proceedings of a Conference between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Premiers of the Self-Governing Colonies at the Colonial Office, London, June and July 1897*, (London: HMSO, 1897), 4.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 5.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 4.

without consultation. Thus, while delegates at the Imperial War Conference of 1917 voiced their patriotism and unanimity in prosecuting the war and increasing imperial cooperation, it was with the stipulation that reform was needed.

In 1917 Dominion representatives argued that the shape of imperial consultations “should be based upon full recognition of the Dominions as autonomous nations of an Imperial Commonwealth, and of India as an important portion of the same.”⁸¹ While all parties agreed to defer constitutional reform until after the war, the Dominions were no longer willing to automatically follow Britain into war, and expected the constitutional changes necessary to guarantee their autonomy. At the same time, calls for constitutional reform did not negate the abstract ideals of the British Empire. The First World War was the high-water point of the new imperialism and all parties wished to consolidate the practical benefits of heightened wartime cooperation.

Pursuant to wartime calls for reform and subsequent discussions at the 1921 and 1923 Imperial Conferences, the 1926 Imperial Conference appointed the Inter-Imperial Relations Committee under the direction of Lord Arthur Balfour. The Committee’s purpose was to advise imperial leaders on the workings of the Empire so that they might develop a legal basis for the anticipated constitutional reforms.⁸² However, pre-war imperial cooperation had been conducted as informal gatherings emphasising imperial fraternity, patriotism, and loyalty. Pre-war meetings also included only the self-governing parts of the Empire, tacitly excluding all non-white representatives and certainly not including Indian representatives “as an important portion of the

⁸¹ TNA: Cabinet Office [CAB] 32/1/1, Imperial War Conference 1917: Minutes of Proceedings and Papers Laid before the conference, 1917.

⁸² Murphy, *Monarchy and the End of Empire*, 17.

same.”⁸³ In order to describe inter-imperial relations, the Committee needed to disentangle concrete legal measures from the intangible imperial values that had shaped pre-war meetings.

The Committee’s 1926 report focused on the principles of inter se and external relations for different parts of the British Empire, but in exploring those relations, the discussion returned to common values. The Balfour Report noted that the Empire could not support a united constitution because of its wide geographic spread and the diverse histories of its constituent parts.⁸⁴ This included members such as South Africa and Ireland who did not fit the mould of Anglo-Saxon fraternity, and India, which had already been identified as a represented, but distinct quasi-member. Glossing over these complexities, the report asserted that the British Empire had a tendency toward equality and self-governance, and so every self-governing member was master of their own destiny.⁸⁵ This characterisation failed to note that the Irish Free State had recently gained self-governance through a costly war for independence. The report also noted that per the Imperial War Conference, India held an “important position...in the British Commonwealth,” but that India’s position had been defined in the 1919 Government of India Act and would therefore not be considered in detail by the Committee.⁸⁶

Despite these omissions, the Balfour Report served to highlight the initial values of the Commonwealth. It emphasised the self-governing Dominions and the values of loyalty and freedom. Within the ad hoc structure of the British Empire, the Commonwealth was thus made up of autonomous communities, equal in status, in no way subordinate to each other in domestic or external affairs. Members were freely associated, and united by their common allegiance to

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ *Imperial Conference 1926: Summary of Proceedings* (Ottawa: F.A Acland: Printer to the King’s Most Excellent Majesty, 1926), 12.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ *Imperial Conference 1926: Inter-imperial Relations Committee: Report, Proceedings and Memoranda*, https://www.foundingdocs.gov.au/resources/transcripts/cth11_doc_1926.pdf.

the Crown (which rendered Britain *primus inter pares*).⁸⁷ Those values were both abstract guiding principles in British imperial thought as well as a tool to define and govern the organisation. In this sense, as Balfour noted in 1926, the Commonwealth “bears no real resemblance to any other political organization which now exists or has ever yet been tried.”⁸⁸

The 1926 report explained that the British Empire’s tendency to promoting freedom was because it was not founded on negation, but on “positive ideals.” The Committee claimed that “[f]ree institutions are its life blood. Free co-operation is its instrument. Peace, security, and progress are among its objects.”⁸⁹ While each self-governing member (Dominion) would remain the sole judge of the degree to which they would cooperate, the Committee felt that this would not undermine common cause. The recommendations of the report were that the emergent Commonwealth would need flexible machinery, and that interpersonal contact between member prime ministers should be fostered to supplement Imperial Conferences.⁹⁰

The 1926 report (published as the Balfour Declaration the same year) set the definitional foundation of the Commonwealth. According to the Balfour Declaration, the Commonwealth was a free association of historically and geographically diverse autonomous and equal states within the British Empire. While united by common allegiance to the Crown, they shared a commitment to “positive ideals” such as free institutions, free cooperation, peace, security, and progress, which could be facilitated with flexible machinery and frank interpersonal communication between heads of government.⁹¹ The report echoed the pre-war values-based rhetoric of loyalty, personal contact, free discussion and cooperation. Those values were meant

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ *Imperial Conference 1926: Summary of Proceedings*, 12.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 13, 23.

⁹¹ Ibid., 12, 13, 23.

to serve as both unifying ideals, and foundational principles for the structural realities of the Commonwealth.

The Inter-Imperial Relations Committee was unable to express the legal basis of the Commonwealth without referring to pre-war imperial values. The separation of values and legal principles was more successfully achieved in the 1931 Statute of Westminster. The Statute contained none of the values-based language of the Balfour Declaration. Rather, the document focused entirely on the constitutional development of the Dominions, and defined the Commonwealth based on the members' legal relationships between each other and the Crown, as described in the Balfour Declaration.⁹² The Statute gave substance to Dominion autonomy by affirming that British legislation would no longer automatically apply to the Dominions. The Statute also affirmed by omission the exceptional status of India.⁹³

The Statute of Westminster was a foundational document that is widely cited as the formal origin of the (Old) Commonwealth.⁹⁴ The Commonwealth itself considers the 1931 Statute as a key point in the origins of the organisation, second only to the London Declaration of 1949. The latter is cited in the organisation's online history as the beginning of the "modern" Commonwealth.⁹⁵ The London Declaration accepted Indian, Ceylonese, and Pakistani independence and membership, as well as India's decision to become a republic and remain in the Commonwealth. The Declaration also shifted the role of the Crown from constitutionally

⁹² *Imperial Conference 1926: Inter-imperial Relations Committee.*

⁹³ Statute of Westminster, 1931 (22 and 23 Geo. 5, c. 4).

⁹⁴ Lorna Lloyd, "Loosening the Apron Strings," 283.

⁹⁵ The Commonwealth, "Our History"; Stuart Mole, "From Smith to Sharma: Role of the Secretary-General," in *The Contemporary Commonwealth: An Assessment, 1965-2009*, ed. James Mayall (London: Routledge, 2010), 44.

binding to symbolic.⁹⁶ After 1949, the British Monarch was the symbolic head of the Commonwealth, with the Crown itself a symbol of member cooperation.⁹⁷

The Statute of Westminster and the London Declaration dealt entirely with legal aspects of the Commonwealth. This legal focus was warranted, as self-government and relationship with the Crown were the basis for Commonwealth membership. The London Declaration marked a significant conceptual shift in the Commonwealth by making possible the membership of non-white, non-monarchies (though with a token nod to the Crown as head of the organisation). However, self-government and a relationship with the Crown were based on the explicit assumption of a shared commitment to “positive ideals” and the implicit assumption of whiteness. The London Declaration modified the legal relationships outlined in the Statute of Westminster in order to accommodate the realities of decolonisation in South Asia. However, the London Declaration did not address the values-based rhetoric that informed those legal structures in the first place.⁹⁸

The London Declaration created the multiracial Commonwealth but not the modern Commonwealth. Through the 1950s much of the organisational status quo remained the same. In the latter half of the 1950s, international opinion was increasingly hostile to colonial empires.⁹⁹ The 1955 Bandung Conference and the 1956 Suez Crisis respectively built and bolstered anticolonial solidarity and resentment, as well as opposition to Cold War politicking in

⁹⁶ “London Declaration 1949,” Documents, The Commonwealth, Last modified 16 January 2014, <http://thecommonwealth.org/search-documents?exact=&keywords=london%20declaration>.

⁹⁷ Statute of Westminster, 1931; The Commonwealth, “London Declaration 1949.”

⁹⁸ Statute of Westminster, 1931; The Commonwealth, “London Declaration 1949.”; Murphy, *Monarchy and the End of Empire*, 40.

⁹⁹ Sarah Elizabeth Stockwell, “Britain and Decolonization in an Era of Global Change,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Ends of Empire*, eds. Martin Thomas and Andrew S. Thompson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 71.

international fora like the UN.¹⁰⁰ The context of these international developments underscored the need for change in the operations of the Commonwealth, but did not fundamentally alter the day to day functioning of the organisation. The core of the Commonwealth was still the older, predominantly white Dominions, which remained loyal to the British Crown and aligned with the United Kingdom on most policy decisions (with the exception of the Irish Free State, which left the Commonwealth in 1949). India had always been represented at Commonwealth meetings in its former capacity as a quasi-member. With the decision to become a republic and remain in the Commonwealth, and with a certain wariness of British policies, India remained a member of distinct status. For the time being the new Dominions of Pakistan and Ceylon retained their ties to the British Monarchy as they postured in regional politics with India. The British Government continued to plan Commonwealth meetings and to distribute correspondence and information on behalf of the membership. So while the London Declaration was an important legal development, it changed very little of the practical day-to-day operations of the Commonwealth.

Adapting Commonwealth Values in the 1950s

The Statute of Westminster and the London Declaration addressed the legal aspects of Commonwealth evolution and opened the door to a wider, multiracial membership. However, neither measure addressed the set of values that underpinned those legal structures. Consequently, in the early 1950s the Commonwealth could no longer claim the unity of purpose and vision it had asserted (with significant oversights) in the first half of the twentieth-century. Although the functions of the organisation did not significantly change, through the 1950s there

¹⁰⁰ Peter Lyon, "The Emergence of the Third World," in *The Expansion of International Society*, eds., Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 229-230.

was a concerted effort to reinterpret the values-based rhetoric of the early Commonwealth to better reflect and attempt to give purpose to the new, multiracial organisation.¹⁰¹

President of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs, John Holmes, noted in 1962 that “the Commonwealth has always developed by adjusting to circumstances and concocting its theory retroactively.”¹⁰² In order to adapt Commonwealth values to the legal adjustments of the London Declaration, Commonwealth prime ministers made the most significant effort to reinterpret Commonwealth values at the 1951 Prime Ministers’ Meeting. The 1951 meeting was the first after the London Declaration and was the most immediate opportunity to link the organisation’s legal basis with its stated values. In addition to the traditional communique, the meeting produced a separate Leaders’ Declaration (the first of its kind). The 1951 communique and Leaders’ Declaration reprised the language of the Balfour Declaration to define the purpose of the postwar Commonwealth.

In the most general sense, the Prime Ministers echoed the Balfour Declaration by asserting that the Commonwealth was foremost committed to pursuing world peace by fostering understanding and cooperation, providing security from aggression, and promoting social and economic development.¹⁰³ Where Balfour described the geographical breadth and diverse histories of the Commonwealth, the 1951 Declaration outlined that the Commonwealth represented nearly one quarter of the world’s population on all continents, and elaborated that such diversity included

¹⁰¹ Future Commonwealth Secretary-General Shridath Ramphal perspicaciously observed in 1949 that in the wake of the London Declaration unity through common ideals and interests was supplanting the old links of allegiance and legal status. He went on to wonder whether the new bond of the “Second Commonwealth” would “prove more acceptable and so more lasting” than the old links, though perhaps not realizing that those value-based links were more longstanding than he had observed. See: Shridath Ramphal, “The Second Commonwealth of Nations,” *The Round Table* 98, no. 401 (April 2009): 19.

¹⁰² Holmes, “The Impact on the Commonwealth of the Emergence of Africa,” 291.

¹⁰³ *Imperial Conference 1926: Inter-imperial Relations Committee*; “Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 1951 (London, 4-13 January): Final Communique,” in *The Commonwealth at the Summit: Communiqués of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings, 1944-1986* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1987), 35-36.

men of many different races, traditions, and creeds.¹⁰⁴ In 1926 Lord Balfour concluded that the Commonwealth bore no resemblance to any other political organisation, past or present.¹⁰⁵ The 1951 Declaration also asserted the uniqueness of the Commonwealth and claimed that because of its diversity, the organisation was “singularly well constituted to enable it to study and in some measure comprehend the vexed questions which beset the world.” The “special knowledge” afforded by Commonwealth diversity lent a “special sense of responsibility” to its members that was undergirded by a deep faith in the existence of justice in the world.¹⁰⁶

The 1951 Leaders’ Declaration was largely an exercise in ideational continuity. The prime ministers re-asserted almost verbatim the Balfour Declaration’s claims of Commonwealth uniqueness, belief in positive ideals, commitment to free consultation, and joint pursuit of peace, security, and progress. The notable exception in 1951 was the prime ministers’ increased emphasis on Commonwealth diversity, and a corresponding de-emphasis on loyalty to the Crown. This rhetorical shift brought the professed values of the Commonwealth back into line with the organisation’s structure, which now afforded full membership to non-white countries. The unique diversity of the Commonwealth (rather than loyal, Anglo-Saxon fraternity) was now the core tenet that gave substance to the organisation’s claim to champion broader liberal values like peace, security, and progress.

The reconciliation of the Commonwealth’s professed values with its newly multiracial structure conformed to postwar realities, but did not alter the basic operations of the organisation in the

¹⁰⁴ *Imperial Conference 1926: Summary of Proceedings*, 12; “Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers 1951 (London, 4-13 January): Declaration by Commonwealth Prime Ministers,” in *The Commonwealth at the Summit: Communiqués of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings, 1944-1986* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1987), 33-34.

¹⁰⁵ *Imperial Conference 1926: Summary of Proceedings*, 12.

¹⁰⁶ “Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers 1951 (London, 4-13 January): Declaration by Commonwealth Prime Ministers,” 33-34.

1950s. The “free consultation” of the Commonwealth was still planned and orchestrated by the British Government. The Old Commonwealth continued to support British Cold War policies under the banner of a shared commitment to peace, security and progress.¹⁰⁷ The new South Asian members also conformed to pre-existing roles. After partition, Pakistan and Ceylon aligned more closely with the Western Bloc as they vied with India in regional politics. In consequence, Pakistan and Ceylon did not upset the status quo of Commonwealth operations.

Under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru India pursued its own role and spearheaded Commonwealth projects in conventional and nuclear disarmament, as well as combatting poverty and racism which Indian representatives saw as the causes of international strife.¹⁰⁸ However, the role of India as a distinct member was already long-established. India had been represented as a quasi-member since the First World War. Divergent Indian priorities fit the mould of India as a distinct member, and tensions between India and its neighbours as well as with apartheid South Africa were not enough to overturn broad Commonwealth consensus. For instance, arguments between Delhi and Pretoria over the rights of Indians in South Africa had been a feature of Commonwealth relations since before the First World War. Those tensions were not new, and the lack of resolve between India and South Africa was justified as a difference of opinion between Commonwealth members. Such differences even buttressed the organisation’s claims to diversity, which held that members need not agree on everything in order to discuss and cooperate in matters of common concern.

This continued organisational status quo was reflected in subsequent statements by the Commonwealth prime ministers. The communique of the 1953 Prime Ministers’ Meeting

¹⁰⁷ Srinivasan, *The Rise, Decline and Future of the British Commonwealth*, 139.

¹⁰⁸ Holmes, “The Impact on the Commonwealth of the Emergence of Africa,” 300.

repeated the value of interpersonal contacts between heads of governments, and in all of its resolutions pursued peace, security, and economic progress.¹⁰⁹ The same communique extolled the unity of the Commonwealth despite varying interests, circumstances, and differing approaches to major world problems.¹¹⁰ The 1955 communique again described the Commonwealth as a unique association representing all quarters of the globe, many races, religions, and peoples, deriving strength from its diversity, yet sharing a common outlook. It was an organisation of free and equal members cooperating in the pursuit of peace, liberty, and progress. The 1956 communique repeated these themes and again underscored the value of frank interpersonal contacts between leaders, in spite of divergent approaches to world problems.¹¹¹ The official view of the Commonwealth that decade was “the blessed culmination of the virtues of the Empire, [and] the triumph of its good instincts over its errors.”¹¹²

Despite this rosy official view, the racial hierarchy of the British Empire, which held Asians above Blacks (both in Africa and the Caribbean) remained intact. As Frank Gerits notes, Asian leaders harboured a certain degree of condescension towards Africa based on their western education and the relative lag of decolonisation and development between Asia and Africa. Such paternalism affected African engagement in South-South cooperative projects after the 1955 Bandung Conference and illustrated the persistence of imperially informed racial stereotypes.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ “Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 1953 (London, 3-9 June): Final Communique,” in *The Commonwealth at the Summit: Communiqués of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings, 1944-1986* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1987), 39-40.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ “Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 1955 (London, 26 January-9 February): Final Communique,” in *The Commonwealth at the Summit: Communiqués of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings, 1944-1986* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1987), 45; “Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 1956 (London, 27 June-6 July): Final Communique,” in *The Commonwealth at the Summit: Communiqués of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings, 1944-1986* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1987), 51.

¹¹² Holmes, “The Impact on the Commonwealth of the Emergence of Africa,” 291.

¹¹³ Frank Gerits, “Bandung as the call for a better development project: US, British, French and Gold Coast perceptions of the Afro-Asian Conference (1955),” *Cold War History* 16, no. 3 (2016): 271.

The persistence of racial stereotypes even in efforts to promote postcolonial solidarity highlighted the imperially-informed Commonwealth status quo of the 1950s.

The organisational continuity of the Commonwealth in the 1950s belies the significance of the London Declaration as the beginning of the modern Commonwealth. The Commonwealth was built on intangible values that both define and govern the organisation, yet the organisation's foundational documents (The London Declaration and the Statute of Westminster) did not reflect the mutually constitutive nature of the Commonwealth's values and structure. John Holmes correctly identified the Commonwealth *modus operandi* when he observed that the organisation adapted its operations and retroactively updated its theory. However, this characterisation fails to note that the operations of the Commonwealth were originally based on theoretical values. The failure of Commonwealth leaders to recognise that the values and structures of the Commonwealth were mutually constituted meant that updating either facet independently was doomed to fail.

The interdependence of values and structures was clear through the constitutional development of the early Commonwealth. Although in 1926 the Committee on Inter-Imperial Relations could not describe the structure of the Commonwealth in isolation from its purported values, the 1931 Statute of Westminster disregarded the values outlined in the Balfour Declaration while setting the legal basis of the Old Commonwealth. The London Declaration of 1949 attempted to update the legal structure of the Commonwealth as laid out in the Statute of Westminster and also did not account for the values that informed the 1931 Statute. The 1951 Leaders Declaration then attempted to update Commonwealth values based on the new legal structure of the 1949 London Declaration. However as illustrated in Figure One, the London Declaration was based on legal principles that had been mutually constituted with the values laid out in the 1926 Balfour

Declaration in the first place. As such, the 1951 Leader's Declaration slightly shifted the rhetoric of Commonwealth values, but did not greatly alter the theoretical composition of the organisation.

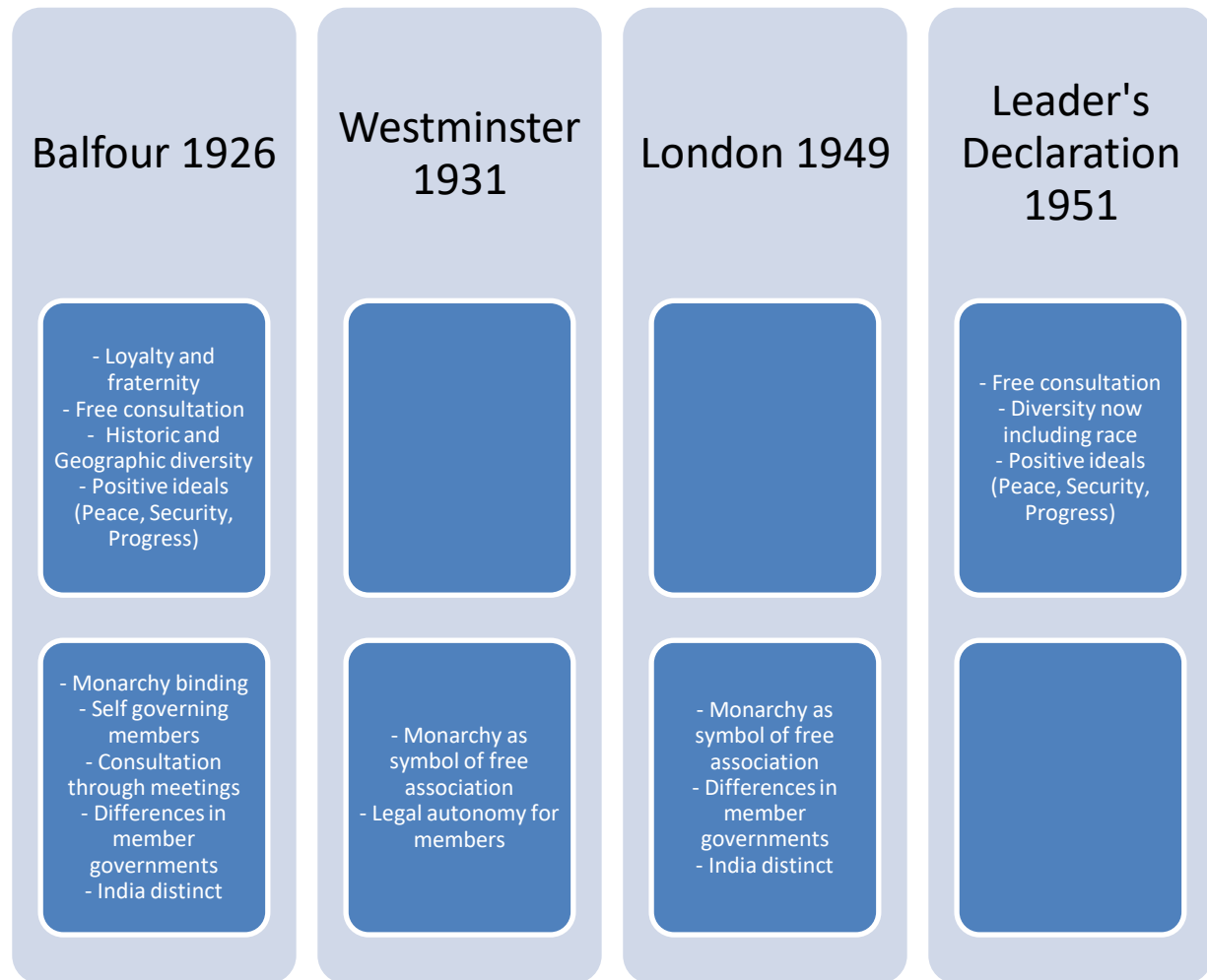


Figure One: Showing the expressed values (top row) and structures (bottom row) of key Commonwealth documents.

The ease with which the values and legal structures of the Commonwealth were adapted to the realities of South Asian independence indicates the lack of ideational change inherent in that

process. Although the concept of a multiracial Commonwealth had technically been implemented, the shift required minimal conceptual work. That conceptual work involved relabelling the parameters of membership and the role of the monarchy. However, the central place of the monarchy and emphasis on Commonwealth diversity and consultation in the pursuit of positive ideals remained the same. The adaptation of Commonwealth values and structures in this period changed nothing about the practical operation of the organisation. Consequently, the Commonwealth maintained a status quo through most of the 1950s and accomplished very little as an organisation during that decade.¹¹⁴ Substantive organisational change required the simultaneous reconsideration of both values and structures. Such a wholesale change was not possible until the racial hierarchy of the British Empire was more concertedly challenged by African decolonisation, and the administration of the Commonwealth was removed from British control.

¹¹⁴ For example, see: The Commonwealth, "Our History.": O'Neill, "Militancy and Accommodation," 211, 214.

Chapter Two: The Secretariat Idea

British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan famously described African nationalism as a “wind of change.” That wind propelled African decolonisation which in turn, dominated Commonwealth politics for the following decade and precipitated the simultaneous reconsideration of the values and structure of the Commonwealth.¹ Majority black member states in Africa, and later the Caribbean, saw the utility of salvaging what they could from old imperial networks including the Commonwealth. However, unlike the South Asian members that joined in the late 1940s, Afro-Caribbean members had not been represented in the original organisation. States formerly comprising British India gained full Commonwealth membership as the culmination of decades of quasi-membership.² In contrast, Afro-Caribbean states gained membership as a direct outcome of decolonisation often in tandem with majority rule and membership in other international organisations. These newer members did not consider Commonwealth membership to be the culmination of an evolutionary process but an indication of their status as independent states. In consequence, Afro-Caribbean members challenged the Anglo-centric and racially hierarchical structure of the organisation and reinterpreted Commonwealth values as akin to the guiding principles of other international organisations. The debates around the formation of the Commonwealth Secretariat illustrate the challenges to both the values and structure of the organisation issued by the newer members in the 1960s.³

¹ “DO 35/10570, no. 53, Address by Mr. Macmillan to both houses of the parliament of the Union of South Africa, Cape Town, 3 February 1960,” in *British Documents on the End of Empire, Series A, Volume 4: The Conservative Government and the End of Empire 1957-1964, Part I, High Policy, Political and Constitutional Change*, eds. Ronald Hyam and Roger Louis (London: The Stationary Office, 2000), 169; Mansergh, *The Commonwealth Experience*, 173.

² Lloyd, “Loosening the Apron Strings,” 296.

³ B. Vivekanander argued in 1967 that the formation of the Secretariat was expression of new members’ demands for machinery to reflect the status of the Commonwealth as an International Organisation. See: Vivekanandan, “The Commonwealth Secretariat,” 301-302.

The idea of a Commonwealth Secretariat was as old as the concept of the Commonwealth itself but did not lead to any concrete measures until the 1960s. Advocates for imperial federation, such as the Round Table movement called for closer, more centrally administered imperial cooperation in the late 19th and early 20th century. The eventual functions of the Commonwealth Secretariat were more specifically outlined in a 1905 British proposal for an Imperial Council, which included an ancillary permanent commission with a secretariat. A similar Australian proposal in 1907 called for a secretariat to coordinate Imperial Conferences and to work closely with the Dominions which felt they were being neglected under the broad scope of the Colonial Office.⁴ The Canadian Government also took a great deal of initiative in developing the concept of the Commonwealth in the interwar period, but none of these measures produced a Secretariat.⁵ The status quo of Commonwealth operations continued through the 1950s with the British Government performing secretarial functions on behalf of the membership.

The structure of the Commonwealth was not challenged until after the first African member (Ghana) joined in 1957.⁶ Ghanaian Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah was an activist. Nkrumah considered Ghanaian independence as the product of a hard-won pressure from below. He pursued socialist policies and put Ghana on the path to becoming a republic in 1960.⁷ A leading Pan-Africanist, Nkrumah saw potential in the Commonwealth but considered the organisation secondary to African unity.⁸ More so than India, which already had a distinct place in the Commonwealth, the Ghanaian Government under Nkrumah would not abide a Commonwealth that was largely operating as it had since the First World War. The London Declaration had opened the door for Ghanaian membership but had not changed the operation of the

⁴ Ibid., 302.

⁵ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 11, The Commonwealth in World Politics, 1 April 1966.

⁶ Holmes, "The Impact on the Commonwealth of the Emergence of Africa," 291.

⁷ Kwame Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., Publishers, 1963), 17.

⁸ Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite*, 217.

organisation.⁹ Ghanaian membership precipitated a reassessment of the values and structures of the Commonwealth that culminated with the formation of the Commonwealth Secretariat in 1965.

In the interim, the membership and activism of African states (Ghana in 1957 followed by Nigeria in 1960) highlighted the racial hierarchy inherent in the Commonwealth's values and structures, and problematised British administration of the organisation. How the Commonwealth responded to these challenges set the basis for expansionist and restrictionist approaches to the Secretariat when it was proposed in 1964.¹⁰ In the most immediate case, Ghanaian membership in 1957 and Nigerian membership in 1960 helped push South Africa to leave the Commonwealth. Through the 1950s, South Africa had joined with other Commonwealth leaders in expressing support for the rhetorical values of peace, security, and progress fostered by Commonwealth diversity and consultation. However, the South African Government remained averse to colonial independence and expanded Commonwealth membership.¹¹ The escalation of apartheid increasingly put the Union of South Africa at odds with other members. South Asian members were committed to combatting racism and the other Old Commonwealth members were increasingly embarrassed by their association with South Africa. Tensions had always existed between South Asian members and South Africa, but these had not been enough to upend the status quo in the 1950s.

African membership helped alter the status quo of racial relations within the Commonwealth. As Kwame Nkrumah later recalled, at the 1960 Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting "the

⁹ Amitav Banerji argues that this opened the door for other former colonies both to join and to feel confident in doing so. See: Amitav Banerji, "The 1949 London Declaration: Birth of the Modern Commonwealth," *Commonwealth Law Bulletin* 25, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 6.

¹⁰ Watts, *Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence*, 110.

¹¹ TNA: DO 121/246, Minute from J.G.L. (J. Gilbert Laithwaite) to Secretary of State, 11 July, 1956.

Union of South Africa and the whole subject of apartheid came under heavy fire.”¹² At the Prime Ministers’ Meeting the following year, Nigeria was also represented, and added to the strength of anti-apartheid sentiment in the Commonwealth. In 1961 “In light of the views expressed on behalf of other member Governments and the indications of their future intentions regarding the racial policy of the Union Government he [Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd] had decided to withdraw his application for South Africa’s continuing membership of the Commonwealth as a republic.”¹³ The membership and activism of majority Black African states added weight to South Asian antiracism at a time when support for South Africa was waning among the rest of the Old Commonwealth. Ultimately, African membership helped preclude South Africa from remaining a member long enough to participate in the Secretariat discussions.

Restrictionists

The restrictionist group of Commonwealth members (Australia, India, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom) had diverse motives for attempting to limit the scope of the Commonwealth Secretariat. However, restrictionist members shared an aversion to the changes brought about by African membership in the Commonwealth. African decolonisation and Commonwealth membership upset the status quo of Commonwealth operations and set precedence for the rapid expansion of the organisation in the 1960s. Commonwealth membership more than doubled between 1957 and 1964, with the vast majority of the new members from Africa and the Caribbean.¹⁴ These changes affected the restrictionist members’ engagement with the organisation. The restrictionist members were uncomfortable with rapid, wholesale change.

¹² Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite*, 186.

¹³ “Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 1961 (London, 8-17 March): Communique on South Africa,” in *The Commonwealth at the Summit: Communiqués of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings, 1944-1986* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1987), 67.

¹⁴ New members in this period included: Ghana, the Malay Federation, Nigeria, Cyprus, Sierra Leone, Tanganyika and Zanzibar (later Tanzania), Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, Kenya, Malawi, Malta, and Zambia.

While they were willing to tweak the operations of the Commonwealth they resisted an independent, capable Secretariat.

The Australian Government supported South Africa's bid to remain in the Commonwealth in 1961 and resisted the growth of the Secretariat because it challenged the racial hierarchy of the organisation. Such challenges threatened Australian immigration policy vis-à-vis Asia, as well as Australia's own colonial policies in its mandate territories. In the wake of South Africa's departure, the British Government encouraged Australians to reconcile with the new shape of the Commonwealth. British officials argued that retaining connections with former colonies could be beneficial to both Britain and the rest of the Old Commonwealth.¹⁵ However, while Canberra recognised signs of change, when the Secretariat was proposed in 1964 Australia still preferred the "old Anglo-Saxon club" and had deep misgivings about the idea of a multiracial-Commonwealth, the expansion of the Secretariat, and later, about the new Secretary-General personally.¹⁶ Canberra consistently argued for a small Secretariat with no executive powers that could serve only as a clearing house for information to supplement the club-like atmosphere of the Commonwealth. In the consultations prior to the establishment of the Secretariat, Australian officials explicitly stated that the Commonwealth was not like the United Nations and should not be built along the lines of other international organisations.¹⁷ When the Secretariat was established, Australian officials consistently coordinated with the British Government to try to keep the Secretariat in check.

¹⁵ TNA: DO 194/66, Telegram from Canberra (Sir W. Oliver) to Commonwealth Relations Office, 28 April, 1965.

¹⁶ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 16 "Diary June 1966 (2)," Letter from Arnold Smith to Wilfred C. Smith, 30 June, 1966; TNA: Foreign and Commonwealth Office [FCO] 49/198, Minute from A.J. Cambridge to Mr. Forster on Secretary of State's Visit to Australia February 1967, 31 January, 1967; TNA: FCO 49/198, Secretary of State's visit to Australia – February 1967, Australian attitude to Commonwealth Secretariat (Draft) Defensive Brief by Commonwealth Office, 31 January, 1967.

¹⁷ TNA: CAB 148/43, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 1965: Commonwealth Secretariat (Draft Brief by the Commonwealth Relations Office), Annex B: Summary of views expressed by other Commonwealth Governments on Officials' Report, 28 May, 1965.

The restrictionist stance of the Australian Government reflected a deep discomfort with non-white Commonwealth membership. By mid-1966 Australia had in some capacity opposed every major Commonwealth initiative including the expansion of the Secretariat and Commonwealth efforts to push for a settlement in Rhodesia (see chapters eight and nine). Secretary-General Arnold Smith bemoaned Australian opposition to the ideal of a multi-racial Commonwealth in a letter to his brother in June 1966. Smith went so far as to call the Australian Foreign Minister Paul Hasluck a “rather stupid reactionary” and expressed his sincere hope that the recent retirement of Robert Menzies would result in some change in Australian policy.¹⁸ In January 1967 however, Australian antipathy to the Commonwealth remained so entrenched as to become excessive even to the British Government. British officials sympathized with Australian unease about the Secretariat but argued that Smith’s goodwill with newer Commonwealth members could be used to Britain’s own advantage, and therefore they advised the Australian government to maintain good terms with the Secretariat.¹⁹ By 1968, officials in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) described Australian dislike of Smith, the Secretariat, and the African members as “widespread and almost pathological,” and increasingly unhelpful.²⁰ Of the remaining Old Commonwealth members, Australian officials held on to an imperially informed concept of the Commonwealth longer than any other member, including Britain.

In contrast, the Indian Government’s lukewarm reception of the Secretariat was due to wariness of external oversight. Having borne the brunt of second class membership in the early decades of the Commonwealth, Indian representatives were cautious about any development in the

¹⁸ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 16, Letter from Arnold Smith to Wilfred C. Smith, 30 June, 1966.

¹⁹ TNA: FCO 49/198, Secretary of State’s visit to Australia – February 1967, Australian attitude to Commonwealth Secretariat (Draft) Defensive Brief by Commonwealth Office, 31 January, 1967.

²⁰ TNA: FCO 68/171, Minute from J.B. Johnston to Permanent Under Secretary [P.U.S.], 23 October, 1968.

Commonwealth that might suggest British domination by other means.²¹ Much of Jawaharlal Nehru's campaign in 1949 was based on justifying Commonwealth membership to a skeptical Indian Constituent Assembly. Perhaps more so than the old Dominions, India was determined to ensure its sovereignty in any dealings with the Commonwealth. Nehru was clear that the Commonwealth would not impose any limits on Indian sovereignty and that India would remain a member because membership was directly beneficial to India and the causes which she wished to promote internationally.²² More specifically, the Commonwealth was a means to promote Indian leadership in the Non-Alignment Movement, including proposals for conventional and nuclear disarmament.

Indian officials echoed Commonwealth values of free consultation, diversity, and organisational flexibility but did so with prescribed limits. For example, India opposed the notion that the Commonwealth might serve as a tribunal to settle member disputes, as this would give the organisation authority above member sovereignty and threaten external intervention in the Kashmir dispute with Pakistan.²³ As the idea of the Commonwealth Secretariat emerged, Indian officials aligned more closely with Old Commonwealth leaders than with newer members. In Secretary-General Smith's estimation, "India...wished to see the Secretariat largely as a clerical, non-active, inexpensive organisation with no say in political matters."²⁴ The Indian Government

²¹ TNA: DO 25/2212, Reuters India and Pakistan Service: Accept Commonwealth Agreement – Nehru, 16 May, 1949.

²² Ibid.; TNA: DO 25/2212, Inward Telegram to Commonwealth Relations Office from U.K. High Commissioner in India, 19 May, 1949; Gopal Krishna, "India and the International Order: Retreat From Idealism," in *The Expansion of International Society*, eds., Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 275.

²³ TNA: DO 25/2212, Reuters India and Pakistan Service: Accept Commonwealth Agreement – Nehru, 16 May, 1949.

²⁴ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume. 1, File 3 "Diaries 19 Oct-Nov 1965," Interview: Mr. A Smith and Sir Morrice James, U.K. High Commissioner in Pakistan, 29 October, 1965.

opposed any notion of voting or rigid organisational governance and proposed cost saving measures that would further reduce the Secretariat's capacity for political action.²⁵

A cautious and pragmatic approach to the Commonwealth enabled India, particularly under the vision of Nehru, to find something to be salvaged in the organisation.²⁶ By remaining in the Commonwealth, India would not be isolated and would derive benefits from the association.²⁷

As part of his concept of one-worldism, Nehru believed that breaking up international associations was foolhardy. He argued that any type of international association that espoused discussion, understanding, and cooperation was beneficial for the world and was in the interest of peace. Addressing the Constituent Assembly in May 1949 Nehru argued that "it is better to keep a co-operative association going which may do good in this world rather than break it. To not use such an association would be a loss. Rather, he advocated breaking up the "evil parts" of the organisation or anything that would stifle its members.²⁸ Nehru's vision for the Commonwealth maintained many of the core tenets set out in the Balfour Declaration but institutionalised a certain wariness of external oversight.²⁹

²⁵ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume. 1, File 1, Diary Entry, 3 September, 1965; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 11, The Commonwealth in World Politics, 1 April 1966; TNA: CAB 148/43, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 1965: Commonwealth Secretariat (Draft Brief by the Commonwealth Relations Office), Annex B: Summary of views expressed by other Commonwealth Governments on Officials' Report, 28 May, 1965.

²⁶ Amitav Banerji argues that this was a product of *realpolitik* combined with Nehru's idealism and Anglophilia. See: Banerji, "The 1949 London Declaration," 2-3.

²⁷ TNA: DO 25/2212, Inward Telegram to Commonwealth Relations Office from U.K. High Commissioner in India, 19 May, 1949.

²⁸ Jawaharlal Nehru, "Commonwealth is Common Weal," Speech in the Constituent Assembly, 16 May, 1949, in *Important Speeches of Jawaharlal Nehru: A Sheaf of Supremely Significant Speeches Delivered During a Decade, 1946-1957*, Volume II: India's Mission at Home and Abroad, 1946-1957, ed. Jagat S. Bright (New Delhi: Indian Printing Works, Undated), 525; TNA: DO 25/2212, Reuters India and Pakistan Service: Accept Commonwealth Agreement – Nehru, 16 May, 1949; TNA: DO 25/2212, Inward Telegram to Commonwealth Relations Office from U.K. High Commissioner in India, 19 May, 1949.

²⁹ By 1962, John Holmes argued the Commonwealth's stock of political ideas contained as much of Gandhi as of Balfour, largely due to Indian influence. See: Holmes, "The Impact on the Commonwealth of the Emergence of Africa," 297.

The stance outlined by Nehru and carried forward through the 1960s ironically brought Indian and Australian stances toward the Secretariat into line. While Australian opposition to a strong Secretariat was informed by a commitment to maintaining the white Anglo-Saxon club of old, Indian opposition was based on resisting external influence in Indian affairs, and benefitting from the Commonwealth as a diplomatic network. Both stances were borne of the Old Commonwealth and responded to regional concerns, yet both supported the pre-Secretariat status quo set out in 1949.

Of the restrictionist camp, the Government of New Zealand was the most apathetic about the prospect of a Secretariat.³⁰ In a broad sense, New Zealand officials were averse to major changes in how the Commonwealth was run. Wellington had opposed the reorganisation of the Colonial and Commonwealth Relations Offices in the 1950s and in 1964 greeted the idea of the Secretariat “without enthusiasm.”³¹ However, the New Zealand Government also saw valuable ties in the Commonwealth beyond those with Britain and thought it best to make the most of connections with African members.³² The Secretariat was also a useful channel to posture in regional politics vis-à-vis Australia, which wished to impose strict conditions on the Secretariat. Wellington feared that without getting involved in the formation of the Secretariat, the organisation might be given a mandate that would not be conducive to New Zealand’s interests.³³ Wellington also feared losing representation in favour of Australia in the proposed regional-

³⁰ TNA: Prime Minister’s Office [PREM] 11/4637, Minute on the Commonwealth Secretariat by Saville Garner, 10 July, 1964.

³¹ TNA: DO 121/246, Note for the Record by J.G.L, 9 July, 1956; TNA: Treasury [T] 312/707, Inward Telegram to Commonwealth Relations Office from Wellington (Sir Ian MacLennan), 26 August, 1964.

³² LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 5 “Diaries 16-20 Dec. 1965,” Press Statement from Prime Minister Holyoake, 16 December, 1965; TNA: T 312/707, Inward Telegram to Commonwealth Relations Office from Wellington (Sir Ian MacLennan), 26 August, 1964.

³³ TNA: T 312/707, Inward Telegram to Commonwealth Relations Office from Wellington (Sir Ian MacLennan), 26 August, 1964.

based working group to discuss the Secretariat's formation.³⁴ In early consultations New Zealand officials supported the Secretariat in a lukewarm fashion and focused on the need for a better defined role for the Secretary-General and a clearer budget.³⁵ This support was not from a particular sense of enthusiasm for the Secretariat, but for Wellington's desire to make the most of its international connections, to make sure New Zealand's voice was heard, and to posture vis-à-vis Australia in its own regional sphere. Moving forward, however, the Government of New Zealand passively opposed the expansion of the Secretariat, largely by echoing British arguments against a strong Secretariat.

British concerns about a central Secretariat were reinforced by the experience of decolonisation and the Commonwealth's expanding membership in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Nkrumah's activist approach to the Commonwealth (and Ghanaian international relations more generally) alarmed Macmillan's conservative government, which increasingly considered Nkrumah to be a threat to British interests.³⁶ Macmillan himself came to dread Commonwealth meetings as he anticipated how "troublesome" they would be.³⁷ The Conservative government's concerns over the Commonwealth, decolonisation, and the British economy culminated in an "audit" of the Empire in 1957 which included financial cost-benefits of colonies, and a review of colonies' eligibility for Commonwealth membership.³⁸ The 1957 audit and subsequent discussions

³⁴ TNA: T 312/707, Inward Telegram to Commonwealth Relations Office from Canberra (Sir William P. Oliver), 31 August, 1964.

³⁵ TNA: CAB 148/43, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 1965: Commonwealth Secretariat (Draft Brief by the Commonwealth Relations Office), Annex B: Summary of views expressed by other Commonwealth Governments on Officials' Report, 28 May, 1965.

³⁶ Butler, *Britain and Empire*, 150.

³⁷ Brian Harrison, *Seeking a Role: The United Kingdom, 1951-1970* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009), 111.

³⁸ "CO 852/1919, no 24: UK current economic situation and ceiling on expenditure: CO circular letter (from WL Gorell Barnes to most governors," in *British Documents on the End of Empire*, Series A, Volume 4: The Conservative Government and the End of Empire 1957-1964, Part II, Economics, International Relations, and the Commonwealth, eds. Ronald Hyam and Wm Roger Louis (London: The Stationary Office, 2000), 28; Butler, *Britain and Empire*, 139.

between various departments in the British Government encouraged both generalised and departmental resistance to the idea of a Commonwealth Secretariat.

On the heels of the 1957 audit, by 1959 officials in the Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO) recognised that the Commonwealth was effectively an international organisation of independent states, though without a secretariat or constitution. The CRO saw itself as an “International Secretariat” for the Commonwealth that performed the functions of a secretariat at the members’ behest, in addition to furthering the United Kingdom’s interests through bilateral relations with the Commonwealth.³⁹ However, the CRO had originally been conceived as a diplomatic rather than administrative department and CRO officials views of their own department went beyond the secretarial services they provided.⁴⁰ Above all, the CRO saw itself as acting as the conscience of the Commonwealth, inviting the members to consult on matters of mutual concern. Sir Henry Lintott in the CRO argued that “[a]ll this we do, I think, only indirectly as a U.K. interest. It is, of course, a U.K. interest to hold the Commonwealth together, but I think that to a large extent, we are exercising the functions which a good Secretary-General of an international organisation would perform in the interests of the organisation as a whole.”⁴¹ While this was a clear conflict of interest, in 1959 the CRO estimated that most of the Commonwealth would prefer that the CRO continue to perform these functions rather than there be any notion of direct leadership in the Commonwealth, thus continuing past informal methods.⁴²

Lintott was correct in assuming the majority of Commonwealth members supported the CRO’s role as a surrogate secretariat. The organisational status quo had remained unchallenged until the admission of Ghana as a full member in 1957. Yet by 1959, apart from South Africa, Ghana was

³⁹ TNA: DO 121/247, Minute from H. Lintott to Sir G. Laithwaite, 30 June, 1959.

⁴⁰ Doxey, *The Commonwealth Secretariat*, 13.

⁴¹ Ibid; Lloyd, *Diplomacy with a Difference*, 190.

⁴² Ashton, “British Government Perspectives,” 76.

still the only independent African member and remained outspoken on issues of both policy and principle. However, the CRO's assessment was a defensive measure. The wider Macmillan ministry was keen to shed Britain's colonial commitments in light of increased scrutiny of colonial affairs at both Commonwealth and United Nations gatherings, and the low cost-effectiveness of colonies per the 1957 audit. Following this logic, Sir Norman Brook in the Cabinet Office argued that the sharp distinction between British dependencies and Commonwealth membership (to which they were entitled upon independence) should be reduced, so as to dissociate Britain from its colonial reputation while maintaining the Commonwealth as a vehicle for British influence. The merger of the Colonial Office (CO) and the CRO would ease this differentiation by removing the word "Colonial" from the governmental apparatus, all the while producing economies in Britain's diplomatic budget.⁴³ Officials in the CRO countered that the Commonwealth approved of the CRO's coordinating functions, and that to force a merger would offend the Commonwealth by lumping together colonies and full Commonwealth members. CRO officials argued further that a merger of the CO and CRO would reduce services available to the Commonwealth by overworking either the newly merged department or the Foreign Office (whichever would be responsible for Commonwealth relations).⁴⁴

Because changes in the operation of the Commonwealth threatened the existence of the CRO, CRO opposition to the idea of the Secretariat was persistent and intensified after the decision to form the Secretariat was taken in July 1964. CRO obstructionism was even more vehement as

⁴³ TNA: DO 121/247, Note for the Record by R.B.M. King, 26 June, 1959.

⁴⁴ TNA: DO 121/247, Minute from H. Lintott to Sir G. Laithwaite, 30 June, 1959; TNA: DO 121/247, Note for the Record by J.G.L. (Gilbert Laithwaite), 25 June, 1959; TNA: DO 121/247, Note for the Record by R.B.M. King, 26 June, 1959; One official noted with aversion that this would also cause more work for CRO staffers and increase the likelihood of overseas deployment for both CO and CRO staff. See: TNA: DO 121/247, Note for the Record on Commonwealth States, by J.G.L., 9 July, 1959.

Harold Wilson's more pro-Commonwealth Labour government came to power in October of that year.⁴⁵ British policy under both the Conservative and Labour Parties was cautious towards the Commonwealth and did not support a large, independent Secretariat.⁴⁶

British officials feared that with a strong Secretariat, the Commonwealth could become an executive organisation dominated by former colonies. Such an organisation might become a pressure group against U.K. policy on anything from decolonisation to increased aid and better terms for trade.⁴⁷ A similar process with voting blocks of former colonies in the United Nations had already produced a great deal of pressure on European colonial powers, and the British Government was anxious to prevent a similar situation in the Commonwealth.⁴⁸ The notion that the Commonwealth was becoming in the eyes of its members much like any other international body was worrisome for British officials. For H.L.M Oxley in the CRO, the Commonwealth was "...an association of States but in no sense an organisation..." He elaborated that "The Commonwealth Secretariat will, no doubt, have some similarity to the Secretariat of the U.N. or of other international bodies but this, I suggest, would be because it is to be a Secretariat not because it is to serve the purposes of a number of States."⁴⁹ Following the decision to establish the Secretariat in July 1964, the British Government considered the possibility of developing countries dominating the Secretariat as a "serious danger" and resolved, while not appearing to

⁴⁵ Butler, *Britain and Empire*, 172.

⁴⁶ Murphy, *The Empire's New Clothes*, 30.

⁴⁷ TNA: CAB 148-7, Commonwealth Secretariat: Memorandum by the Commonwealth Relations Office, 30 July, 1964.

⁴⁸ Palliser, "Diplomacy Today," 385.

⁴⁹ TNA: DO 211/42, Minute from H.L.M. Oxley to Mr. Hamilton on Commonwealth Secretariat – Immunities, 2 September, 1964.

be obstructive, to ensure that the Secretariat would not be able to interfere in the affairs of member countries.⁵⁰

For differing reasons, the governments of Australia, India, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom had a vested interest in maintaining the Commonwealth status quo. That status quo had been established in both the values and structures of the Old Commonwealth and was affirmed with minor changes in 1949. The expansion of Commonwealth membership and the idea of the Secretariat challenged the status quo and pitted the restrictionists against fellow Commonwealth members with an interest in a more robust, activist Secretariat.

Expansionists

Although they also differed in their motives, the expansionist group shared a vision of the Commonwealth as an international organisation and supported a strong, activist Secretariat. The growing numbers of African and Caribbean members saw the Commonwealth as one of many IOs through which they could pursue their own goals.⁵¹ Of the postwar members the governments of Pakistan and Ceylon supported a more robust Secretariat. These states were both establishing new governments after receiving independence and Dominion status in 1947 and 1948 respectively. The Commonwealth could give these states a sense of international legitimacy in addition to providing valuable diplomatic contacts to help train and finance their nascent diplomatic corps.⁵² Perhaps more importantly, a strong Secretariat beholden to the membership would help promote their interests without reliance on either Britain or India.

⁵⁰Ibid.; TNA: T 312/707, Note on the Commonwealth Secretariat by Saville Garner, 27 August, 1964.

⁵¹J.D.B. Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, 377; O'Neill, "Militancy and Accommodation," 228.

⁵²TNA: CAB 148-7, Commonwealth Secretariat: Memorandum by the Commonwealth Relations Office, 30 July, 1964.

Pakistani engagement with the Commonwealth was shaped by regional politics such as the Kashmir conflict. The Government of Pakistan supported a politically active Secretariat that would intervene in member disputes.⁵³ In October 1965 the United Kingdom High Commissioner in Pakistan noted that there was a feeling of disappointment in the Pakistani Government when the Commonwealth did not step into the Kashmir conflict that year, even if it was beyond the agreed scope of the Secretariat.⁵⁴ Prime Minister Dudley Senanayake of Ceylon was also a vocal supporter of Secretariat expansion. Senanayake hoped that a strong Secretariat would facilitate greater multi-lateral Commonwealth consultation like the Colombo Plan.⁵⁵ Close coordination with the Secretariat was so important to Senanayake that when he fell ill in London in April 1966, he cancelled all of his appointments including a luncheon with the Queen, but insisted on meeting with Secretary-General Arnold Smith. Smith recalled that they met in Senanayake's bedroom where the latter was sitting in his pyjamas by an electric fire. The two spoke of Commonwealth affairs for some forty minutes before Smith took his leave.⁵⁶ The Secretariat was an important institution for both Pakistani and Ceylonese officials, who consistently supported Secretariat expansion.

Similar to the pragmatic self-interest of Pakistan and Ceylon, the Canadian Government increasingly approached the Commonwealth as an international organisation that could further Canadian political goals. Canadian officials supported many of the new members' initiatives and were instrumental in supporting the formation of the Secretariat. Canada was the only member of the Old Commonwealth to oppose South African re-entry into the Commonwealth in 1961. John Diefenbaker's Conservative government was initially hesitant to oppose apartheid given

⁵³ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 3, Interview: Mr. A Smith and Sir Morrice James, U.K. High Commissioner in Pakistan, 29 October, 1965.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 11, Item for Diary, 7 April, 1965.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Canada's own poor record of race-relations. However, Diefenbaker was personally committed to promoting the concept of Human Rights, which he saw as a means of opposing communism in the context of the Cold War. Canadian opposition to renewed South African membership responded to domestic calls for action against apartheid, and encouraged better relations with potential allies in the emerging Third World.⁵⁷ Canada's lack of colonies (the only old Dominion to not have any) and security in the Americas also gave the Canadian Government more leeway to view decolonisation with detachment, and to reimagine Canada's role in world politics.⁵⁸ For Lester Pearson's subsequent Liberal government (beginning in April 1963), supporting the newer members' vision for the Commonwealth was an avenue to build support for Canada's emerging identity as a middle power and "honest broker" in international politics.⁵⁹ The image of the Commonwealth as an international organisation rather than an Englishmen's club also appealed to the French Canadian population which had never shared the old bond of British kinship.⁶⁰ For both domestic and foreign policy reasons across party lines, the Canadian Government supported the Secretariat from the beginning.

The Secretariat Decision

Among the expansionist camp, the newer Afro-Caribbean members were the most active proponents of the Commonwealth Secretariat. For these members, a Secretariat would help democratise the functions of the Commonwealth and make the organisation a more effective tool

⁵⁷ Asa McKercher, "Sound and Fury: Diefenbaker, Human Rights, and Canadian Foreign Policy," *The Canadian Historical Review* 97, no. 2 (June 2016): 171, 176-177.

⁵⁸ The priorities of successive Canadian Governments through this period also translated into support for the Commonwealth across party lines, such as the Pearson Government's internationalist agenda, or the Diefenbaker Government's focus in trade. See: McIntyre, "Canada and the Creation of the Commonwealth Secretariat, 1965," 757; McIntyre, "Britain and the Creation of the Commonwealth Secretariat," 138; Holmes, "The Impact on the Commonwealth of the Emergence of Africa," 292; Erika Simpson, "The Principles of Liberal Internationalism According to Lester Pearson," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 34, no. 1 (Spring, 1999): 84-85.

⁵⁹ Simpson, "The Principles of Liberal Internationalism According to Lester Pearson," 77.

⁶⁰ Holmes, "The Impact on the Commonwealth of the Emergence of Africa," 292.

for promoting their interests abroad. By challenging the status quo of the 1950s the newer members espoused a vision of the Commonwealth that functioned like other international organisations where former colonies had more successfully advocated for their interests.

Apart from the inspiration of the United Nations, the proposal for the Commonwealth Secretariat itself was informed by Kwame Nkrumah's own experience in the formation of the Organization for African Unity (OAU) in 1963. Nkrumah recalled that the basis for the OAU had been largely outlined by the Monrovia Group at a meeting in Lagos in 1962.

The conference agreed upon a whole new complex machinery for inter-African co-operation. It included a semi-permanent council of ministers, a biennial representative assembly, and a permanent secretariat of the African and Malagasy states. Among resolutions passed were those calling for a development bank, a private investment guarantee fund, an organization for health, labour and social affairs, an educational and cultural council, and certain other commissions to deal with various practical matters.⁶¹

Many of the 1962 Lagos resolutions had precedents in the UN, and were later echoed in Commonwealth initiatives supported by the newer members. The newer members supported similar initiatives in the UN, the OAU, and the Commonwealth. Each of these organisations had a different membership base, and initiatives focused on socio-economic development benefitted newly independent countries the most.⁶² However, developing members' ability to derive benefit from the Commonwealth depended on the independent operation of the organisation. The eventual formation of the Secretariat was motivated by newer members' rejection of the CRO's

⁶¹ Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite*, 148.

⁶² Secretary-General Smith recognised that members joined the Commonwealth because they could both input and derive value in the aid, trade, diplomatic contacts, and potential to influence world opinion afforded by the organisation. This did not make international cooperation easy, but the Commonwealth both facilitated and incentivised such cooperation. See: LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 8 "Diary, Dec 1968," Transcript of an Interview Granted by Mr. Arnold Smith, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, to Norman Gelb of the Voice of America, December 13, 1968.

role administering the organisation.⁶³ For those newer members, building a Secretariat to take over Commonwealth administration from the British Government was the first step to pursuing both political and socio-economic initiatives in the Commonwealth.

Drawing on his experience with the OAU, Kwame Nkrumah tabled the idea for a Commonwealth Secretariat at the 1964 Prime Ministers' Meeting. Trinbagonian Prime Minister Eric Williams formally proposed Nkrumah's suggestion, which was heavily supported by the Afro-Caribbean members.⁶⁴ These leaders were frank about their vision for the organisation. During the proceedings, Duncan Sandys, the British Commonwealth and Colonial Secretary, gave a speech about the progress of decolonisation which soon-to-be Secretary-General Arnold Smith remembered as "...pure Britannia nutrix, the proud mother who had nursed her infants to strength and independence."⁶⁵ In response to Sandys' speech, Dr. Banda of Malawi asserted

Now come, Mr. Chairman, let's be frank with each other. You British have not been as pig-headed as other imperialists. You have recognised in time what is inevitable, and accepted it gracefully. That is your greatness, and we honour you for it. But it has not been all voluntary. There's been a significant element of persuasion, and many of us here have been among the persuaders... He then went round the table, mentioning names and prison terms...⁶⁶

Smith later recalled that the session ultimately resolved in good humour.⁶⁷ However, the point was clear that just as Commonwealth membership changed there was an expectation that its machinery would also change.⁶⁸

⁶³ Vivekanandan, "The Commonwealth Secretariat," 316-317; Doxey, *The Commonwealth Secretariat*, 11.

⁶⁴ Arnold Smith, *Stitches in Time: The Commonwealth in World Politics* (London: Andre Deutsch Limited, 1981), 5; Uganda's Milton Obote had also considered proposing such a body in 1964. See: TNA: PREM 11/4637, Letter from David Renton to Sir Alec Douglas-Home, 9 June, 1964.

⁶⁵ Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 2.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Discussion at the 1964 Prime Ministers' Meeting of what the Secretariat machinery would look like produced a variety of proposals. There was a general consensus that the Secretariat should serve all members equally, be based in London, have a small competent staff, be headed by a Secretary-General, and should be financed by pro-rata cost sharing.⁶⁹ However, the functions of the Secretariat remained unclear. A central suggestion for the role of the proposed Secretariat was that it should be responsible for servicing Commonwealth meetings in addition to preparing agendas and background papers. Newer members argued that the Secretariat should be a coordinating body for development aid and technical assistance. A central Secretariat could match member requests for aid and assistance with available funding from other, more developed members and support the implementation of aid programmes.⁷⁰ Another possible role for the Secretariat was as an information clearing house for factual reports and statistics about external political affairs and world economic developments. The prime ministers agreed that the efforts of the Secretariat should be complemented by the formation of a Commonwealth Foundation to coordinate non-governmental Commonwealth projects (though this would be developed separately from the Secretariat).⁷¹

Officials in the CRO were apprehensive about the influence of the newer members. The CRO response as reported to the Cabinet Committee on Defence and Oversea Policy is worth quoting in full.

⁶⁸ TNA: CAB 148-7, Commonwealth Secretariat: Memorandum by the Commonwealth Relations Office, 30 July, 1964; Vivekanandan, "The Commonwealth Secretariat," 302; Holmes, "The Impact on the Commonwealth of the Emergence of Africa," 295.

⁶⁹ TNA: CAB 148-7, Commonwealth Secretariat: Memorandum by the Commonwealth Relations Office, 30 July, 1964.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ TNA: FCO 141/14126, Outward Telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office on Commonwealth Secretariat to Commonwealth Governments, 18 September, 1964. For the full proposal on the shape of the Commonwealth Foundation, see: TNA: CAB 148/43, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 1965: Commonwealth Foundation, 28 May, 1965.

It is clear that some, if not all, of the African Governments see the Commonwealth not so much as something special, but as one of the various international and regional organisations to which they belong. Their inclination will be to mould the Commonwealth into the same pattern as they are accustomed to in these other organisations. If we have a Commonwealth Secretariat dealing with the agenda for meetings the question will arise whether the inclusion of a particular item is to be decided by majority vote. Moreover some of the African Governments may wish to turn the proposed Secretariat to their own use and to control it by pressure group tactics in order to secure changes in policy to their benefit. Even if the Secretariat starts in a modest way, pressures may progressively develop to use it as an executive organ to carry out the resolutions of the majority and to make recommendations. Such tendencies will have to be resisted firmly from the start, and it must be made clear that what we envisage is, in effect, an information bureau which would analyse, collate and edit information and would have the responsibility of preparing objective reports based on the facts. This would need to be carefully reflected in the terms of reference of the Secretariat on its establishment.⁷²

In the meantime, British officials advocated that the details of the Secretariat's structure and function be deferred to a dedicated working party. A small working party could be influenced by the CRO which was still responsible for convening Commonwealth meetings. In contrast, the proposals for what the Secretariat would do reflected the newer members' vision for a Secretariat similar to other international organisations. Because the structures and values of the Commonwealth were intrinsically linked, the newer members' vision for the organisation was also reflected in the values espoused by the Commonwealth prime ministers in 1964.

In their communique announcing the proposed Secretariat, Commonwealth leaders still echoed the early iterations of Commonwealth values outlined in the Balfour Declaration. Because of its diversity in population, history, and geography, the prime ministers considered the Commonwealth to be a "unique experiment in international co-operation."⁷³ The prime ministers

⁷² TNA: CAB 148-7, Commonwealth Secretariat: Memorandum by the Commonwealth Relations Office, 30 July, 1964.

⁷³ Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 1964 (London, 8-15 July): Final Communique," in *The Commonwealth at the Summit: Communiqués of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings, 1944-1986* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1987), 83-90.

also echoed the 1951 Leaders' Declaration by noting that the Commonwealth also included diverse races, colours, and creeds which provided a cross-section of the world itself and was an unparalleled opportunity for international co-operation.⁷⁴ None of these points were new. The 1964 Communique differed in its increased emphasis on racial politics, and styling the Commonwealth as an international organisation.

The importance of racial issues in world politics had been a theme in Commonwealth communiques through the 1950s, but conspicuously grew once Afro-Caribbean states began joining the Commonwealth in greater numbers. In 1964, the assembled prime ministers recognised combatting racism was central to supporting world peace and economic development. The older Commonwealth goals of peace, security, and progress, were now contingent on combatting racism. This ideational commitment would have been hardly possible in the 1950s, but by the mid-1960s was bolstered by Afro-Caribbean membership. Former colonies' success in advocating for decolonization in the UN General Assembly (resulting in the UN Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples in 1960, and the formation of the Special Committee on Decolonization in 1961) emboldened newer members to pursue similar aims in the Commonwealth.

The 1964 communique outlined a vision of the Commonwealth as an international organisation working in conjunction with other international bodies. The communique emphasised Commonwealth support for the UN in upholding the UN Charter, peacekeeping, negotiating nuclear disarmament, and in economic measures like the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The traditional calls for better Commonwealth machinery and communication between Commonwealth leaders

⁷⁴ Ibid.

were supplemented by the proposal for a Commonwealth Secretariat. The proposed Secretariat would facilitate better consultation in addition to being a visible symbol of Commonwealth cooperation. The Secretariat was to be, like the Crown, a symbol of “the spirit” of the Commonwealth.⁷⁵ Expanding on the potential role of the Secretariat and largely echoing the Monrovia Group’s 1962 Lagos resolutions, the 1964 communique also included statements on a diverse range of Commonwealth initiatives including: development projects, administrative training, educational cooperation, satellite communications, convening a Commonwealth Medical Conference, the work of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, and the establishment of the Commonwealth Foundation.⁷⁶

The input of the newer members built on rhetorical precedents in Commonwealth communiqués and statements, but demonstrated a new vision for the organisation. That vision echoed newer members’ experiences in other international organisations where they had pursued their national goals with some success. Although the Commonwealth was a distinct forum, leaders of the newer members sought to adapt the Commonwealth to be more in-line with other international organisations. The formation of a Secretariat was the first step to applying structural best-practices from other organisations to the Commonwealth. The Secretariat would, in turn, help democratise the operations of the Commonwealth and better enable newer members to derive benefit from Commonwealth membership.⁷⁷

The degree to which the newer members supported the formation of a Secretariat was decisive. In May 1965 the British Government conducted a follow-up survey asking members whether

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ I use the term “democratise” not to suggest that newer members supported democracy in Commonwealth member states or as an organisational goal. However, those members did expect to have a voice in the operation of the Commonwealth which constituted a form of democratisation in the organisation itself.

they agreed in principle to the proposals to establish a Secretariat, and the proposals on the position of Secretary-General. Australia, India, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom supported these principles with significant reservations. In contrast, all other members (including Canada) supported the Secretariat either without reservation, or with concerns that the proposal had not gone far enough. Many of the newer members worried whether the terms and powers of the Secretariat would be sufficient to accomplish its mandate and competitively attract high quality staff.⁷⁸ The survey results were decisively in favour of newer, developing members' vision of the Commonwealth as an international organisation.⁷⁹

The foundational documents of the Secretariat reflect the vision of the expansionist groups (newer members and Canada) for a larger Secretariat, as well as British-led efforts to restrict the scope of the Secretariat.⁸⁰ Just as the 1964 communique focused more heavily on race and coordination with the UN, the 1965 communique further emphasized these themes in addition to hailing the UN as essential to world peace and pledging both support and loyalty to UN efforts.⁸¹ The 1965 communique most heavily reflected newer members' views of what the Commonwealth was and what it should be. The *Agreed Memorandum* that set out the parameters of the Secretariat was, in contrast, more visibly affected by British-led restraining tactics and “played down the idea that the Commonwealth should behave like an international

⁷⁸ TNA: DO 156/25, Confidential Cypher from Commonwealth Relations Office to British High Commissions, No. Y Circular 46, 12 May, 1965; TNA: CAB 148/43, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 1965: Commonwealth Secretariat (Draft Brief by the Commonwealth Relations Office), Annex B: Summary of views expressed by other Commonwealth Governments on Officials' Report, 28 May, 1965.

⁷⁹ TNA: PREM 11/4637, Minute on the Commonwealth Secretariat by Saville Garner, 10 July, 1964; The newer members also raised the issue of the scale of contribution and their ability to pay according to their national economies. See: TNA: CAB 148/43, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 1965: Commonwealth Secretariat (Draft Brief by the Commonwealth Relations Office), Annex B: Summary of views expressed by other Commonwealth Governments on Officials' Report, 28 May, 1965.

⁸⁰ British restrictive tactics were also manifested in the subsequent logistical planning for the Commonwealth. For example see: TNA: T 312/707, Commonwealth Secretariat: British Working Paper, 13 August, 1964.

⁸¹ “Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 1965 (London, 17-25 June): Final Communique,” in *The Commonwealth at the Summit: Communiqués of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings, 1944-1986* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1987), 95-96.

organization.”⁸² For example, the memorandum described the new Secretariat as a body that would serve a membership that represented many races and points of view, and that it should be built to facilitate exchange of opinions in a “friendly, informal, intimate atmosphere.”⁸³

However, the preamble went on to state that the Commonwealth was not a formal organisation, would not encroach on member sovereignty, would not require collective decisions or actions, and that to impose too many formal procedures would be disadvantageous to the goals of the association.⁸⁴

Such rhetorical to and fro maintained the core definition of Commonwealth values, and accommodated the expansion of those values as envisioned by the newer members. To reiterate, those values described a free association of historically and geographically diverse autonomous and equal states with the Crown, and now the Secretariat, as symbols of their cooperation. They shared a commitment to “positive ideals” such as free institutions, free cooperation, peace, security, and progress, which could be facilitated with flexible machinery and frank interpersonal communication between heads of government. By this time, combatting racism, and working with other international associations, as requisite to the pursuit of those goals was a well-entrenched addition to the values set. As David McIntyre states, “virtue was always made a necessity, and the Commonwealth was transformed.”⁸⁵ However, the wording of the *Agreed Memorandum* left room for interpretation based on both expansionist and restrictionist visions of the organisation.

⁸² Chan, “The Commonwealth as an International Organization,” 397-398.

⁸³ *Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting 1965: Agreed Memorandum on the Commonwealth Secretariat* (London: HMSO, 1965), 2.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ McIntyre, “Canada and the Creation of the Commonwealth Secretariat, 1965,” 754.

The leaders of newer member states continued to evoke the values based rhetoric of familial ties, shared history, diversity, and consultative practices that set the Commonwealth apart in the international sphere. In a broad sense, these members considered the Commonwealth to be a useful free-association of sovereign states that would listen to their concerns and benefit themselves and others.⁸⁶ However, those members' interpretation of long-held Commonwealth values reflected a vision of the Commonwealth as an international organisation, rather than a Commonwealth club. In a conversation with Arnold Smith several months after the formation of the Secretariat, the Ugandan High Commissioner noted that his country was "always under pressure at OAU meetings that the Commonwealth is a neo-colonialist association controlled by Britain. Now we have a Secretariat to demonstrate that this is not so."⁸⁷

The creation of the Commonwealth Secretariat in 1965 helped bring the organisation into line with other international organisations and was a crucial development for the newer members. The Secretariat helped democratise the operations of the Commonwealth and better enabled the newer members to derive benefit from the organisation. Dudley Senanayake's insistence on seeing the Secretary-General while ill, or the Secretary-General being invited to new members' state occasions alongside the heads of other organisations like the OAU and the UN, spoke to the perception of the Commonwealth as an international organisation in the minds of newer developing members.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ See, for example: TNA: FCO 49/103, Letter from James Nyamweye to Arnold Smith, 8 December, 1967.

⁸⁷ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 1 "Aug-Sept 1965," Diary Entry, 3 September, 1965; Singaporean officials also reflected this view during their application for Commonwealth membership in 1960. Feeling misled by British procedural advice, deputy Prime Minister Dr. Toh Chin Chye forcefully stated not using the Secretariat would make them look like "white men's stooges" to other nations, and that in their view the Commonwealth was a collective association not an Englishman's club. LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 3, Meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore, 29 October, 1965.

⁸⁸ See, for example: TNA: FCO 68/171, Cypher from Accra to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 15 September, 1969; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 13 "Diary May 1966(1)," Mr. Smith's Engagements, 1966.

Chapter Three: Planning and Implementation

Between the 1964 decision to create the Secretariat and its formal beginnings in 1965, the differing perspectives of Commonwealth members more firmly coalesced into the expansionist and restrictionist camps. The restrictionist members in general and the United Kingdom in particular attempted to limit the scope of the Secretariat idea, but were consistently countered by members supporting an expanded Secretariat. The consolidation of these camps set the landscape for the practical formation of the Secretariat over the subsequent years.

1964 Planning

With the decision to establish a Secretariat in July 1964, the Commonwealth prime ministers resolved to meet again the following summer. In the meantime, the prime ministers asked the British Government to organise a working party to flesh out the details of the Secretariat proposal. The organisation of the working party demonstrated the very problem with British administration of the Commonwealth when the British Government sought to restrict member participation in the working group under the guise of providing secretarial services.

For the reasons outlined in the previous chapter, the British Government desired to keep any feature of a centralised Commonwealth Secretariat small and unassuming. Backed by the Australian Government, the British proposed that the working party be based on regional representation. Under the British model, the working party would have eight members: one for Canada, one for the Caribbean, one each for East and West Africa, two for South East Asia, one of Australia and New Zealand, and one for the United Kingdom itself.¹ A similar working party had been established at the Prime Ministers' Meeting in May 1960 to discuss Commonwealth

¹ TNA: FCO 141/14126, Outward Telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office to Commonwealth Governments, 5 August, 1964.

evolution, and British officials had found it “to be both a convenient and effective arrangement.”²

The British preference for a regionally-based working party fit the mould of older imperial conferences with an intimate club-like atmosphere. A smaller working party would keep Commonwealth consultations manageable, while also conforming to the wider pattern of what Michael Collins has called the “federal moment.”³ This federal thinking informed British attempts (largely under the Conservative party) to create colonial federations as alternatives to nation-states. By avoiding decolonisation through nation-states, British policy-makers sought to deemphasise national sovereignty among British colonial possessions. Promoting federalist models had long been used as tools to foster imperial unity, and maintain a British sphere of influence among former colonies.⁴ However, with the disaggregation of British India upon decolonisation, the recent failure of both the West Indies Federation and the Central African Federation (1962 and 1963 respectively), and the ongoing talks to remove Singapore from the Malay Federation, regional tensions remained high among Commonwealth members. British efforts to promote regional representation were met with suspicion and opposition. As the December deadline to create the working party drew near, British planners were faced with increasing worries about representation from throughout the Commonwealth.

Representational concerns broadly aligned to regional tensions across the Commonwealth. The governments of Ceylon and the Malay Federation refused representation by any other regional government. These members feared Indian domination of the Southeast Asian regional group. In the context of rising tensions in Kashmir, both Indian and Pakistani officials wished to appoint

² TNA: PREM 11/4637, Telegram from Burke Trend to Alec Douglas-Home, with Minute on the Commonwealth Secretariat, 30 July, 1964.

³ Michael Collins, “Decolonisation and the ‘Federal moment’,” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 24 (2013): 22

⁴ *Ibid.*, 24-25; see also Mansergh, *The Commonwealth Experience*, 179.

their own representatives.⁵ The Government of New Zealand resented the likely de facto appointment of an Australian representative and the Australian Government expressed disappointment that as “senior members” Australia and New Zealand were not both entitled to representation.⁶ In Africa, the Government of Malawi protested that the division of Africa into Eastern and Western regions would not accurately represent Central African problems and perspectives, and the British felt increasingly embarrassed over the input of North Rhodesia (soon to be Zambia), to which papers about the Secretariat had accidentally been circulated prior to Zambian independence.⁷ Trinidadian and Jamaican officials were in a row about Caribbean representation and the governments of Nigeria and Ghana both wished to appoint their own nominees.⁸ Kwame Nkrumah summed up these worries in a letter to Sir Douglas-Home, stating that he “...consider[ed] that while this kind of arrangement may have worked satisfactorily in the past with regard to other Commonwealth problems, the question of the Commonwealth Secretariat is so important that each Commonwealth country should be represented at these initial discussions.” He noted that while this would mean a larger working party, it would resolve the question of representation and allow the party to begin its work.⁹

British officials consulted their traditional allies in the Old Commonwealth and were surprised to find that the older members roundly supported individual member representation in the working party. The governments of Australia and New Zealand both wanted separate representation, and

⁵ TNA: T 312/707, Inward Telegram to Commonwealth Relations Office from Colombo (Sir Michael Walker), 31 August 1964; TNA: T 312/707, Inward Telegram to Commonwealth Relations Office from Karachi (Sir Morrice James), 29 August, 1964.

⁶ TNA: T 312/707, Inward Telegram to Commonwealth Relations Office from Canberra (Sir William P. Oliver), 31 August, 1964.

⁷ TNA: T 312/707, Inward Telegram to Commonwealth Relations Office from Lusaka (Sir Evelyn Hone), 30 August, 1964; TNA: T 312/707, Outward Telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office to Lusaka (C.R.O. Representative), 1 September, 1964.

⁸ TNA: T 312/707, Outward Telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office to Commonwealth Governments, 29 August, 1964.

⁹ TNA: T 312/707, Inward Telegram to Commonwealth Relations Office from Accra (Mr. H Smedley), 21 August, 1964.

the Canadian Government, (while guaranteed a representative in any case) agreed with the prevailing sentiment that all members should be represented.¹⁰ The British Government ultimately conceded the issue of regional representation. Apart from the lack of support from traditional Commonwealth allies, the 1964 British elections also influenced this concession. Harold Wilson's Labour government came to power in October 1964 and did not share the Conservative predilection to maintaining regional blocs. The Wilson ministry quickly relented on the issue of regional representation. However, within the British Government, the CRO remained the central organising body and was thus in control of the procedures to establish the committee.¹¹ Officials in the CRO drafted lists of their preferred nominees (pro-British and/or passive candidates) and circulated these to other British governmental departments in order to exert maximum influence on the composition of the working group. One such list noted that while serving as a representative in the Canadian delegation at the 1964 Prime Ministers' Meeting Arnold Smith had shown himself to be too enthusiastic about the prospect of a Secretariat and thus, the CRO "should prefer not, repeat not to have Arnold Smith" represented on the working party.¹²

However, British officials recognised that they must not appear to be overtly shaping the form of the working party. CRO staff had detailed discussions about how to manage the image they presented to the public. In anticipation of the December 1964 establishment of the working party as well as during the working party's subsequent meeting in January of 1965, the British Government wished to avoid the impression that Britain was running the meeting. The News

¹⁰ TNA: T 312/707, Inward Telegram to Commonwealth Relations Office from Ottawa (Sir Henry Lintott), 29 August, 1964; McIntyre, "Britain and the Creation of the Commonwealth Secretariat," 145-146.

¹¹ TNA: T 312/707, Inward Telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office from Lusaka (C.R.O. Representative), 1 September 1964.

¹² TNA: FCO 141/14126, Outward Telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office to Commonwealth Governments, 5 August, 1964. McIntyre, "Britain and the Creation of the Commonwealth Secretariat," 149.

Department of the CRO recommended that the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs avoid any interviews with the press prior to the convening of the working party. Instead they advised short, general press statements and footage of other Commonwealth leaders arriving in London to de-emphasise the United Kingdom's role in the proceedings.¹³ This was a fine line to navigate as the British were keenly aware that no Commonwealth press facilities yet existed and they were more or less free to mould the image of the Commonwealth proceedings presented to the public. Ultimately while the CRO loaned press facilities and staff to the working party for the purposes of the meeting they decided not to meddle further lest they be perceived to be unduly influencing the meeting.¹⁴

The Labour government relented on regional representation and the CRO wished to avoid allegations of meddling in the proceedings. However, British opposition to a strong Secretariat spurred alternative means of limiting the Secretariat, all the while trying to maintain the appearance of impartiality.¹⁵ In addition to trying to influence nominations for Commonwealth representatives, the CRO advocated to distribute responsibilities for the coordination of trade, finance, and technical affairs within the new Commonwealth structure. This approach would keep the Secretariat decentralised and leave many of these areas under British influence.¹⁶ In a similar sense CRO staff sought to ensure that checks were in place "...to contain the efforts of the high-level personage who would have to be found to head the Secretariat."¹⁷

¹³ TNA: DO 194/66, News Department File Minute from J.M. Dutton to Mr. Ellis, 11 December, 1964; TNA: DO 194/66, News Department File Minute from D.R.F. Brower to Mr. Smele, 31 December, 1964.

¹⁴ TNA: DO 194/66, News Department File Minute from N. Pritchard to Mr. Walsh Atkins, 2 April, 1965.

¹⁵ TNA: FCO 141/14126, Commonwealth Secretariat: British Working Paper, 19 August, 1964.

¹⁶ TNA: DO 121/215, The Future of Commonwealth Relations: Outline for Report to Ministerial Committee, 20 November, 1953.

¹⁷ TNA: T 312/707, Letter on the Commonwealth Secretariat from W.W. Morton to Mr. Owen, 7 August, 1964.

January 1965

Concerns about the scope and function of the proposed Secretariat dominated the working party's January meeting. Australian and Ceylonese officials echoed British concerns about the possibility of the Secretariat acquiring executive authority and so infringing on the sovereignty of members, while Pakistani representatives countered that the Secretariat's potential role in international affairs was being too heavily restricted.¹⁸ African members' strong support for a Secretariat involved in aid and development coordination was opposed by British and Australian representatives.¹⁹ The rest of the Old Commonwealth was surprised at Canadian support of African members and opposition to limits on the Secretariat's functions.²⁰

The working party reached consensus on a general programme setting out the Secretariat's mandate. Members agreed that the Secretariat's purpose would be "...to serve them by facilitating and promoting consultation on matters of common concern."²¹ In providing that service the Secretary-General should be non-partisan, abstain from policy recommendations, and consult with members on all decisions.²² Within these guidelines, the Secretariat would prepare and disseminate factual information on world political and economic affairs as well as organise and service Commonwealth meetings.²³ Any other possible functions for the Secretariat were deferred pending a review of existing intra-Commonwealth organisations.²⁴

¹⁸ TNA: CAB 148/43, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 1965: Commonwealth Secretariat: Draft Brief by the Commonwealth Relations Office, 28 May, 1965.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ TNA: DO 156/25, Meeting of Commonwealth Officials January 1965: Report on the Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth Development Projects, 13 January, 1965.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

The meeting took a definite step in the direction of the democratised Commonwealth envisioned by the newer members and appeared to strike a balance between “expansionists” and “restrictionists.”²⁵ Then Cabinet Secretary Burke Trend reflected that if the Secretariat could be contained within the limits set out by the working party it would best serve the British Government to support it. He noted however, that “...in doing so, we shall, of course, be taking the first formal step of an administrative kind along the road which leads away from the concept of the United Kingdom as the mother country...and towards the new concept that all the members of the Commonwealth are entitled to an equal say in matters of Commonwealth concern. This is quite a significant thing to do!”²⁶ In spite of British reluctance, the formation of the Secretariat moved the Commonwealth to a basis informed by the input of the newer members.

January to June 1965 Consultation

At the behest of the working party the British Government circulated the pursuant documents for consideration by member states. In May 1965, the CRO sent a subsequent survey to all Commonwealth governments asking whether they agreed to the proposal to establish a Commonwealth Secretariat, and the requirements for hiring a Secretary-General as laid out by the working party.²⁷ While all member governments agreed in principle, many of them raised issues they felt warranted further discussion. Such comments largely echoed the deliberations to date and most were tabled at the next Prime Ministers’ Meeting in June 1965.

²⁵ TNA: DO 156/25, Confidential Cypher from Commonwealth Relations Office to British High Commissions, no. Y Circular 8, 15 January, 1965.

²⁶ TNA: PREM 11/4637, Telegram from Burke Trend to Alec Douglas-Home, 11 July, 1964.

²⁷ TNA: DO 156/25, Confidential Cypher from Commonwealth Relations Office to British High Commissions, no. Y Circular 46, 12 May, 1964.

Foremost among the concerns brought up in the consultations of spring of 1965 was the selection and appointment of a Secretary-General. Both the hiring process and the role itself were essential to the formation of the Secretariat but remained ill-defined. As in the January meeting, the restrictionist group (Australia, India, New Zealand and the United Kingdom) reiterated concerns about the Secretariat acquiring executive powers. The Australian Government more specifically articulated that they did not wish to see the Commonwealth Secretary-General equated with the United Nations Secretary-General as the latter possessed real executive authority and required a large expert staff. In light of British estimations that many of the newer members saw the Commonwealth as an international organisation like any other, this was a valid concern for the older members who wished to keep the Secretariat small and unobtrusive.²⁸

While most members agreed that the role of Secretary-General needed to be further defined, their concerns about the role itself were quite different. The expansionist group (newer members and Canada) were more concerned with the calibre of person required to take the job of Secretary-General. Tanzanian officials for example, wondered whether hiring based on nomination and curriculum vitae alone were enough to appoint such an important officer and suggested that interviews with Commonwealth High Commissioners be incorporated into the hiring process. The Government of Malta echoed Tanzanian thinking and suggested that for a role as important as Secretary-General the appointment should be delayed until after the establishment of the Secretariat. The delay would allow time to better establish what the role of Secretary-General would entail. Maltese officials further suggested that a group of senior Commonwealth High Commissioners be selected to guide and mentor the Secretary-General for a time after his

²⁸ Ibid.

appointment.²⁹ Pakistani officials noted with concern that the limits to the Secretary-General's functions seemed "unduly severe" and the Canadian Government wondered if too many restrictions might dissuade desirable candidates. Ugandan officials went one step further and questioned whether the terms laid out for hiring a Secretary-General were attractive enough to entice a suitably high-calibre candidate at all.³⁰

Newer members with Canadian support were less concerned about restricting the role of Secretary-General and more concerned with the quality of the candidate. This focus on quality led the expansionists to advocate for more rigorous hiring practices, more attractive terms of employment, and fewer restrictions on the Secretary-General's role. Their vision of the Secretary-General was not a passive liaison officer to keep the Commonwealth running smoothly, but an active, high-calibre representative that would advocate for the members.

While questions about the Secretary-General were clearly split between the expansionists and restrictionists, questions about associated costs were more widely shared. Indian, Canadian and New Zealander officials noted that the financial arrangements for the Secretariat were as yet ill-defined and would require further discussion.³¹ Zambian officials felt that the proposed salary scale of the Secretariat was somewhat high but recognised the need to attract good quality staff at competitive rates.³² The governments of Sierra Leone, Malawi, and the Gambia took issue with the proposed schedule of member contributions. These governments argued that as it stood the pro-rata scale of cost sharing was unrealistic based on the size of their respective economies. They argued that additional contribution brackets be added to the scheme and looked forward to discussing further details at the Prime Ministers' Meeting in June.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

The issue of cost prompted Indian officials to raise another issue for further discussion in their response to the survey. As a means of saving overall Commonwealth costs, the Indian Government proposed that provision be made for the Secretariat to absorb a number of smaller existing Commonwealth organisations such as the Commonwealth Education Liaison Unit (CELU) and the Commonwealth Economic Committee (CEC).³³ Indian concerns were centred on keeping central Commonwealth organisation small, manageable, and inexpensive. Kenyan officials also felt that other Commonwealth organisations might be absorbed into the new Secretariat. The Kenyan Government argued that the consolidation of Commonwealth organisations should be a gradual process initiated after the Secretariat was self-sufficient.³⁴ This would also ensure that proper consultations could be carried out with the staff of existing Commonwealth bodies, which were apprehensive about the prospect of amalgamation (for example see Chapter 11). In contrast to the Indian position, the Kenyan stance on consolidating Commonwealth organisations was to ensure the long-term strength and sustainability of the Secretariat.

Newer members' views on the practical aspects of setting up the Secretariat did not always align, but they shared a commitment to a strong Secretariat working for the members. Ghanaian officials for example, noted that in the discussions to date, little had been mentioned about the location of the Secretariat and any subsequent meetings. For their part, the Ghanaians believed that the Secretariat and future meetings should be in London. As most Commonwealth members maintained High Commissioners in London and the city hosted a wide variety of diplomatic organisations and infrastructure, this would be a practical cost saving measure for Ghanaian diplomacy. Zambian officials however, welcomed the idea that even with a London-based

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

Secretariat, future conferences and meetings would rotate throughout the Commonwealth.³⁵ Meeting rotation would mean less predictable costs but would bring more attention to political issues throughout the Commonwealth as leaders traveled beyond London. In the context of a deteriorating political situation in neighbouring Rhodesia and African members' push to reduce the Anglo-centricity of the Commonwealth, such heightened attention would be of practical benefit to Zambia, and the newer members. Although they differed on where meetings should be held, both Ghanaian and Zambian arguments were based on ensuring that the operation of the Secretariat would be of practical benefit to members.

In response to the CRO survey, member governments raised a broad array of questions concerning the establishment of the Secretariat but agreed that such details could be discussed at the next Prime Ministers' Meeting.³⁶ Members' responses demonstrated the restrictionists' preoccupation with controlling the scope of the new Secretariat. These members evoked the club-like status quo of the Old Commonwealth and the 1950s and cautioned against a large Secretariat with executive functions. In contrast, the expansionist members supported a more robust Secretariat and raised practical concerns about the quality of staff, location, consultation, and financial contributions expected from the membership.

June 1965

The questions raised during the spring 1965 consultations were brought to a second officials meeting from June 14-16, 1965, immediately before the next Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting.³⁷ The June officials' meeting focused on editorial revisions to the draft memorandum

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ TNA: DO 156/25, Confidential Cypher From Commonwealth Relations Office to British High Commissions, No. Y Circular 71, 21 June, 1965.

on the Secretariat that was to be submitted to the prime ministers the following week. However, the meeting also foreshadowed debates on the implementation of the Secretariat by considering two consistent problems in Commonwealth history: cost and colonies.

The problems of cost and colonies were not resolved in 1965. While several smaller, less developed members raised concerns about the scale of their budget contributions, the meeting agreed that the pro-rata system would remain as defined by the January meeting for the time being. Contributions could be reviewed by the prime ministers in the future. The officials meeting also articulated that those members who still had responsibility for dependencies (Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom) would continue to act on behalf of their dependencies. However, the meeting stipulated that those members should circulate any materials relevant to their dependencies and might arrange for colonial representation at certain meetings or sessions on an ad hoc basis.³⁸ Both of these issues were central concerns of the newer, developing members and foreshadowed recurrent themes in the early operations of the Secretariat.

The June 1965 Prime Ministers' Meeting was largely focused on the developing crisis in Rhodesia, but after some discussion approved the formation of the Secretariat.³⁹ The *Agreed Memorandum* which set the basis for establishing the Secretariat changed very little from the principles drafted that January notwithstanding some key clarifications. The limits on the Secretariat's role vis-à-vis partisanship and investigating colonial affairs were more concretely defined.⁴⁰ In the economic sphere, the possibility of the Secretariat coordinating development

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ For an outline of the Rhodesian problem leading up to the 1965 Prime Ministers' Meeting see: Carl P. Watts, "Dilemmas of Intra-Commonwealth Representation during the Rhodesian Problem, 1964-65," *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 45, no. 3 (July 2007): 323-344.

⁴⁰ *Agreed Memorandum on the Commonwealth Secretariat*, 3-4.

projects and absorbing existing Commonwealth economic organisations was acknowledged with the provision that any initiatives in that direction did not obstruct existing bilateral agreements.⁴¹

The immediate tasks of the Secretariat were collecting and disseminating information, taking over the functions of the Commonwealth Liaison Committee performed by the CRO and organising Ministerial Meetings.⁴² A small independent committee was mandated to conduct a review of all intra-Commonwealth organisations prior to the Secretariat taking on any further functions.⁴³ The pro rata scale of contributions was also formalised with a minimum 1.5 and maximum 30 percent contribution of the Secretariat's budget, although the prime ministers recognised that this scale would require periodic adjustment.⁴⁴

The June meeting also addressed the question of nominating a Secretary-General. Members could submit nominees which would need to be accepted by the wider group (though how this would be agreed upon had not been defined), as well as released from their current postings should they be elected. The terms of the position itself had remained the same since January with a tacit assumption that the first Secretary-General would be from the Old Commonwealth. The British delegation recognised that a British nominee would be inappropriate as first Secretary-General but the remainder of the Old Commonwealth put forward nominees. The governments of Canada and New Zealand nominated their own diplomats, Arnold Smith and Alistair McIntosh respectively. While two Australians working for the UN in Africa were nominated by African states, Robert Menzies disapproved and in an apparent bid to counter African preferences instead

⁴¹ Ibid, 4-6.

⁴² Ibid, 6-7.

⁴³ Ibid, 6.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 1; For an overview of the rates of contribution and the question of adjustments, see: TNA: DO 161/398, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, September, 1966, Rates of Contribution to the Budget of the Commonwealth Secretariat: Memorandum by the Secretary-General, 31 August, 1966.

nominated Ceylon's Director-General of External Affairs, Gonville Sextus Peiris.⁴⁵ S.C.A Forster of Sierra Leone and Pakistan's Ghulam Ahmed were also nominated by their respective countries.⁴⁶ British staff in the CRO continued to oppose Smith's nomination as "...apart from anything else he would be far too much of an activist..."⁴⁷ However, the position of the Secretary-General was of especial interest to developing countries and Smith enjoyed a good deal of popularity among the African members, particularly after their own nominees were not supported by Australia.⁴⁸

At the eleventh hour Ahmed withdrew and the day before the vote both Peiris and McIntosh's candidacies were withdrawn by their home governments.⁴⁹ The British delegation nonetheless heavily debated Smith's candidacy and searched for other last minute alternatives, even going so far as to suggest that a retired British colonial governor serve as interim Secretary-General until a better selection procedure could be established.⁵⁰ Smith's internationalist views and activist approach to the Commonwealth ran counter to the restrictionists' desire for a passive, pro-British Secretary-General. These same characteristics made Smith a popular choice with the newer members. The Commonwealth did not typically operate on the basis of voting, but discussion on appointing a Secretary-General dragged out to the point that a vote was called for out of

⁴⁵ Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 16.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ TNA: T 312/707, Inward Telegram to Commonwealth Relations Office from Ottawa (From Lintott to Garner), 19 August, 1964; TNA: T 312/707, Outward Telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office to Ottawa (From Garner to Lintott), 20 August, 1964.

⁴⁸ African interest in the position of Secretary-General and Smith's popularity among newer members remained strong through his first term. See: TNA: FCO 68/171, Telegram from Mr. Watt to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 6 November, 1969; Ashton, "British Government Perspectives," 83-84.

⁴⁹ TNA: DO 156/25, Confidential Cypher from Commonwealth Relations Office to British High Commissions, No. Y Circular 71, 21 June, 1965; Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 17.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

exasperation. Of the remaining candidates, Smith received 18 of 20 member votes, which was then made unanimous on June 24, 1965. Smith was offered and accepted the post the same day.⁵¹

1965 Beginnings

Smith threw himself into the role of Secretary-General with considerable energy and by all accounts, took his role as a servant of all Commonwealth members very seriously.⁵² On August 10, prior to embarking for Britain, Smith lunched with eight heads of Commonwealth missions to the United Nations in New York to introduce himself and take soundings of their positions and concerns vis-à-vis their governments' engagement with the UN.⁵³

Arriving in Southampton on August 17 at 08:00, Smith was met by Don Abbey, the acting Administration Officer of the Secretariat who had been seconded from the CRO until such time as the Secretariat could hire its own staff. With the aid of a protocol officer to clear his affairs through customs, Smith discussed the setting up of the Secretariat with Abbey on the train to London and began work shortly after his arrival in the city, although the Secretariat's formal life was not slated to begin until the first week of September.⁵⁴ The next day Smith began addressing Singapore's application for Commonwealth membership (see Chapter Six).⁵⁵ He also started preliminary correspondence for the recruitment of the deputy secretary general of administration

⁵¹ TNA: DO 156/25, Telegram from Foreign Office and Commonwealth Relations Office to Missions at Commonwealth Capitals, 23 June, 1965; Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 17.

⁵² Smith and his personal assistant arrived at Marlborough House to begin work on August 30 (The start of the first week Marlborough was to be available for the Secretariat) before realising that it was a Bank Holiday and the building was closed. They had to return the next day to begin work as scheduled on September first. "Witness Seminar, The Heartbeat of a Modern Commonwealth? The Commonwealth Secretariat 1965-2013 – Session 1- The Office of the Secretary General." Commonwealth Oral History Project June 24, 2013. Last updated May 10, 2014. <https://commonwealthoralhistories.org/2014/session-1-the-office-of-the-secretary-general/>

⁵³ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 1, Luncheon, 10 August 1965.

⁵⁴ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 1, Letter from Hussain Mohamed Osman to Arnold Smith (Acting High Commissioner for Malaysia), 13 August, 1965.

⁵⁵ The letter from the Malaysian High Commissioner regarding Singapore's application for membership was the first item in Smith's personal files as Secretary-General.

and international relations and met with the High Commissioner for Ceylon to discuss nominations for the economic deputy Secretary-General. The same day he met with Sir Neil Pritchard, who was acting as head of the CRO to discuss preliminary questions regarding the setting up of the Secretariat, including the issue of membership consultation.⁵⁶

On August 19, in addition to having further discussions about the appointment of deputy secretaries, Smith formally introduced himself to the Commonwealth membership.⁵⁷ In an introductory letter to each of the Commonwealth High Commissioners he concluded: “I rejoice at the opportunity which this appointment gives me to try to serve equally the interest of all member Governments of the Commonwealth. In taking up my duties in London I particularly look forward to developing with Your Excellency the closest and most friendly relations, both personal and official.”⁵⁸

Smith built his Commonwealth connections quickly, but he was also soon in conflict with various British Government departments as he attempted to organise the logistics of the Secretariat. The Secretary-General’s role, as per the *Agreed Memorandum*, was in part based on maintaining “the unwritten conventions which have always determined those processes” of Commonwealth cooperation.⁵⁹ The vagueness of the *Agreed Memorandum* was a product of the restrictionist group, and the British Government in particular.⁶⁰ This left a degree of interpretive leeway in members’ approach to the Secretariat, which characterised Secretariat engagement with the British Government during the practical implementation of the Secretariat.

⁵⁶ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 1, Diary Entry, 19 August, 1965.

⁵⁷ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 1, Diary Entry, 17, 18, 19 August, 1965.

⁵⁸ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 1, Commonwealth Circular No. 3, 19 August, 1965.

⁵⁹ *Agreed Memorandum on the Commonwealth Secretariat*, 1.

⁶⁰ Armstrong, “From International Community to International Organisation?” 32.

Chapter Four: Arnold Smith

Few people made a more concerted effort to navigate differing visions of the Commonwealth than Arnold Smith, the first Commonwealth Secretary-General. Smith realised that the Commonwealth was unlikely to make a mark on the international scene without active leadership from the Secretariat.¹ Himself a committed internationalist, Smith worked to build a vision of the organisation that could be supported by all members.

Balancing the various perspectives of the Commonwealth was increasingly difficult as membership ballooned in the 1960s. Even with comparably fewer members in 1964, Smith recalled that as a member of the Canadian delegation at the 1964 Prime Ministers' Meeting, he had not realised the full scope of the organisation.² However, Smith already had a broad resume that gave him the diplomatic skill to navigate the complexities of the Commonwealth. Smith had worked in various capacities for the British and Canadian Governments in Estonia, Egypt, and the USSR. He had held positions at a number of universities and various international bodies such the Atomic Energy Council and the United Nations. He had also served as an International Truce Commissioner in Cambodia and Indochina.³

Smith understood that his post was an ambiguous one and was “hard to define for the excellent reason that the Commonwealth itself [wa]s hard, or indeed impossible to define.”⁴ Smith noted that the lack of a concrete definition of the Commonwealth was good for its adaptability.

However, it was clear that to effectively lead the organisation he needed to create a more

¹ Murphy, *The Empire's New Clothes*, 32.

² Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 6.

³ TNA: DO 194/66, Communique: Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting, Commonwealth Secretariat, Appointment of Secretary-General, 23 June, 1965; TNA: FCO 68/171, H.E. Mr. Arnold Smith, Commonwealth Secretary-General Call on the Secretary of State, 28 October, 1968, at 5.00 p.m, Annex A: Arnold Smith.

⁴ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 8, The Political Use of the Commonwealth: Verbatim Transcript of a lunch-time lecture given at the Royal Commonwealth Society on Thursday, 20th January, 1966.

cohesive vision for the organisation.⁵ During his first months as Secretary-General Smith developed a concise summary of the Commonwealth which loosely defined the organisation, elucidated its functions and utility, and outlined its potential role in international politics. Smith honed his definition of the Commonwealth through hundreds of speeches and soon referred to it as “the usual gospel.”⁶

Smith’s vision of the modern Commonwealth was a unique association made up of sovereign nations from every race and continent, every size, and every level of economic development, in contrast to “once upon a time” when the Commonwealth was “essentially a rich man’s, white man’s club.”⁷ In the face of major world problems such as development, race relations, bloc politics, neo-isolationism, and narrowing national horizons, Smith styled the Commonwealth as one of many instruments that could promote international understanding and cooperation. By promoting consultation between members which might not otherwise meet in person, the uniqueness of the Commonwealth was more relevant and more useful than it ever had been.⁸ The unique composition and consultative practices (as opposed to voting) of the Commonwealth contrasted to the impersonal structure of the UN and region or issue specific organisations like the OAU, Organization of American States (OAS), NATO, or SEATO. Smith echoed the older, values-based definitions of the Commonwealth as well as the new emphasis on diversity and international purpose. He denied that the organisation was an imperial afterthought and told a

⁵ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume. 1, File 16, Address to Royal Geographical Society, London, on 13 June, 1966.

⁶ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 14 “Diary May 1966 (2),” Diary Item about May 29th, 1966, 25 August, 1966; Vivekanandan, “The Commonwealth Secretariat,” 330.

⁷ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 1, BBC Topical Tapes, Profile: Arnold Smith interviewed by Vibart Wills, 1965.

⁸ Ibid.

progressive story of organisational evolution. The core of Smith's "gospel" was a clear, accessible vision of the organisation that could be delivered to all manner of audiences.⁹

Smith's vision of the Commonwealth ironically both affirmed and belied Lord Balfour's claim that the organisation depended not on negation but on positive ideals.¹⁰ Smith echoed the "positive ideals" of Commonwealth diversity, shared history, free cooperation, and uniqueness in the international sphere. Yet he also worked hard to negate "false images" of the Commonwealth including: the insinuation it was a kith-and-kin concept that lost meaning beyond the old Anglo-Saxon club; that the organisation was an imperial relic or colonial hangover; that it was a placebo to ease the loss of empire in Britain; or that it was a multi-racial, but toothless debating society that was all talk and no action.¹¹ He instead argued that the organisation had grown organically as the result of pragmatic and often improbable decisions. While the Commonwealth was a product of the history of the British Empire, it was not a logical or inevitable outcome and to see it that way was to fundamentally misunderstand it. Smith went so far as to say that it was "only the blind who see in the Commonwealth the Emperor's new clothes." Treating the Commonwealth as a relic of the past, Smith argued, would be a self-fulfilling prophecy that could reduce the organisation to a giant farce.¹²

⁹ Smith spoke, for example, to Commonwealth ministers, groups such as the Commonwealth Press Union, Scientific Committee, and Parliamentary Association, numerous university convocations, private associations, and public events and consistently delivered the same narrative in hundreds of other addresses. For example, see contents of Commonwealth Secretariat Library and Archives [CSLA]: Arnold Smith Records, International Affairs Section, File 1997/30 (1) "Speeches Made By the Secretary General & Related Correspondence (Part 1) 20 Jan 1966 – 2 Nov 1970"; CSLA: 1997/30 (2) "Speeches Made By the Secretary General & Related Correspondence (Part 2) 20 Jan 1966 – 2 Nov 1970"; CSLA: 1997/31 "Addresses by the Secretary-General 1 Apr 1966 – 16 Oct 1969."

¹⁰ *Imperial Conference 1926: Summary of Proceedings*, 12.

¹¹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 3, Notes for Speech by the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr. Arnold Smith, to the Zambia Association for National Affairs at Lusaka on November 16, 1965; CSLA: 1997/30 (1), Notes for Remarks by the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr. Arnold Smith, at Annual Dinner of Commonwealth Correspondent's Association, on 7 December, 1967.

¹² LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 11, The Commonwealth in World Politics, 1 April 1966; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 13, BBC Interview, African Forum: Mr. Arnold Smith, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, May 1966.

Rather than an imperial afterthought, Smith argued that the Commonwealth concept was a means by which former colonies could retain the benefits of association with Britain without the subordination and disadvantages of imperial rule. This idea was the result of self-interested calculation that succeeded in the Old Commonwealth and set the stage for the modern organisation.¹³ Borrowing from a pragmatic Nehruvian interpretation of the Commonwealth, Smith argued that members chose to remain by evaluating “what they will get out of it, in the way of aid opportunities, trade opportunities, and diplomatic knowledge and friendships; and of what they can put into it, using it as one of the channels whereby they can influence the thinking of others, and thus play a part in shaping international outlooks that will determine the future of our world.”¹⁴ Rather than backward looking nostalgia or sentimentality, the Commonwealth had always been the product of hard-headed, forward-looking calculation, and that by remaining in the Commonwealth newer members had overcome “the psychological heritage of former imperial domination.”¹⁵

The progressive arc of Smith’s vision for the organisation acknowledged but did not overstate the Commonwealth’s imperial origins, praised the pragmatism of later members, and emphasised the potential of the contemporary organisation. He saw a “special relevance” in the Commonwealth that more than its previous iterations could “make a real contribution to the progress of humanity.”¹⁶ He often reiterated that the Commonwealth was not a product of

¹³ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 11, The Commonwealth in World Politics, 1 April 1966.

¹⁴ CSLA: 1997/30 (1), Notes for Remarks by the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr. Arnold Smith, at Annual Dinner of Commonwealth Correspondent’s Association, on 7 December, 1967; CSLA: 1997/30 (1), Notes for Address by H.E. Mr. Arnold Smith, Commonwealth Secretary-General to Canadian Men’s Club, Vancouver, 27 May, 1969; Nehru, “Commonwealth is Common Weal,” 527.

¹⁵ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 1, Remarks by Mr. Arnold Smith, Commonwealth Secretary-General, at the Opening of an Exhibition of Commonwealth Handicrafts and Textiles at the Design Centre, 17 September 1965; CSLA: 1997/30 (1), Notes for Remarks by the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr. Arnold Smith, at Annual Dinner of Commonwealth Correspondent’s Association, on 7 December, 1967.

¹⁶ TNA: FCO 68/171, Record of a Meeting Between the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Commonwealth Secretary-General at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 28 October, 1968, at 4.15 P.M.;

imperial nostalgia and decline but of principled, forward-looking statesmen.¹⁷ “At this level” Smith argued, “[an] idealistic vision for humanity and long-term considerations of national interest can coincide.”¹⁸

The linchpin of Smith’s vision for the organisation was the concept of the Commonwealth as an “instrument.” The concept of an instrument reflected organisational utility and members’ agency in how that instrument was used. Smith suggested that the Commonwealth was one of many instruments in members’ diplomatic toolkits. He actively compared the Commonwealth to other international bodies such as the UN and OAU and argued that the Commonwealth should complement, not compete with member involvement in other international groups.¹⁹ The instrument concept was a catch-all term that incorporated differing visions of the Commonwealth.²⁰ As an instrument the Commonwealth could be idealistic yet practical, unique yet only one form of international machinery. It could draw on shared traditions without succumbing to neocolonialism.²¹ The organisation could be progressive without subscribing to Marxist, Whig, or Non-Aligned visions of progress. Smith variously described the Commonwealth as an instrument to help increase understanding and practical cooperation on an international scale, an instrument for world politics, an instrument for applied social geography,

LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 13, BBC Interview: African Forum, Mr. Arnold Smith, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, May 1966; CSLA: 1997/30 (1), The Commonwealth’s Future in Practical Co-Operation: Extracts from an address to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association by the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr. Arnold Smith delivered on 16 October 1969 at Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

¹⁷ CSLA: 1997/30 (1), The Commonwealth’s Future in Practical Co-Operation: Extracts from an address to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association by the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr. Arnold Smith delivered on 16 October 1969 at Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

¹⁸ CSLA: 1997/30 (1), Notes for Remarks by the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr. Arnold Smith, at Annual Dinner of Commonwealth Correspondent’s Association, on 7 December, 1967.

¹⁹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 2, File 10 “Diary June 1967,” Notes for address by Mr. Arnold Smith, Commonwealth Secretary-General, to the Annual Conference of the Commonwealth Press Union, Marlborough House, London, 13 June, 1967.

²⁰ Harold Macmillan also considered the Commonwealth to be an instrument for strengthening the principles of the free world, in contrast to non-aligned members, or all members’ self-interest. See: James Barber, “The Impact of the Rhodesian Crisis on the Commonwealth,” *Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 7, no 2 (1969), 84.

²¹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 3, Notes for Speech by the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr. Arnold Smith, to the Zambia Association for National Affairs at Lusaka on November 16, 1965.

an instrument for development and aid, an instrument for fighting neo-isolationism, an instrument to bridge regional and trans-regional politics, and an instrument for political dialogue across the lines of race and region and across economic levels.²² While these were all vaguely progressive uses for that instrument, they did not consign the Commonwealth to a particular political camp. Above all Smith saw the Commonwealth as “an instrument for all its members to help shape the future” that would be what they made it to be.²³

In addition to better defining the Commonwealth, Smith also worked to defend his vision of the organisation. In the spring of 1966 for instance, a racially-charged editorial in the *Toronto Star* falsely accused Smith and the Secretariat of spreading extremist ideas and training Black Africans to commit terrorist acts in Rhodesia. Smith and his lawyers threatened legal action for libel. The paper ultimately withdrew the text and issued a formal apology.²⁴ Smith carefully monitored and defended the Commonwealth image he sought to embody. His personal files, much more than the records of the Secretariat itself, are filled with press reports and extensive

²² LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 1, BBC Topical Tapes, Profile: Arnold Smith interviewed by Vibart Wills, 1965; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 16, Address to Royal Geographical Society, London, on 13 June, 1966; CSLA: 1997-30 (1), Notes for Remarks by the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr. Arnold Smith, at Annual Dinner of Commonwealth Correspondent’s Association, on 7 December, 1967; CSLA: 1997-30 (1), Notes for Address by H.E. Mr. Arnold Smith, Commonwealth Secretary-General to Canadian Men’s Club, Vancouver, 27 May, 1969; CSLA: 1997/30 (1), The Commonwealth’s Future in Practical Co-Operation: Extracts from an address to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association by the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr. Arnold Smith delivered on 16 October 1969 at Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

²³ CSLA: 1997/30 (1), The Commonwealth’s Future in Practical Co-Operation: Extracts from an address to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association by the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr. Arnold Smith delivered on 16 October 1969 at Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago; CSLA: 1997/30 (1), Notes for Remarks by the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr. Arnold Smith, at Annual Dinner of Commonwealth Correspondent’s Association, on 7 December, 1967; CSLA: 1997/30 (2), Notes for address by Mr. Arnold Smith, Commonwealth Secretary-General, to the Annual Conference of the Commonwealth Press Union, Marlborough House, London, 13 June, 1967; See also: Holmes, “The Impact on the Commonwealth of the Emergence of Africa,” 301-302; Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, 383.

²⁴ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 12 “Diary April 1966 (2),” Letter from Messrs. Clark, Macdonald, Connolly, Affleck, Brocklesby, Gorman & McLaughlin to C.D. 21 April, 1966; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 12, Letter from Arnold Smith to the Editor, *Toronto Star*, 29 April, 1966; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 12, Text of Apology to be published in *Toronto Star*, April 1966.

records of world leaders' impressions and statements about the Commonwealth. As he noted in his diary in 1966 the "usual gospel" about the Commonwealth was one he "believe[d] in".²⁵

Smith's belief in the Commonwealth and advocacy for its use as an international instrument supported his popularity with the newer, Afro-Caribbean members and eventually earned the begrudging respect of British officials. In 1968 Smith's British counterparts in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office reflected that Smith remained "a passionate believer in the multi-racial Commonwealth." He saw the Secretariat as "having a powerful co-ordinating role in the economic, educational, medical and social fields within the Commonwealth, and has occasionally trodden heavily on toes both in this country and other Commonwealth countries in pursuing this role. There is no doubt, however, that his actions spring from a firm conviction of the value of the Commonwealth."²⁶ Smith was a believing internationalist but balanced his idealism with realism.²⁷ His vision for the organization balanced future purpose and past history, as well as varying member perspectives into a coherent, accessible package. Smith placed that vision into the context of international issues that challenged the membership to make the best use of the Commonwealth as an instrument. As Secretary-General, Smith promoted and tried to embody a vision of the Commonwealth that could be supported by all members.

Smith's efforts were generally successful. The older restrictionist members were receptive to the traditional values-based language of the Balfour Declaration though they resented Smith's activism in building the Secretariat along the lines of an international organisation. More important to the future of the Commonwealth, Smith's ideas resonated with the newer

²⁵ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 14, Diary Item about May 29th, 1966, 25 August, 1966.

²⁶ TNA: FCO 68/171, H.E. Mr. Arnold Smith, Commonwealth Secretary-General Call on the Secretary of State, 28 October, 1968, at 5.00 p.m.

²⁷ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 1, BBC Topical Tapes, Profile: Arnold Smith interviewed by Vibart Wills, 1965.

expansionist members. Smith's concept of the Commonwealth as one international instrument among many was a clear step away from the organisation's beginnings as an imperial club and did not put Commonwealth membership at odds with other international organisations. British representatives struggled with the idea that the Commonwealth could be a complementary organisation. Much to Smith's frustration, British officials frequently juxtaposed Commonwealth engagement with "competing ties" to other international efforts like the European Economic Community (EEC), the OAU, and American defence initiatives.²⁸ Newer members, particularly in Africa, were wary of perceived neocolonialism and sought benefits from multiple international organisations. Commonwealth membership was important to these members but they would not tolerate the old status-quo of a racially hierarchical, Anglo-centric Commonwealth.²⁹ If the organisation continued to be administered by Britain and if Commonwealth membership precluded participation in other international bodies, there would be little to distinguish Commonwealth membership from colonial control. Smith's efforts to build a robust, independent Secretariat and his insistence on the utility of the Commonwealth as a complementary international instrument reassured newer members and encouraged their ongoing engagement with the Commonwealth through the 1960s.

²⁸ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 6 "Diary Oct 1968," Diary, Monday 28 October, 1968.

²⁹ Watts, *Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence*, 109.

Part One Conclusion

This section established the background for the more detailed analysis in part two of *how* the Commonwealth transitioned into an international organisation. The mutually constituted values and structures of the Commonwealth outlined in Chapter One demonstrate that the London Declaration modified, but did not significantly alter the operation of the organisation in the 1950s. African decolonisation and subsequent Commonwealth membership precipitated real change. Chapter Two analysed the origin of the Secretariat idea and showed how the vision and activism of African members was decisive in the formation of the Secretariat. These members saw the Commonwealth as an international organisation and pursued structural changes to match their vision. How various members received the Secretariat proposal created two main camps (expansionists and restrictionists) among the membership. Chapter Three detailed how the process of planning the Secretariat solidified the aforementioned camps among the members. The planning process also brought problems with British management of Commonwealth administration to the fore, and foreshadowed the conflict between the new Secretariat and the British Government. Chapter Four showed how Secretary-General Arnold Smith developed his own vision of the Commonwealth that encompassed both expansionist and restrictionist visions of the organisation. This chapter demonstrated that Smith and the Secretariat had agency in the debates over the direction of the organisation. Smith's own vision of the Commonwealth and the Secretariat's role both as a mediator between members and an oppositional force to the British Government shaped the transition period of the late 1960s. Taken together, these chapters show the ideational and argumentative basis for the transformation of the Commonwealth to its modern iteration as an IO. This section also identified the key actors and tensions that

characterised that transitions (restrictionists versus expansionists, and the Secretariat versus the British Government).

Part Two

The *Agreed Memorandum* that laid out the scope and functions of the Secretariat was purposefully vague. The memorandum was a rhetorical balancing act between two distinct visions of what the Commonwealth was and how it should function. The restrictionist group preferred the Commonwealth status quo of the 1950s and sought to keep the Secretariat small and weak. The expansionist group saw the Commonwealth as an international organisation and it pushed for a strong Secretariat with a broad mandate. The struggle between the expansionists and the restrictionists for what the Commonwealth should be shaped the debates surrounding the Secretariat's mandate. The implementation of that mandate was in turn negotiated between the Secretariat and the British Government. This section explores how these struggles were manifested in debates about Secretariat logistics, the Secretariat's role processing Commonwealth membership applications, and the Secretariat's role organising high-level meetings from 1965 to 1969. Taken together these debates shaped the Commonwealth as it became an international organisation.

Chapter Five: Practical Considerations: Logistics

Establishing the Secretariat in 1965 was a considerable challenge for Arnold Smith and his staff. This challenge was characterised by struggles between the Secretariat and various British departments for the necessary assistance and authority to create a functional Secretariat.¹ The historically ad hoc nature of British foreign, Commonwealth, and imperial policy left British departments with different stakes in administering the Commonwealth. The practical logistics of housing, hiring, finance, immunities and privileges, and protocol, were all contested to varying degrees by the restrictionist British Government. Opposition to the Secretariat was greatest when the departments involved had the most traditional authority to lose. Such opposition was chiefly based in the CRO which had provided secretarial services to the Commonwealth since its formation in 1947.

Housing

In the most practical sense Arnold Smith had to stake out the Secretariat's place in London. Queen Elizabeth II had made Marlborough House available as a Commonwealth Centre in 1959, and the CRO had henceforth managed the site. In the lead-up to the Secretariat's formation, the Commonwealth working party recommended that the Secretariat take up offices in Marlborough House in Westminster. The working party stipulated that the Secretariat should have priority over the other Commonwealth organisations already occupying the site.² In 1965 Marlborough House contained the offices of the Commonwealth Economic Committee (CEC) and the Commonwealth Education Liaison Unit (CELU). Per the *Agreed Memorandum*, both the CEC

¹ "Witness Seminar, The Heartbeat of a Modern Commonwealth? The Commonwealth Secretariat 1965-2013 – Session 1- The Office of the Secretary General."

² TNA: DO 156/25, Meeting of Commonwealth Officials January 1965: Report on the Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth Development Projects, 13 January, 1965.

and CELU were under review for potential amalgamation into the Secretariat. CEC staff were particularly concerned for the future of their jobs pending the review (see Chapter 11) and expressed their desire to remain in their existing offices.³ The CRO used its existing control of the building and leveraged CEC concerns in a bid to limit the growth of the Secretariat.

As Secretariat staff began to work in Marlborough House they were assigned offices in the house's upper levels and wings. This was initially a practical measure while the central part of the house was renovated through mid-1965.⁴ However, CRO officials attempted to permanently keep Secretariat offices in more remote corners of the building rather than giving the Secretariat priority over existing CEC offices. Smith made the case that while certain sections of the Secretariat could be housed in remote offices, the senior officers and their personal staff should be housed on the main floor of the central building. The placement of the senior offices was both a matter of form and a practical measure to ensure senior staff would be close to the main halls and meeting rooms. Smith felt that it was important to the members of the Commonwealth that the Secretariat be taken seriously and while he had to fight for central office space, the CRO ultimately relented.⁵

Staff

Pressure for the CRO to cooperate with the housing needs of the Secretariat was increased as the number and diversity of Secretariat staff grew. Arnold Smith's vision for the organisation involved wide recruitment from throughout the Commonwealth. A diversely staffed Secretariat

³ TNA: DO 161/473, Letter from Saville Garner to Mr. Chadwick, 11 February, 1965.

⁴ For an overview of works done to prepare Marlborough House for Commonwealth use, see: TNA: Ministry of Works [WORK] 59/72.

⁵ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 3, Record of Conversation between Lord Beswick (CRO) and Arnold Smith, 30 November, 1965; "Witness Seminar, The Heartbeat of a Modern Commonwealth? The Commonwealth Secretariat 1965-2013 – Session 1- The Office of the Secretary General."

would increase members' stake in the organisation and reflect the Commonwealth's claim to a unique degree of diversity.

Hiring permanent staff was one of the most pressing imperatives in the early days of the Secretariat. The Secretariat began in September 1965 with only the Secretary-General, his personal assistant, and two staffers on loan from the British Diplomatic service. The Secretary-General had the authority to appoint junior staff at his own discretion and could choose senior staff from panels of names submitted by member governments.⁶ In the meantime, Smith was starting from scratch.

Smith enjoyed some support from the British Government in terms of junior staff. David Muirhead, Head of Her Majesty's Diplomatic Service Personnel Department and George Wigg, the British Accountant General, recognised that Smith "...may well become very much of a 'one man band'" without assistance. At Smith's request both the diplomatic service and the Accountant General's Office approved extended secondments for junior staff. The Accountant General's Office also handled the accounting and paid out Secretariat salaries until sufficient staff could be trained for the Secretariat to manage its own internal affairs.⁷ Seconded staff and services were provided at no cost to the Secretariat with salaries being paid by their home departments and the additional workload of the Secretariat's accounting being deemed too small to burden Whitehall's own accountants.⁸ Smith also had assistance from two diplomats on loan from the Canadian Government whom he found "indispensable" during the first few months of his appointment.⁹ Smith was grateful for this early help and in his personal notes questioned how

⁶ *Agreed Memorandum on the Commonwealth Secretariat*, 8.

⁷ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 1, Memorandum for File, 24 September, 1965; TNA: DO 156/25, File Note on Commonwealth Secretariat, 15 September, 1965.

⁸ TNA: DO 156/25, Letter from E.S. Jones to Mr. Ford, 23 September, 1965.

⁹ Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 20.

he would have got along without the help of these staff. In particular Smith appreciated loaned staffers' knowledge of organisational and governmental protocols in London, and their general knowledge of Commonwealth affairs. Smith drew on their expertise in tandem with the personal connections he was forging throughout the Commonwealth.¹⁰

In contrast to the genuine assistance of the Accountant General's Office, the CRO was accommodating as a means of continuing their influence over the operations of the Commonwealth. Not only did the CRO loan staff and facilities to the nascent Secretariat but it also pushed for one of its own staff to be hired as Secretariat political officer. Smith and David Muirhead (head of personnel for the British Diplomatic Service) agreed that hiring a CRO officer for the post would appease the CRO. However, they noted that CRO politicking must only be tolerated for so long as the department was slated to be amalgamated with the Foreign Office.¹¹ In the meantime the bulk of British opposition to the Secretariat was concentrated in the CRO.¹²

Despite an early reliance on the British Government, Smith did his best to hire staff from throughout the Commonwealth and to pursue alternative channels for filling the ranks of the Secretariat.¹³ "There could be no question of a CRO in disguise."¹⁴ During his early rounds of introductory visits to the various Commonwealth High Commissioners in London, Smith not only discussed their vision for the future of the organisation but also asked for advice on potential staff members.¹⁵ While the *Agreed Memorandum* called for junior staff such as typists, clerks, and drivers to be recruited locally in London as a cost saving measure, Smith also wrote to the High Commissioners asking for their recommendations for these junior positions and

¹⁰ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 1, Diary Entry, 23 August, 1965.

¹¹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 1, Memorandum for File, 24 September, 1965.

¹² LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 3, Record of Conversation on 2nd November at 5:30 p.m.

¹³ *Agreed Memorandum on the Commonwealth Secretariat*, 8.

¹⁴ Doxey, *The Commonwealth Secretariat*, 29.

¹⁵ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 1, Diary Entry, 1, 2, 3 September, 1965.

whether their offices or consulates had junior staff who might be interested in working for the Secretariat. Smith attempted to assert the Secretariat's independence from the British Government by incorporating the broadest possible spectrum of Commonwealth personnel within the financial imperative to locally hire junior staff.¹⁶ By seeking the assistance of all Commonwealth members to find diverse junior staff already in London, the Secretariat would be less susceptible to British attempts to fill the Secretariat ranks with either their own staff, or staff from other restrictionist governments (like Australia or New Zealand).

The first week of September 1965 Smith addressed the important question of hiring two deputy Secretaries-General. This was both to distribute the workload among himself and his small staff, and to ensure continuity of leadership during his planned trips through the Commonwealth to become better acquainted with the membership. The two deputies would look after economic affairs, and international affairs and administration respectively. The former was hired for a three-year term and the latter for a five-year term staggered with the Secretary-General's own five-years. Smith himself proposed staggered terms to ensure a degree of continuity among the Secretariat's senior staff as the composition of the Secretariat changed over time.¹⁷ In the interim Smith also suggested that the deputies be recruited from Africa and Asia so that the senior-most positions of the Secretariat would represent the broadest possible range of Commonwealth members.¹⁸

Ghanaian Amishadai Larson (Yaw) Adu was nominated as political and administrative deputy in August. While Adu was the only nominee for this position there was widespread approval of his appointment among Commonwealth High Commissioners. Adu had served in the Gold Coast

¹⁶ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 1, Commonwealth Circular No. 4, 2 September, 1965.

¹⁷ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 1, Commonwealth Circular No. 8, 17 September, 1965.

¹⁸ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 1, Commonwealth Circular No. 5, 6 September, 1965.

Colonial Administrative Service and had a distinguished record in the Ghanaian Civil Service after independence. His experience as Secretary-General of the East African Common Services Organization and as a Regional Representative of the UN Technical Assistance Board gave him a wealth of experience and a strong reputation among both expansionist and restrictionist members.¹⁹ The candidates for the economic deputy were T.E. Gooneratne of Ceylon and Sen Gupta from India. The Commonwealth High Commissioners met on October 7, 1965 to finalise offers of appointment for both positions. During the discussions, India withdrew the candidacy of Sen Gupta for economic deputy in order to achieve unanimity. Sen Gupta was later offered an alternative senior position as head of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Economic Department.²⁰ Unlike Arnold Smith's appointment in June, Adu and Gooneratne were approved as Deputy Secretaries-General without concerted opposition from Britain and without resorting to a vote.²¹ The ease of these appointments underscores that British opposition to Smith's appointment was based on his personal activism and vision for the organisation, rather than his position as Secretary-General per se.

Both deputies began work as soon as possible. Adu assisted with the organisation of Smith's African tour that November, even though Adu was not slated to take his post until January 1966. Gooneratne began to plan the Commonwealth Trade Officials Meeting with the assistance of the British Government which was set to take place less than a fortnight after his arrival in London. Gooneratne and Sen Gupta also managed the growth and daily running of the Secretariat while Smith travelled in the autumn of 1965.²² As per the mandate of broad hiring practices laid out in

¹⁹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 1, Commonwealth Circular No. 8, 17 September, 1965.

²⁰ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 3, Letter from Arnold Smith to T.E. Gooneratne c/o Dr. G.P. Malalasekera, 2 November, 1965.

²¹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 2 "Diaries Oct 1965," Memorandum for File, 18 October, 1965.

²² LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 2, Letter from Arnold Smith to T.E. Gooneratne c/o Dr. G.P. Malalasekera, 19 October, 1965.

the *Agreed Memorandum*, the three senior-most Secretariat staff were from three different continents within the Commonwealth and would therefore represent the broadest range of member perspectives at the highest level.

In contrast to the senior-most positions, hiring junior Secretariat staff went slowly. In its first year of operation the Secretariat did not even meet its initial hiring budget.²³ Some of this delay was due to CRO staff members obstructing the hiring process in the Commonwealth Finance Committee. Smith recalled that in May 1966 Robert Walker, Head of the CRO's Commonwealth Policy and Planning Department (who sat on the Finance Committee as a British representative) insisted that he did not have the authority of the British Government to approve hiring additional Secretariat staff. Because the Commonwealth was based on building consensus rather than voting Smith inquired how the Finance Committee could function if its members could neither vote nor wield the authority to work towards a consensus.²⁴ Smith eventually convinced the committee to approve additional hires but in the meantime had to ask contract staff to stay with the Secretariat for several extra weeks to cover the gaps in Secretariat personnel.²⁵

Finance

Robert Walker's delay of the Finance Committee's deliberations on Secretariat hiring was part of a wider pattern of British obstructionism in the early financial management of the Secretariat. The Commonwealth prime ministers appointed the Commonwealth Finance Committee in June 1965 to oversee the Secretariat budget and manage Secretariat finances until the Secretariat itself was able to hire and train its own accounting staff. For the first year of the Secretariat the

²³ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 18 "Diary July 1966," Commonwealth Secretariat Estimates 1966/67: Explanatory Notes on Estimates with Details, 14 June, 1966.

²⁴ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 13, Diary, Thursday, 5 May, 1966.

²⁵ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 10 "Diaries 7-31 Mar, 1966," Memorandum for Mr. Adu, 10 March, 1966.

committee collected and disbursed Secretariat funds, oversaw expenditures, authorised changes to the Secretariat budget, and drew up financial rules and regulations in collaboration with the Secretary-General.²⁶ In theory the committee would operate as a transparent body comprised of the Commonwealth High Commissioners, the Secretary-General, and representatives of the British Treasury. However, the committee was fluid because both the Secretary-General and the High Commissioners could be represented by other senior Commonwealth staff in the event of scheduling conflict. The centrality of the committee in London made attendance more convenient to British officials who had the greatest ability to maintain consistent representation. The central role of the Treasury in the committee also facilitated British obstruction to Secretariat growth.

Financial foot dragging by the British Treasury delayed the establishment of the Secretariat in the first place. In order to expedite the establishment of the Secretariat Smith repeatedly requested that the Secretariat funds held by the Treasury be available before his arrival in London on August 17, 1965.²⁷ Without consulting the Commonwealth Finance Committee, the Treasury refused to distribute the funds until September when the Secretariat technically began operations. Treasury officials then further delayed into September owing to a bank holiday, and even then only released half of the Secretariat's funding for the first year.²⁸

By controlling the Secretariat purse strings and not consulting with the wider Finance Committee, Treasury officials slowed the initial growth of the Secretariat. Yet by December 1965 both the Treasury and the CRO were calling for the Secretariat to provide a detailed budget

²⁶ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 10, Commonwealth Circular No. 46: Commonwealth Secretariat Budget Year 1965/66, 21 March 1966.

²⁷ TNA: DO 156/25, Minute from B.L.D. to Mr. Collett, 2 August, 1965; TNA: DO 156/25, Letter From Arnold Smith to Sir Saville Garner, 27 August, 1965.

²⁸ TNA: DO 156/25, Minute from L.B. Walsh Atkins to Arnold Smith, 2 September, 1965.

for the next fiscal year.²⁹ The Secretariat had not yet prepared a budget. By the end of 1965 the Secretariat had not finished hiring general or financial staff. Nor had the Secretariat received the second installation of its initial budget. Treasury officials justified the demand for a complete budget as necessary if the Treasury was to advocate for the Secretariat in the British Parliament. However such demands were more likely a means to pressure Secretariat staff. Internally, British officials felt that a “system of financial control” should be instituted over all Secretariat activities.³⁰ By obstructing the development of the Secretariat’s financial capabilities and pressuring its existing staff, Treasury and CRO officials sought to weaken the Secretariat and keep it dependent on British administration. The extent to which pressure over the 1966-67 Secretariat budget was a British tactic was clear in the consultations of the Finance Committee (which included representatives of the Secretariat and the wider membership including expansionists). When Smith raised the topic of the Secretariat budget with the committee, the group remained flexible and considerate of the Secretariat’s still-growing capacity. The Secretariat submitted its final budget for 1966-67 at the end of the fiscal year in April 1966, and the Finance Committee accepted and reviewed it without issue.³¹

Immunities and Privileges

Divergent expectations between the expansionists and restrictionists also animated discussion over the immunities and privileges given to the Secretariat. Diplomatic benefits were more highly contested within the British Government as they affected more departments and had greater implications for the status of the Secretariat. Many departments retained an Anglo-centric view of the Commonwealth and considered it an association grounded in the Empire rather than

²⁹ TNA: DO 156/25, Letter from J.G. Littler (T) to R.W. Newman (CRO), 28 December, 1965.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 10, Commonwealth Circular No. 46: Commonwealth Secretariat Budget Year 1965/66, 21 March 1966.

an international organisation. The presumption that the Commonwealth was not an IO meant that in British thinking the new Secretariat did not fit into any of the pre-existing categories of organisations that were normally accorded diplomatic privileges and immunities.³² British Government departments shared a restrictionist approach to the Secretariat. However, the British approach to diplomatic benefits was disjointed and marked by conflicting departmental views of the Commonwealth's place in British diplomacy. Lengthy internal debates about the degree and type of benefits the Secretariat should receive ultimately led to a compromise between relevant departments. That compromise showed the influence of expansionist Commonwealth members and reflected that the organisation functioned as an IO.

Differing ideas in British departments about whether the Secretariat should receive diplomatic benefits depended on the degree of traditional authority those departments held vis-à-vis the Commonwealth. The Treasury for example, was defensive about Secretariat funds and worked with the CRO to delay the initial operations of the Secretariat. However, Treasury officials also recognised that the Secretariat functioned as a senior international organisation and supported full diplomatic privileges for Secretariat staff.³³ Because Treasury officials did not oversee diplomatic immunities and privileges they were willing to concede that the Secretariat operated as an IO. In contrast, CRO officials were defensive about Secretariat infringement on the CRO's traditional role performing secretarial functions for the Commonwealth. The CRO argued that Secretariat staff should not receive diplomatic benefits as those benefits would suggest that the Secretariat was an independent executive body. In keeping with CRO opposition in other areas, CRO officials felt that any immunities and privileges afforded to the Secretariat should be given on an ad hoc basis that would not risk setting any precedents about the status of the Secretariat as

³² TNA: DO 211/42, File Note about Draft Paper on Immunities and Privileges, 8 July, 1964.

³³ TNA: T 312/707, Letter from D.J.S. Hancock to Miss Whaley, 31 August, 1964.

an IO.³⁴ For officials in the domestically-oriented Home Office, the question of Secretariat immunities and privileges raised the spectre of increased Commonwealth costs. Home Office representatives argued that existing Commonwealth bodies such as the CELU or CEC (which were largely staffed by Britain) had successfully functioned without such benefits and there was no reason to afford them to the Secretariat.³⁵ Because Commonwealth administration had traditionally been performed by British staff without diplomatic benefits, the notion that the Commonwealth operated outside the British Government both challenged traditional thinking in the Home Office and raised questions about Commonwealth costs.

Officials in the Foreign Office (FO) were also uncertain of the Commonwealth's place in international relations. With the rapid changes of decolonisation the British diplomatic service was dealing with repeated departmental mergers at home and a profusion of new IOs abroad. Senior members of the FO wished not only to exert some control over these new IOs but also to limit the benefits afforded to them. Such benefits risked making the diplomatic service appear a financial drain to Parliament thus jeopardising the FO's own funding and encouraging further departmental reorganisation. In a bid to slow the growth of IOs and stem diplomatic costs, FO staffers even drafted an international memorandum on the need to limit immunities and privileges for international organisations.³⁶

Achieving consensus between British departments about the degree and type of immunities and privileges to give the Secretariat involved challenging British departments' traditional authority and assumptions about the Commonwealth. Each department was defensive and sought to put the burden of Commonwealth costs on another British department. For example, the Foreign Office

³⁴ TNA: DO 211/42, Letter from H.L.M. Oxley to Mr. Hamilton, 2 September, 1964.

³⁵ TNA: DO 211/42, Letter from W.A.B. Hamilton to Sir Neil Pritchard, 3 December, 1964.

³⁶ TNA: DO 211/42, Minute from W.A.B Hamilton to Minister of State, 23 December, 1964.

opposed allocating benefits through income tax exemptions or legal immunities as they did not wish to set any precedents for the Commonwealth or any other international organisation.³⁷ Officials in the FO instead supported benefits via concessions in duties and customs. These suggestions drew the ire of the Chancellor of the Exchequer who felt that the FO suggestion disproportionately burdened the Exchequer rather than distributing diplomatic benefits more evenly between customs, income tax, and legal immunities.³⁸ In a similar sense, Wilson's Cabinet wished to limit privileges and immunities to only the Secretary-General and perhaps his two deputies at most. Other concerned British departments agreed that benefits should be limited to a maximum of six to eight senior Secretariat staff, but were concerned about backlash from other Commonwealth members if these were only given to the Secretary-General.³⁹ The CRO had the most traditional authority to lose and either opposed or sought to lessen schedules of immunities and privileges drawn up by other departments. Later, CRO officials even tried to claw back concessions already given to the Secretariat.⁴⁰

British departmental concerns over traditional authority and cost were exacerbated by pressures from the expansionist Commonwealth members. The expansionist view of the Commonwealth as an international organisation shaped the FO proposal that ultimately set the basis for Secretariat immunities and privileges. The FO feared parliamentary scrutiny over diplomatic benefits but was also concerned with maintaining good international relations. Because Commonwealth members held sway in the UN and thus affected broader British diplomacy, it was also in the FO's departmental interest to facilitate Commonwealth relations. In consequence FO officials

³⁷ TNA: DO 211/42, Minute from W.A.B. Hamilton to Sir Neil Pritchard, 8 April, 1965.

³⁸ TNA: DO 211/42, Minute from W.A.B. Hamilton to Mr. Walsh Atkins, 2 April, 1965.

³⁹ TNA: DO 211/42, Minute from M.J. Williams to Mr. Hamilton, 5 January, 1965; TNA: DO 211/42, Minute from W.A.B. Hamilton to Mr. Minogue, 14 January, 1965.

⁴⁰ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 3, Record of Conversation between Lord Beswick (CRO) and Arnold Smith, 30 November, 1965.

proposed a compromise between British departments to give the new Secretariat a limited degree of immunities and privileges without according comprehensive diplomatic benefits.

Although the FO proposal was meant to limit the immunities and privileges given to Secretariat staff it was an important step toward recognising the Commonwealth as an international organisation. The restrictionist tone of the FO proposal appealed to other British governmental departments but was also designed to appease newer Commonwealth members. Developing member states attached dual importance to diplomatic benefits which they saw as an important indicator of status as well as an important cost saving measure for their small diplomatic departments.⁴¹ The FO proposed that duty free petrol, liquor, and tobacco might be afforded to senior Secretariat officers in addition to customary diplomatic privileges such as immunity from traffic laws and financial provision for Secretariat staff moving to the UK. Internally FO officials noted that such benefits were relatively inexpensive diplomatic benefits that would also assist Secretariat staff in the transportation and hospitality needed to facilitate Commonwealth meetings.⁴² After some internal debate, the British Government also resolved to offer some tax exemptions to Secretariat staff based on tiered distinction between the senior and junior Secretariat staff.⁴³ A schedule of immunities and privileges acceptable to the various British departments as well as to the Commonwealth membership was eventually codified in the Commonwealth Secretariat Act of 1966.⁴⁴

⁴¹ TNA: T 312/707, Minute from J.A. Marshall to Mr. Butler, 11 December, 1964.

⁴² TNA: DO 211/42, Minute from Saville Garner to Secretary of State, 29 March, 1965; TNA: DO 211/42, Minute from W.A.B. Hamilton to Sir Neil Pritchard, 22 March, 1965; TNA: DO 211/42, Minute from N. Pritchard to Sir S. Garner, 25 March, 1965.

⁴³ TNA: DO 211/42, Minute from E.G. Andrews to Mr. Oxley, 7 December, 1965; TNA: DO 211/42, Minute from H.L.M. Oxley to Mr. Andrews, 8 December, 1965.

⁴⁴ TNA: DO 161/398, Commonwealth Secretariat: Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, September, 1966: Report of the committee of Officials on Secretariat Matters, 14 September, 1965.

The most significant outcome of the internal British debates on Commonwealth immunities and privileges was that the schedule of benefits proposed by the FO was modeled on benefits given to United Nations officials. The newer members had persistently called for British officials to grant diplomatic privileges and immunities to the Secretariat as befitted a senior international organisation. Some newer members even raised the issue directly with the British Government through personal channels. Representatives from Sierra Leone inquired why customary immunities for traffic offenses had not been included for junior Secretariat staff and Jamaican representatives pressed the British directly for Secretariat staff to receive full diplomatic treatment regarding income tax.⁴⁵ The tiered schedule of benefits outlined in the Commonwealth Secretariat Act was a compromise. The act did not go as far as some newer members wanted and many British departments considered the act to go beyond all precedents for the treatment of international organisations. However, the act did allow the British Government to demonstrate understanding to the Commonwealth, so as not to “dash their hopes” about the new Commonwealth structure.⁴⁶ More importantly, the Commonwealth Secretariat Act represented a shift in British treatment of the organisation. By modelling Commonwealth immunities and privileges on the UN and accommodating the expansionist vision for the organisation British officials began to more formally treat the Commonwealth as an international organisation.⁴⁷ The role of the Foreign Office in brokering a compromise between defensive British departments also suggested a closer association of the Commonwealth with the Foreign Office in British thinking and foreshadowed the merger of the Foreign and Commonwealth Offices in 1968.

Protocol

⁴⁵ TNA: DO 211/42, Minute from N. Pritchard to Sir S. Garner, 22 June, 1965; TNA: DO 211/42, Minute from N. Pritchard to Sir S. Garner, 23 June, 1965.

⁴⁶ TNA: DO 211/42, Minute from W.A.B. Hamilton to Minister of State, 28 April, 1965.

⁴⁷ Ibid; TNA: CAB 148/7, Commonwealth Secretariat: Memorandum by the Commonwealth Relations Office, 30 July, 1964.

The conceptual shift between the Commonwealth-as-club and the Commonwealth-as-IO that shaped British debates over immunities and privileges also had implications for systems of protocol and form. British departments used to an Anglo-centric, imperially based concept of the Commonwealth were resistant to changes in Commonwealth protocols. The newer, expansionist members expected that protocols be changed to reflect the Commonwealth's status as an international organisation rather than an appendage of the British Government. Issues of protocol had important symbolic ramifications and were chiefly opposed by British officials that either resented or did not understand the implications of such protocols.

Tensions over procedural questions began almost as soon as the Secretariat was established. In September 1965 Smith wrote to British Prime Minister Harold Wilson as part of a circular query to all Commonwealth Heads of Government regarding Singapore's application for Commonwealth membership. The Prime Minister's reply became the subject of a series of internal correspondence between the CRO and the Prime Minister's Office. While the British considered a reply sent by a lesser secretary beginning with the formal, yet frosty "Sir, I am directed..." They concluded that this might be too stiff of a brush-off for the new Secretary-General. They decided instead to avoid the question of official wording and reply to Smith in a semi-official form. Not only did this avoid the potential problem of how to officially respond to the Secretary-General but it "...would [also] be in line with the policy of trying to direct Mr. Smith to transact his business with Under-Secretaries and not exclusively with Ministers and the Private Offices."⁴⁸ The *Agreed Memorandum* governing the Secretariat stipulated that the Secretary-General should have access to member Heads of Government but elaborated that

⁴⁸ TNA: DO 161/309, Note for Record, 8 September, 1965.

members could specify the appropriate channels of communication.⁴⁹ British policy on communication with the Secretary-General was a specific interpretation of the *Agreed Memorandum* that reflected the British view that Smith should be treated as a lesser diplomatic official rather than the head of a senior international organisation.

Smith was aware that he was facing a well-entrenched system of protocols and worked with good humour to carve out the position of the Secretary-General. In his personal notes for August 25, 1965, he wrote that he had teased Mr. Shannon of the Economic Section of the CRO by asking whether Shannon would call on Smith at Marlborough House for a meeting they had arranged that week. Smith noted that while he was happy to call at the CRO, Shannon had “seemed astonished” by this suggestion. When they met, Smith elaborated that he would not always call on the CRO and that in future, CRO staff would sometimes be expected to come to Marlborough House to call on the Secretary-General.⁵⁰ Smith explained that this was both the expectation of the Commonwealth members and proper procedure for a large international organisation. As with the question of immunities and privileges, matters of protocol had strong symbolic value to the newer members. It was important to demonstrate that the Secretariat was not beholden to the British Government.

The newer members’ vision of the Commonwealth as an international organisation was also clear in other symbolic matters of form like the Secretary-General’s honorific title. Several newer members suggested that the Secretary-General might be called “his excellency” like the UN Secretary-General.⁵¹ Those members felt that the honorific was an important signifier of the Secretary-General’s standing and a reasonable feature for a large international organisation.

⁴⁹ *Agreed Memorandum on the Commonwealth Secretariat*, 2.

⁵⁰ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 1, Diary Entry, 23 August, 1964.

⁵¹ TNA: FCO 49/198, Secretary of State’s visit to Australia – February 1967, Australian attitude to Commonwealth Secretariat (Draft) Defensive Brief by Commonwealth Office: Background Note, 27 January, 1967.

British officials opposed the use of “excellency” but were largely alone in this view and recognised that openly opposing the honorific could damage their standing in the Commonwealth. While privately indignant, British officials ultimately decided to choose their battles based on major issues of principle and relented on the issue of honorifics.⁵² The Australian Government shared British misgivings about the honorific title to the point that Canberra initiated correspondence with Whitehall on what could be done to prevent the use of “excellency.” While sympathising with the Australian view British officials argued that dealing with the Secretariat was a question of tactics rather than principle. Because open confrontation would rally newer members to the Secretariat, British officials preferred to engage with Smith personally through unofficial channels. By using unofficial channels they could avoid using the new title without appearing difficult to the other members.⁵³ British officials advised the Australian Government to do the same and relent on small matters and in order to keep Smith in close personal touch, rather than at arm’s length as an enemy.⁵⁴ Rather than risking conflict with the newer members and the Secretariat, in both figurative and literal terms the British Government conceded that the Secretary-General could have a seat at the table.⁵⁵

Despite these early concessions, British thinking about the Secretariat was slow to acknowledge the Secretariat’s status as a senior international organisation rather than a subordinate British project. For instance, in 1965 British protocol for ceremonial occasions was adapted to include the Secretary-General. Henceforth, British policy for ceremonies was to treat the Secretary-General with the same formalities as a Commonwealth High Commissioner, but not as the head of an IO. However, as late as March 1969 the recently formed Foreign and Commonwealth

⁵² Ibid; TNA: DO 161/309, Minute from O.G. Forster to Mr. R. Walker, 13 May, 1966.

⁵³ TNA: FCO 49/198, Secretary of State’s visit to Australia – February 1967, Australian attitude to Commonwealth Secretariat (Draft) Defensive Brief by Commonwealth Office: Summary and Talking Points, 31 January, 1967.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Armstrong, “From International Community to International Organisation?” 33.

Office (FCO) invited each of the Commonwealth High Commissioners to the Prince of Wales' investiture and forgot to invite the Secretary-General. When the error was discovered the FCO issued an invitation to Arnold Smith and apologised that they had used the wrong distribution list. In this case, a diplomatic list excluding the Secretary-General from ceremonial occasions had survived four years and two departmental mergers in the British diplomatic service. Smith had specifically requested to be included on such diplomatic lists in December 1965 and treating the Secretary-General the same as High-Commissioners for ceremonial occasions had also been British policy since 1965.⁵⁶ The survival of an exclusionary diplomatic list for such occasions attests to how the idea of the Commonwealth as a lesser organisation was entrenched in the British "official mind."

Discussions about protocol for communication, meetings, title, and ceremony illustrate the degree to which British officials resisted changing protocols regarding the Commonwealth. In each of these instances British officials wished to treat the Secretary-General without special privileges, or with formalities befitting a Commonwealth High Commissioner rather than the head of an international organisation. This resistance was both a manifestation of British restrictionism towards the Secretariat and a reflection of the difficulties British officials had accepting the idea of the Commonwealth as an IO. In contrast, the newer members saw the Secretary-General as a senior international figure and a representative of their own interests. Those members felt that protocols should reflect the status of the Commonwealth as an IO and anything less would trivialise the Commonwealth organisation. The newer, expansionist members so strongly advocated for those protocols that the British Government relented rather than risk friction with other Commonwealth members.

⁵⁶ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 4 "Diaries 1-15 Dec. 1965," Commonwealth Circular no. 19, 15 December, 1965; TNA: FCO 68/171, Minute from B.G. Smallman to Miss Monreal, 14 March, 1969.

Conclusion

The process of arranging Secretariat logistics was shaped by differing visions for the future of the organisation. The newer members who viewed the Commonwealth as an international organisation consistently advocated for housing, staff, finance, diplomatic immunities and privileges, and protocols commensurate with the standards of other international organisations such as the UN. Those logistics were negotiated in turn between the Secretariat and various British departments.⁵⁷ British engagement with the Secretariat was characterised by deep institutional conservatism and a widespread difficulty conceiving of the Commonwealth as anything other than a British entity. Difficulties between the Secretariat and British Government departments were often as much due to the British inability to recognise the Commonwealth as an IO as they were due to overt obstruction. Obstructionism was concentrated in departments which had the most traditional authority to lose. As Secretariat logistics were negotiated with different British departments, the British Government made concessions that indicated that the Secretariat was an international organisation. While there was no unified recognition of the Commonwealth as an IO, the establishment of the Secretariat shifted British engagement with the organisation onto a footing that better reflected newer members' vision for the Commonwealth.

⁵⁷ "Witness Seminar, The Heartbeat of a Modern Commonwealth? The Commonwealth Secretariat 1965-2013 – Session 1- The Office of the Secretary General."

Chapter Six: Membership

Introduction

In theory the early Commonwealth was bound together by imperial loyalty and fraternity. After the Second World War the monarchy became the symbolic head of the Commonwealth and organisational diversity was increasingly emphasised as a central feature of the organisation. However, the adaptation of Commonwealth values and structures outlined in Chapter One left many older features of the Commonwealth unchallenged until Afro-Caribbean decolonisation began in earnest. The responsibility for processing applications for Commonwealth membership was a role assumed by the British Government. Whitehall had never been challenged in this area, and the processes surrounding Commonwealth membership had not changed since 1949. British Officials in the Colonial Office (CO) and CRO maintained an imperially-informed, Anglo-centric concept of how the membership process should function.

To former colonies and those on the eve of independence, British involvement in processing Commonwealth applications undermined the integrity of the Commonwealth. Newer members accepted that the British Government might submit membership applications on behalf of colonies under the same rules of sovereignty that applied in the UN. However, they objected to the British Government processing membership applications. Newer members sought to delineate the application and consultation processes between the British Government and the Secretariat in order to make the Commonwealth more like other international organisations.

Processing applications for Commonwealth membership was the first major operational challenge for the Secretariat in the fall of 1965. A largely informal process, acceptance as a Commonwealth member was determined by simple consultation with the existing membership.

The process to become a Commonwealth member was tied to colonial independence. The British viewed colonial policy as a domestic matter and therefore an issue of sovereignty. The processes of independence and membership applications had historically been handled in the same British departments and there was no clear distinction between where domestic matters ended and where Commonwealth matters began. Because the CRO had hitherto provided secretarial services to the Commonwealth there had been no particular need to differentiate between these processes. However, for the newer members who viewed the Commonwealth as an international organisation, it was imperative that the operations of the Commonwealth be clearly separated from British colonial administration. As with the logistics of setting up the Secretariat, questions about Commonwealth membership were negotiated between a proprietary British Government and the activist Secretariat. The former was supported by the restrictionist group which shared British concerns about Secretariat infringement on member sovereignty. The latter was supported by the newer, expansionist members who wanted to retrieve Commonwealth administration from the murky processes of British policy.

Newer members' suspicions about how the British handled Commonwealth applications were raised in the context of the UN Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and aligned to their calls for imperial accountability and transparency in the international sphere. Suspicions of British intentions were also based on a record of British attempts to control Commonwealth membership leading up to the formation of the Secretariat. As the Commonwealth grew in the early 1960s the British Government in general, and the CRO in particular, attempted to leverage questions of membership to maintain traditional procedures. Maintaining the status quo would give more power to the British Government and justify the continued existence of the CRO. As it became clear that African membership would upset the

Commonwealth status quo, CRO officials proposed ways to limit and control Commonwealth membership as African decolonisation accelerated.

The Commonwealth of the 1950s was an Anglo-centric, racially hierarchical organisation. As detailed in Chapter Two, African decolonisation set in motion the changes that led to the birth of the modern organisation in 1965. However, prior to the formation of the Secretariat, the CRO attempted to forestall changes in Commonwealth membership procedures. In 1953, CRO officials recommended denying automatic membership to newly independent states. Instead the CRO proposed a tiered membership model including ranking by area, population, or national wealth.¹ Such a system would prevent the Commonwealth from becoming so egalitarian that it would be able to exert pressure on British policy and would prevent the bloc politics that small former colonies were using in the UN General Assembly. However, the CRO proposal reached an impasse in the wider context of the Cold War. Whitehall feared that a tiered and exclusive model of Commonwealth membership might encourage former colonies to abandon the Commonwealth and seek association with the Eastern Bloc.² This would reduce British influence in the world much more than condoning a new concept of the Commonwealth in which Britain was no longer *the* central authority. The British Government reluctantly supported the Secretariat in a bid to counter Soviet influence. Whitehall considered this a practical risk management approach, particularly in Africa.³ The imperatives of the Cold War won out over traditional thinking regarding the equality of Commonwealth members.⁴

¹ Lloyd, "Britain and the Transformation from Empire to Commonwealth," 350.

² TNA: DO 121/215, Committee on Commonwealth Membership: C.R.O. Comments on Draft Outline for Report, November, 1953.

³ TNA: DO 121/215, Minute from J.J.S. Garner to Sir P. Liesching, 23 November, 1953.

⁴ This did not prevent, as David McIntyre argues "a de facto 'two-tier' system of consultation...especially in defence matters" from persisting within the formally egalitarian Commonwealth. Defence consultation, however, was increasingly transferred away from the Commonwealth to other networks such as NATO, or the Five Eyes. See:

Ideas about restricting Commonwealth membership nonetheless persisted despite Cold War concerns. In a 1963 procedural note, the CRO reconsidered the tiered model first proposed in 1953. CRO officials still found the tiered model untenable in light of broader political concerns, but nor would they consider automatic membership for newly independent states.⁵ The 1963 note recommended that the British Government expedite consultations with other Commonwealth members in order to lessen scrutiny on British attitudes towards prospective members, but it did not propose any concrete changes to existing membership procedures. The lack of clarity surrounding Britain's role in Commonwealth membership consultations was not resolved until after the formation of the Secretariat. In 1965 the British Government conceded to a more egalitarian concept of the Commonwealth and supported the establishment of the Secretariat. However, British officials nonetheless worked to mitigate the impact of those concessions and maintain control of Commonwealth membership procedures. British opposition to the Secretariat processing member applications had four core components. In a broad sense, the British Government was restrictionist and opposed the expansion of the Secretariat's functions in any way. Maintaining control of Commonwealth membership procedures was a means to prevent Secretariat expansion. A secondary oppositional feature within the British Government was the CRO's proprietary stance towards Commonwealth operations. The CRO had the most traditional authority to lose to the Secretariat. CRO officials worried about their future employment and wanted to avoid their department being amalgamated. A third significant reason for opposition over membership was a deep-seated concern for British sovereignty. In both the Commonwealth and other international fora the British Government vehemently defended the position that

McIntyre, "Canada and the Creation of the Commonwealth Secretariat, 1965," 754; McIntyre, *British Decolonization*, 120.

⁵ TNA: DO 161/309, Procedure for Admission of New Members to the Commonwealth: Note Prepared in the Commonwealth Relations Office, 5 April, 1963.

colonial affairs were a domestic concern, not to be subject to the scrutiny or advice of other nations or organisations.⁶ British officials conceded that the Secretariat could fact-find and conduct research among the membership on domestic affairs but maintained that the Secretariat had no authority to involve itself in members' internal affairs and that "...any extension of its functions in this way... would be wrong in principle and disastrous for the Commonwealth concept which the Secretariat should be designed to promote."⁷

Finally, as with the logistical debates detailed in Chapter Five, British officials found it difficult to conceive of the Commonwealth as an international organisation. Secretariat management of membership applications would require delineating responsibility for making an application from the responsibility for processing an application. These responsibilities had never been differentiated and had always been conducted internally. To newer members British control of Commonwealth membership was an obvious conflict of interest that did not meet the standards of an international organisation. When newer members called for the Secretariat to process membership applications, in addition to sovereignty arguments British officials argued that they were the best equipped to process membership requests because they had the best sense of the timing of prospective members' independence and because they had always done so. This was a weak argument that reflected the British difficulty viewing the Commonwealth as something other than an Anglo-centric club. As with debates over Secretariat logistics, questions about Commonwealth membership were negotiated between the Secretariat and the British Government. The membership issue was another field of competition between different ideas

⁶ In British nomenclature, the term Commonwealth evolved and so at different times meant different things, and could be scaled to include a wide range of states. For example "Commonwealth countries" might include colonies, but were not the same as "Commonwealth members." For the purposes of this paper a simpler distinction is drawn between the terms Commonwealth and colonial, in which the former refers to Commonwealth members and the latter to dependencies unless otherwise specified.

⁷ TNA: T 312/707, Commonwealth Secretariat: British Working Paper, 13 August, 1964.

about the nature and future direction of the Commonwealth, either as a continuation of the old Anglo-centric club or as a modern international organisation.

Singapore

The question of how the Secretariat would affect Commonwealth membership applications arose before the Secretariat was even technically operational. When Arnold Smith first arrived at Marlborough House on August 18, 1965, he found a letter awaiting him from the Malaysian High Commissioner detailing the separation of Singapore from Malaysia and sponsoring Singapore's application for Commonwealth Membership.⁸ Smith immediately acted on the Malaysian letter and initiated consultations to approve Singapore's membership that afternoon. The August 18 circular was the first official correspondence of the new Secretariat and was issued before the Secretariat had received any funding, before it had its own letterhead or staff, and before Smith had had a chance to introduce himself to the Commonwealth High Commissioners.⁹

The same day Smith met with CRO officials who attempted to dissuade him from acting on the Singapore application. They argued that Smith had no background knowledge of Singapore's application and that since the matter was political, any action taken by the Secretariat would be an executive function contrary to the terms of the *Agreed Memorandum*.¹⁰ CRO officials maintained that British coordination of membership consultations was an accepted, established procedure that in no way ran counter to the equality of the members. Furthermore, the CRO had already begun consultations while Smith was en route to London and felt that he would only

⁸ The Singapore request was the first item in Smith's personal files as Secretary-General. See LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 1, Letter from the High Commissioner for Malaysia to the Secretary-General, 13 August, 1965.

⁹ Ibid; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 1, Diary Entries, 17, 18, 19 August, 1965; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 3, Commonwealth Circular No. 14, 10 November, 1965.

¹⁰ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 1, Diary, 17, 18, 19 August, 1965.

cause confusion by duplicating the consultations.¹¹ Smith was surprised that such an important message had not been telegraphed to him. He countered that even if the matter was purely one of form, if he did not respond the Commonwealth would appear to be a club beholden to Britain rather than an organisation in which the members were equal partners.¹²

Smith initiated membership consultations to demonstrate that the Secretariat was independent from British influence. In contrast, CRO officials felt they were defending both British sovereignty and their department's traditional functions. The CRO had been preparing for Singapore's application for six years. In 1959 CRO staff anticipated that small states would eventually apply for Commonwealth membership and noted that Singapore would likely be the first candidate. The Singapore case was "not very satisfactory" due to the legal complexities of dissolving the Malay Federation, tensions between Commonwealth neighbours, and strong suspicions of the British operating neocolonial "snatch-back powers."¹³ In 1962 CRO officials agreed that because Commonwealth membership was predicated on member sovereignty (like UN membership) with the appropriate legal procedures for sovereignty-transfer, Singapore and Malaysia could both inherit Commonwealth membership as successor states if the Malay Federation was dissolved.¹⁴ The CRO initiated advanced discussions about Singaporean membership in defence of their office against a possible merger with the Colonial Office. By finding solutions for membership problems in advance, CRO official sought to justify the utility of their department. However, these discussions were based on the assumption that the CRO

¹¹ TNA: DO 161/309, Letter from J.J.S Garner to Sir Hilton Poynton, 27 August, 1965; TNA: DO 161/309, Minute from Sir N. Pritchard to Mr. Walsh Atkins, 19 August, 1965.

¹² LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 1, Diary Entries, 17, 18, 19 August, 1965; Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 21.

¹³ TNA: DO 121/247, Note for Record: Commonwealth States, 9 July, 1959.

¹⁴ TNA: DO 181/27, Malaysia: Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting, 14 August, 1962.

would continue operating as a surrogate secretariat for the Commonwealth.¹⁵ The creation of the Secretariat undermined these assumptions and not only re-opened the issue of Singapore's membership but also posed a threat to the CRO and subjected the British Government to more scrutiny than if it had been solely responsible for membership consultations.

Increased scrutiny over British conduct showed the CRO's willingness to exclude the Secretariat from consultations in order to maintain its central position in a hub-and-spoke model of the Commonwealth. The exclusion of the Secretariat also demonstrated the inherent conflict of interest in British management of Commonwealth membership applications.¹⁶ In the Singaporean case, the Malaysian Federal Government had first approached the CRO to conduct the consultations for Singapore's membership according to pre-Secretariat procedures. However, the British Government had repeatedly delayed consultations for Singaporean membership. Those delays were in part due to "...very delicate and important discussions with Britain's allies, the United States and Australia, about the future of Singapore..."¹⁷ The British Government also wished to confer with the Old Commonwealth behind closed doors before initiating discussions with the wider membership which further delayed the membership consultations.¹⁸ The Malaysian Government wrote to the Secretariat before it was technically operational in response to British delays, and as a way to test the new Secretariat.¹⁹ Arnold Smith's prompt action within

¹⁵ TNA: DO 121/247, Minute from H. Lintott to Sir G. Laithwaite, 30 June, 1959; TNA: DO 121/247, Note for Record, 25 June, 1959.

¹⁶ TNA: DO 121/247, Note for Record: Commonwealth States, 9 July, 1959.

¹⁷ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1 File 1, Diary Entry, 27 August, 1965.

¹⁸ TNA: DO 161/309, Letter from J.J.S Garner to Sir Hilton Poynton, 27 August, 1965.

¹⁹ TNA: DO 161/309, Telegram from Kuala Lumpur (Lord Head) to Commonwealth Relations Office, 2 September, 1965.

24 hours of arriving in London exposed British delays as artificial. British officials later blamed the delays on confusion caused by the Secretariat, but the damage was done.²⁰

The Singaporean Government felt misled by the British and argued that without the Secretariat they would be made to look like “white men’s stooges.” Because British interest in the Singapore Naval Base was affecting membership consultations Singaporean officials went so far as threatening to seek other clients to lease the base if the British did not treat the Singaporean Government equitably.²¹ In so doing the Singaporean Government leveraged the Cold War security considerations that had already steered British policy away from a hierarchical model for Commonwealth membership in the early 1960s. However, because the issue of membership applications directly touched on British sovereignty, the British Government had a stronger impetus to resist change to membership procedures.

Internally, British officials toyed with the idea of falsely telling Smith that the consultations were already complete in order to stop Secretariat “meddling” in the Singaporean application²²

However, the Secretariat enjoyed wide support from the newer, expansionist members. Smith pressed the issue as a matter of principle and the Secretariat conducted its own parallel consultations.²³ CRO officials privately conceded that the Secretariat might issue a statement on the consultation results but contested Secretariat involvement in the consultations themselves.²⁴

Both Smith and the CRO remained unconvinced of the other’s legitimacy in processing membership consultations. British officials felt that Smith would follow the matter as a point of

²⁰ TNA: DO 161/309, Outward Telegram from the Secretary of State for the Colonies to British Guiana (Sir R. Luyt), 23 March, 1966.

²¹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume, 1 File 3, Meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore, 29 October, 1965.

²² TNA: DO 161/309, Letter from J.J.S Garner to Sir Hilton Poynton, 27 August, 1965.

²³ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 1, Diary Entry, 27 August, 1965; TNA: DO 161/309, Letter from J.J.S Garner to Sir Hilton Poynton, 27 August, 1965.

²⁴ TNA: DO 161/309, Letter from J.J.S Garner to Sir Hilton Poynton, 27 August, 1965.

principle and argue that the Secretariat should coordinate membership consultations for all future members and so remained evasive on procedural questions.²⁵ Smith doubted that British representatives understood the significance of the membership question for the image of the Commonwealth to the newer members.²⁶

The debate over processing Singapore's membership aligned to the expansionist and restrictionist views of the Commonwealth. For instance, Britain had a staunch ally in Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies. Menzies was a vocal critic of the Secretariat in general and specifically opposed Secretariat involvement in the membership question. He echoed British reasoning that the Secretariat risked straying into executive functions in processing membership applications.²⁷ Menzies conceded that Smith's course of action regarding Singapore was a natural course given the circumstances. However, he wrote to Smith personally to note that the practice of membership consultation had always been handled by Britain on an inter-governmental basis and opined that it should continue that way.²⁸ In addition to Menzies personal antagonism, Australian policy aligned with British restrictionism because Australia also had dependent territories. Secretariat participation in membership applications had implications for what was perceived as Australian domestic policy and thus had implications for its sovereignty.²⁹

In contrast, Smith's position was buttressed with support from the newer members, as well as the legal peculiarities of the Singapore application. The British opposed Secretariat involvement in applications as most prospective members were dependencies and thus remained a domestic

²⁵ TNA: DO 161/309, Minute from Sir N. Pritchard to Mr. Walsh Atkins, 19 August, 1965.

²⁶ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 1, Diary Entry, 27 August, 1965.

²⁷ TNA: DO 161/309, Minute by N. Pritchard, 25 August, 1965.

²⁸ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 1, Message from R.G. Menzies to Arnold Smith, 10 September, 1965.

²⁹ Apart from dependencies, Australia and Britain also shared anxieties about non-white immigration and Singapore's implications for defence in the South Pacific.

matter in British thinking. In this sense, any attempts by the Secretariat or other Commonwealth members to involve themselves in the application process could violate British sovereignty. Singapore however, was applying as a member being split from the already independent Malay Federation. Malaysia as the applicant sponsor replicated the British role of other Commonwealth applicants as they gained independence and the matter was clearly beyond British sovereignty. The British recognised this particularity which ultimately led them to accommodate the Secretariat's parallel consultations and to coordinate a joint outcome with Smith. However, the CRO worried that Smith would regard the Singaporean case as a precedent for the Secretariat's role in future membership consultations, while in British thinking the case was clearly sui generis.³⁰

The Secretariat circulated the formal acceptance of Singapore's membership on October 14, 1965.³¹ In a sense, confirming British suspicions, Smith viewed the application as a precedent for Secretariat consultation and came to view the Singapore case as the first test of the central consultative machinery of the Secretariat.³² More importantly, the Singaporean application demonstrated the conflict of interest inherent to British management of Commonwealth membership procedures and the difficulty British officials had delineating British and Commonwealth priorities.

Malawi

In the spring of 1966, the Secretariat's role processing Commonwealth membership applications was still unclear. Smith felt that the Singapore case was an important precedent, but the constitutional particularities of the Malay Federation had facilitated Secretariat involvement.

³⁰ TNA: DO 161/309, Letter from J.J.S Garner to Sir Hilton Poynton, 27 August, 1965.

³¹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 2, Commonwealth Circular No. 11, 14 October, 1965.

³² *Annual Report of the Commonwealth Secretary General* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, August 1966), 9.

Because the applicant was already independent, British and Australian arguments that the Secretariat would infringe on member sovereignty by participating in the application process were unfounded. In April 1966, the Malawian application to remain in the Commonwealth once it became a republic reinforced the Secretariat role in processing membership applications.

Although Malawi was already a Commonwealth member the Malawian Government felt that it was important to affirm its status in the Commonwealth after the changeover of its constitution and governmental apparatus planned for July 1966. There were no formally established protocols as to whether a change in governmental structure would affect Commonwealth membership.³³

However, India, Pakistan, Ghana, Tanzania, and Nigeria had all previously sought affirmation of their Commonwealth membership after transitioning to republics which set a strong precedent in an organisation based on building member consensus. By seeking the same affirmation, the already-independent Malawian Government gave the Secretariat the opportunity to reinforce its ability to process membership applications without raising the issue of member sovereignty.

As an already independent member, the Malawian Government followed the approach used by Malaysia in the Singapore case and announced its intentions to other Commonwealth governments. Unlike with the Singapore case, the Malawian Government eschewed dual consultations and only approached the Secretariat. As with previous republics affirming their membership, there was little doubt as to the outcome of these consultations. However, the process was important to the Malawian Government and was also a show of support for the Secretariat.

³³ TNA: DO 121/215, The Future of Commonwealth Relations: Outline for Report to Ministerial Committee, 20 November, 1953; TNA: DO 161/309, Minute from R. Walker to Mr. Turner, 16 May, 1966.

The British and Australian Governments still opposed Secretariat involvement in membership applications and conferred on how to prevent Secretariat participation. However, Malawi was already independent, already a Commonwealth member, and had consulted the Secretariat directly. The British Government had no authority to contest the approach and feared being isolated in the Commonwealth if newer members rallied to the Secretariat. CRO officials advised Australian representatives to stand with the United Kingdom on larger matters of principle while conceding minor victories to Smith and the Secretariat.³⁴ Both Australian and British officials made their views known to the Secretariat without risking rebuke from the wider membership. In their responses to the Secretariat consultations both emphasised that they had already been in direct communication with the Government of Malawi when the republican transition was first announced, implying Secretariat redundancy.³⁵ Australian officials took the opportunity to state outright that they supported Malawi's continued membership but that membership consultations should be carried out directly between governments and not through the Secretariat.³⁶

As with the Singapore application, Smith and his staff expediently conducted the membership consultations and completed the entire process within one month.³⁷ Although the affirmation of Malawi's membership was not a major episode in the evolution of membership consultations, it demonstrated that the Secretariat could, and in the eyes of the newer members, should carry out such consultations.

Guyana

³⁴ TNA: DO 161/309, Minute from O.G. Forster to R. Walker, 13 May, 1966.

³⁵ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 12, Letter from Arthur Bottomley to Arnold Smith, 27 April, 1966.

³⁶ TNA: DO 161/309, Note: Malawi, 13 May, 1966; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 13, Letter from High Commissioner for Australia (A.R. Downer) to Arnold Smith, 3 May, 1966.

³⁷ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 16, Commonwealth Circular No. 65, 13 June, 1966.

Singaporean and Malawian support reinforced the Secretariat's role processing membership applications and gave the Secretariat a stronger footing to participate in British Guiana's application for Commonwealth membership. Unlike Singapore or Malawi, Guiana (soon to be Guyana) was still a dependency under British suzerainty. British officials maintained that up to independence the responsibility of a colony's external affairs remained with Britain and therefore if a colony wished to become a Commonwealth member "...she should ask Britain to take the appropriate steps, and it is for Britain to decide what steps should be taken."³⁸ Based on the Singaporean and Malawian applications, British officials expected the newer members and Secretariat staff to object to British management of the Guyanese application.³⁹ However, the British Government saw the Guyanese case as a matter of principle involving British sovereignty and was willing to fight over its right to manage Guyanese membership.

Smith also regarded the Guyanese application as a matter of principle which would not fundamentally change the consultations but was crucial to the success of an egalitarian Commonwealth. In his conversations with the Commonwealth leaders, with the exception of Australia and the United Kingdom, he found all other Commonwealth leaders supportive of Secretariat involvement in the membership process.⁴⁰ The High Commissioner of Ceylon went so far as to ask what the point of the Secretariat was if not to carry out such consultations.⁴¹ The Guyanese High Commissioner agreed on this principle and advised his government to apply directly to the Secretariat for Commonwealth membership.

This conflict over principle peaked in the spring of 1966. British Officials again blurred the lines between British interests and Commonwealth services. Because Guyanese foreign policy was

³⁸ TNA: DO 161/309, Minute from R. Walker to Mr. Walsh Atkins, 22 April, 1966.

³⁹ TNA: DO 161/309, Minute from R. Walker to Mr. Walsh Atkins, 16 March, 1966.

⁴⁰ TNA: FCO 49/74, Handling of Applications for Commonwealth Membership, 20 September 1967.

⁴¹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 11, Item for Diary, 7 April, 1966.

still administered by the British Government, Guyanese Prime Minister Forbes Burnham sent a letter to Arnold Smith care of the Colonial Office. CO officials held the letter on suspicion that it was the Guyanese application for Commonwealth membership. Although they were unclear on the letter's contents, CO officials did not forward it to the Secretariat and instead consulted the CRO. Both departments regarded direct correspondence between the Guyanese Government and the Secretariat as improper and saw it as setting a dangerous precedent on the membership issue.⁴² While British officials had intercepted Burnham's correspondence they were uncertain whether the Guyanese Government had already contacted the Secretariat via Sir Lionel Luckhoo, the Guyanese High Commissioner in London. The CO and CRO resolved not to deliver Burnham's letter at all and to "summon" Sir Luckhoo to explain Guyanese actions and attempt to dissuade Burnham and Smith from a course of action not approved by Britain.⁴³

In conversation with Sir Luckhoo, British officials found that Smith had initiated correspondence with Guyanese representatives and that even though they had instructed Burnham on the "proper" application procedure, he had ignored their instructions in favour of consulting directly with the Secretariat.⁴⁴ On March 22, CO officials were able to convince an upset Sir Luckhoo that Smith had misled him with incorrect procedures. British representatives also instructed their own High Commissioner in Guyana to tell Burnham that his letter had been held and to remind him that the Singaporean application did not constitute a precedent.⁴⁵ The High Commissioner was further instructed to tell Burnham that his consultation with the Secretariat was inappropriate

⁴² TNA: DO 161/309, Minute from Atlantic Department to Mr. Walker, 18 March, 1966.

⁴³ TNA: DO 161/309, Minute from R. Walker to Mr. L.B. Walsh Atkins & Sir N. Pritchard, 18 March, 1966; TNA: DO 161/309, Minute from R. Walker to R.W. Piper, Esq., 21 March, 1966; TNA: DO 161/309, Minute from R. Walker to Mr. L.B. Walsh Atkins & Sir N. Pritchard, 18 March, 1966; TNA: DO 161/309, Minute from R. Walker to R.W. Piper, Esq., 21 March, 1966.

⁴⁴ TNA: DO 161/309, Outward Telegram From the Secretary of State for the Colonies to British Guiana (Sir R. Luyt), 23 March, 1966; TNA: DO 161/309, Minute from Saville Garner to Secretary of State, 6 May, 1966.

⁴⁵ TNA: DO 161/309, Minute from R. Walker to Sir N. Pritchard, 23 March, 1966.

and not only broke procedure, but would cause confusion, difficulty, inefficiency, delays, and a reduced likelihood of a positive response from other governments.⁴⁶

When CRO officials met with Smith on March 18, they hedged their responses to Smith's inquiries about Guyanese membership and left the conversation inconclusive.⁴⁷ Only after they had dispatched telegrams to Guyana on March 23 did CRO staffers discuss how to answer Smith. CRO officials agreed that telling Smith "what we are doing when we do it" would be the best approach as it left little room for Smith to protest British actions.⁴⁸ They resolved to initiate consultations on Guyanese membership and to keep Smith informed as a courtesy but without any advance notice.⁴⁹ In the meantime, CRO officials also exploited Smith's scheduled visit to Canada, the United States, and Trinidad from March 23 to April 7 to begin Commonwealth consultations while Smith was away.⁵⁰ The CRO only resumed discussions about how to prevent Secretariat interference in the application process the day before Smith returned to London.⁵¹ The day Smith returned, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations Arthur Bottomley wrote to the Secretary-General flatly informing Smith that the CRO had already begun consultations on Guyanese membership. Bottomley recognised that the Secretariat had a legitimate interest in the membership question but stressed that interest did not mean that the

⁴⁶ TNA: DO 161/309, Outward Telegram from the Secretary of State for the Colonies to British Guiana (Sir. R. Luyt), 23 March, 1966 [1]; TNA: DO 161/309, Outward Telegram from the Secretary of State for the Colonies to British Guiana (Sir. R. Luyt), 23 March, 1966 [2].

⁴⁷ TNA: DO 161/309, Minute from O.G. Forster to Sir N. Pritchard, 18 March, 1966; TNA: DO 161/309, Minute from Saville Garner to Sir N. Pritchard, 22 March, 1966. Sir Luckhoo related that in their meeting, perhaps because of the brush off he had received from the CRO, Smith had been critical of the CRO, and suggested that the office was dragging its feet to prevent the Secretariat from fulfilling its full responsibilities. See: TNA: DO 161/309, Minute from R. Walker to Sir N. Pritchard, 23 March, 1966.

⁴⁸ TNA: DO 161/309, Minute from R. Walker to Mr. Walsh Atkins, 16 March, 1966.

⁴⁹ TNA: DO 161/309, Minute from R Walker to Mr. D. M. Cleary, 24 March, 1966.

⁵⁰ TNA: DO 161/309, Minute from R Walker to Mr. D. M. Cleary, 24 March, 1966; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 10, Mr. Smith's Engagements for 1966.

⁵¹ TNA: DO 161/309, Minute by N. Pritchard, 6 April, 1966.

Secretariat had any right to participate in the membership process and that the Singapore case did not constitute a precedent for Secretariat involvement.⁵²

Bottomley's letter demonstrated the fundamental lack of understanding within the British Government as to how the Commonwealth was perceived by the newer members. When Smith replied to Bottomley he stressed that the membership issue was not a legal or practical problem but one "of psychology and political atmosphere."⁵³ Smith recognised that there were valid arguments to be made for both of their approaches but argued that consultation through the Secretariat and not the former colonial power was the best way to embody Commonwealth principles and was the expectation of the membership. He agreed that in keeping with international norms the British could reserve the right to manage the external affairs of colonies until independence. However, Smith suggested that if those colonies applied for Commonwealth membership, the British should submit the application to the Secretary-General on the colony's behalf and the Secretariat should carry out the membership consultations.⁵⁴ Unlike the CRO, Smith differentiated between British and Commonwealth matters and sought to remove the latter from British control.

British officials and ministers missed the point of Smith's letter which they saw as both unreasonable and arrogant.⁵⁵ Officials in the CRO saw Smith's persistence on the question of Commonwealth membership as a means of building his own authority rather than a reasonable function for the Secretariat. However, when the British began their consultations on Guyanese membership the newer members preferred Secretariat management of membership applications

⁵² LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 11, Letter from Arthur Bottomley to Arnold Smith, 7 April, 1966.

⁵³ TNA: DO 161/309, Letter from Arnold Smith to Arthur Bottomley, 13 April, 1966.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ TNA: DO 161/309, Minute from L.B. Walsh Atkins to Sir N. Pritchard, 25 April, 1966; TNA: DO 161/309, Letter from Arthur Bottomley to Arnold Smith, 9 May, 1966.

as with the Malawian and Singaporean cases. Zambian officials for example, supported Guyanese membership, but noted in their reply that they “...did not expect the British High Commission to approach us on this matter as this subject is purely the responsibility of the Commonwealth Secretariat.”⁵⁶

The CRO did not want to damage relations with other Commonwealth countries, particularly in central Africa where tensions over Rhodesia were high.⁵⁷ At the same time, they concluded that a firm reply to Smith was needed to check his perceived expansionism. They concluded that if the CRO conducted the majority of membership consultations, they would invite the Secretariat to issue a formal statement of acceptance after Guyanese independence. British officials hoped this would be an acceptable compromise that would help appease the Secretariat and the newer members without any loss of practical authority or breach of British sovereignty.⁵⁸ Bottomley replied to Smith on May 9 and restated British arguments but nonetheless offered that the Secretariat could issue Guyana’s formal acceptance when the consultation process was completed.⁵⁹ At a meeting between CRO and Secretariat officials the following day Smith took a conciliatory tack and agreed to the compromise in Guyana’s case, though he reiterated the importance of employing the Secretariat’s consultative machinery in future.⁶⁰ British feelings of embattlement over Rhodesia and doubts about the Commonwealth occupied the rest of the meeting and encouraged Smith to make conciliatory overtures.⁶¹ In his own records however,

⁵⁶ TNA: DO 161/309, Letter from P.K. Banda to K.G. Ritchie, Esq., 29 April, 1966.

⁵⁷ TNA: DO 161/309, Minute from Saville Garner to Secretary of State, 6 May, 1966.

⁵⁸ TNA: DO 161/309, Minute from R. Walker to Mr. Walsh Atkins, 22 April, 1966; TNA: DO 161/309, Minute from Saville Garner to Secretary of State, 6 May, 1966.

⁵⁹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 13, Letter from Arthur Bottomley to Arnold Smith, 9 May, 1966.

⁶⁰ TNA: DO 161/309, Record of a Meeting Between the Commonwealth Secretary and Mr. Arnold Smith at the Commonwealth Relations Office at 10 A.M. on Tuesday, 10th May, 1966; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 13, Note of conversation with the Rt. Hon. Arthur Bottomley, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, 10 May, 1966.

⁶¹ TNA: DO 161/309, Record of a Meeting Between the Commonwealth Secretary and Mr. Arnold Smith at the Commonwealth Relations Office at 10 A.M. on Tuesday, 10th May, 1966.

Smith noted that Bottomley had ignored a previous oral agreement about consultation procedures and that his own ideas remained unchanged.⁶²

The importance of maintaining British cooperation over Rhodesia was paramount and guided Smith's conciliatory efforts. However, debate between the Secretariat and the CRO had also been productive. The CRO was providing the Secretariat with regular updates of member responses (a courtesy previously unlikely) and the Secretariat had secured the role of formally announcing the consultation results.⁶³ The Secretariat was also now established enough to fulfill its role as an "information clearing house" and prepared a background paper on Guyana that was well received even in the CRO.⁶⁴ More importantly, the Secretariat had secured inroads on the membership issue and was firmly backed by the newer Commonwealth members that viewed the Commonwealth as an IO.

The Guyanese application was an important step in delineating British interests from Commonwealth affairs. The existence of the Secretariat made conflicts of interest more obvious in how the British Government managed membership applications. The newer, expansionist members did not accept British arguments that the application process should not be managed by the Secretariat. The Guyanese Government consistently opposed British involvement in the process. In a meeting with Smith after independence in May 1966, Prime Minister Burnham stressed that British involvement in the membership process had made the application more

⁶² LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 13, Note of conversation with the Rt. Hon. Arthur Bottomley, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, 10 May, 1966. For a record of the original agreement, see: LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 10, Note of a conversation with the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, The Rt. Hon. Arthur Bottomley, 17 March, 1966.

⁶³ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 12, Minute from L.B Walsh Atkins to T.W. Aston, Esq., 18 April, 1966; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 12, Minute from L.B Walsh Atkins to T.W. Aston, Esq., 19 April, 1966; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 12, Minute from R. Walker to T.W. Aston, Esq., 26 April, 1966.

⁶⁴ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 13, Letter from S. Garner to Arnold Smith, 13 May, 1966; TNA: DO 161/309, Commonwealth Secretariat Background Paper: British Guiana (Guyana), 11 May, 1966.

politically vulnerable in Guyana, and he wanted the Secretariat to carry out the consultations.⁶⁵ Burnham stressed that if Guyanese officials had the opportunity at the next Prime Ministers' Meeting, they intended to raise the issue with other Commonwealth members and state for the record that they saw membership consultations as a matter for the Secretariat and had requested the Secretariat to conduct them in the first place.⁶⁶ The British High Commissioner in Guyana reported Burnham's intent to London and, noting that such a discussion was likely to glean extensive support from the newer members, the British prepared a dedicated defensive brief on membership procedures in anticipation of the next Prime Ministers' Meeting.⁶⁷ The debate over membership was not over, but the Guyanese case opened the door for greater Secretariat involvement in subsequent membership applications

Others

By mid-1966, British officials were on a defensive footing regarding Commonwealth membership procedures. Not only did British officials prepare a defensive brief in anticipation of Burnham's questioning in the fall of 1966 but in the intervening months they also had to grapple with the new consultative dynamics that had been established with the Guyana case. As well, they faced the impending merger of the Colonial and Commonwealth Relations Offices into the Commonwealth Office at the beginning of August. With three more colonies slated to become independent that fall and the upheaval of the impending merger, British officials relented. Rather than opposing all Secretariat involvement in upcoming membership applications they focused on maintaining the procedures established with the Guyanese case. The Guyanese case had

⁶⁵ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 14, Visit to Guyana, 23-29 May, 1966.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ TNA: DO 161/309, Minute from W. Turner to Mr. Walker, 7 September, 1966; TNA: DO 161/309, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 1966, New Commonwealth Members: Bechuanaland Basutoland and Barbados, Supplementary Brief by Commonwealth Office, 8 September, 1966.

concluded with a compromise between the CRO and the Secretariat. That compromise included British management of all stages of the application except the final, formal announcement of membership. British management was on the condition that the Secretariat be kept informed at all stages of the proceedings and consulted to a greater degree in future.⁶⁸ As preparations for the independence of Bechuanaland (Botswana), Basutoland (Lesotho), and Barbados began in the spring of 1966, the British Government used the Guyanese case as a referent for engagement with the Secretariat. These procedures did not condone full Secretariat management of membership applications, nor did they invite dispute by fully opposing or excluding the Secretariat. It was a defensive policy aimed at avoiding further changes.

Over the summer of 1966 British officials began membership consultations for the membership of Bechuanaland, Basutoland and Barbados according to the Guyana precedent. The British Government carried out initial consultations and consistently kept the Secretariat informed through the process.⁶⁹ But British officials worried about another membership row over the Barbados application. By mid-summer, consultations for Bechuanaland and Basutoland were going apace. However, due to the Barbadian parliamentary schedule the Barbadian Government had not yet submitted a formal request for Commonwealth membership and the British had therefore not initiated consultations among the wider membership. In the Barbadian case the delay in British consultations was legitimate. But after the questionable delays in British consultations for Singapore and Guyana, British officials worried that either the Secretariat or the Barbadian Government would initiate their own consultations as Smith and Burnham had for

⁶⁸ TNA: DO 161/309, Minute from D.M. Cleary to Mr. Molyneux & Mr. Watt, 29 July, 1966.

⁶⁹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 13, Letter from R. Walker to T.W. Aston, Esq., 13 May, 1966; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 14, Minute from J. McGee to T.W. Aston Esq., 26 May, 1966; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume. 1, File 15 "Diary June 1966 (1)," Minute from J. McGee to T.W. Aston Esq., 10 June, 1966; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 16, Minute from J. McGee to T.W. Aston Esq., 23 June, 1966.

Guyana. These anxieties underscore how effective the efforts of the Secretariat and expansionist members had been in shaping British engagement with the Commonwealth.

As a way to avoid conflict over membership consultation, British officials proposed that the formal membership consultations for all three potential members be conducted at the upcoming Prime Ministers' Meeting.⁷⁰ This would not only be efficient but would altogether avoid potential problems with Secretariat or Barbadian representatives initiating their own membership consultations. British representatives coordinated with Smith to include membership consultations in the provisionary agenda for the September Prime Ministers' Meeting.⁷¹ British cooperation with the Secretariat in anticipation of the meeting was facilitated by the merger of the Colonial and Commonwealth Relations Offices into the Commonwealth Office in August 1966.⁷² The broader staff of the new CO and the reassignment of top CRO personnel dispersed the most vehement source of British antagonism towards the Secretariat. The CRO had lost the defence of its traditional authority and ceased to be a major obstacle to the functions of the Secretariat.

After the merger of the CRO, British opposition to Secretariat management of Commonwealth membership rested on general restrictionism rather than departmental purview or personal antagonism with Arnold Smith. At the September Prime Ministers' Meeting British officials prepared to defend the membership procedures based on the Guyanese precedent.⁷³ Their brief

⁷⁰ TNA: DO 161/309, Minute from W. Turner to Mr. McGee, 22 July, 1966; TNA: DO 161/309, Minute from W. Turner to Mr. Molyneux, 5 August, 1966.

⁷¹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 18, Commonwealth Circular No. 76, 15 July, 1966.

⁷² Vivekanandan, "The Commonwealth Secretariat," 312.

⁷³ *Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, 6th-15th September, 1966: Final Communique* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1966), 1; The membership issue was so minor that of several hundred pages of preparatory briefs, the Secretariat only prepared a single, half page brief regarding the membership discussion. See: CSLA: 1997/029 "Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meetings, Lagos, January 1966," Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers Steering Brief for Chairman No. 14: Commonwealth Membership, 4 September, 1966; For further

was somewhat contradictory, in that it argued that the United Kingdom could carry out consultations more effectively than the Secretariat by virtue of Britain having representatives in all Commonwealth capitals.⁷⁴ However, it also actively endorsed the Secretariat's role announcing formal acceptance as well as the Secretariat's work in cases of already independent applicants like Singapore and Malawi.⁷⁵

The September Prime Ministers' Meeting was a turning point on questions of membership. In an internal debrief several weeks after the meeting, officials in the new Commonwealth Office concluded that in addition to making the formal announcements of member acceptance, it would be appropriate for the Secretariat to carry out all membership consultations in the future, "particularly since a number of African and Caribbean countries think that it is appropriate."⁷⁶ In a later study of membership debates since the formation of the Secretariat, CO officials noted that over the past six membership cases (Singapore, Malawi, Guyana, Botswana, Lesotho, and Barbados) Secretariat involvement had steadily increased.⁷⁷ The study noted that every other Commonwealth member except Australia preferred the Secretariat to process membership applications.⁷⁸ CO officials concluded that to deny this would be destructive to Commonwealth relations as it would appear as though the British still thought they ran the Commonwealth.⁷⁹

records of Secretariat meeting preparations, see: CSLA: File 1997/028 "Heads of Government Meeting September 1966."

⁷⁴ TNA: DO 161/309, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 1966, New Commonwealth Members: Bechuanaland Basutoland and Barbados, Supplementary Brief by Commonwealth Office, 8 September, 1966.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ TNA: DO 161/309, Minute from W. Turner to Mr. Walker, 5 October, 1966; Newer members advocated for the inclusion of members' "high appreciations of the work of the Secretary-General and his colleagues in the Commonwealth Secretariat" in the final communique. See: *Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, 6th-15th September, 1966: Final Communique*, 10.

⁷⁷ TNA: FCO 49/74, Handling of Applications for Commonwealth Membership, 20 September, 1967.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

The British Government no longer saw any advantage “either of principle or convenience” to opposing views of the wider membership about membership applications.⁸⁰ This was a major shift in British policy that opened the door to the Secretariat fully managing membership applications. In 1967, the Commonwealth Office requested that the Secretary-General process Mauritius’ entire membership application on their behalf.⁸¹ In February 1968, the Secretariat hosted the Swaziland Independence Conference at Marlborough House and was also able to carry out membership consultations before independence itself.⁸²

Conclusion

The early debates between the Secretariat and the British Government led to the gradual reduction in British opposition to Secretariat management of Commonwealth membership, which paved the way for the Secretariat to operate as an IO. The British Government maintained a restrictionist view of the Secretariat but was willing to concede to the views of newer, expansionist members in order to maintain good relations with the Commonwealth. The debates over membership applications consistently demonstrated that newer members expected the Secretariat to handle membership applications as the Secretariat of any other international organisation would. The ensuing applications also demonstrated that the Secretariat was capable of effectively handling these applications. Expansionist members exerted considerable pressure on the British Government and Whitehall gradually conceded. The dispersal of the CRO in August 1966 effectively ended British arguments based on traditional authority. The the British Government’s weak assertion in the September 1966 defensive brief that it was the best equipped

⁸⁰ TNA: FCO 49/74, Telegram from Commonwealth Office to Canberra, 23 October, 1967.

⁸¹ TNA: FCO 49/74, Handling of Applications for Commonwealth Membership, 20 September, 1967; TNA: FCO 49/74, Telegram from Commonwealth Office to Canberra, 23 October, 1967.

⁸² TNA: FCO 49/103, Telegram from Commonwealth Office to Swaziland, 23 February, 1968; TNA: FCO 49/103, Commonwealth Secretariat Press Release: Swaziland to be a Member of the Commonwealth, 24 February 1968; Further papers from the 1968 Swaziland Independence Conference can be found in TNA: FCO 49/103.

to handle membership applications was significantly less potent than earlier CRO arguments based on traditional authority and long-established procedures.

Perhaps more importantly, debates over Commonwealth membership provided a framework for British officials to envision the Commonwealth as something other than a British entity.

Discussion over the membership of Singapore, Malawi, and Guyana forced the British Government to differentiate between British and Commonwealth procedures. Historically, both the submission and processing of membership applications had been carried out within the British Government. There had been no need to clearly delineate responsibility for these two tasks. The formation of the Secretariat exposed British conflicts of interest in handling membership applications. Newer members' suspicions of British motives and view of the Commonwealth as an international organisation led them to demand membership applications be processed by the Secretariat. With clearer definition of how responsibility for applications could be divided, British officials became more receptive to the Secretariat's role in processing membership applications. In 1965, Arnold Smith unsuccessfully tried to explain the expansionist members' perspective to British Officials by analogising the problem in terms of a club. He recalled that "giving a local clubland analogy, I said that I had just been told of my election to the Athenaeum by the club's secretary, not by its oldest living member."⁸³ However, by 1968 officials in the Commonwealth Office agreed that Secretariat management of Mauritius' entire application was a reasonable course of action.

A clearer delineation between the submission and processing of membership applications also assuaged fears of Commonwealth infringement on British sovereignty. Newer members demonstrated that they expected transparency and progress towards decolonisation but would

⁸³ Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 22.

respect British sovereignty over colonial possessions to the same standards they observed in the United Nations. In a similar sense, Arnold Smith and his staff demonstrated that they would not interfere with British sovereignty but expected to process applications for Commonwealth membership.

Over a four year span, the task of processing Commonwealth membership applications had been divorced from the British Government in favour of the Secretariat. While this was in part due to Arnold Smith's persistence and the eventual reorganisation of the British diplomatic service, the change was primarily due to pressure from the newer Commonwealth members. Newer members consistently advocated for a strong Secretariat that functioned like other international organisations. The British Government was used to an exclusive, Anglo-centric model for processing membership applications and British officials had difficulty conceiving of the Commonwealth beyond that model. Pressure from the newer members and the Secretariat forced British officials to better define the processes governing Commonwealth membership, which opened the door to a larger, more well defined role for the Secretariat.

Chapter Seven: High-Level Meetings

Introduction

Free consultation on matters of common interest was the basis of the original Commonwealth. The Imperial Conferences of the late 19th and early 20th century were the foundation of the organisation, and remained central to Commonwealth values and action. Few aspects of the organisation were decided outside the meetings of prime ministers and senior Commonwealth officials. The management of high-level Commonwealth meetings was a means to shape what was included in Commonwealth consultation and how that consultation was carried out.¹ In the late 1960s, the expansionist and restrictionist groups agreed that the Secretariat should have a role managing Commonwealth meetings. However, the extent of the Secretariat's role in Commonwealth meetings was the main field of conflict between expansionist and restrictionist views for the future of the organisation.

Debate over the Secretariat's role organising and servicing Commonwealth meetings increased as the Secretariat's administrative functions were established through 1965 and 1966. These debates hinged on interpretation of the *Agreed Memorandum*. The memorandum outlined the responsibilities of the Secretariat in four main areas including international affairs, economics, a review of Commonwealth organisations, and the servicing of Commonwealth meetings. The Secretariat's role was prefaced with the old axiom that "consultation is the life blood of the Commonwealth."² In international affairs the Secretariat was tasked with arranging specialised political meetings when deemed appropriate by the prime ministers.³ In economics, the Secretariat was tasked with planning meetings on behalf of the Commonwealth Economic

¹ O'Neill, "Militancy and Accommodation," 212.

² *Agreed Memorandum on the Commonwealth Secretariat*, 3.

³ *Ibid.*

Consultative Council (CECC) and Commonwealth Liaison Committee, and other bodies like the Commonwealth Economic Committee (CEC) pending the review of Commonwealth organisations.⁴ Also pending review, the Secretariat would take over the planning of the Commonwealth Education Conference and other Commonwealth Education Liaison Unit meetings, in addition to the meetings of the Commonwealth Telecommunications Board.⁵

The Secretariat was primarily tasked with organising Prime Ministers' Meetings and eventually, other ministerial or officials' meetings "where appropriate."⁶ The process of planning and executing Commonwealth meetings was the thread uniting the four areas of Secretariat responsibility. Meetings were not only a manifestation of Commonwealth values, but also the practical means to assert the Secretariat's role vis-à-vis the British Government and other restrictionists, and to cement the Secretariat's reputation as a reliable central body. Assuming management of meetings involved divorcing basic administrative functions from the British Government in favour of the Secretariat. In practical terms the main organisational aspects of Commonwealth meetings were consultation before meetings, setting dates, agendas, and meeting locations, coordinating the role of the host government and logistics, and arranging the chairmanship of meetings. The handover of servicing Commonwealth meetings from the British Government to the Secretariat was marked by four evolutionary dynamics.

The first was widespread passive resistance to Secretariat management of Commonwealth meetings. This resistance was centred in the restrictionist camp and included more nuanced opposition from the British Government. In most British governmental departments opposition to the Secretariat was manifested when British interests were at stake. Many departments were used

⁴ Ibid., 5.

⁵ Ibid., 6-7.

⁶ Ibid., 6; Doxey, *The Commonwealth Secretariat*, 54-55.

to British preferences taking precedent in Commonwealth meetings. Resistance to the Secretariat in this manner was the product of a general institutional memory with Britain as the centre of a hub-and-spoke Commonwealth. “Britain had an entrenched institutional and historic knowledge of colonial governance, as well as many highly skilled practitioners with specialist knowledge of individual colonial territories.”⁷ The British Government was often supportive in principle but decidedly restrictionist and wary of Secretariat expansion. Suspicion of any Commonwealth body that might interfere with member sovereignty or otherwise act as a pressure group to the most established members was also a key factor among the restrictionists, though occasionally opposition was simply based on support for the British Government as in the case of Australia and New Zealand. Australian opposition to Commonwealth reform on racial grounds was also a major factor during the Menzies years.

The second theme of the Secretariat’s takeover of Commonwealth meetings was the active resistance of the Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO) until its amalgamation with the Colonial Office in August 1966. Before the Secretariat, the CRO was able to insert British preferences into the planning process for meeting timing, agenda, attendance, and logistics under the guise of providing secretariat-style services to the Commonwealth. The growth of the Secretariat meant that the British Government could only pursue those preferences by coordinating with the Secretariat, thereby reducing deference to British preferences and the relevance of the CRO itself. Unlike the question of membership consultations, planning and servicing Commonwealth meetings was a responsibility specifically mandated to the Secretariat in the *Agreed Memorandum*. In consequence, CRO opposition was less marked as in other areas

⁷ Charlotte Lydia Riley, ““Tropical Allsorts”: The Transnational Flavor of British Development Policies in Africa,” *Journal of World History* 26, no. 4 Special Issue: The British World as World History: Networks in Imperial and Global History (December 2015), 840.

such as administrative logistics or membership consultations. However, in order to justify its continued existence, the CRO opposed the Secretariat in most facets of meeting coordination even when other British departments were supportive. This was particularly evident in delineating the role of the host government, setting meeting agendas, and servicing smaller meetings of Commonwealth officials, committees, and ministerial meetings below the level of the prime ministers. For these smaller meetings and administrative tasks Secretariat involvement would require approval from the membership and had been left open to interpretation in the *Agreed Memorandum*.⁸ Resistance from the CRO was largely manifested in promoting and acting on a very limited interpretation of the *Agreed Memorandum*. The CRO ultimately ceased to be the focal point of active British resistance to the Secretariat as the British diplomatic service was reorganised. .

The third dynamic was the expansion of the Secretariat itself. Though initially reliant on British assistance, the growth of the Secretariat's capacity to service meetings allowed it to decentralise aspects of Commonwealth meetings in such a way as to render them less contingent on the British or any other host government. The growth of the Secretariat reflected the expansionist members' vision for the organisation and facilitated a greater consultation between the Secretariat and prospective host governments as well as a greater role for the Secretariat in a wider array of ministerial and officials' meetings. The expansion of its capacity ultimately bolstered the Secretariat's role as an independent organisational body and Commonwealth interlocutor working on behalf of all members.

Finally, the Secretariat's use of informal connections within the Commonwealth to manage meetings shaped the handover process. Secretary-General Arnold Smith used his connections

⁸ *Agreed Memorandum on the Commonwealth Secretariat*, 7.

within the Canadian Government under Pearson and the support of the newer Commonwealth members to bolster the Secretariat's capacity and independence before that capacity was reflected in the Secretariat's own staff and resources.⁹ This dynamic speeded the handover and more effectively democratised the Secretariat.

Taken together, these four dynamics characterised the evolution of the Secretariat's role in servicing Commonwealth meetings. These features received less attention from contemporaries than the major political and economic debates that shaped the modern Commonwealth. However, these dynamics are more important to understanding the history of the Commonwealth Secretariat and transition of the Commonwealth from an imperial club to an international organisation. These dynamics characterised the Secretariat's role in meetings which in turn represented Commonwealth values or the "life blood" of the organisation. Meetings and the service thereof were a common feature of the four main areas of Secretariat responsibility and the most practical way for the Secretariat to impact the organisation.¹⁰ The process of the Secretariat taking on Commonwealth meetings was foundational to Secretariat engagement in the politico-economic affairs of the Commonwealth. The following chapters explore the Secretariat's first forays into planning Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meetings and relate the process of planning meetings with the political problem of Rhodesia and, as the Secretariat became more established, to the economic problem of aid and development.

Background

⁹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 1, BBC Topical Tapes, Profile: Arnold Smith interviewed by Vibart Wills, 1965.

¹⁰ Stuart Mole argues that if consultation is the life blood of the Commonwealth, the Secretary-General and Secretariat are the mechanisms by which such consultation is achieved. See: Mole, "From Smith to Sharma," 47.

As the root of Commonwealth consultation, meetings had been a central feature of the nascent Commonwealth since the Imperial Conferences of the late 19th century. By the mid-1960s, even with rapid advances in communications technology, in-person meetings were still the most effective form of Commonwealth consultation. The Secretariat faced a well-established tradition of British management of Commonwealth meetings. The British Government had hosted all but two imperial and Commonwealth Conferences in addition to the majority of smaller Commonwealth meetings since the 19th century. The CRO was well habituated to planning Commonwealth meetings. The department was established in 1947 and had provided secretarial services ever since.

However, British organisation of Commonwealth meetings allowed Whitehall's preferences about meeting dates, timing, agendas, and policy directions to be incorporated into Commonwealth affairs under the guise of providing services to the group. As the Commonwealth membership grew, British interests were increasingly evident in the planning and execution of Commonwealth meetings. For example, in preparation for the 1953 Prime Ministers' Meeting, British preparatory documents focused on imperial and Cold War topics like security in the Middle East and the Suez Canal, NATO, the problem of Germany, and recent Soviet and Chinese actions.¹¹ The topics of British preparations took the confident imperial tone of pre-Suez foreign policy.¹² British preparations generally assumed that other members were also suspicious of Soviet and Chinese activities and supported NATO and the European Defence Community.¹³ The 1953 communique largely reflected British planning save the addition of a

¹¹ TNA: DO 121/207, Preparation for Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 1953.

¹² Brian Harrison and Robert Blake respectively characterise this period of British foreign policy as one of "illusions of world influence" and "extrovert confidence." See: Harrison, *Seeking a Role*, 540; Robert Blake, *The Paladin History of England: The Decline of Power, 1915-1964* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 406..

¹³ TNA: DO 121/207, Preparation for Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 1953; Butler, *Britain and Empire*, 196.

discussion over the armistice talks in Korea. The Korean armistice was a project of particular interest to the Indian delegation but was scarcely reflected in the broader meeting and not at all in British preparations.¹⁴ South Asian concerns were not prioritized. In 1953 India, Ceylon, and Pakistan were still a clear minority to Old Commonwealth settler-states. Without the later support of Afro-Caribbean members, racial politics and the notion of non-alignment were not tenable in the Commonwealth.

By the 1960s however, the old dominions and Britain no longer commanded a majority in the Commonwealth. Assumed allegiance to the Western Bloc or the British Empire rendered attempts to align Commonwealth Conferences with British interests more obvious and more offensive to the membership. By the 1964 Prime Ministers' Meeting, South Africa had withdrawn from the Commonwealth and a greater number of Afro-Caribbean members were represented. The 1964 communique asserted that the most important major issue of the day was race relations.¹⁵ The Secretariat was also commissioned in 1964 to be recruited from throughout the Commonwealth and to serve all member governments.¹⁶ There was little assumption of shared geopolitical stances and so defence and security-related discussions moved to other fora.¹⁷ Yet while British posturing over the content of meetings had been more thoroughly exposed and rejected by the 1960s, the habit of pressing British preferences persisted.

¹⁴ Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 1953 (London, 3-9 June): Final Communique," in *The Commonwealth at the Summit*, 39. See: Robert Barnes, "Between the Blocs: India, the United Nations, and Ending the Korean War," *Journal of Korean Studies* 18, no. 2 (Fall 2013): 263-286; Lloyd, "Britain and the Transformation from Empire to Commonwealth," 343.

¹⁵ Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 1964 (London, 8-15 July): Final Communique," in *The Commonwealth at the Summit*, 84.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁷ McIntyre, "Britain and the Creation of the Commonwealth Secretariat," 135-158; McIntyre, "Canada and the Creation of the Commonwealth Secretariat, 1965," 753-777; Lloyd, "Britain and the Transformation from Empire to Commonwealth," 343. See also: Anthony Clayton, "'Deceptive Might': Imperial Defence and Security, 1900-1968," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume IV: The Twentieth Century*, eds. Judith M. Brown and Wm Roger Louis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999): 280-305; Lloyd, "Britain and the Transformation from Empire to Commonwealth," 344.

A 1964 distribution list error illustrates the extent to which these habits persisted and were rooted in the CRO. In this instance posturing over British preferences caused confusion among the members and demonstrated the methods by which the CRO could manipulate Commonwealth meetings to serve British preferences. When the CRO circulated documents regarding the Secretariat preparatory committee after the 1964 Prime Ministers' Meeting they accidentally included central African colonies (North Rhodesia and Nyasaland) on the distribution list several months prior to those colonies' independence that October. This error threatened British efforts to keep the working party small as well as British suzerainty (by inviting colonies to participate prior to their independence). The mistaken invitation was quickly retracted and British officials argued that only after independence could Zambian and Malawian officials be brought into the Commonwealth deliberations.¹⁸

The retraction and double standard of information distribution caused a great deal of confusion and was criticised by F.M. Thomas, the Deputy-Governor of North Rhodesia. Thomas went so far as to write Sir Neil Pritchard, the Cabinet Secretary to say "With all respect to the C.R.O. I think they are not good at classification. This telegram asking us to treat other telegrams as personal is itself in the non-personal series, and this is bound to cause confusion. Could they be asked to keep the two series quite distinct?"¹⁹ The CRO defended its right to exclude colonies from the deliberations, noting the British commitment to maintaining their sovereignty to the day of legal independence and not before. This was in keeping with wider British policy in the UN and other international fora. However, CRO officials noted internally that they would be obliged to revisit the attendance issue if the meeting were postponed until after those nations'

¹⁸ TNA: FCO 141/14126, Northern Rhodesia Government Inward Telegram no. 79 from CROSEC London to Governor, Lusaka, 2 September, 1964; TNA: FCO 141/14126, Northern Rhodesia Government Outward Telegram no. 510 from Governor, Lusaka to CRO London, 19 August, 1964.

¹⁹ TNA: FCO 141/14126, Letter from N.W. McClellan to Permanent Secretary, 4 September, 1964.

independence. A postponement would remove any question of British sovereignty over her colonies but would also undermine CRO efforts to keep the number of representatives at Commonwealth meetings at a minimum.²⁰

On the other hand, the next British election was set for October 1964. The deliberations about the Secretariat working party were increasingly inconvenient for many members of the British Government. The looming British election added to the appeal of postponing the meeting. Postponement might lead to a larger working party with the addition of Zambia and Malawi as full members, but would clear up the embarrassing issue of the distribution list error and allow the British to stand their ground on the sovereignty principle without appearing to go back on their word. Thus, the CRO increasingly sought to postpone the preparatory meeting until after the conclusion of elections, which would now be convenient for the British in multiple ways. However, the CRO did not wish to arouse suspicion of obstructing the Commonwealth working party. Internally, CRO staff agreed to push for delaying the Officials Meeting into 1965 although they would not openly advocate for the postponement.²¹

On the heels of the CRO mix-up there were heated discussions in the Commonwealth over both colonial and member representation in the Secretariat working party. Ultimately, colonial representatives were excluded and the British conceded that Commonwealth members could send their own representatives rather than agreeing on regional ones (see Chapter Three). However, the CRO circulated the news that members could represent themselves independently only eleven days before the proposed meeting.²² In consequence, East African Commonwealth members who had been attempting to co-ordinate regional representation from an early date, as

²⁰ TNA: FCO 141/14126, Minute from Deputy Governor to Y.E., 26 September, 1964.

²¹ TNA: FCO 141/14126, Outward Telegram From Commonwealth Relations Office to Commonwealth High Commissioners, 18 September, 1964.

²² Ibid.

well as Zambian and Malawian officials anticipating independence in October, respectively wrote to the CRO to request clarification as to whether each member could be represented and to request more time to select their own candidates in lieu of their previous work on regional nominees.²³ On September 23, one week before the proposed meeting, the CRO issued a circular letter noting that a number of Commonwealth governments had expressed that it would be difficult for them to be adequately represented on September 29 and that those members had suggested the meeting be postponed. Ultimately, the meeting of the working party took place in January 1965 with Zambia and Malawi represented as full members.²⁴

Outwardly the CRO had successfully consulted with the membership, resolved the issue of representation, and organised the logistics of the officials meeting. In the process however, the CRO had injected British preferences into the workings of the Commonwealth and delayed the meeting in such a way that it was most conducive to the British electoral schedule. Furthermore, the CRO-facilitated delay upheld the British desire to maintain control of dependencies' foreign policy up to the day of their independence and cleared the CRO of any embarrassment resulting in the distribution error. While British officials conceded that the meeting would not be as small as they would have liked, under the guise of providing services to the Commonwealth they had nonetheless maintained most of their preferences without appearing to do so.

There were thus significant problems with British management of Commonwealth meetings on the eve of the Secretariat's formation. Whitehall was accustomed to the Commonwealth catering

²³ TNA: FCO 141/14126, Outward Telegram from B.H.C. Nairobi to CRO, 28 August, 1964; TNA: FCO 141/14126, Outward Telegram No. P. 327 from Governor, Lusaka to Secretary of State, London, 26 September, 1964; TNA: FCO 141/14126, Outward Telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office to Commonwealth High Commissioners, 23 September, 1964.

²⁴ TNA: FCO 141/14126, Outward Telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office to Commonwealth High Commissioners, 23 September, 1964; TNA: CAB 148/43, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 1965: Commonwealth Secretariat (Draft Brief by the Commonwealth Relations Office), Annex B: Summary of views expressed by other Commonwealth Governments on Officials' Report, 28 May, 1965.

to British preferences. Those preferences were further facilitated by the CRO. As with the membership debates outlined in Chapter Six, there was a clear conflict of interest between the Anglo-centric status quo maintained by the British Government and the more egalitarian ideas of the newer members. The newer, expansionist members saw the Commonwealth as an international organisation and supported a strong Secretariat with a broad mandate encompassing all aspects of Commonwealth consultation.

Chapter Eight: Prime Ministers' Meetings

When the Secretariat was formed in 1965 it was primarily tasked with servicing Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meetings. The Secretariat faced a well-established tradition of the CRO organising meetings according to British preferences. In the core organisational aspects of Commonwealth meetings (consultation, setting dates, agendas, and locations, coordinating the role of the host government, logistics, and arranging the chairmanship) passive resistance from the British Government and restrictionist members persisted in tandem with the concerted, yet declining opposition of the CRO (in contrast to the Cabinet Office, which reflected Labour's cautious support). Arnold Smith and the Secretariat countered that pushback with capacity-building efforts facilitated by interpersonal connections and support from the newer members. The newer, expansionist members also exerted considerable pressure on the British Government. Those members opposed continued British management of Commonwealth meetings which they saw as a conflict of interest and antithetical to the proper workings of an international organisation. These debates were played out during the planning and execution of Prime Ministers' Meetings. These meetings were the Secretariat's main priority and had the most potential to cement the Secretariat's role in both the political and economic activities of the Commonwealth.

The 1966 Lagos Prime Ministers' Meeting

The first Prime Ministers' Meeting after the formation of the Secretariat was an emergency meeting proposed by the Nigerian Government specifically to address the unfolding crisis in Rhodesia.¹ This was the first instance of the Secretariat fulfilling its mandate of servicing Prime

¹ The Nigerian Government no doubt felt that this was a timely opportunity to build support in the Commonwealth, as the Biafran crisis was escalating in Nigeria itself. The topic of Biafra, however, was not the basis for the meeting.

Ministers' Meetings. The meeting was a surprise and took place before the Secretariat was able to manage a meeting of that scale on its own strength.² This January 1966 meeting was also unique in that it was the first Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting to take place outside of London since 1932. The Secretariat worked closely with the host Nigerian Government to organise the meeting. In contrast to working with the British Government in its capacity as host for other Commonwealth meetings there was much less friction between the Secretariat and the Nigerian Government. The former did not need to combat British recalcitrance and the latter saw the Secretariat as an asset rather than a threat. The division of labour between the Secretariat and host government was much more freely shared and ultimately helped solidify the Secretariat's capacity to organise Commonwealth meetings beyond reliance on the British as host or predecessor.

Key to the Secretariat's success in Lagos was that the meeting did not originate from a British proposal and did not involve the British Government as host. On November 11, 1965 the Rhodesian Government unilaterally declared independence (UDI) from the British Empire. This was a move by the white settler government in order to avoid a transitional model for independence that included majority rule. Rhodesia was a functionally apartheid, rogue state. The UDI escalated the Rhodesian crisis and alarmed other African governments. In early December the Nigerian Government proposed and initiated consultations for an emergency Commonwealth meeting in early 1966. The Nigerian Government assumed full Secretariat involvement and kept the Secretariat informed as they collected member responses.³ Shortly

² CSLA: 1997-29, Telegram from Arnold Smith, Commonwealth Secretary-General to A.L. Adu, 21 December, 1965.

³ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 4, Telegram for Rt. Hon. Prime Minister of Federal Republic of Nigeria, Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, from Arnold Smith, Commonwealth Secretary General, 14 December, 1965; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 4, Record of Conversation with Mr. L.J. Dosunmu, Acting High Commissioner for Nigeria, 13 December, 1965.

after the Nigerian call went out, Secretary-General Smith issued his own circular requesting that Commonwealth governments send a copy of their replies to keep the Secretariat informed of their decisions on attending a January meeting so the Secretariat could begin preparing logistics with accurate numbers.⁴

Secretariat staff kept track of the responses from member governments which were mostly willing to coordinate with both the Secretariat and the Nigerian Government. While most members kept the Secretariat informed, the Australian High Commissioner called on Smith personally to inform Smith that Robert Menzies had no intention of replying to the Secretariat which he saw as interfering with the prime ministers' right to private communication between themselves. Menzies' objection echoed both a limited interpretation of the *Agreed Memorandum* and a wider pattern of Australian resistance to the Secretariat's activities including coordination of Singapore's membership application, the Secretariat's involvement in the most recent Trade Officials Meeting, and its work on the review of Intra-Commonwealth Organisations mandated in 1965.⁵ Smith promptly wrote to Menzies to address his concerns and "regretted that there had been a misunderstanding" about the Secretariat's role in organising the meeting. However, Smith was secure in the backing of the Nigerian Government and the wider group of expansionist members.⁶

Within the wider Commonwealth, the British debated the merits of the Lagos meeting, the Australians opposed it outright, and the New Zealanders expressed that they would follow the

⁴ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 5, Commonwealth Circular no. 20, 16 December, 1965.

⁵ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 6, Record of Conversation with Sir Alexander Downer, Australian High Commissioner, on Wednesday 22 December at 2:15 p.m; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 6, Prime Ministers' Meeting, Lagos: State of Replies to Nigerian Invitation as of 31st December, 1965.

⁶ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 6, Record of Conversation with Sir Alexander Downer, Australian High Commissioner, on Wednesday 22 December at 2:15 p.m; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 6, Letter from Arnold Smith to Sir Alexander Downer, 22 December, 1965.

majority. In a show of good faith, officials from Trinidad and Tobago questioned the need for the meeting if the Rhodesian crisis was ended by British action in the meantime.⁷ The bulk of the membership distrusted British intentions and felt that the proposed meeting would be an important step in resolving the crisis. Consequently, the majority responded to the Secretariat's calls for coordination and confirmed their countries' attendance with the Secretariat as well as with the Nigerian Government. Amidst this supportive milieu, Britain and the East African members with the largest stake in the Rhodesian crisis were in attendance and the diplomatic balance of the conference was aided by the absence of the most extreme parties. At one extreme, in solidarity with the OAU, Ghana's Nkrumah and Tanzania's Julius Nyerere had already broken diplomatic relations with Britain. Although both leaders continued to correspond with the Secretariat as Commonwealth members, they refused to breach their diplomatic breaks by attending the conference. At the other extreme, Robert Menzies felt that the single-issue conference in Africa was tantamount to the African members summoning the British Prime Minister to come and explain British policy. Menzies felt that this was simply wrong, and refused to send an Australian delegation to a conference. Australia was represented by an observer only.⁸ The absence of these extreme parties helped mediate the January meeting and keep key parties (notably Britain and Zambia) at the table.

Smith worked with his limited staff and the Nigerian Government to set up the meeting logistics, in addition to working on a political level to ensure that the meeting took place at all. African governments under pressure from the OAU were contemplating breaking diplomatic ties with

⁷ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 6, Statement by Sir Robert Menzies, Prime Minister of Australia, 28 December, 1965; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 5, Letter from New Zealand High Commissioner to Arnold Smith, 17 December, 1965; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 6, Letter from W. Andrew Rose, High Commissioner for Trinidad and Tobago to Arnold Smith, 23 December, 1965.

⁸ *Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting in Lagos 1966: Final Communiqué* (London: HMSO, 1966), 3; Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 33; CSLA: 1997-29, Letter from Arnold Smith to the Hon. Stanley Wei, Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lagos, 8 January, 1966; Barber, "The Impact of the Rhodesian Crisis on the Commonwealth," 89.

Britain (as Ghana and Tanzania had done) or leaving the Commonwealth in protest over British handling of the Rhodesian crisis.⁹ The British Government was interested in the meeting in principle but had no intention of attending a hostile gathering where they would be “put in the dock” by former colonies.¹⁰ Arnold Smith maintained extensive correspondence with his African and British counterparts to keep them in dialogue with each other and ensure that the Commonwealth did not break up before the Lagos meeting took place.

Smith also employed his personal connections in the Canadian Government to facilitate the Lagos meeting. The Canadian Government under Pearson was supportive of both the Secretariat and the Lagos meeting and worked closely with Smith to keep both the United Kingdom and African members engaged. On December 16, 1965, two days after Smith initiated coordination with the Nigerian Government and the same day as consultations for the meeting began, he announced that the Canadian Government had expanded its program of sanctions so that over 90% of Canadian imports from Rhodesia had been embargoed.¹¹ The circular expressed Canadian support for the British strategy of sanctions over military intervention while also showing appreciation of the gravity of the situation and support for African members calling for increased action.¹² The Secretariat’s timely announcement of these Canadian measures showed that action was being taken within the Commonwealth and that there was momentum to be harnessed at the upcoming meeting.

Canadian officials helped Smith build rapport between British and African Commonwealth members, and worked closely with Smith in advance of the Lagos meeting. On December 17

⁹ Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 30.

¹⁰ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 4, Record of Conversation with Sir Burke Trend and (Subsequently) Mr. P. Rogers (British Cabinet Office) on Wednesday, 15th December at 10 A.M. at Cabinet Office.

¹¹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 5, Commonwealth Circular no. 20, 16 December, 1965.

¹² LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 5, Commonwealth Circular no. 21, 16 December, 1965.

Smith hosted a luncheon at his personal residence, inviting high-level British officials with a hand in the Rhodesian crisis, as well as Central and East African representatives. The number of Canadian statesmen invited was equal to the number of other representatives and the Canadian guests were interspersed among the other attendees in the seating plan for the occasion.¹³ At the suggestion of Paul Martin, the Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs, the following day Smith sent a lengthy secret telegram to the Canadian Prime Minister and heads of External Affairs.¹⁴ Smith knew that British Prime Minister Harold Wilson was having second thoughts about the meeting but planned to consult with the Canadian Government before making a final decision (as per the established British practice of consulting with the Old Commonwealth outside of regular Commonwealth meetings). Smith hoped that forearming the Canadian Government with a full complement of information and arguments would help them convince Wilson to attend.¹⁵ Smith also outlined that any attempts by the British to delay the meeting, call for it to be held in London, or to seek the chairmanship would be seriously damaging to African views of the Commonwealth.¹⁶ Pearson managed to convince Wilson to attend the conference in a telephone conversation on December 31 though he advised Smith that the Secretariat would have to tread a carefully non-partisan line if the British were to follow through.¹⁷ Pearson later echoed a number of Smith's arguments in his speech at the successful opening of the conference on 11 January, 1966, showing that the Secretary-General not only made compelling points but had a valuable ally in Pearson.

¹³ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 5, Luncheon at the Residence in Honour of Mr. Arnold Smith, Friday, December 17, 1965.

¹⁴ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 5, Telegram from Arnold Smith to Canadian Prime Minister, Secretary of State for External Affairs, and Undersecretary of State for External Affairs, 18 December, 1965.

¹⁵ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 5, Telegram from Arnold Smith to Canadian Prime Minister, Secretary of State for External Affairs, and Undersecretary of State for External Affairs, 18 December, 1965.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 54-55.

Smith also had local Canadian support from the Canadian High Commissioner's office in Lagos. The office appointed Andre Couvrette as Secretary to the Canadian Delegation for the conference. Couvrette wrote to Smith upon his arrival in Lagos and noted that while they had thought better than to "appropriate" Smith upon his arrival, the office was looking forward to seeing him and was anxious to assist in any way possible. Smith's personal connections in the Canadian diplomatic service afforded him additional Canadian support in Lagos. Beyond the official Chancery channels for correspondence, Couvrette's letter included both the High Commissioner's and his own home telephone numbers in case Smith needed anything.¹⁸ Before signing the typed letter, Couvrette also included a handwritten note saying "Remember the Paris visit! This is going to be fun too! The start of a Happy New Year."¹⁹ Smith employed his connections in the Canadian Government and diplomatic service as well as Canada's good reputation in both the old and new Commonwealth to bolster the Secretariat and to facilitate the success of the Lagos Meeting. David McIntyre has argued that Canada's chief contribution to the Secretariat was Arnold Smith, but Smith's continued association with Canadian diplomats provided the ongoing support necessary to his success as first Secretary-General.²⁰

Secretariat staff worked closely with the Nigerian Government to prepare for the meeting including consultations, background papers, staff, and logistics. On December 20, only ten days after the Nigerian proposal was first circulated, Deputy Secretary-General T.E. Gooneratne was already in Lagos to work with the Nigerian Government.²¹ Two days later Gooneratne reported to Smith that he had discussed the conference details with Mr. Nwokedi, the Nigerian Permanent Secretary of External Affairs, and secured a suitable venue. The Nigerian Government saw the

¹⁸ CSLA: 1997-29, Letter from André Couvrette to Arnold Smith, 5 January, 1966. (1035)

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ McIntyre, "Canada and the Creation of the Commonwealth Secretariat, 1965," 773-774; Ball, 99.

²¹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 4, Telegram for Rt. Hon. Prime Minister of Federal Republic of Nigeria, Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, from Arnold Smith, Commonwealth Secretary General, 14 December, 1965.

Lagos meeting as establishing an important model for hosting Commonwealth meetings outside London.²² The expansionist Nigerian Government was committed to the success of the conference and appointed a Joint Conference Officer to work more closely with the Secretariat.²³ Secretariat staff pursued a comprehensive role in planning the Lagos Prime Ministers' Meeting while avoiding reliance on a hostile CRO. The Secretariat prepared detailed plans for the meeting directly based on CRO documents from the June 1965 Prime Ministers' Meeting.²⁴ However, Smith obtained these template documents from the British Cabinet Office, rather than the CRO itself.²⁵ Cabinet Secretary Burke Trend also helped in terms of administrative supplies and arranged a meeting between Smith and Mr. J. Howard-Drake who had previously worked on the logistics of several Prime Ministers' Meetings.²⁶ In this manner the Secretariat gleaned information and assistance from the British Government through the cautiously sympathetic Cabinet Office without deferring to the resistant core of the CRO.

The bulk of the work setting up the conference was nonetheless coordinated between the Secretariat and the Nigerian Government. Nigerian officials decisively accounted for shortfalls in available Secretariat staff. While the Secretariat anticipated contributing 28 staff members, the Nigerian Government provided an initial 42, as well as all security, press, transportation, communications, protocol, and hospitality staff.²⁷ By the conclusion of the conference the

²² CSLA: 1997-29, Preliminary Arrangements for Proposed Commonwealth Prime Minister's Meeting – Lagos – January, 1966.

²³ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 6, Letter from L.J. Dosunmu to Arnold Smith, 22 December, 1965.

²⁴ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 4, Record of Conversation with Mr. John Howard-Drake on 15th December, 1965; CSLA: 1997-29, Revised Draft Plan for the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting June 1965, 17 May, 1965; CSLA: 1997-29, Draft Plan for the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting Lagos, January 1966, 23 December 1965.

²⁵ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 4, Record of Conversation with Sir Burke Trend and (Subsequently) Mr. P. Rogers (British Cabinet Office) on Wednesday, 15th December at 10 A.M. at Cabinet Office.

²⁶ Ibid; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 4, Record of Conversation with Mr. John Howard-Drake on 15th December, 1965.

²⁷ CSLA: 1997-29, Suggested Method of Staffing the Commonwealth Secretariat, 18 December, 1965.

Secretariat had employed a further nine British staff (none of which were from the CRO) in addition to two Pakistani, one Indian and one Jamaican staff on loan.²⁸ The Nigerian Government meanwhile had loaned several dozen other staff officers to the Secretariat for the duration of the conference.²⁹ In this manner the Nigerian Government supported a robust role for the Secretariat. The Secretariat itself overcame its capacity limits by diversifying its sources of aid and thus reducing reliance on the British Government in general and the CRO in particular. The Nigerian Government proposed solutions to logistical questions such as the chairmanship and press arrangements for the meeting. Prime Minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewa proposed to chair the meetings (customary for the leaders of host governments) with the Secretary-General seated at his right hand.³⁰ The Secretary-General would then be free to open subcommittee meetings as needed. Smith would also issue two press statements per day that would not interfere with delegate statements but would provide key non-partisan summaries of each conference session.³¹ British officials had previously expressed concerns about other members chairing any session dealing with Rhodesia and doubted the Secretariat's capacity to manage press relations. The active coordination between the Nigerian Government and the Secretariat helped resolve these issues well before the meeting and without room for contestation from the British Government.

The help offered to the Secretariat was also evident in the three delegations selected to give the opening speeches of the Lagos Meeting. As host, Nigerian Prime Minister Abubakar opened the

²⁸ CSLA: 1997-29, Suggested List of Addressees for Letters of Thanks from the Secretary-General, 13 January, 1966.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 6, Letter from L.J. Dosunmu to Arnold Smith, 22 December, 1965.

³¹ CSLA: 1997-29; Press Briefing by Mr. Smith – p.m. Tuesday, January 11, 1966; CSLA: 1997-29, Meeting of Commonwealth Officials 11:30 a.m. Monday 10 January; CSLA: 1997-29, Press Briefing by Mr. Smith – Tuesday Mid-day, January 11, 1966; Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 55.

proceedings with words of welcome and by noting the significance and gravity of the meeting. He referred to the Commonwealth as a cherished organisation that was held together by invisible ties and that continued to thrive. Perhaps more importantly, he repeatedly emphasised the Commonwealth's multi-racial character and noted that it was the first meeting called to discuss a single problem. Abubakar also noted that it was the first conference to be serviced by the new Secretariat and placed significance on the fact that the Secretariat was doing so outside of its London headquarters. Although he recognised that members may not have been in agreement for the necessity of the meeting, he underscored their shared goal of a speedy end to the Rhodesian crisis and hoped that the conference would realise that goal.³²

Speaking next, Pearson also recognised the uniqueness of the meeting as the first since the establishment of the Secretariat, the first emergency meeting, and the first dedicated to a single problem. Pearson extensively thanked the Nigerian Government and the Commonwealth Secretariat under Arnold Smith for their quick organising work before concluding by evoking the multiracial nature of the Commonwealth and the grave responsibility to make the conference a constructive one. Pearson foresaw productive conversations if Commonwealth leaders kept the frankness of friends and the respect and trust of associates.³³ Pearson's speech echoed Smith's arguments in the December telegram for Canadian eyes only. The meeting would be successful if the members focused on one issue and worked to build trust among one another. Pearson also

³² CSLA: 1997-29, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers – Lagos, 1966: Statement of Welcome by the Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Alhaji the Right Hon. Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, 11 January, 1966.

³³ CSLA: 1997-29, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers – Lagos, 1966: Statement by the Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson, 11 January, 1966.

echoed Smith's points about the significance of the meeting's timing, location, and chairmanship.³⁴

Representing the newest Commonwealth member, Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew was the last to speak during the opening remarks. He made a point of noting that the occasion would not soon be forgotten and was underscored by the fact that it was the first time that a British Prime Minister had travelled abroad to a recently independent colony to meet the Commonwealth Heads of Government and discuss a situation in one of its current colonies. Yew also noted that they shared a goal to resolve the single issue of Rhodesia and expressed optimism that they would find constructive steps forward to solve "a problem so charged with passion for all of us" and that that goal might be achieved in an "emotionally acceptable" timeframe.³⁵

Each of the initial speakers had played a significant role in supporting the Commonwealth Secretariat in its first months of its existence. The Nigerian and Singaporean Governments trusted the Secretariat to serve them as members in coordinating both membership and meetings, and the Canadian Government was an ally of Arnold Smith as well as a broker between the old and new Commonwealth. The speeches at the start of the meeting set a more collegial tone for the subsequent discussions by giving the newest member, the host, and a reliable partner to both old and new members the opportunity to speak. The opening speeches were also a strong show of support for the Secretariat and were good diplomacy in the face of difficult discussions to come. The successful coordination of the meeting with the support of the wider membership underscored that the Secretariat was increasingly able to, and in the mind of the newer members, obligated to operate in a realm of wider Commonwealth coordination. The framing of the Lagos

³⁴ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 5, Telegram from Arnold Smith to Canadian Prime Minister, Secretary of State for External Affairs, and Undersecretary of State for External Affairs, 18 December, 1965.

³⁵ CSLA: 1997-29, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers – Lagos, 1966: Singapore Prime Minister's Speech at the opening of the Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers at Lagos on 11th January, 1966, at 10.00 a.m.

Communique reflected the expectations of the newer members by emphasising that the Lagos meeting was the first Commonwealth Conference held in Africa. Delegates agreed that after this success holding meetings throughout the Commonwealth would underscore the essential egalitarian character of the Commonwealth association.³⁶

Though not yet at full strength at the Lagos meeting the Secretariat asserted its central role arranging the chairmanship, timing, logistics, and consultation for the meeting. Smith and the Secretariat needed assistance to accomplish the meeting preparations in a mere three weeks. The necessary work was accomplished with Nigerian coordination and Smith's Canadian connections. The preparations were also totally independent of the CRO and therefore minimally reliant on the British Government. Smith underscored the importance of the Secretariat's success in these areas in his first annual report as Secretary-General and later in his memoirs.³⁷ He noted that the Lagos meeting was novel in appointing standing committees on sanctions and assistance for training Rhodesian Africans which were the first standing committees collectively appointed by the prime ministers.³⁸ The Lagos meeting also secured a statement from the British Government committing to the NIBMAR principle (No Independence Before Majority Rule).³⁹

Smith credited the success of the Lagos meeting to the new standing machinery of the Secretariat which could overcome the episodic nature of past Commonwealth coordination.⁴⁰ This was an additional victory for the Secretariat as Smith had prepared a memorandum suggesting the special assistance programme to provide educational training for Rhodesian Africans. The acceptance of this principle and the appointment of a standing committee to oversee the

³⁶ *Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting in Lagos 1966: Final Communiqué*, 3.

³⁷ *Annual Report of the Commonwealth Secretary-General* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 26 August 1966), 6-7; Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 56-57.

³⁸ *Annual Report of the Commonwealth Secretary-General*, 5.

³⁹ *Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting in Lagos 1966: Final Communiqué*, 2.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

programme showed that the Secretary-General could take constructive action by putting forward and speaking on his own recommendations rather than passively attending the meetings.⁴¹ The Lagos Conference did not resolve the Rhodesian crisis and left many broader political questions to be addressed but was a considerable success in terms of Secretariat capacity-building and posturing vis-à-vis the CRO.

Sanctions Committee Meetings

Following the Lagos Meeting, Secretariat staff continued to expand the Secretariat's capacity to coordinate Commonwealth meetings. The expansionist members supported greater Secretariat involvement in officials' and ministerial gatherings beyond the central Prime Ministers' Meetings. The most immediate opportunity to pursue an expanded role was the first meeting of the newly formed Sanctions Committee. At the behest of the prime ministers, Smith followed up on the Sanctions Committee within a week of the Lagos Meeting. On January 18 he proposed that the Sanctions Committee convene on January 25 and circulated relevant documentation from Lagos several days later.⁴²

Because the Sanctions Committee meetings would take place in London, the planning process was negotiated between the Secretariat and the British Government. British officials tried to use past Commonwealth practices about location and chairmanship to further their own preferences and policy goals. Established Commonwealth practice was for the host government to chair meetings. British Officials rightly claimed that this was a traditional prerogative of the host government. However, there had never been a Sanctions Committee and at Lagos the Secretary-General was tasked with organising the Sanctions Committee. Rather than consulting with Smith

⁴¹ Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 57.

⁴² LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 7 "Diaries 1-19 Jan. 1966," Commonwealth Circular no. 30, 18 January, 1966; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 8, Commonwealth Circular no. 34, 21 January, 1966.

on procedures for the committee, the British Government assumed chairmanship of all Sanctions Committee meetings and unilaterally informed the Commonwealth High Commissioners of this arrangement.⁴³ Only after they had claimed the chairmanship did British officials inform Arnold Smith and explain that they were acting on precedent.⁴⁴

Smith had recognized this precedent in wider Commonwealth meetings and was understanding of the British position in a subsequent conversation with Sir Saville Garner (the Permanent Undersecretary of State for Commonwealth Relations).⁴⁵ Garner elaborated that "...Britain was anxious to retain the Chair of the Sanctions Committee...[because] Britain was primarily responsible for Rhodesia and had some fear of a partial Chairman if sanctions were unsuccessful."⁴⁶ However, the newer members objected to the British Government handling Commonwealth affairs, especially for politically charged scenarios like Rhodesia. The record of conflicts of interest in British handling of Commonwealth affairs was unacceptable to the newer members.

Jamaican High Commissioner Sir Henry Lindo wrote personally to Garner to object to British chairmanship of the Sanctions Committee. Lindo wrote that he was "disturbed" by this assumption that "cut across the whole concept of the Commonwealth Secretariat."⁴⁷ Lindo argued that the prime ministers would never have agreed to British Chairmanship during the Lagos Meeting. Lindo warned Garner that he intended to raise the chairmanship issue as soon as the Sanctions Committee convened and that he would propose that the Secretary-General chair

⁴³ *Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting in Lagos 1966: Final Communiqué*, 3.

⁴⁴ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 8, Letter from S. Garner to Arnold Smith, 20 January, 1966.

⁴⁵ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 8, Note Re: Prime Ministers' Meetings, 21 January, 1966.

⁴⁶ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 9 "Feb-4 Mar 1966 Diaries," Record of Conversation with Sir Saville Garner at the C.R.O. 4:30 p.m., Wednesday 16 February, 1966.

⁴⁷ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 8, Letter from H. Lindo to Sir Saville Garner, 25 January, 1966.

the session.⁴⁸ Ultimately Sir Arthur Bottomley, the British Commonwealth Secretary of State chaired the first meeting of the Sanctions Committee on January 25, 1966. This saw further escalation of opposition to British chairmanship. The Sierra Leonean High Commissioner wrote to the Secretariat objecting to Bottomley's continued chairmanship. Sierra Leonean officials argued that because the British Government was the only member able to present evidence on whether sanctions were working in Rhodesia it was inappropriate that Britain should chair the meeting regardless of past procedures.⁴⁹ Per Sierra Leonean request, Smith circulated this view to all Commonwealth governments in the lead-up to the next meeting of the Sanctions Committee on February 23.⁵⁰ Both the Sierra Leonean and Jamaican High Commissioners recognised that British representatives were exploiting precedents to influence the workings of the Committee. They argued that the British Government knew that the prime ministers in Lagos would not approve of a British chairman and that it would be inappropriate to ignore such a conflict of interest.

Smith worked with all parties to find a viable solution for both British fears and the demands of the newer members. When Smith met with Garner on February 16, Garner suggested that the British would like to make an announcement about a pending oil embargo on Rhodesia to demonstrate understanding to the Commonwealth members in the OAU and Smith agreed to call a meeting to facilitate this. Smith noted however that Garner had glossed over the issue of the meeting's chairmanship.⁵¹ When they met again two days later Smith directly addressed the issue of chairmanship. Garner had since issued a circular within the CRO and consulted with various

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 9, Letter from Dr. A. M. Kamanda, Acting High Commissioner for Sierra Leone to Arnold Smith, 17 February, 1966.

⁵⁰ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 9, Commonwealth Circular no. 41, 22 February, 1966.

⁵¹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 9, Record of Conversation with Sir Saville Garner at the C.R.O. 4:30 p.m., Wednesday 16 February, 1966.

Commonwealth High Commissioners about the issue. Garner concluded that British policy should be to not seek the chairmanship of all Commonwealth meetings but that they would continue to press for chairmanship of the Sanctions Committee. Smith was clear that this would not pass with the wider membership. Eventually, British officials conceded on the conditions that the new chairman was not the Secretary-General and was elected from the Old Commonwealth.⁵² Smith disagreed with the idea of limiting either his own or the new members' ability to chair Commonwealth meetings, but encouraged Garner to take further soundings for alternative chairs in his ongoing correspondence with High Commissioner Lindo.⁵³ Garner was anxious to avoid a row over the issue and pursued consultations with Lindo as well as attempts to convince Bottomley in the CRO and the pro-British Australians to accept a compromise with the Secretariat.⁵⁴

Lindo's consultations revealed that the Afro-Caribbean members were overwhelmingly in favour of Canadian chairmanship of the meetings. Other members who supported either the Secretary-General or a British chair agreed that they would accept Canadian chairmanship if a popular consensus emerged.⁵⁵ The British Government relented once the Canadian nomination was secured. After opening the February 23 meeting Bottomley handed the chairmanship to the Canadian High Commissioner Lionel Chevrier.⁵⁶ Chevrier presided over the most intensive period of the Sanctions Committee meetings, chairing 13 meetings between January and September 1966.⁵⁷

⁵² LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 9, Record of Conversation with Sir Saville Garner at C.R.O. on Friday, 18 February, 1966.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 9, Memorandum for File: Chairmanship of Committee, 22 February, 1966.

⁵⁶ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 9, Sanctions Committee Communique, 23 February, 1966.

⁵⁷ Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 59.

By all accounts, Chevrier took his role quite seriously. On June 15, 1966 for example, when he was briefly dispatched to Canada, Chevrier wrote to Smith to inform him that he might not be back in time for the June 22 Committee Meeting. While Chevrier said he would keep Smith informed of the timing, in the event he was not back by June 22 he asked Smith to postpone the meeting rather than opening up the election of a new chairman.⁵⁸ Chevrier remained chairman until the next Prime Ministers' Meeting in September at which point he was succeeded by Andre Rose, the High Commissioner for Trinidad.⁵⁹ Subsequent chairmanships were decided on a rotating basis.

With the assistance of the Canadian Government as a Commonwealth mediator, management of the Sanctions Committee chairmanship was centralised in the Secretariat as was the wider coordination of the Committee itself. The chairmanship issue demonstrated how the expansionist members could apply effective political pressure on the British and other restrictionist governments. By 1969, the Secretariat had so fully taken over management of the Sanctions Committee that the Labour party preferred to defer questions about the Sanctions Committee to the Secretariat itself. For instance, when Sir John Briggs-Davison, a noted supporter of the Rhodesian Government and a member of the Conservative Monday Club, posed a parliamentary question about the cost of the Sanctions Committee, Labour MP Maurice Foley indicated because the Sanctions Committee was serviced by the Secretariat, it was not possible to answer Briggs-Davison's question.⁶⁰ In 1969 the workings of the Commonwealth were separate from the British Government as befitted an international organisation.

⁵⁸ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 16, Note for Diary, June 15, 1966.

⁵⁹ Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 59; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 9, Memorandum for File: Chairmanship of Committee, 22 February, 1966.

⁶⁰ Hansard, Commonwealth Sanctions Committee (HC Deb 4 July 1969 Volume 786 c145W).

Outcomes

During the establishment of the Sanctions Committee the British worried about political pressure from the UN if Commonwealth members lost confidence in British handling of the Rhodesia Crisis. The anti-colonial tenor of the UN in the early 1960s was a growing concern for the British Government. Officials in the Colonial Office specifically noted that after the expansion of the UN Special Committee on Decolonization from 17 to 24 in late 1962 they no longer knew whether the UN would be “reasonable” in its calls for decolonization.⁶¹ There was also no longer a guarantee of Commonwealth backing in the UN as the number of African members grew. The British Government had foreseen difficulties with Rhodesia having implications for how they managed the transition to independence for all colonial territories. The British Government feared the unknown consequences of UN intervention if the crisis escalated, but felt that it would invariably result in Britain being isolated or having its sovereignty violated. Thus, from an early date the British Government sought to manage the crisis with as little international upset and therefore as little criticism of its own policies as possible.

The eventual involvement of the UN on an increasing scale was unfolding alongside debates about the chairmanship of the Sanctions Committee. In an effort to keep all parties in dialogue, Arnold Smith worked to resolve the chairmanship issue without exacerbating rifts over potential UN involvement. For example, while Smith circulated the Sierra Leonean protest over the chairmanship of the Sanctions Committee he did not circulate the associated threat of sponsoring UN Chapter VII sanctions if British led efforts in the Commonwealth failed to bring down the rogue Rhodesian regime.⁶² This was in part because Smith was working to broker discussions of

⁶¹ TNA: Colonial Office [CO]: 936/877, Letter from J.M. Martin to Colonial Office, 5 February, 1963.

⁶² LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 9, Letter from Dr. A. M. Kamanda, Acting High Commissioner for Sierra Leone to Arnold Smith, 17 February, 1966.

UN involvement between the British and the African members and in part because the threat of invoking Chapter VII action was a longstanding one. When the prime ministers agreed to concerted action at the Lagos meeting some had reserved the right to propose UN action under Articles 41 and 42 of Chapter VII if the need arose.⁶³ These clauses respectively governed the severance of economic, communication, and diplomatic ties, and the use of military force, while Chapter VII more broadly addressed breaches of, and threats to peace.⁶⁴ Because the use of force would involve problematic “kith-and-kin” politics in the United Kingdom and would theoretically breach British sovereignty in Rhodesia, British officials wished to avoid UN involvement altogether. The Sierra Leonean threat to make good on the rights reserved at the Lagos meeting would escalate the gravity of the crisis and force the British Government to concede that the crisis constituted a threat to peace, and therefore to concede United Nations involvement on a broader scale.

Although British officials slowly came around to the need for UN Chapter VII sanctions as the situation in Rhodesia evolved that spring, they remained resistant to the idea of UN action and hesitant to work with the Sanctions Committee. On April 7, the British Government decided to sponsor a limited program of Chapter VII actions themselves in order to enforce the oil embargo on Rhodesia. However, to announce this shift in policy the CRO called an ad hoc meeting of Commonwealth representatives rather than consulting with the Sanctions Committee. Smith noted that Saville Garner “rather lamely” suggested that meeting with the Sanctions Committee

⁶³ *Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting in Lagos 1966: Final Communiqué*, 5.

⁶⁴ “Chapter VII” Charter of the United Nations, United Nations, <https://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/chapter-vii/>.

in Marlborough House would take more time than calling a meeting of Commonwealth representatives at the CRO but would not explain why.⁶⁵

Smith attended the CRO meeting and made the point that the Sanctions Committee would keep abreast of the situation and could recommend UN action as needed. He later wrote in his diary that he made this point to lessen African suspicions of British manoeuvring and to tie the work of the Sanctions Committee into the British decision-making process. Perhaps reading the room, Garner echoed Smith's point once made and highlighted the valuable work of the Sanctions Committee.⁶⁶ Smith's attendance and arguments and Garner's reception of those arguments in the meeting itself were important because there were clear implications of how the CRO had handled the Chapter VII announcement. At a time when Commonwealth tensions were at an all-time high, by hosting the meeting in the CRO the British had effectively summoned Commonwealth representatives and announced the direction of their policy. There was little room for discussion, the terms and hierarchy of the meeting were clear, and the Secretariat had no role in calling or planning the meeting. Smith's effective diplomacy during the meeting helped smooth over these tensions and encouraged British officials to work more closely with the Secretariat in future.

In May 1966, British officials began working more closely with the Sanctions Committee to implement joint action on Rhodesia.⁶⁷ Both the newer members and the Secretariat continued to pressure the British to cooperate as equals with their Commonwealth counterparts. The genesis of the Sanctions Committee illustrates several points about the establishment of the Commonwealth Secretariat. The British Government initially reverted to the habit of embedding

⁶⁵ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 11, Item for Diary, Thursday, 7 April, 1966.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ See for example: LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 13, Note of Conversation with the Rt. Hon. Arthur Bottomley, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, 10 May, 1966.

their own interests in Commonwealth affairs in order to pursue their own policy objectives. In both assuming the chairmanship and calling ad hoc meetings outside of the Sanctions Committee, British officials demonstrated an older, Anglo-centric understanding of Commonwealth meetings. Pressure from the newer, expansionist members along with the Secretariat showed that this was unacceptable to the wider membership. This pressure pushed Garner to pursue a conciliatory course in spite of the CRO's early manoeuvring. The genesis of the Sanctions Committee showed the extent to which newer members were able to use the Secretariat to check British actions and bring them into line with a central Commonwealth body. Newer members were able to point out how inappropriate they found British actions in both bi- and multilateral channels and launch a corrective course in conjunction with the Secretary-General.

The organisation of Sanctions Committee meetings also illustrated the degree to which Canada played a bridging role between the old and new members. As with the Lagos meeting earlier in 1966, Arnold Smith used his connections within the Canadian Government and Canada's acceptable, if not positive reputation among the membership to break deadlock between the most vocal Commonwealth members (notably Australia and elements of the British Government such as the CRO on one hand, and African members such as Zambia, Ghana and Tanzania on the other). The newer, expansionist members provided the vision for the Commonwealth as an IO. The Canadian Government helped realise that vision by bolstering the Secretariat's capacity and by mediating conflicts between other Commonwealth members.

Chapter Nine: 1966 and 1969 London Prime Ministers' Meetings

1966 London Prime Ministers' Meeting

Over the summer of 1966, the Secretariat continued building its capacity to organise Commonwealth meetings with its work for the Sanctions Committee while working to hold the Commonwealth together through its deepest divisions over Rhodesia. At the Lagos meeting the prime ministers had agreed to meet again in July 1966 if the rebellion had not yet ended.¹ As the year progressed it was increasingly clear that sanctions were not having the anticipated effect on the Rhodesian economy. By mid-summer, the white Rhodesian population had not had to make any economic sacrifices and the Rhodesian industrial sector had actually expanded.² Black Rhodesians were increasingly frustrated by the lack of impact from international sanctions which gave substance to African governments' calls to end the crisis by force.³ Per the terms of the Lagos Conference, the ongoing Rhodesian crisis warranted a second Prime Ministers' Meeting in 1966.

The preparations for the second 1966 Prime Ministers' Meeting included consultation for dates and location, setting the agenda, coordinating logistics, and finding agreement over the chairmanship. In each of these areas the Secretariat demonstrated growing capacity and confidence with a corresponding decrease in deference to British preferences and assumptions. Smith and the Secretariat again used connections throughout the Commonwealth and especially in Canada to keep all members engaged with one another. The September 1966 Prime Ministers' Meeting was the first full scale Prime Ministers' Meeting organised by the Secretariat and was a turning point in the Commonwealth's transition from imperial club to international organisation.

¹ *Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting in Lagos 1966: Final Communiqué*, 5.

² LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 18, Letter from Tilak Gooneratne to Arnold Smith, 29 July, 1966.

³ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 19 "Diary August 1966 (1)," Rhodesia: Note for the Record, 19 July, 1966.

Struggles between the expansionists and restrictionists, and between the Secretariat and the British Government, began with the formation of the Secretariat in 1965 and came to a head during the September 1966 meeting. Few of these issues were resolved that year, but the September Prime Ministers' Meeting shifted the organisational balance to the newer members' view of the Commonwealth as an IO.

Timing and Location

The advances in the Secretariat's capacity to service meetings demonstrated at Lagos and Smith's good standing with the newer African members were important factors in the lead-up to the September Prime Ministers' Meeting. British officials continued to maintain an older, Anglo-centric view of how the Commonwealth should operate. However, the exigencies of the Rhodesian crisis forced the British Government to work with the Secretariat, which they conceded was a better avenue to building Commonwealth consensus over Rhodesia.

Because sanctions were not having a considerable effect on the Rhodesian economy, in May 1966 Secretariat staff initiated consultations for a second Prime Ministers' Meeting in July. British officials had never fully supported a July meeting and preferred that it be postponed until later in 1966. In the past British officials inserted British preferences directly into the planning process under the guise of providing Commonwealth Services (as the CRO had done with the postponement of the Commonwealth working party outlined in Chapter Three). However, in 1966 British officials brought their scheduling concerns to Arnold Smith rather than pursuing them unilaterally.

In a meeting between Smith and CRO officials on May 10, Arthur Bottomley noted that the British Government had a heavy parliamentary schedule in July and would be hosting the World

Cup in addition to a state visit by the King of Jordan. Not only would this mean that British representatives would be busy in July but there would also be little room for Commonwealth delegates in London hotels.⁴ A more pressing British fear was that a July meeting would not leave enough time to achieve any real results with either negotiations or sanctions in Rhodesia. This was in part because South African intervention was slowing the impact of sanctions and in part because "...the British Government had no desire to provide the opportunity for a number of *lesser representatives* [my emphasis] to let off steam."⁵

For these reasons, British officials preferred that the meeting be postponed until September. An autumn meeting would be more convenient for the British schedule and would place the meeting right before the opening of the UN General Assembly which might be useful for gaining international support for any Commonwealth efforts to resolve the Rhodesian crisis. Whitehall would also prefer that the meeting be held in Canada. This would eliminate possible "embarrassment" over the chairmanship (as with the Sanctions Committee) without changing the traditional right of host governments to take the chair. British representatives also felt that Lester Pearson would support the United Kingdom in the discussions.

There were practical advantages to some of the British proposals such as greater availability of hotels in London and better timing vis-à-vis the UN General Assembly. However, at the May 10 meeting CRO officials simply informed Smith of their preferences and showed little regard for other members' perspectives or the meeting schedule agreed to at Lagos. While British officials understood that they now had to coordinate Commonwealth meetings with the Secretariat, they maintained a decidedly Anglo-centric view of the Commonwealth and how it should function.

⁴ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 13, Note of Conversation with the Rt. Hon. Arthur Bottomley, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, 10 May, 1966.

⁵ Ibid.

In subsequent correspondence with British officials, Smith noted that as a servant of all Commonwealth members he was willing to help the British Government explore the possibility of postponing the meeting and holding it outside of the United Kingdom. However, Smith was also clear that as per the *Agreed Memorandum* the planning process would be transparent, and that the British Government should be willing to accommodate a July meeting in London if this meant avoiding conflict with the other members.⁶ Smith also requested that if the meeting was postponed the British Government provide assurances to the African members that they would adhere to the commitments they had agreed to in Lagos. In the meantime, Smith agreed to consult the membership on the viability of other locations and dates after Prime Minister Wilson had a chance to discuss the possibility of a meeting in Ottawa with Pearson.

Smith and the British Government launched parallel consultations on the viability of postponement and alternative locations on May 18.⁷ These consultations illustrated the differing views of the British Government and the Secretariat about the nature of the organisation. For instance, the British Government maintained that private correspondence between government officials was the best method for consultation. Whitehall used its own diplomatic networks to gauge whether other members would be receptive to postponing the meeting. In contrast, Secretary-General Smith issued a circular on May 18 and met with groups of Commonwealth High Commissioners over the following day.⁸ Smith relied on the central mechanism of the Secretariat to Communicate with Commonwealth governments through both the circular distribution, and direct conversations with the High Commissioners. Smith also went beyond

⁶ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 13, Memorandum to File, 17 May, 1966.

⁷ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 13, Record of Conversation between the Secretary-General and Sir Saville Garner at the C.R.O. on Wednesday, 18th May at 10.30 a.m.

⁸ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 13, Draft Circular to Commonwealth members, 18 May, 1966; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 13, Record of Conversation between the Secretary-General and Sir Saville Garner at the C.R.O. on Wednesday, 18th May at 10.30 a.m.; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 13, Letter from Arnold Smith to Harold Wilson, 19 May, 1966.

these formal channels in the service of Commonwealth members. The Tanzanian Government had boycotted diplomatic relations with Britain over British handling of the Rhodesian crisis. Because Tanzanian diplomats had been withdrawn from London, there was less opportunity to include Tanzania in personal consultations like Smith's meetings with Commonwealth High Commissioners on May 18. Smith corresponded directly with Julius Nyerere (as he did throughout the Tanzanian boycott) to keep him informed of developments in the organisation and to encourage him to attend the next Prime Ministers' Meeting.

Smith also used his Canadian connections to bolster the Secretariat's central position. On May 29-30 while visiting Ottawa, Smith discussed the possibility of hosting the meeting in Canada with Pearson and various Canadian Government officials. Canada was perceived to be a neutral meeting place that would be accepted by all members. Pearson was hesitant given the political climate and feared the domestic political implications if Canada should host the meeting that ended the Commonwealth.⁹ While he did not wish to be on record as refusing to host the meeting Pearson told Smith that because British intentions were so unclear all of his advisors cautioned against hosting the meeting in Canada.¹⁰ However, at Smith's request Pearson was willing to have a frank personal conversation with Wilson and to "put [the issue] to him squarely."¹¹ Smith emphasised in his talks with Pearson and other Canadian officials that the meeting would be much easier to postpone if Wilson could be persuaded to give assurances about British intentions to the African members.¹² Again, Smith appealed to the good offices of his connections within the Canadian Government and the good reputation that Canada enjoyed among the members to work toward the success of the meeting. He continued closely coordinating with the Canadian

⁹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 14, Diary Item, 25 August, 1966.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 14, Visit by the Secretary-General to Ottawa, Monday 30 May, 1966.

Government through the planning process, gaining further insight on Julius Nyerere's stance on the meeting from Canadian officials in Dar es Salaam, as well as receiving copies of Pearson's correspondence with the Canadian High Commissioner in London.¹³

The consultative channels employed by the British Government and the Secretariat affected the results of their initial consultations. When CRO officials passed the results of British inquiries to the Secretariat in early June, the results were skewed towards postponement. The wording of the British report supported British preferences for the meeting, and simply noted whether or not other members would support a meeting in September. The Secretariat's own inquiries yielded much more nuanced results with most members supporting either a July or a September meeting so long as a meeting took place that year.¹⁴ In most cases members were willing to go along with whatever majority emerged even if that would affect the composition of their delegations.¹⁵ For example, because of their electoral schedules and domestic business, if the meeting was held in September the leaders of Kenya, Ghana, Trinidad & Tobago, India, Pakistan, Zambia, Ceylon and Nigeria would not be able to attend and secondary ministers would need to be sent in their stead. However, even though their delegations would be affected, these members were willing to work toward a broader Commonwealth consensus.¹⁶

The parallel consultations demonstrated very different views of the Commonwealth and how it should function. The British Government continued to operate as if the Commonwealth was an imperial club in which the United Kingdom was *primus inter pares*. Whitehall preferred that

¹³ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 15, Telegram from Canadian Embassy, Dar Es Salaam to London, 3 June, 1966; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 15, Telegram from Canadian Prime Minister to Canadian High Commissioner London, 1 June, 1966.

¹⁴ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 15, Prime Ministers' Meeting: Summary of Replies to Secretary-General's Communication as at 1st June, 1966; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 15, Prime Ministers' Meeting: Summary of Replies to Secretary-General's Communication to Commonwealth Heads of Government as at 3rd June, 1966.

¹⁵ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 15, Prime Ministers' Meeting: Summary of Replies to Secretary-General's Communication to Commonwealth Heads of Government as at 7th June, 1966.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*; *Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, 6th-15th September, 1966: Final Communique*, 1.

consultations be carried out between member diplomats rather than by a central Secretariat, prioritised the attendance of prime ministers at the meeting, and expected British preferences for timing and location to be accommodated by other members. The CRO continued to insert British preferences into their Commonwealth consultations. The CRO's report reflected a binary of opposition or support for a September meeting while ignoring that most members were flexible on dates but insistent on the meeting itself.

In contrast, newer members approached the consultations based on the Commonwealth operating as an IO. They felt that coordinating through a central hub was more appropriate and readily met and corresponded with the Secretariat. Newer members trusted the Secretariat to organise the meeting to best serve all members. Many replied that they would support a meeting in either July or September and would accept whatever consensus emerged. Unlike the CRO, the Secretariat was transparent about that consensus and gave a nuanced report that better reflected the preferences indicated by individual members. The newer members were also prepared to attend regardless of whether their Heads of Government were available. In this sense they saw the Commonwealth as an organisation like the UN rather than a club. Meetings were organised by a central Secretariat and the members would send a delegation to participate, rather than meetings being contingent on member Heads of Government being available at British convenience.

The pressures exerted on Britain by the newer members over the Rhodesian crisis forced the British Government to work more closely with the Secretariat as the meeting preparations continued. The key to the meeting's success lay with the African members in general, and Zambia in particular. At this point, Britain's handling of the Rhodesia problem was causing many African nations to question their continued participation in the Commonwealth in general. Zambia was most directly affected by the Rhodesian crisis and President Kaunda felt both

isolated and betrayed by Wilson's recent attempts to bring the Rhodesian Government into negotiations, further undermining confidence in British intentions after Lagos.¹⁷ However, he continued to engage with the Commonwealth as he felt that on balance its ongoing support was advantageous for Zambia. Ghana's Nkrumah had been fostering support for a Commonwealth boycott, but this was curbed by Nkrumah's ousting in a military coup that February and replacement with a military government. Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta consistently supported Commonwealth meetings throughout this time (and later worked to prevent an African walkout once the meeting began).¹⁸ However, other African members would support Zambia in a Commonwealth boycott if British policy continued on its apparent course. Tanzania had already broken diplomatic ties with Britain in protest over Rhodesia and Julius Nyerere did not see much use to his attending in light of British policies. Nyerere also feared backlash from the OAU if he reversed on the Tanzanian break with Britain.¹⁹ The new military government in Nigeria also expressed the contingency of their attendance, noting that unless concrete measures were forthcoming on Rhodesia that summer there would be no point in attending the Prime Ministers' Meeting.²⁰ The ongoing possibility of an African boycott threatened to collapse the meeting preparations.

Whitehall wanted to maintain relations with the Commonwealth. The British Government viewed the Commonwealth as a useful means of extending British influence in the world but was also accustomed to pursuing their own policy objectives regardless of other members' views. By

¹⁷ Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 69-70.

¹⁸ TNA: DO 207/231, Confidential Cypher from Nairobi (Sir E. Peck) to Commonwealth Office, 18 September, 1966.

¹⁹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 19, Letter from Julius Nyerere to Colin Legum, Esq., 16 August, 1966.

²⁰ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 18, Letter from Major-General J.T.U. Aguiyi-Ironsi Head of the National Military Government [Nigeria] to the Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 13 July, 1966; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 18, Commonwealth Circular Letter no. 81, 22 July, 1966; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 18, Commonwealth Circular no. 79, 25 July, 1966.

June 1966, the British Government continued to press for postponing the Commonwealth meeting while refusing to provide assurances that they would not go back on their commitments at Lagos.²¹ Smith reminded CRO officials on June 7 that the viability of postponing the meeting depended on African opinion which depended in turn on British policy.²² It was still unclear whether there was a consensus among African governments. By mid-June, replies from the membership indicated that seven members would prefer July, six members would support either date, and nine would prefer September.²³ The Ghanaian Government was amenable to a September Meeting but would support the preference of the majority of African governments. It was still unclear whether Tanzania would be represented at the meeting at all. Zambia's Kenneth Kaunda was particularly vocal against potential British back-pedaling and enjoyed strong support among other African members.²⁴ Kaunda argued that any delay took pressure off the Rhodesian Government, lessened the accountability of the British, and allowed further destruction of the Zambian economy. Writing to Smith on June 13, Kaunda insisted that the terms of the Lagos meeting be upheld and if that meant holding the July meeting elsewhere he proposed that it be held in New Delhi.²⁵ The Zambian Government with the support of other undecided African members could make or break a majority consensus on the meeting dates. But Zambian action depended on British policy, thus creating an impasse in the meeting

²¹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 13, Note of Conversation with the Rt. Hon. Arthur Bottomley, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, 10 May, 1966.

²² LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 15, Record of Conversation between the Secretary-General and Sir Saville Garner, at the C.R.O. on Friday 3 June, at 10:15 a.m.

²³ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 15, Prime Ministers' Meeting: Rough Summary of Replies from Governments, 10 June, 1966.

²⁴ For example see: LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 15, Prime Ministers' Meeting: Summary of Replies to Secretary-General's Communication to Commonwealth Heads of Government as at 7th June, 1966; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 15, Letter From Julius Nyerere to Arnold Smith, 7 June, 1966.

²⁵ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 15, Letter from Kenneth Kaunda to Arnold Smith, 8 June, 1966.

preparations. Both the British and Zambian Governments would need to revise their positions for the Prime Ministers' Meeting to move ahead.²⁶

The Secretariat facilitated consensus on the meeting dates. As with the lead-up to the January Meeting in Lagos, Arnold Smith worked to keep all parties at the table in spite of a gloomy outlook regarding the Rhodesian crisis.²⁷ In addition to working with Canadian representatives to try to smooth out the administrative issues leading up to the meeting, Smith corresponded continuously with Commonwealth leaders on a personal level with special attention to Zambian and British representatives. Following Kaunda's call for the July meeting, Smith wrote him personally to appeal for cooperation with the emerging consensus for a date in September.²⁸ Smith continued sustained personal correspondence with Kaunda, writing on multiple occasions to plead that Kaunda not leave the Commonwealth and to encourage him to use the Commonwealth machinery and meetings as a way to resolve the Rhodesian crisis.²⁹ Shortly before the meeting itself Smith sent Kaunda advance copies of the Secretary-General's first report to show how Kaunda's own recommendations had influenced the British and directly influenced many of the Secretariat's own activities.³⁰ It was a final note of encouragement on the use and value of the Commonwealth as the meeting drew near.

Smith also argued with British representatives across party lines. He grappled with both Labour Prime Minister Wilson and other influential figures like Duncan Sandys (who had until recently been Conservative Shadow Secretary of State for the Colonies) over the need to give assurances

²⁶ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 16, Commonwealth Circular Letter no. 66, 14 June, 1966.

²⁷ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 18, Letter from Tilak Gooneratne to Arnold Smith, 29 July, 1966; Doxey, *The Commonwealth Secretariat*, 41.

²⁸ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 16, Letter from Arnold Smith to Kenneth Kaunda, 17 June, 1966.

²⁹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 18, Letter from Arnold Smith to Kenneth Kaunda, 19 July, 1966.

³⁰ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 22 "Diary 1-15 Sept, 1966 (1)," Letter From Arnold Smith to Kenneth Kaunda, 2 September, 1966.

that Britain would not go back on her word in Lagos. Both Wilson and Sandys were offended that the Commonwealth was pressuring Britain and would not consider giving assurances about Britain's commitment to NIBMAR. Sandys advocated granting independence to Rhodesia to technically resolve the crisis before the Prime Ministers' Meeting. Wilson took a more deft approach and sought to defer the Rhodesia discussion to a sub-committee at the Prime Ministers' Meeting on the condition that the committee be chaired by Lester Pearson.³¹ Smith faced a well-entrenched view of the Commonwealth as an Anglo-centric club.³²

Secretariat efforts to keep Zambian and British officials engaged in the planning process culminated with Deputy Secretary-General Adu being dispatched to Zambia to assist with new talks between the Zambian and British Governments. The talks focused on how to deal with the impact of the Rhodesian crisis on the Zambian economy, particularly as sanctions began to have an effect. Through these talks, new measures to support the Zambian economy were tabled by British officials and Secretariat personnel agreed to issue an emergency call for aid to the wider membership. The Secretariat's facilitation of these fresh talks was an important part of the planning process that contributed to the 1966 Prime Ministers' Meeting taking place at all. With new British assurances and the Secretariat's call for emergency Commonwealth assistance Kaunda accepted postponement of the Prime Ministers' Meeting until September.³³ Once the September dates for the Prime Ministers' Meeting were set, Smith issued an additional circular to follow up on the meeting location.³⁴ While Ottawa had already been ruled out in the

³¹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 18, Diary Item, 18 July, 1966; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 19, Note of Discussion with the British Prime Minister, 5p.m., Tuesday 30th August, 1966.

³² As David Goldsworthy observed of British colonial policy in 1971, "If the major parties are judged solely by the records of their leaders in office, it is not very apparent that there was any great contention between them over colonial issues." See: David Goldsworthy, *Colonial Issues in British Politics, 1945-1961: From 'Colonial Development' to 'Wind of Change'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 376.

³³ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 16, Telegram from Adu to Arnold Smith, 21 June, 1966.

³⁴ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 16, Commonwealth Circular no. 67, 16 June, 1966.

preliminary rounds of discussion, Nairobi had been proposed as a potential host city in addition to New Delhi and London.³⁵ With the issue of dates resolved consensus to hold the meeting in London was quickly achieved and by June 27 the location was finalised.³⁶ However, the decision to host the meeting in London prompted both Guyanese and Ghanaian officials to call for future meetings to rotate throughout the Commonwealth.³⁷

In the process of planning the dates and location for the second 1966 Prime Ministers' Meeting, the Secretariat had to keep all parties engaged through some of the deepest divisions the Commonwealth had yet seen. Coordinating the meeting involved negotiating expansionist and restrictionist perspectives of what the Commonwealth was and how it should operate. Furthermore, the planning process necessitated the Secretariat's involvement in Commonwealth politics. In order to successfully fulfill the limited mandate of planning Commonwealth meetings, Secretariat staff had to adopt a wider political mandate to facilitate and coordinate cooperation between members and to keep the parties with the greatest stake in the Rhodesian debates (the UK and Zambia) in dialogue with one another. By facilitating the talks in Lusaka the Secretariat helped both parties reach a compromise. Smith and the Secretariat did so in order to ensure that the Commonwealth held together and the second 1966 Prime Ministers' Meeting would go ahead. However, by pursuing that original meetings-based mandate the Secretariat stepped into a wider political role that included negotiation and mediation between members.

³⁵ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 13, Record of Conversation between the Secretary-General and Sir Saville Garner at the C.R.O., 18th May, at 10.30 a.m; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 14, Visit by the Secretary-General to Ottawa, Monday 30 May, 1966; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 16, Commonwealth Circular no. 67, 16 June, 1966.

³⁶ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 16, Commonwealth Circular no. 69, 27 June, 1966.

³⁷ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 15, Prime Ministers' Meeting: Summary of Replies to Secretary-General's Communication to Commonwealth Heads of Government as at 7th June, 1966; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 16, Letter from J.B. Lomotey, Acting High Commissioner for Ghana to Arnold Smith, 14 June, 1966.

The process of scheduling the 1966 Prime Ministers' Meeting thus illustrated that the management of Commonwealth meetings could be a stepping stone to Secretariat expansion

Logistics and Press

After the difficult work of coordinating the timing of the meeting, managing practical logistics was comparably straight forward. The Secretariat capacity to plan logistics was much greater after Lagos and Secretariat staff could work on procedures established at the previous meeting without as much reliance on the host government. Adopting a practice from Lagos, Smith proposed that members appoint conference liaison officers to work with the Secretariat and the British Government to facilitate the arrangements.³⁸ In a July briefing outlining the division of responsibilities between the British Government and the Secretariat, CRO officials noted that it would be the first time the Secretariat serviced such a meeting in the United Kingdom. The CRO acknowledged that the Secretariat would be in charge of the wider services and organisation in addition to setting the agenda and managing press relations.³⁹ The CRO was therefore responsible only for host government arrangements such as ceremonial and social programming (apart from the opening ceremony which was organised by the Secretariat), administrative concerns such as catering, communications, service staff, parking, and security, and briefing the British delegation.⁴⁰ These were the traditional responsibilities of a host government and the extent of the British role in the 1966 Prime Ministers' Meeting.

³⁸ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 18, Commonwealth Circular Letter no. 77, 18 July, 1966.

³⁹ TNA: DO 163/103, Departmental Notice: Arrangements for the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting 6-15 September, 19 July, 1966.

⁴⁰ CSLA: 1997-29, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, September 1966: Programme for the Opening Ceremony, Tuesday 6 September 1966: Note by the Secretary-General, 31 August, 1966; TNA: DO 163/103, Departmental Notice: Arrangements for the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting 6-15 September, 19 July, 1966.

The CRO briefing that outlined responsibilities for the meeting and recognised the Secretariat's central role was the product of the Secretariat's success in Lagos. Secretariat staff had coordinated the logistics of the Lagos meeting without any involvement of the CRO. Because the Secretariat had done so away from its home offices while understaffed and working on short notice, there was no justification for the CRO to push for a greater role beyond the letter of its responsibilities as host government. The newer members would be suspicious of any British claims to more responsibility for the planning of the September Prime Ministers' Meeting.

The management of the 1966 press arrangements reflected the effective pressure the expansionist members exerted on the restrictionist British Government. In the past CRO officials had been tempted to exploit the lack of Secretariat press staff to their own advantage. In 1964, the CRO considered exerting influence on Commonwealth press activities before the Secretariat had been established or had its own press division, but elected to not attempt this lest they be perceived to be controlling upcoming meetings.⁴¹ In the July 1966 briefing CRO officials noted that the Secretariat still did not have sufficient press staff to manage the meeting requirements and that they could provide loaned staff from the CRO News Department.⁴² As in the 1964 case, by providing loaned staff the CRO could potentially influence the media coverage of the Prime Ministers' Meeting. The ongoing Rhodesian crisis gave added impetus for British officials to want to manage Commonwealth press coverage. After the second meeting of the Sanctions Committee in February 1966, Cledwyn Hughes, Minister of State for Commonwealth Relations wrote to Smith to complain that a recent article in the *Times* contained information that was

⁴¹ TNA: DO 194/66, Minute from N. Pritchard to Mr. Walsh Atkins, 2 April, 1965.

⁴² TNA: DO 163/103, Departmental Notice: Arrangements for the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting 6-15 September, 19 July, 1966.

“based on more than intelligent guesswork.”⁴³ While Hughes did not make any outright accusations of information mismanagement, he reminded Smith that press security was the responsibility of the Secretariat. Hughes stressed that this was particularly important in the context of ongoing negotiations with the Rhodesian Government and suggested that Smith remind other member governments of the importance of discretion with confidential information.⁴⁴

The management of press at Commonwealth meetings was a responsibility which had technically been transferred from the CRO to the Secretariat after the latter’s foundation.⁴⁵ The CRO had managed press arrangements for the 1964 and 1965 Prime Ministers’ Meetings after the decision to form the Secretariat had been taken but before it began operations. In this period the CRO actually expanded its press capabilities and introduced new protocols to deal with increased media volume and new media technologies.⁴⁶ The Secretariat had been building its capacity to manage press relations but by 1966 was still understaffed. With the ongoing Rhodesian crisis and the understaffed Secretariat, the British Government had the motive and the means to influence Commonwealth press management for the September 1966 Prime Ministers’ Meeting.

CRO officials took note of the potential to influence Commonwealth press management in 1966 but as they had done in 1964, did not pursue that opportunity. British officials feared other Commonwealth members’ reactions if the British Government was found to be influencing the press during the meeting. That fear was greater than the advantage of controlling the image of

⁴³ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 9, Letter from Cledwyn Hughes to Arnold Smith, 24 February, 1966.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ TNA: DO 161/398, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, September 1966: Minutes of a Meeting of Senior Officials held in the Chairman’s Committee Room, Marlborough House, London, on Monday 5 September, 1966, at 11.30 a.m.

⁴⁶ CSLA: 1997-29, Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting June, 1965: Publicity Arrangements; CSLA: 1997-29, Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting – 1964: Publicity Arrangements.

the Commonwealth in the press. In consequence the CRO relented and allowed the Secretariat to conduct press management on its own.

With the exception of the Lagos and Ottawa Prime Ministers' Meetings, the British Government had hosted most Commonwealth meetings to date. As with the question of membership detailed in Chapter Six, there was no clear division of responsibilities in the British management structure. With membership applications, the division of responsibility for submitting and for processing applications was unclear as it had hitherto been managed within the British Government. The same problem occurred with Commonwealth meetings. All logistical deliberations were internally conducted between British Government departments in their capacity host and their capacity as Commonwealth planners. The formation of the Secretariat challenged these practices. Newer members expected the Secretariat to manage the logistics and press arrangements for high-level Commonwealth meetings. The Lagos Prime Ministers' Meeting had shown that the Secretariat could effectively arrange such logistics. For the September Prime Ministers' Meeting, the newer members continued to pressure the British Government to respect the Secretariat's central administrative role. The British Government came to see Secretariat growth as less problematic than a schism with the expansionist Afro-Caribbean members and moved to a more cooperative footing in the summer of 1966. This process was facilitated by the imminent reorganisation of the CRO in August of that year. Both the Secretariat and British planning documents for the September 1966 meeting heavily emphasised the division of tasks between the Secretariat as planner and the British Government as host. That emphasis was not a coincidence or point of nomenclature but a reflection of changes in the operation of the Commonwealth.

Agenda and Chairmanship

By the end of July 1966, the logistical preparations for the Prime Ministers' Meeting were finalised. Deputy Secretary-General Adu was able to call a meeting of conference liaison officers to explain the administrative arrangements and begin consultations for setting the meeting agenda.⁴⁷ The preparation of the meeting agenda again involved conflict between the Secretariat and the British Government. As with the other meeting logistics, that conflict involved differentiating between the British and Secretariat roles in the meeting preparations and pressure from the newer members for the British Government to respect that differentiation.

According to the terms of the *Agreed Memorandum*, preparing the meeting agenda was a responsibility of the Secretariat. The September Prime Ministers' Meeting was mandated by the Lagos meeting which had been the first Prime Ministers' Meeting focused on a single issue (Rhodesia). After the intense discussions in Lagos the membership supported a full Prime Ministers' Meeting in London including a customarily wide agenda. Wider world political problems, the future of British dependencies, Commonwealth membership, and Secretariat affairs were set to be prominent items.⁴⁸ In anticipation of these discussions, the Secretariat issued background papers on the independence of Basutoland and Bechuanaland, the Secretariat budget, Commonwealth aid, and nuclear disarmament.⁴⁹ Each of these papers was a significant research undertaking. In fact, the Secretariat's research and background papers on disarmament were far more voluminous than the more pointed materials on Rhodesia. Smith and a number of Commonwealth officials felt a strong third party appeal in the UN by a group like the Commonwealth could tip the scales to closing a disarmament settlement between the United

⁴⁷ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 18, Letter from Tilak Gooneratne to Arnold Smith, 29 July, 1966.

⁴⁸ TNA: DO 161/398, Meeting of Commonwealth prime Ministers, London, September 1966: Order and Timetable of Agenda: Note by the Secretary-General, 5 September, 1966.

⁴⁹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 18, Letter from Tilak Gooneratne to Arnold Smith, 29 July, 1966.

States and the Soviet Union.⁵⁰ These efforts reflect that the Secretariat was fielding member concerns (India's work on disarmament in the 1950s never received the same attention at Prime Ministers' Meetings), and that the Commonwealth was functioning as an international organisation.

However, while preparing research on issues such as colonial independence and disarmament was an important component of Secretariat preparations for the meeting, it was clear that these issues would be overshadowed by the Rhodesian crisis at the meeting itself. As the agenda preparations went ahead British officials pushed for Rhodesia to be included as a sub-section of the customary discussion of world affairs rather than as a stand-alone agenda item in its own right.⁵¹ However, unlike the pre-Secretariat meetings, the agenda could no longer be quietly organised according to British preference. Agenda items proposed by the membership were weighed equally and further developed by the Secretariat. This new dynamic was facilitated by the merger of the CRO and CO into the Commonwealth Office at the beginning of August 1966. While many former CRO personnel continued to oppose the Secretariat in their new capacities in the Commonwealth Office or other departments, the reorganisation nonetheless marked the removal of the CRO as the central source of British antagonism to the Secretariat. The genesis of Rhodesia's place on the September agenda illustrates this shift in both British deference to the Secretariat and the role of the Secretariat in coordinating member input on a more equal basis.

⁵⁰ See: CSLA: 1997-28 "Heads of Government Meeting, September 1966: 23 Aug 1966 – 23 Sep 1966," Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, September, 1966: Report of the Sanctions Committee; CSLA: 1997-28, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, September 1966: Disarmament: Memorandum by the Secretary-General, 26 August, 1966; CSLA: 1997-28 ; Commonwealth Secretariat Background Paper: Disarmament, 26 August, 1966; CSLA: 1997-28, Summary of the Attitudes of China and France on Disarmament, 26 August, 1966; TNA: DO 161/398, Commonwealth Secretariat Disarmament Background Paper, 26 August, 1966; TNA: DO 161/398, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, September 1966: Disarmament: Memorandum by the Secretary-General, 26 August, 1966; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 20 "Diary Aug 1966 (2)," Call by the Secretary-General on the British Prime Minister, 5 p.m. Tuesday, 30th August, 1966.

⁵¹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 13, Note of Conversation with the Rt. Hon. Arthur Bottomley, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, 10 May, 1966.

As the merger of the CRO and CO drew near, CRO officials began to defer responsibilities more readily to the Secretariat. In contrast to the earlier manoeuvring over the agenda at the Commonwealth Law Ministers' Meeting (see Chapter 10), a CRO circular to request internal briefs for the British delegates that July acknowledged that the Secretariat would be drafting the agenda with the input of the wider membership.⁵² However, the CRO nonetheless suggested that briefings be organised on the lines of the 1965 Prime Ministers' Meeting during which Rhodesia had been lumped together with discussion of other dependencies in the agenda.⁵³ While this would not fundamentally alter the content of the Rhodesia briefs, it was a point of order that reflected British preferences about the framing of the Rhodesia discussions.

The order of the agenda was a significant symbolic issue for many of the members especially after the delay of the meeting itself. In the case of the Rhodesian crisis, African members argued that the Rhodesia issue was the most important point of the September meeting and should be treated as a stand-alone topic that was first on the agenda. They worried that any other agenda items would be out of proper perspective if they were not discussed in the context of the Rhodesian crisis. They argued that time to discuss other subjects would work itself out once the Rhodesian subject was treated.⁵⁴ Asian members agreed on putting Rhodesia first but for different reasons. Indian officials spoke of the psychological effect of treating race issues seriously and the need to curtail press speculation as soon as possible. Malaysian officials pointed out that delegates would no doubt wish to consult their capitals on any decisions made

⁵² TNA: DO 163/103, Departmental Notice: Arrangements for the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting 6-15 September, 19 July, 1966; TNA: DO 163/103, Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting 1966: Items for Discussion, 15 July, 1966.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ TNA: DO 161/398, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, September 1966: Minutes of a Meeting of Senior Officials held in the Chairman's Committee Room, Marlborough House, London, on Monday 5 September, 1966, at 11.30 a.m.

about Rhodesia, so placing the topic as early as possible would also be practical.⁵⁵ British officials backed by the New Zealand Government countered that because Rhodesia was part of the ‘world situation’ it would only be logical to discuss the former first. They also hoped to have the opportunity to sound the tone of the discussions and adjust their stance according to other members before delving into the Rhodesia discussions.

While preparing the agenda Smith was cognisant that the Afro-Asian members overwhelmingly supported getting straight to the point with Rhodesia as a standalone item first on the agenda. However, Smith was also aware of British concerns and he himself desired to create a climate for productive discussion at the September meeting. Smith hoped that Rhodesia might be included as an independent agenda item, but after the customary discussion of world affairs. He felt this configuration might allow African, Asian, and Canadian opinion to coalesce, thereby increasing the chances of a productive discussion on Rhodesia.⁵⁶ As with his own vision for the organisation, Smith sought to find a balance between expansionist and restrictionist perspectives.

Smith’s thinking was reflected in the drafts of the agenda circulated by the Secretariat. The provisional agenda circulated in mid-July included Rhodesia as a standalone item first on the agenda, but included a note that the prospective order was not necessarily final.⁵⁷ In late August, a more developed draft agenda included Rhodesia after the discussion of world affairs, yet still as a stand-alone item.⁵⁸ In discussions with senior Commonwealth officials to finalise the agenda shortly before the Prime Ministers’ Meeting began, Smith trod a middle line and recognised both British arguments, and the arguments made by members in the Global South. Smith noted the

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 22, Diary, 4th September, 1966.

⁵⁷ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 18, Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting 1966: Items for Discussion, 15 July, 1966.

⁵⁸ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 19, Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting, London, September 1966: Annotated Agenda, 23 August, 1966.

merits of ordering the agenda in accordance with both perspectives.⁵⁹ By this time however, the order was functionally set. Following the merger of the CRO and CO in August, the British preparatory briefs had been reorganised by the new Commonwealth Office along the lines of the Secretariat's July draft agenda that had been based on southern members' input rather than on the 1965 model proposed by the former CRO.⁶⁰ Thus in British internal circles, those preparing for the meeting had already conceded the issue of agenda order. The British and New Zealand Governments continued to advocate for a later discussion of Rhodesia at the September officials meeting but ultimately decided not to press the agenda issue in the face of an overwhelming consensus among the members in the Global South.⁶¹ Again, pressure from the newer members ensured that the British Government did try to reclaim responsibilities from the Secretariat. Whitehall could not impose British preferences on the shape of the meeting.

British officials were ultimately willing to accept the order of the agenda along the lines proposed by the newer members. They had initially opposed Rhodesia as first on the agenda to lessen its prominence in the proceedings. The British Government was still keen not to be criticised by former colonies with a greater stake in the Rhodesia issue. However, Whitehall increasingly worked with the Secretariat to devise other ways to calm the potentially volatile meeting. For instance, as leader of the host government, the British Prime Minister would traditionally be expected to take the role of meeting chairman. Leading up to the conference however, Sir Saville Garner proposed that Lester Pearson chair the sessions discussing Rhodesia,

⁵⁹ TNA: DO 161/398, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, September 1966: Minutes of a Meeting of Senior Officials held in the Chairman's Committee Room, Marlborough House, London, on Monday 5 September, 1966, at 11.30 a.m.

⁶⁰ TNA: DO 163/103, Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting, 1966: Main Briefs, 3 August, 1966.

⁶¹ TNA: DO 161/398, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, September 1966: Minutes of a Meeting of Senior Officials held in the Chairman's Committee Room, Marlborough House, London, on Monday 5 September, 1966, at 11.30 a.m.

whatever the order of the agenda.⁶² This would appeal to both the newer members' trust in Canada as a mediating figure within the Commonwealth in addition to Guyanese calls to re-evaluate whether the host government should necessarily provide the chairman.⁶³ While the British opposed Arnold Smith stepping in as a chairman (to which Smith agreed in order to avoid allegations of partisanship), this was a significant change in British policy.⁶⁴ British concessions over the agenda were facilitated by concessions over the chairmanship of key sessions. The debates over the chairmanship of the Sanctions Committee earlier in the year illustrated how the expansionist members could apply effective political pressure on the British and other restrictionist governments. The struggles over the chairmanship of the Sanctions Committee eased the transition for other, larger meetings like the September Prime Ministers' Meeting. Whitehall was increasingly willing to work with the Secretariat to address concerns about the agenda and chairmanship of Commonwealth meetings and the Secretariat was coming into its own as the central body of the organisation.

In the final days before the September Prime Ministers' Meeting began, Smith continued to mediate between member perspectives. He reminded Commonwealth officials that the agenda or the session chair need not be finalised until the prime ministers themselves convened and confirmed that he had proactively discussed the matter with Pearson, who was willing to chair

⁶² TNA: DO 161/398, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, September 1966: Minutes of a Meeting of Senior Officials held in the Chairman's Committee Room, Marlborough House, London, on Monday 5 September, 1966, at 11.30 a.m.

⁶³ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 15, Prime Ministers' Meeting: Summary of Replies to Secretary-General's Communication to Commonwealth Heads of Government as at 7th June, 1966; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 16, Letter from J.B. Lomotey, Acting High Commissioner for Ghana to Arnold Smith, 14 June, 1966.

⁶⁴ TNA: DO 161/398, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, September 1966: Minutes of a Meeting of Senior Officials held in the Chairman's Committee Room, Marlborough House, London, on Monday 5 September, 1966, at 11.30 a.m.

the sessions on Rhodesia.⁶⁵ Ultimately, the Secretariat facilitated newer members' preferences in the agenda order while working to maintain flexibility and introduce positive elements to the upcoming meeting. Smith used his Canadian connections to help bridge the perspectives of the old and new Commonwealth, both of which considered the Canadian Government to be an ally. He skillfully used his connections and networks within the Commonwealth to broker a feasible outcome which kept all parties at the table, in addition to cementing the Secretariat's role as a useful central body for both planning and mediating Commonwealth meetings.

Commonwealth Cooperation

During the meeting itself, Smith and the Secretariat continued working to introduce positive aspects of Commonwealth cooperation into the discussion both to address previously raised member concerns and to break up the divisive discussions on Rhodesia.⁶⁶ Secretariat efforts reflected the Commonwealth as an international organisation by emphasising multilateral efforts based on both general and specific member needs. Foremost among the Secretariat's efforts was a proposal for a centrally coordinated, multilateral Commonwealth aid and technical assistance scheme.

In the most immediate sense, the Secretariat proposal would help address the Rhodesian crisis by facilitating technical training efforts for Rhodesian Africans. Representatives from the Zimbabwean African National Union (ZANU) had personally called on Smith to request that the Commonwealth do more to provide training and education for Rhodesian Africans. They hoped to coordinate these efforts with the Zambian Government, the Zimbabwean African Peoples'

⁶⁵ TNA: DO 161/398, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, September 1966: Minutes of a Meeting of Senior Officials held in the Chairman's Committee Room, Marlborough House, London, on Monday 5 September, 1966, at 11.30 a.m.

⁶⁶ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 22, Diary, Thursday, 8th September, 1966.

Union (ZAPU), and the wider Commonwealth to ensure a more stable government and society once Zimbabwean independence was achieved.⁶⁷ Groups of Black Rhodesian students and members of parliament also called on Smith in hopes that the Commonwealth could better coordinate training efforts, particularly after the Rhodesian Government began arresting dissenting parliamentarians and students and sanctions began cutting off Commonwealth scholarships.⁶⁸ For these individuals, Commonwealth technical assistance would provide the educational basis to ensure a viable Zimbabwean Government in the future and the scholarships and funding to ensure that education and training took place in the meantime. The Secretariat's technical assistance proposal would therefore contribute to solving the Rhodesian crisis by facilitating opportunities for Rhodesian Africans on one hand and by providing constructive material to ease tensions between Commonwealth leaders.

The Secretariat proposal also responded to a number of wider Commonwealth economic issues that had been recurrent themes in both Prime Ministers' Meetings and other ministerial gatherings over the past several years.⁶⁹ As detailed in the Secretariat proposal, Commonwealth consultation on a wide range of aid and development problems topics had been limited with no efforts to routinize or centrally coordinate such initiatives that did exist in the Commonwealth.⁷⁰

A multilateral scheme for Commonwealth aid could combine efforts in aid, development,

⁶⁷ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 6, Meeting with ZANU Representatives to Discuss Higher Education for Rhodesian African Students, 21 December, 1965.

⁶⁸ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 10, Note for Record, 22 March, 1966; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 15, Note of Meeting with Rhodesian Opposition Leaders, 8 June, 1966; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 16, Letter from C. Chipunza to Arnold Smith, 21 June, 1966; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 11, The University Crisis in Rhodesia: Note of a conversation with Mr. Ian Henderson, 1 April, 1966.

⁶⁹ Such calls were even incorporated into the Agreed Memorandum. See: *Agreed Memorandum on the Commonwealth Secretariat*, 5.

⁷⁰ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 19, Commonwealth Assistance Programmes: Memorandum by the Secretary-General, 9 August, 1966.

economic planning, and technical assistance, thus increasing the efficiency and efficacy of Commonwealth development initiatives.

Development-related concerns were often raised by the newer members of the Commonwealth, and Smith had been working on the Secretariat proposal for some time. While an aid and development initiative would enjoy wider support from the new members and would be a positive element to balance the difficult Rhodesia discussions, the proposal could not have come at a worse time for coordinating with the British Government. The British were suspicious of both the wider Commonwealth membership and the expansion of the Secretariat and were facing perceived economic downturn at home and difficult negotiations with the European Economic Community.⁷¹ The British Government and other restrictionist members had ensured that the *Agreed Memorandum* stipulated that the Secretariat should only have an advisory role in development and that the Secretariat would do nothing that might affect existing channels of economic and technical assistance.⁷² The Secretariat proposal circulated in August 1966 called for a modest beginning to the aid scheme and stayed well within cited parameters of the Secretariat's functions. Smith's reliance on the accepted documentation was noted by the British Ministry of Overseas Development (ODM) which systematically sought out loopholes to undermine the proposal. Officials in the ODM regarded Smith's proposal as beyond the legitimate limits of the Secretariat and inviting "nothing but chaos" at the Prime Ministers'

⁷¹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 20, Letter from T.E. Gooneratne to Arnold Smith, 2 August, 1966; Jim Tomlinson, "The Decline of the Empire and the Economic 'Decline' of Britain." *Twentieth Century British History* 14, no. 3 (2003): 202-203; Helen Parr, "Saving the Community: The French response to Britain's Second EEC Application in 1967," *Cold War History* 64, no. 4 (2006), 435;

⁷² *Agreed Memorandum on the Commonwealth Secretariat*, 5; Bilateral channels for such assistance ensured greater British control over its use, which could serve British economic interests and was, as Sarah Stockwell argues, an important part of British decolonisation strategy after the failure to develop local institutions on the eve of African decolonisation in particular. See Sarah Stockwell, *The British End of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 73.

Meeting.⁷³ The reassignment of Arthur Bottomley, one of the Secretariat's strongest opponents in the CRO, as Minister of Overseas Development following the amalgamation of the CRO and CO the same month did not help the Secretariat efforts. Bottomley reflected the Wilson Government's cautious approach to aid spending in the 1960s and was one of many individuals from the colonial apparatus who now worked in international aid.⁷⁴ Bottomley's reassignment to the ODM was the beginning of the end of his career as a minister giving him all the more personal reason to oppose the Secretariat. In the meantime, he continued to oppose Secretariat expansion.

However, Secretariat staff were aware of British financial concerns and resisted the "wet blanketing [sic]" their initial drafts received from British representatives.⁷⁵ While noting that the British had taken the narrowest possible interpretation of the Secretariat's mandate, Secretariat staff nonetheless pursued the aid proposal for inclusion at the September Prime Ministers' Meeting. The British Government was the chief contributor of Commonwealth aid and would not agree to commit to the proposal in either principle or detail. However, in order to avoid additional conflict with the newer members, Whitehall did not object to the Secretariat circulating the proposal among the membership or incorporating the proposal into the upcoming meeting.⁷⁶

The Secretariat proposal was barely discussed at the September 1966 Prime Ministers' Meeting.

The lack of British support and the division over Rhodesia led to an underwhelming discussion

⁷³ TNA: DO 161/398, The Role of the Commonwealth Secretariat in Connexion With Aid: Memorandum from A.W. Snelling to Sir N. Pritchard, 29 July, 1966.

⁷⁴ Matthew Hilton, "Charity and the End of Empire: British Non-Governmental Organizations, Africa, and International Development in the 1960s," *The American Historical Review* 132, no. 2 (2018): 498.

⁷⁵ TNA: DO 161/398, Minute from Mr. Turner to Mr. Molyneux, 11 August, 1966; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 20, Letter from T.E. Gooneratne to Arnold Smith, 2 August, 1966.

⁷⁶ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 20, Letter from T.E. Gooneratne to Arnold Smith, 2 August, 1966. LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 20, Letter from A. Cohen to T.E. Gooneratne, 3 August, 1966.

even among the newer members who most strongly supported the idea. While newer members initiated discussion of the aid proposal, there was not enough momentum to achieve results. Jamaican and Singaporean representatives for instance, raised questions of nomenclature regarding “developing” countries and the Nigerian delegation called on members able to give aid to channel it through the Secretariat.⁷⁷ This discussion was limited by the restrictionist members. Bottomley, speaking for the British delegation, outlined British economic difficulties and affirmed British commitment to aid in existing bilateral channels but refused to raise “false hopes” about increased aid or expanded programs through the Secretariat.⁷⁸ Indian representatives also expressly opposed the expansion of the Secretariat into this realm and affirmed their commitment to existing channels of aid while stifling discussion of new multilateral methods.⁷⁹

The aid proposal came to an impasse between the expansionists and restrictionists. Once again Smith’s connections in the Canadian Government helped break the deadlock. The Secretary-General had been asked to organise a meeting of Commonwealth Planners by the end of 1966.⁸⁰ Because the Secretariat proposal for multilateral aid and technical assistance came under the broader umbrella Commonwealth economic planning, Lester Pearson suggested that the proposal be deferred to the Planning Conference that Smith had already been asked to arrange.⁸¹ The prime ministers agreed and the Secretariat proposal was effectively postponed. As Smith later recalled, the Secretariat proposal had run into “heavy weather” and did not see any tangible

⁷⁷ TNA: DO 207/231, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, September, 1966: Minutes of the Fourteenth Meeting held at Marlborough House, London, on Thursday 15 September, 1966, at 10.00 a.m.

⁷⁸ Ibid; Jim Tomlinson notes that these economic difficulties were more a product of perceived decline than they were real economic losses. See: Jim Tomlinson, “The Decline of the Empire and the Economic ‘Decline’ of Britain,” *Twentieth Century British History* 14, no. 3 (2003), 203.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ TNA: DO 215/273, Notes for Supplementaries, 13 October, 1966.

⁸¹ TNA: DO 207/231, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, September, 1966: Minutes of the Fourteenth Meeting held at Marlborough House, London, on Thursday 15 September, 1966, at 10.00 a.m.

results at the September 1966 meeting, but “survived” to be revisited at the Planning Conference.⁸²

Wider economic discussions in September 1966 also reached an impasse. The newer members worried about the stalling of the United Nations’ “Development Decade” as well as the uncertainty of Commonwealth trade amid unclear British intentions towards the EEC.⁸³ These were not small issues yet the discussions were cursory at best. Most economic discussions echoed outlines provided by the Commonwealth Trade Ministers’ Meeting earlier that year, or were deferred to the upcoming Finance Ministers’ Meeting later that month. The discussion that did take place was descriptive rather than prescriptive.⁸⁴ The meeting took note of economic problems and gave lip service to the potential for Commonwealth coordination but deferred those issues for future discussion.⁸⁵ Both the Secretariat aid proposal and the wider economic situation were subordinated to discussions on Rhodesia and deferred to other meetings of Commonwealth officials. The September 1966 meeting demonstrated that the work of ministerial meetings was becoming more important to the operations of the Commonwealth (and more akin to the specialised conferences of the UN). There was not enough time or momentum for the prime ministers to address those issues in depth, and the growing scale of the Commonwealth necessitated a greater distribution of tasks among its leaders. The restrictionist members opposed Secretariat expansion into an economic role including aid and development, but were willing to defer discussion to ministerial meetings organised by the Secretariat.

⁸² Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 110.

⁸³ TNA: DO 215/273, Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting: Brief on Kennedy Round: Minute from J.F. Wearing to Mr. Shannon, 17 August, 1966; TNA: DO 207/231, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, September, 1966: Minutes of the Fourteenth Meeting held at Marlborough House, London, on Thursday 15 September, 1966, at 10.00 a.m.

⁸⁴ TNA: DO 207/231, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, September, 1966: Minutes of the Fourteenth Meeting held at Marlborough House, London, on Thursday 15 September, 1966, at 10.00 a.m.; DO 215/273 (2015)

⁸⁵ *Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, 6th-15th September, 1966: Final Communique*, 8-9.

In this sense, the meeting was a qualified success for the Secretariat. While the Secretariat proposal for multilateral aid and technical assistance was not approved, the Secretariat was tasked with organising a greater number of meetings to address a greater number of economic topics. The Report of the Review Committee, which officially recommended the amalgamation of the CEC and CELU into the Secretariat was also reviewed and accepted at the meeting.⁸⁶ The report received little attention from the prime ministers apart from a stamp of approval. The prime ministers were again willing to entrust the work to a dedicated committee, just as they entrusted economic issues to other ministerial meetings. The approval of a Secretariat economic branch was a watershed point of approval for the expansion of the Secretariat but was accomplished with little fanfare.

The same was true for other topics related to the Secretariat's work. For instance, at the September meeting, there was some debate over rotating meetings throughout the Commonwealth. The idea was accepted in principle and the prime ministers tasked the Secretariat to coordinate meeting rotation on a loose pragmatic basis that very much echoed the status quo.⁸⁷ The restrictionists opposed any concrete rules about meeting rotation that would formalise the Secretariat into an executive entity. However, by opposing hard and fast rules about meetings, they gave the Secretariat a greater discretionary power to oversee, coordinate, and organise meetings.

In a similar sense, the Secretary-General's annual report was reviewed and accepted by the meeting. Smith hoped that his report could be published for public information, but all restrictionist governments opposed its publication. British, Indian, and Australian delegations in

⁸⁶ Ibid., 10.

⁸⁷ TNA: DO 207/231, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, September, 1966: Minutes of the Fifteenth Meeting held at Marlborough House, London, on Thursday 15 September, 1966, at 2.45 p.m.

particular felt that the report was an effort of self-aggrandisement on Smith's part. In contrast, most Afro-Caribbean members either supported the report's publication or were too focused on the Rhodesian issue to particularly care about the report.⁸⁸ In consequence, the report merited little attention and the prime ministers agreed that the Secretariat could publish the report independently, but not on the authority of the assembled prime ministers.⁸⁹ Sir Saville Garner later recorded "with some measure of glee" the lukewarm reception of the Secretary-General's report, in addition to the rejection of his proposal on Commonwealth aid, (among other features of the meeting) were "hard knocks" that seemed to have personally hurt Smith.⁹⁰ Garner and other British officials hoped that "the lesson" would sink in regarding the role of the Secretariat, but had to concede that Smith had earnestly and genuinely tried to be helpful regarding the operation of the Commonwealth. They further noted that there had been no complaint about the Secretariat among the delegations from newer Commonwealth members.⁹¹ The Secretary-General's report was opposed by the restrictionists in a bid to limit the Secretariat, yet by withholding their blessing of the report they enabled the Secretariat to publish the report independently of the prime ministers.

The September 1966 Prime Ministers' Meeting was a qualified success for the Secretariat despite the subdued treatment of Secretariat issues in the meeting and the snide British perceptions of Secretariat activities behind closed doors. Contrary to Garner's estimations the Secretariat aid proposal was postponed rather than rejected, the expansion of the Secretariat in the economic

⁸⁸ TNA: DO 161/398, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, September, 1966: Annual Report of the Secretary-General, 26 August, 1966; TNA: DO 207/231, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, September, 1966: Minutes of the Fifteenth Meeting held at Marlborough House, London, on Thursday 15 September, 1966, at 2.45 p.m.

⁸⁹ TNA: DO 207/231, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, September, 1966: Minutes of the Fifteenth Meeting held at Marlborough House, London, on Thursday 15 September, 1966, at 2.45 p.m.

⁹⁰ TNA: DO 207/231, Push no. 33 from Commonwealth Office to Heads of Mission, 20 September, 1966.

⁹¹ Ibid.

realm had been approved, and many members were impressed with the success of the Secretariat in servicing its first full scale Prime Ministers' Meeting.⁹² Restrictionist opposition over the Secretariat proposal, economic topics, the location of Commonwealth meetings, and the publication of the Secretariat report, all inadvertently strengthened the Secretariat by reinforcing the Secretariat's capacity for independent action and even expanding its role managing Commonwealth meetings.

Rhodesia

The groundwork to make the September meeting happen in the first place had been expeditiously carried out by the Secretariat and the discussion had not reached a deadlock over the pressing issue of Rhodesia. Avoiding deadlock at the meeting was an improbable outcome that attests to Secretariat initiatives in moving the meeting ahead. As with Secretariat efforts to facilitate Commonwealth cooperation, there was no clear success at the September meeting. However, the conduct and planning of the meeting itself helped solidify the central role of the Secretariat and was a qualified success for Smith and his staff. The process behind the meeting moved the Commonwealth onto a footing more akin to an IO than a club, and ensured that the Commonwealth did not disintegrate over the Rhodesian crisis in 1966. The survival of the organisation was not a foregone conclusion and the processes behind the meeting were just as, if not more important than the talks at the meeting itself.

As the preparations for the timing and location of the September meeting attest, the likelihood of deadlock over Rhodesia was high. Leading up to the meeting the British Government felt that the pressure being exerted on Whitehall from other Commonwealth members was unsustainable and

⁹² TNA: DO 215/273, Parliamentary Question by Mr. Patrick Wall: Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting: Notes for Draft Reply, 12 October, 1966.

that the resolution of the Rhodesian crisis on British terms and continued association with the Commonwealth seemed incompatible.⁹³ While Smith continued to argue that the Commonwealth was not an exclusive organisation and should complement, not compete with other international organisations, it was clear that some agreement about Rhodesia was needed if the British were to continue with the Commonwealth association. This imperative was complicated by British policy. Because the British Government viewed the Rhodesian issue as a domestic problem, Whitehall had not been forthcoming about the details of the crisis and had made no commitment to majority rule. Nor would the British Government consider the use of force to resolve the crisis. Apart from kith and kin arguments against military action, British officials argued that intervention would result in a full scale, open-ended war, contrary to other colonial “security” operations which were not against a state apparatus and therefore had a defined scope.⁹⁴ This position had little basis in the context of the vast amounts of military aid distributed globally during the Cold War, but nonetheless shaped British policy on Rhodesia.

With no settlement in sight and military action ruled out, sanctions became the main British strategy to resolving the crisis. However, by September 1966 British sanctions policy was also becoming tenuous given their questionable efficacy. British officials preparing for the September meeting anticipated significant debate on the efficacy of sanctions in Rhodesia, noting that the British delegation could expect “some pretty rough patches given the depth of resentment and suspicion of our motives.”⁹⁵ Such suspicion was well warranted. Not only was the British commitment to NIBMAR questionable, but sanctions were not quickly taking hold. The poor performance of the sanctions was partly due to the scale of the UK’s continued trade with

⁹³ TNA: DO 207/231, Push no. 33 from Commonwealth Office to Heads of Mission, 20 September, 1966.

⁹⁴ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 19, Rhodesia: Note for the Record, 1 August, 1966.

⁹⁵ TNA: DO 207/230, Confidential Circular from Foreign Office and Commonwealth Office to Certain Missions, Guidance no. 253: Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting, 23 August, 1966.

Rhodesia. In 1965, out of a total of £85.4 million of Rhodesian exports, South Africa and Britain had accounted for £76.6 million of sales with the entire rest of the Commonwealth accounting for a further £8.8 million. When asked to find deficiencies in other Commonwealth members' application of sanctions to Rhodesia to support a British defensive brief, one staffer in the Commonwealth Office simply concluded that "there is insufficient evidence to provide a useful brief on the deficiencies of [other] Commonwealth countries...in applying sanctions against Rhodesia."⁹⁶ Other Commonwealth members were effectively administering sanctions in contrast to the "considerable" ongoing British trade with Rhodesia. If pressed the British delegation was prepared to defend their ongoing trade with Rhodesia on humanitarian grounds to support the Zambian economy and the day-to-day lives of Rhodesian Africans. However, the CO also shifted the British Rhodesia brief from defensive to offensive in order to push conversation away from the ineffectual application of British sanctions. Rather than focusing on sanctions, the British delegation would attack other members over deficiencies in their support for Zambia.⁹⁷

Even though the diplomatic outlook for the conference was not good, Smith maintained his belief in the organisation. Smith was confident in the support of the newer members and felt that the British would not "sell out" and go back on the commitments they had supported in Lagos (namely the potential use of force, the implementation of sanctions, and a commitment to majority rule). Smith again employed his Canadian connections and asked Pearson to try to help him persuade Wilson to give a clear statement on Rhodesia. Smith hoped that even if Wilson did not explicitly endorse NIBMAR policy, he would at least confirm to the other members that the

⁹⁶ TNA: DO 207/230, Application of Sanctions by Commonwealth Countries: Minute by A.V. Hayday, 1 September, 1966.

⁹⁷ TNA: DO 207/230, Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting Briefing: Minute by R.G. Chisholm, 1 September, 1966; TNA: DO 207/230, Minute from R.G. Chisholm to Mr. Clinton-Thomas, 2 September, 1966.

United Kingdom would stand behind the Lagos agreements.⁹⁸ Smith also included the Lagos agreements in his annual report in order to make it more difficult for Wilson to go back on his word.⁹⁹

Despite a lack of British statements indicating any commitment to the Lagos agreements and the racially charged arguments justifying the lack of concerted British action, Smith was correct in his estimations. British material interests in the Commonwealth and the United Kingdom's international reputation and standing in the United Nations were at stake. Ultimately, the British Cabinet resolved that they were willing to "pay a price" over Rhodesia to maintain their Commonwealth connections which were far more politically valuable than sustained trade with Rhodesia.¹⁰⁰ British officials still did not view the Commonwealth as an international organisation and continued to think of Commonwealth and other international bodies as mutually exclusive. However, this concession demonstrated that the weight of value had shifted between visions of the Commonwealth. The Rhodesian Government was an aspiring member of the old Anglo-Saxon club and was rejected by the new members of the modern Commonwealth, just as South Africa had been. By 1966, the British Government was increasingly willing to forego connections with Rhodesia along the old club model in favour of connections with other Commonwealth members under the new IO model. The willingness of both parties to stay at the table through the transition was facilitated by the Secretariat.

In the subsequent discussions at the meeting itself, much to the dismay of the Old Commonwealth, the Afro-Asian members created a caucus system echoing their caucus in the

⁹⁸ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 22, Diary, 4th September, 1966.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ TNA: DO 207/231, Push no. 33 from Commonwealth Office to Heads of Mission, 20 September, 1966.

UN.¹⁰¹ The caucus routinely adjourned to discuss British proposals among themselves and often delaying the meeting schedule for hours in the process. Ironic given the tradition of exclusive Old Commonwealth meetings, the older members expressed dislike at being “summoned” to discuss caucus decisions and regretted the division of the Commonwealth on new/old and racial lines.¹⁰² The British were especially perturbed by “the continuous and offensive derogation of all things British, and the general discourtesies to which we have become enured” in addition to debate over the British Prime Minister’s personal sincerity.¹⁰³ Once losing his temper, Wilson burst out that Britain was “being treated as if we were a bloody colony.”¹⁰⁴ Afro-Asian members noted that the caucus procedure was indeed difficult but defended the procedure as one that enabled the narrowing of differences between views on Rhodesia to the extent that they might reach an agreement. These differences remained the three key issues of NIBMAR, sanctions, and the use of force.¹⁰⁵

Smith’s work at Secretariat capacity building, keeping all parties at the table, and coordinating with the Canadian Government were central to bridging these differences. As the caucus and wider conference reached the possibility of drafting an agreed communique specifically on Rhodesia, the Secretariat was available to write drafts and papers on short notice, and ultimately produced the first draft of the Rhodesia communique over the conference lunch hour on

¹⁰¹ Peter Lyon argues that meeting within other international organisations was one of the only effective ways for representatives of the Non-Alignment Movement to convene in the late 1960s. Connecting the Commonwealth Caucus group with the politics of the Cold War and Non-Alignment is a promising avenue for further research. See: Lyon, “The Emergence of the Third World,” 232.

¹⁰² LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 23, Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting, September 1966: Restricted Session: Fifth Meeting, 14 September, 1966; Barber, “The Impact of the Rhodesian Crisis on the Commonwealth,” 90.

¹⁰³ TNA: DO 207/231, Push no. 33 from Commonwealth Office to Heads of Mission, 20 September, 1966.

¹⁰⁴ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 23, Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting, September 1966: Restricted Session: Second Meeting, 12 September, 1966.

¹⁰⁵ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 23, Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting, September 1966: Restricted Session: Fifth Meeting, 14 September, 1966; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 23, Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting, September 1966: Restricted Session: Third Meeting, 13 September, 1966.

September 13. Lester Pearson then took over the drafting of the communique and used the framework provided by the Secretariat to create a composite draft balancing the views of the Afro-Asian caucus and those supporting Britain.¹⁰⁶

The resulting communique was widely regarded as a masterwork of tact and concession which did not resolve the overriding anxieties of the Afro-Asian membership but balanced British policies with a series of assurances demanded by the newer members.¹⁰⁷ For example, the British desire to give the Rhodesian Government a final chance to negotiate a constitutional settlement was approved. Herbert Bowden, the new Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs was dispatched to Rhodesia within days of the meetings' conclusion to call for a legal settlement.¹⁰⁸ However, the British desire to pursue a settlement was approved by the Afro-Asian members on the condition that any such settlement conformed to NIBMAR principles and that it should be pursued on a clear timeline (before the end of the year).¹⁰⁹ Similarly, the Afro-Asian members agreed to fully support the British Government's Rhodesia policies in the United Nations in return for the assurance that the British would pursue a heavier program of sanctions through the UN if the Rhodesian Government refused to negotiate.¹¹⁰ To achieve this compromise the Afro-Asian members conceded that selective rather than comprehensive UN sanctions might be pursued in consultation with the Commonwealth, whereas the British Government reversed its

¹⁰⁶ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 23, Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting, September 1966: Restricted Session: Third Meeting, 13 September, 1966.

¹⁰⁷ TNA: DO 207/231, Push no. 33 from Commonwealth Office to Heads of Mission, 20 September, 1966; *Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, 6th-15th September, 1966: Final Communique*, 3.

¹⁰⁸ TNA: DO 207/231, Confidential Cypher from Commonwealth Office to British High Commissions, 17 September, 1966.

¹⁰⁹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 23, Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting, September 1966: Restricted Session: Third Meeting, 13 September, 1966.

¹¹⁰ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 23, Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting, September 1966: Restricted Session: Fourth Meeting, 13 September, 1966.

stance opposing a comprehensive oil embargo.¹¹¹ The Rhodesia communique included support of further sanctions and the work of the Sanctions Committee and related proposals to increase aid to Zambia to lessen the economic damages of such sanctions.¹¹² Although the discussions were tense, they illustrated the degree to which the newer members saw the Commonwealth as an international organisation. They also showed how Smith's vision of the Commonwealth as one international instrument among many was applied by the newer members as they worked through different channels to pressure for a solution in Rhodesia.

Outcomes

While the meeting reached a consensus on the Rhodesia communique, very little had actually changed in terms of British policy. In spite of assurances given to the Commonwealth, behind closed doors British officials still considered a negotiated settlement with the Rhodesian Government short of NIBMAR to be a possibility. In preparation for the Secretary of State's subsequent trip to Rhodesia, the Commonwealth Office made a point of conveying to the Rhodesian Government that Britain had defended Rhodesia from international wrath and had managed to keep the door open for an "honorable" settlement. Whitehall hoped to reach a settlement during talks aboard the HMS *Tiger* set for November. However, the United Kingdom was also on the brink of losing all influence within both the Commonwealth and the UN, and could not hold the floodgates indefinitely.¹¹³ In a post-mortem of the Prime Ministers' Meeting, the Commonwealth Office considered that the Rhodesia Communique had been a "considerable

¹¹¹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 23, Prime Ministers' Meeting, September, 1966: Summary of Certain Points Discussed in Restricted Session, Undated.

¹¹² TNA: DO 161/398, International Support for Sanctions on Southern Rhodesia, 26 August, 1966; TNA: DO 161/398, Commonwealth Aid to Zambia: Aid and Offers of Aid: Information Received in the Commonwealth Secretariat as at 17th August, 1966; TNA: DO 161/398, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, September, 1966: Report of the Sanctions Committee, 26 August, 1966.

¹¹³ TNA: DO 207/231, Secret Cypher from Commonwealth Office to Salisbury: Secretary of State's Visit, 15 September, 1966; TNA: DO 207/231, Confidential Cypher from Foreign Office and Commonwealth Office to Certain Missions: Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting – Rhodesia, 15 September, 1966.

triumph” as the British had made no concessions about the use of force or mandatory sanctions, and had kept one last opportunity to negotiate a settlement with the Rhodesian Government.¹¹⁴

They further concluded that the wording of the Communique ensured that if any Commonwealth member disagreed with British sanctions policy in the UN “we should then regard ourselves as absolved from the obligation in the communique.”¹¹⁵ Although they had conceded an assurance about their commitment to NIBMAR (though not explicitly), the British felt that this was the minimum price for retaining the trust of the Commonwealth and securing advantages in the United Nations.¹¹⁶ The British felt that they had successfully avoided the breakup of the Commonwealth without changing their policies and that the “traumatic” experience of the meeting among the emotional Afro-Asian members may have scared those members into realising the value of the Commonwealth to themselves and into learning some lessons for the future of Commonwealth coordination.¹¹⁷

British paternalism, racism, and manoeuvring during the meeting were not lost on newer Commonwealth members. The Cypriot and Maltese presses were suspicious of British motives and saw British proposals as financially and imperially motivated. The Ugandan and Malawian presses supported the Afro-Asian caucus and called for stronger measures against the Rhodesian Regime.¹¹⁸ Opinion in other African nations was also quite skeptical. Though he had not attended the meeting, Julius Nyerere saw the British tactics at play. He noted in a statement to

¹¹⁴ TNA: DO 207/231, Confidential Cypher from Foreign Office and Commonwealth Office to Certain Missions: Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting – Rhodesia, 15 September, 1966.

¹¹⁵ TNA: DO 207/231, Confidential Cypher from Foreign Office and Commonwealth Office to Certain Missions: Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting, 17 September, 1966.

¹¹⁶ TNA: DO 207/231, Confidential Cypher from Foreign Office and Commonwealth Office to Certain Missions: Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting – Rhodesia, 15 September, 1966.

¹¹⁷ TNA: DO 207/231, Confidential Cypher from Foreign Office and Commonwealth Office to Certain Missions: Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting – Rhodesia, 15 September, 1966.

¹¹⁸ TNA: DO 207/231, Telegram from Zomba to Commonwealth Office, 20 September, 1966; TNA: DO 207/231, Telegram from Valletta to Commonwealth Office, 16 September, 1966; TNA: DO 207/231, Telegram from Kampala to Commonwealth Office, 16 September, 1966; TNA: DO 207/231, Telegram from Nicosia to Commonwealth Office, 15 September, 1966.

the press that at the core of the discussion, Wilson had still not explicitly committed to NIBMAR and that Tanzania would therefore continue her diplomatic break with Britain.¹¹⁹ Sierra Leonean newspapers accused the British Government of avoiding action to end the crisis, summed up in the slogan “because the rebels are white their action is right.”¹²⁰ In spite of an official delegation apology, Zambian foreign minister Simon Kapwepwe was unapologetic for his accusation that Wilson was a racist and the Zambian press praised their delegation’s commitment to their principles and to “the solidarity of people of Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Canada.”¹²¹

The 1966 Prime Ministers’ Meeting did not solve the Rhodesian crisis and as Arnold Smith remembered it was a time of “severe testing” for the Commonwealth.¹²² The meeting was another step toward the newer members’ vision of the Commonwealth as an international organisation. Smith and the Secretariat worked tirelessly not only to plan the Prime Ministers’ Meeting in a practical sense, but also to keep members engaged with one another. Smith in particular employed his personal connections in the Canadian Government as well as his contacts in the wider Commonwealth to make a case for the revitalisation of the organisation through the Secretariat, and to facilitate the compromises necessary to generate consensus on the dedicated Rhodesia Communique. Regardless of their stances on the Secretariat, both the British Government and the wider membership felt that the Secretariat’s work had been well conducted. At the closing of the meeting the Secretariat received thanks and accolades from both the Indian and British delegations.¹²³ Indian officials disagreed with British policy in Rhodesia and spoke

¹¹⁹ TNA: DO 207/231, Telegram from Dar-Es-Salaam to Commonwealth Office, 15 September, 1966.

¹²⁰ TNA: DO 207/231, Telegram from Freetown to Commonwealth Office, 15 September 1966.

¹²¹ TNA: DO 207/231, Telegram From Commonwealth Office to Lusaka from Wilson to Kaunda, 15 September, 1966; TNA: DO 207/231, Telegram from Lusaka to Commonwealth Office, 16 September, 1966; TNA: DO 207/231, Telegram from Lusaka to Commonwealth Office, 18 September, 1966.

¹²² Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 63.

¹²³ TNA: DO 207/231, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, September, 1966: Minutes of the Fifteenth Meeting held at Marlborough House, London, on Thursday 15 September, 1966, at 2.45 p.m.

on behalf of the caucus to praise the Secretariat's performance under the abnormal circumstances and extreme pressure of the meeting.¹²⁴ The British and Indian Governments differed on the Rhodesian issue but were both committed restrictionists opposed to Secretariat expansion. Their accolades crossed the spectrum of the Rhodesian issue as well as the typical binary of expansionists and restrictionists.

None of the major initiatives in Commonwealth cooperation or on the Rhodesian crisis succeeded at the meeting, but the September 1966 Prime Ministers' Meeting had important implications for the future of the Commonwealth. Secretariat efforts ensured a Secretariat economic branch, enabled the Secretariat to publish reports independently, expanded the number and scale of meetings organised by the Secretariat, demonstrated the Secretariat's ability to organise full-scale Prime Ministers' Meetings, and shown its ability to mediate between members. Although there were no major policy changes at the meeting, there was increasing recognition of the Secretariat's role and room for that role to expand in future.

1969 London Prime Ministers' Meeting

The key points in planning meetings such as setting the dates and location, agenda and chairmanship, and coordinating logistics and press coverage, remained the same at the next Prime Ministers' Meeting in January of 1969. The central discussion points of Rhodesia and Commonwealth cooperation were also carried over to 1969 after the lack of resolve in 1966. However, as the planning process began in 1968, the Secretariat had little opposition in planning the next Prime Ministers' Meeting. Increasing Secretariat capacity was coupled with a corresponding decrease in British and restrictionist resistance to the Secretariat. Continued

¹²⁴ Ibid.

pressure from the expansionist members and the proven track record of Secretariat organisation facilitated the planning for the 1969 meeting.

In spite of the ongoing Rhodesian crisis, the 1969 meeting was widely regarded as having reached a “new plateau of maturity” without bickering over logistics and with discussions that were much calmer than expected.¹²⁵ By the time planning began in 1968 all parties were willing to cooperate through the central body of the Secretariat and were more open to Secretariat proposals on Commonwealth cooperation. Tracing the planning process and the continued discussion on Rhodesia and Commonwealth cooperation at the 1969 Prime Ministers’ Meeting illustrates the success of Secretariat efforts in fulfilling its mandate to plan and coordinate meetings. Furthermore, tracing these elements between 1966 and 1969 demonstrates how Secretariat success with meetings cemented its role in political affairs and opened the doors to expanding the organisation into the economic realm of development and aid. As one Secretariat official put it “it is only when the ‘bread and butter’ work of the Secretariat, required of it by the *Agreed Memorandum*, has been effectively discharged that we can have the acquiescence of (jealous) national diplomats in exercising the proper political role morally laid upon us.” He continued that in 1969 the Secretariat was “thoroughly on top of the whole complex mechanism” of Commonwealth meetings and was growing out of its original restrictive shell.¹²⁶

Timing and Location

¹²⁵ CSLA: 1997-30 (1), The Commonwealth’s Future in Practical Co-operation: Extracts from an address to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association by the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr. Arnold Smith delivered on 16 October 1969 at Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago; CSLA: 2001-101 (1) “CPMM 1969 Post Mortem, 20 Jan 1969 – 27 May 1970,” CPM Meeting (69), 25 February, 1969.

¹²⁶ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 9 “Diary Jan. 1969,” PM 2: Memorandum by Noel H. Salter, 31 January, 1969.

Conventionally the Commonwealth prime ministers had met about every two years since the end of the Second World War. Even after the acrimonious 1966 London meeting the prime ministers agreed on the value of continuing their meetings on a biennial basis. They further agreed that for expediency sake the next Prime Ministers' Meeting should again be held in the United Kingdom. After the September 1966 meeting the Secretariat began consultations for a conference in the fall of 1968 in keeping with the traditional schedule. In many ways the consultations for the 1969 meeting date echoed those of 1966, but with the key difference that the role of the Secretariat was not challenged by the British Government to the same degree it had been in the past.

As in 1966 Whitehall had reservations about the proposed meeting dates. In a conversation with Secretary-General Smith in June, Prime Minister Wilson expressed concerns about most of the proposed weeks in October as a Commonwealth meeting then would potentially conflict with the parliamentary schedule and the British Labour Party Conference. Wilson also noted that many British representatives would be busy with the anticipated merger of the Foreign and Commonwealth Offices on October 1. In his conversation with Smith, Wilson was cognisant that adjusting the meeting dates to the fourth week of September might clash with the Finance Ministers' Meeting and might require relocation to another city in the UK such as Edinburgh, and therefore noted his preference of the second week of October.¹²⁷ In a Commonwealth circular issued on June 18, Smith outlined British difficulties in hosting an autumn meeting and noted that in feedback from other members, there were mixed preferences between October and January dates.¹²⁸ Rather than sustaining a lengthy consultative correspondence between all member governments Smith called for a meeting of High Commissioners on July 9, 1968 to

¹²⁷ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 1 "Diary June 1968," Inward Telegram From Commonwealth Office to Secretariat, 1 June, 1968.

¹²⁸ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 1, Message to Commonwealth Heads of Government from Commonwealth Secretary-General dated 18 June, 1968.

finalise the date and venue in person.¹²⁹ The July meeting of High Commissioners reached a unanimous decision to hold the next Prime Ministers' Meeting from January 7 -15, 1969.¹³⁰

The British approach to the date for the 1969 Prime Ministers' Meeting illustrates the consolidation of the Secretariat's organisational role in two ways. Even though Wilson sought to delay the meeting (he was certainly not looking forward to another Prime Ministers' Meeting after 1966), he could not do so without working with the Secretariat.¹³¹ Wilson frankly noted his preferences and willingness to make concessions with Smith and left the meeting organisation to the Secretariat. Unlike in 1966 there were no parallel British consultations, negotiations about assurances, or compromises on location and chairmanship to facilitate postponement. Second, the role of the Secretariat as meeting coordinator was more firmly established throughout the British Government. On June 11 British leader of the opposition Edward Heath met with Arnold Smith and alleged that Wilson's preference of the second week of October was meant to frustrate the Conservative Party Conference planned for that week, though he did not think that Wilson would get away with it.¹³² Both the British Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition came to Smith to note their concerns about the date for the Prime Ministers' Meeting. This illustrates the degree to which the Secretariat was recognised as independent and responsible for Commonwealth meetings within wider British political circles, as opposed to 1966 when British officials still struggled to view the Commonwealth as independent of the British Government. The practical handover of meeting responsibility gradually encouraged a change in British thinking about the organisation.

¹²⁹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 1, Commonwealth Circular Letter no. 52/68, 26 June, 1968.

¹³⁰ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 2 "Diary July 1968," Message to Commonwealth Heads of Government from Commonwealth Secretary-General dated 9 July, 1968.

¹³¹ Philip Alexander, "A Tale of Two Smiths: The Transformation of Commonwealth Policy, 1964-70," *Contemporary British History* 20, no.3 (September 2006), 309.

¹³² LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 1, Diary Entry, Tuesday June 11, 1968.

Logistics and Press

In a similar sense, the Secretariat's role in managing the logistics and press for the 1969 Prime Ministers' Meeting was much less contested and continued more smoothly than at previous Commonwealth Conferences. On August 28, 1968 the Secretariat issued a circular calling for nominations for conference liaison officers, with liaison meetings beginning in October.¹³³ By October 1, the Secretariat had finalised the timing and venue, completed a draft agenda and had background papers and coordinating host arrangements with the British Government well in hand.¹³⁴ By the end of October the logistical arrangements including meetings, offices, communications, ceremonies, documents, transportation, security, social programmes, etcetera, were also completed and distributed to member liaison officers.¹³⁵ The final agenda and background papers were distributed directly to the Commonwealth High Commissioners, who met in early December at the Secretariat's behest to review the final arrangements.¹³⁶

To pre-empt the press leaks and extensive press speculation that had occurred in 1966, in 1968 the Secretariat issued detailed instructions about the timing and content of press releases during the conference. This would help the meeting prevent the press from cross-questioning delegations in order to reconstruct the prime ministers' confidential discussions, and to speculate on those incomplete talks.¹³⁷ Tightening protocols for press management was particularly important at the 1969 conference which was set to have more press coverage than any other

¹³³ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 3 "Diary Aug. 1968," Commonwealth Circular Letter no. 63/68, 28 August, 1968.

¹³⁴ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 6 "Diary Oct. 1968," Preparations for CPM 1969: Present Position, 1 October, 1968.

¹³⁵ CSLA: 2001 – 101 (2), Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers to be held at London, 7 January, 1969: Administrative Arrangements, 24 October, 1968.

¹³⁶ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 8, Commonwealth Circular Letter no. 75/68, 6 December, 1968.

¹³⁷ 2009 – 084 "Prime Ministers' Meeting, 1969 Administrative Arrangements, 1 Jan 1969 -6 Jan 1969," Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers: Meeting of Senior Officials, 10:30 a.m. on Monday, 6 January, in Room P.M.4: Brief for the Secretary-General.

Commonwealth meeting to date.¹³⁸ In the lead-up to the meeting the Secretariat managed press speculation by denying false claims of leaked information and coordinated with members to promote a positive and constructive narrative before the meeting.¹³⁹ During the meeting itself the Secretariat maintained punctual releases of meeting records as well as daily press releases about the broad topics being discussed by the prime ministers in each session.¹⁴⁰

The press arrangements for the 1969 meeting were reportedly strained but adequate for the purposes of the Secretariat.¹⁴¹ While the Secretariat no longer heavily relied on borrowed staff, they still required some (mostly from the UK) in order to serve as press officers during the meeting. As these staff were affiliated with national governments, they were both partisan and used to giving and sticking to a “line” as instructed by their home government or department.¹⁴² In the Secretariat post-mortem of the 1969 meeting they concluded that they would no longer borrow press officers from members as the Secretariat itself enjoyed good press relations across the political spectrum and would ensure better, more factual coverage.

After the conference, the Secretariat also worked towards refining its record keeping process. The scope of the meetings had grown so much that keeping verbatim records was increasingly difficult to do in real time.¹⁴³ The British delegation even recommended that the Secretariat be

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 7 “Diary Nov. 1968,” Commonwealth Circular Letter no. 71/68, 22 November 1968; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 8, Telephone conversation which took place on Friday 6 December, 1968 between Mr. Arnold Smith, Secretary-General and Mr. Tom Critchley – Australia House.

¹⁴⁰ 2009 – 084 “Prime Ministers’ Meeting, 1969 Administrative Arrangements, 1 Jan 1969 -6 Jan 1969,” Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers: Meeting of Senior Officials, 10:30 a.m. on Monday, 6 January, in Room P.M.4: Brief for the Secretary-General.

¹⁴¹ CSLA: 2001 – 101 (2), Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting 1969: Memorandum on Press Arrangements, 18 February, 1969.

¹⁴² CSLA: 2001 – 101 (2), Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 1969: Press Arrangements: General Post Mortem Comments and Recommendations, Undated.

¹⁴³ 2009 – 084 “Prime Ministers’ Meeting, 1969 Administrative Arrangements, 1 Jan 1969 -6 Jan 1969,” Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers’: Meeting of Senior Officials, 10:30 a.m. on Monday, 6 January, in Room P.M.4: Brief for the Secretary-General.

supported in expanding its capacity to keep conference records as member delegations could not ensure confidentiality or even distribution of documents. Nor could members ensure the quality of record keeping (such as training standards in shorthand and verbatim notes for record keepers) as well as the Secretariat could.¹⁴⁴ By 1969, the Secretariat was engaged in fine tuning its role in planning and servicing the Prime Ministers' Meeting rather than advocating for a full interpretation of its mandate.

Agenda and Chairmanship

The process of setting the agenda and selecting chairmen for the September 1966 Prime Ministers' Meeting necessitated a great deal of political skill on the part of Arnold Smith. Smith had pursued a moderate course and employed his connections in the Canadian Government to facilitate consensus. In contrast, the Secretariat's role setting the agenda in 1969 was much closer to the Secretariat's functions set out in the *Agreed Memorandum*.¹⁴⁵ The preparation of the agenda through 1968 showed an acceptance by the membership of the role of the Secretariat and even the expectation that the Secretariat take on a more active role moving forward.

For instance, in contrast to the significant interest in the agenda content and order in 1966, through 1968 the Secretariat had to issue multiple follow up requests to the membership to obtain enough information to draft a provisional agenda.¹⁴⁶ Commonwealth Heads of Government were responsible for proposing and approving agenda items but the 1969 agenda was largely a product of outstanding items from 1966 carried forward by the Secretariat. By the

¹⁴⁴ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 9 "Diary Jan. 1969," PM 2: Memorandum by Noel H. Salter, 31 January, 1969.

¹⁴⁵ After Heads of Government had agreed on a broad, provisional list of topics, the Secretary-General was responsible for preparing papers and annotations on agenda items, coordinating member feedback and suggestions, and preparing the final agenda. See *Agreed Memorandum on the Commonwealth Secretariat*, 7.

¹⁴⁶ CSLA: 2001 – 101 (1), Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting, January, 1969: Post Mortem, 3 April, 1969.

time the agenda was finalised in December 1968, the Secretariat had been working on the agenda for ten months, had issued four circular letters, and had held a meeting of High Commissioners in addition to an informal luncheon meeting held by Smith at Marlborough House.¹⁴⁷ The annotated agenda and background papers for the meeting were largely of the Secretariat's own devising due to a lack of feedback through the consultation process.¹⁴⁸ Member input on Secretariat agenda drafts was so scant that after the 1969 meeting Secretariat staff resolved that in future they would begin the process of agenda consultations with a meeting of High Commissioners as it was much easier to get feedback when the members were represented in person.¹⁴⁹

By the time the High Commissioners met in July there was a general consensus forming that the agenda should be a broad one that would include but not be dominated by Rhodesia as in 1966.¹⁵⁰ Other prominent items included world politics and economics, Commonwealth cooperation, and questions of citizenship and immigration within the Commonwealth.¹⁵¹ Many features of the agenda echoed the priorities of various members. The British Government was largely defensive, and sought to moderate discussion on Rhodesia, dependent territories, and UK-EEC relations, and to avoid discussion of immigration and economic issues which did not affect the United Kingdom (such as single-commodity agreements on tropical products like sugar

¹⁴⁷ CSLA: 2001 – 101 (1), Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting, January, 1969: Post Mortem, 3 April, 1969; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 1, Letter from Arnold Smith to Commonwealth High Commissioners, 12 June, 1968; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 3, Commonwealth Circular Letter no. 62/68, 28 August, 1968; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 8, Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting: Meeting With High Commissioners on 12 December, 1968: Points for Discussion, 11 December, 1968.

¹⁴⁸ CSLA: 2001 – 101 (1), Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting, January, 1969: Post Mortem, 3 April, 1969.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 2, Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting: Meeting of High Commissioners and the Secretary-General, 9 July, 1968 at Marlborough House; Rhodesia was ultimately third on agenda with sub headings concerning NIBMAR and the work of the sanctions committee See: CLSA: 2009 – 084, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, January 1969: Order and Time Table of Agenda: Note by the Secretary-General, 6 January, 1969.

¹⁵¹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 3, Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting: January 1969: Items for the Provisional Agenda, 29 August, 1968.

or cocoa).¹⁵² The newer members were keenly interested in Rhodesia, British membership in the EEC, currency values, immigration, aid, and expanded Commonwealth services.

The Secretariat was an important topic for African members in particular. Some proposed that Secretariat activities be treated as a stand-alone agenda item early in the meeting.¹⁵³ The importance of the Secretariat to the newer members was clear not only in calls for Secretariat activities to be addressed in the agenda, but also in those members' faith in the Secretariat to advocate for African interests. For example, the Biafran Crisis in Nigeria had escalated to the point that protests took place outside of Marlborough House on the last day of the conference.¹⁵⁴ Yet in contrast to the Rhodesian crisis, Biafra was not included on the 1969 agenda. Because Nigeria was already an independent member, there was little argument for intervention from either Britain or the newer members. However, at the invitation of the Nigerian Government the Secretariat had been asked to help facilitate peace talks and had been working on setting up negotiations through the winter of 1968-1969. The Secretariat had the confidence of the African members who also wanted to work toward a peaceful outcome. In drafting the agenda for the 1969 Prime Ministers' Meeting, Biafra was left off the agenda although Ugandan officials proposed that a report of the Secretariat's constructive work toward peace negotiations be added

¹⁵² LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 2, Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting: Meeting of High Commissioners with Secretary-General on 9 July, 1968; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 7, Record of Conversation between the Secretary-General and Mr. John Hunt, M.P. (Chairman of the Committee on U.K. Citizenship), Mr. David Steel, M.O., and Mr. P. Patel, Undated; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 4 "Diary Sept. 1968 (1)," Commonwealth Circular Letter no. 65/68, 20 September, 1968; Jim Tomlinson, "The Empire/Commonwealth in British Economic Thinking and Policy," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Britain's Experience in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Andrew Thompson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 234.

¹⁵³ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 2, Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting: Meeting of High Commissioners with Secretary-General on 9 July, 1968; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 8, Letter from P.O. Etiang, Acting High Commissioner, Republic of Uganda to Arnold Smith, 10 December, 1968; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 7, Letter from Forbes Burnham to Arnold Smith, 11 November, 1968.

¹⁵⁴ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 9, Freedom and Peace for Biafra: Flyer, 15 January, 1969.

under Secretariat activities.¹⁵⁵ During the meeting itself, Milton Obote handed a note to Smith asking his opinion on when Obote might propose an adjournment to allow representatives “to meet and exchange views on a tragedy confronting a member of this conference.”¹⁵⁶ African members trusted the Secretariat to work towards a favourable outcome for the Biafran Crisis and worked with Smith to facilitate informal discussion without formally including Biafra on the agenda. This was in stark contrast to the Rhodesian crisis when African members demanded British accountability to the wider meeting.

The expansionists’ faith in the Secretariat thus shaped their engagement with the 1969 draft agenda. In contrast, the restrictionist approach was to avoid discussions that might expand the Commonwealth Secretariat. By definition this defensive approach meant that there were fewer proposals from the restrictionist members than the expansionist members. As Commonwealth membership expanded, there were also more expansionists than restrictionists by the late 1960s. Secretariat staff sought to cement the Secretariat’s role and to reflect the concerns of the members. As a result of the expansionists’ numerical superiority, activist footing, and greater cooperation with the Secretariat, the 1969 agenda more heavily reflected the concerns of the newer, developing members. The 1969 agenda reflected both the newer members’ expectation that the Commonwealth function as an international organisation and Smith’s call to introduce new content into the organisation as its traditional economic and strategic underpinnings ebbed away.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 8, Letter from P.O. Etiang, Acting High Commissioner, Republic of Uganda to Arnold Smith, 10 December, 1968.

¹⁵⁶ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 9, Note from Milton Obote to Arnold Smith, 14 January, 1969.

¹⁵⁷ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 1, Letter from Arnold Smith to Commonwealth High Commissioners, 12 June, 1968.

Secretariat staff introduced areas of potential Commonwealth cooperation into the High Commissioners' consultations and prepared an extensive background paper on Commonwealth cooperation.¹⁵⁸ Ultimately, the topics of Rhodesia and Commonwealth cooperation were carried over from 1966. However, these topics were managed in such a way that Rhodesia would not be overbearing and talks on Commonwealth cooperation would be more substantive. The balance of these issues was so successful in the lead-up to the 1969 meeting that in contrast to 1966 no members challenged the traditional right of the host government to chair the conference (though the Secretariat had prepared an alternative proposal if members rejected a British chair).¹⁵⁹ The preparations for the 1969 Prime Ministers' Meeting were a clear success for the expansionist members' vision of the Commonwealth as an international organisation. Based on the Secretariat's track record in 1966 and successful campaigning between the Secretariat and the British Government, in 1969 there was practically no opposition to Secretariat management of the meeting preparations. Secretariat staff were able to focus instead on fine-tuning their operations and more substantive policy issues such as the Rhodesian crisis and Commonwealth cooperation.

Rhodesia

Both expansionist and restrictionist members felt that the Commonwealth had approached the brink of ruin in September 1966. While the newer members continued to press for the Rhodesian crisis to be included in the 1969 meeting there was an early consensus that discussion of

¹⁵⁸ CSLA: 2001 – 101 (1), Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting, January, 1969: Post Mortem, 3 April, 1969; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 1, Letter from Arnold Smith to Commonwealth High Commissioners, 20 June, 1968.

¹⁵⁹ 2009 – 084 "Prime Ministers' Meeting, 1969 Administrative Arrangements, 1 Jan 1969 -6 Jan 1969," Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers: Meeting of Senior Officials, 10:30 a.m. on Monday, 6 January, in Room P.M.4: Brief for the Secretary-General.

Rhodesia in 1969 should take up less time than in 1966.¹⁶⁰ The Secretariat again had an important role mediating the Rhodesian issue before the meeting itself began. After the Anglo-Rhodesian talks aboard the HMS *Tiger* in November 1966 had failed, it seemed in 1968 that Wilson was again moving towards a non-NIBMAR settlement in breach of past assurances to his Commonwealth colleagues. After the failure of the *Tiger* Talks, with the support of the prime ministers and the more detailed recommendations of the Sanctions Committee, the British Government had sponsored comprehensive mandatory sanctions through the UN in May 1968.¹⁶¹ However, in October 1968 Wilson had agreed to meet with Rhodesian representatives aboard the HMS *Fearless* for a resumption of talks regarding a constitutional settlement. The Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs, George Thomson called together Secretariat officials and the Commonwealth High Commissioners on October 8 to inform them that the talks would begin aboard the *Fearless* the following day. While the British maintained that the talks would not undermine the British commitment to NIBMAR, the resumption of negotiations in the first place and the lack of consultation with the Commonwealth caused deep suspicion among Commonwealth leaders.¹⁶²

Addressing British back-tracking over NIBMAR, Julius Nyerere went so far as to propose an emergency Foreign Ministers' Meeting to allow the British to "give this assurance and restore faith in her intentions over Rhodesia." Nyerere had committed to attend the 1969 meeting after several years of boycotting diplomatic relations with Britain, and argued that a new British

¹⁶⁰ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 8, Record of Meeting between the Secretary-General and Mr. Thomson, Minister without Portfolio, at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 6 December, 1968; Alexander, "A Tale of Two Smiths," 312-313; O'Neill, "Militancy and Accommodation," 223-224.

¹⁶¹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 6, Commonwealth Secretariat Press Release: Commonwealth Sanctions Committee: Communique, 28 October, 1968.

¹⁶² LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 6, Meeting in the Office of the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs on Tuesday, 8 October 1968, at 12.40 p.m.

guarantee was a necessary condition for holding another Prime Ministers' Meeting at all.¹⁶³

Individuals within the British Government also expressed the view that if the *Fearless* talks resulted in a settlement, it would be very difficult to avoid a permanent falling out between the British and African members..¹⁶⁴

The risk to the Commonwealth posed by the resumption of Anglo-Rhodesian talks was exacerbated by the merger of the Foreign and Commonwealth Offices into the FCO on October 17, 1968. With the merger, Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs George Thomson was reassigned as Minister without Portfolio. Thomson had been a close ally of the Secretariat, believing in Smith's vision for the organisation and helping as he was able during his tenure at the short-lived Commonwealth Office. In a conversation just over a week after Thomson's reassignment Smith noted that quick action was needed to avoid an Afro-Asian walk-out at the upcoming Prime Ministers' Meeting.¹⁶⁵ Thomson expressed that even though his new position did not involve direct liaison with the Secretariat he would stay in touch with Smith and work to shift Wilson's cabinet toward a solution in keeping with past British commitments to the Commonwealth. This was welcome help for Smith who found Michael Stewart, the new Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth affairs to be "more ignorant about the Commonwealth than I would have believed possible."¹⁶⁶ In Smith's estimation Stewart seemed to understand the Commonwealth as an exclusive rather than complementary channel for

¹⁶³ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 7, Letter from Stephen Khando, Minister of State (Foreign Affairs) Tanzania to Arnold Smith, 14 November, 1968.

¹⁶⁴ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 8, Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting: Meeting With High Commissioners on 12 December, 1968: Points for Discussion, 11 December, 1968; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 8, C.P.M. Meeting – Rhodesia, 12 December, 1968; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 6, Diary Entry, 28 October, 1968.

¹⁶⁵ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 6, Letter from George Thomson to Arnold Smith, 24 October, 1968; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 6, Note of a Conversation with the Rt. Hon. George Thomson, 29 October, 1968.

¹⁶⁶ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 6, Note of a Conversation with the Rt. Hon. George Thomson, 29 October, 1968; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 6, Diary Entry, 28 October, 1968.

international relations with questionable cost effectiveness and no loyalty to the British. Stewart echoed the same British view of the Commonwealth that Smith had been combatting for years. Smith responded with some of the points of his ‘usual gospel’ and reminded Stewart that loyalty was now a two-way street that would also require Britain to keep her commitments to the Commonwealth.¹⁶⁷

Tensions over Rhodesia persisted through the conference preparations particularly in the Sanctions Committee. As the committee prepared a report for the Prime Ministers’ Meeting, there was heated debate on the acceptability of the report for distribution to the prime ministers. Australian delegates argued that the report went beyond reporting on sanctions and went into making political recommendations. Australian officials voiced well-established restrictionist concerns and argued that because the report was prepared by the Sanctions Committee in conjunction with the Secretariat, a political report would overstep the bounds of both bodies. The Australian stance was roundly rebuked by Kenyan, Indian, and Jamaican representatives, who argued that the problem of Rhodesia was fundamentally a political one and that neither the Sanctions Committee, nor the Secretariat had overstepped their bounds in carrying out their work.¹⁶⁸

Secretariat staff also worried about how Whitehall was treating the Commonwealth. In addition to the resumption of talks with the rogue Rhodesian Government, in early December the British Government submitted a minute to the Secretariat proposing a draft agreement on Rhodesia to be included at the upcoming conference. Creating draft frameworks for meeting communique was not unprecedented in the planning of Prime Ministers’ Meetings. However, submitting a full

¹⁶⁷ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 6, Diary Entry, 28 October, 1968.

¹⁶⁸ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 8, Commonwealth Secretariat Sanctions Committee: Minutes of the Meeting of the Sanctions Committee on Wednesday, 4 December, 1968, at 10.30 hours in Main Conference Room, Marlborough House.

draft statement over a month in advance of the meeting was concerning to Secretariat staff.

Furthermore, the British draft that was decidedly ambiguous, made no mention of NIBMAR, and in a circuitous manner echoed the terms offered by the British during the *Fearless* Talks.¹⁶⁹ The Secretariat maintained reservations about the British paper and debated how to take British input seriously while maintaining the balance required for the meeting to go ahead.

Conditions during the meeting itself also had the potential to exacerbate divisions over Rhodesia. The 1969 Meeting was set to be the largest meeting of Heads of Government since the San Francisco Conference in 1945 with all 24 heads of government in attendance, and 28 total members represented.¹⁷⁰ The scale of the meeting also meant that there would be more press and therefore more speculation than ever before. This could generate potentially divisive rumours and raise the stakes of information security.¹⁷¹

Fortunately for Secretariat planners and the Commonwealth as a whole, the Anglo-Rhodesian *Fearless* Talks broke down and perhaps ironically, the Rhodesian regime's failure to accept British terms helped save the Commonwealth that was so intensely opposed to it.¹⁷² The breakdown of the *Fearless* Talks reassured other Commonwealth leaders that there would be no British sell-out for the time being. As more information about the nature of the talks and their ultimate breakdown became available, the Tanzanian High Commissioner wrote to the Secretariat on November 19 to advise that his government no longer insisted on an emergency

¹⁶⁹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 8, C.P.M. Meeting – Rhodesia, 6 December, 1968.

¹⁷⁰ Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 28th Parliament, 1st Session, Volume 4, (21 January, 1969): 4459.

¹⁷¹ CSLA: 2009 – 084 “Prime Ministers’ Meeting, 1969 Administrative Arrangements, 1 Jan 1969 -6 Jan 1969,” Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers: Meeting of Senior Officials, 10:30 a.m. on Monday, 6 January, in Room P.M.4: Brief for the Secretary-General.

¹⁷² Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 70.

meeting of foreign ministers, and by the end of November the Tanzanians requested that the Secretariat shelve the proposal unless otherwise notified.¹⁷³

This change of fortunes was also assisted by the surprising dedication of Michael Stewart who, in spite of his apparent ignorance of the Commonwealth itself, was increasingly committed to the idea of the Commonwealth and to revitalising the Labour government's approach to the organisation. Stewart had opposed the *Fearless* Talks from the beginning and in spite of Wilson's actions worked to shift British policy and to provide personal assurances to Kaunda and Nyerere as well.¹⁷⁴ In so doing Stewart was arguably responsible for returning the Rhodesia situation to the pre-*Fearless* status quo thus lessening tensions at the upcoming meeting and paving the way for more productive conversations.¹⁷⁵ The newer members still pressured a hesitant British delegation to withdraw the *Fearless* proposals and to reaffirm the British commitment to NIBMAR. While British representatives refused to do so, they did commit to consulting Commonwealth members regarding future developments in Rhodesia. More importantly, British representatives committed to using a "test of acceptability" for any proposed constitutional settlement. Such a test would ensure that the majority of the Rhodesian population would be consulted (most likely by referendum) as to whether they supported any scheme for independence.¹⁷⁶

The Rhodesia discussions were again inconclusive but illustrated the central role of the Secretariat in ensuring productive conversations between Commonwealth members. Even though

¹⁷³ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 7, Letter from P.P. Muro, Tanzania High Commissioner to Arnold Smith, 19 November, 1968; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 7, Letter from P.M. Rupia to Mr. A.L. Adu, 27 November, 1968.

¹⁷⁴ Alexander, "A Tale of Two Smiths," 316.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ "Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 1969 (London, 7-15 January): Final Communique," in *The Commonwealth at the Summit: Communiqués of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings, 1944-1986* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1987), 140-143.

the British Government was unclear about their intentions and warranted suspicion among other Commonwealth members, all members stayed at the table. Secretariat planning helped ensure that the meeting would take place. Secretariat agenda planning also ensured a more balanced approach to the meeting where the Rhodesian crisis was offset with productive topics meant to promote Commonwealth cooperation.

Commonwealth Cooperation

Discussions of Commonwealth cooperation were primed for greater success in 1969 not only because of the direction of discussions on Rhodesia but also due to the extensive planning done by Smith and the Secretariat. Smith pursued Commonwealth cooperation initiatives through the planning process, even calling extra meetings to discuss the Secretariat proposals with High Commissioners and key figures in the British Government.¹⁷⁷ After 1966, British officials were keen to offset the impact of the Rhodesia discussions and were growing increasingly receptive to discussing multilateral aid and development projects.¹⁷⁸ Shifts in the Labour government's engagement with the Commonwealth were further facilitated by Charles de Gaulle's veto of the United Kingdom's second application for EEC membership in November 1967.¹⁷⁹ Shifting British engagement with the Commonwealth coupled with the growing capacity of the

¹⁷⁷ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 6, Record of a Meeting Between the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Commonwealth Secretary-General at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 28 October, 1968 at 4.15 p.m.; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 6, Letter from P.H. Gore-Booth to Arnold Smith, 23 October, 1968.

¹⁷⁸ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 7, Multilateral Aid: Note of discussion between Commonwealth Secretary-General and Sir A. Snelling; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 7, The Commonwealth: Preparation of Background Paper for the Prime Ministers' Meeting: Notes on discussion with Commonwealth Representatives at 3.00 pm on Tuesday, 19 November 1968, at Marlborough House; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 8, Record of Meeting between the Secretary-General and Mr. Thomson, Minister without Portfolio, at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 6 December, 1968, 9 December, 1968.

¹⁷⁹ For background on the 1967 application, see: Parr, "Saving the Community.": Shifting British policy was also shaped by the earlier negotiations surrounding the first British application for EEC membership in 1963. Richard Toye notes how the Commonwealth was used as a rhetorical device by both the Conservative and Labour parties to shape public perceptions about Britain's relationship with the EEC. See: Richard Toye, "Words of Change: The Rhetoric of Commonwealth, Common Market and Cold War, 1961-3," in *The Wind of Change: Harold Macmillan and British Decolonization*, L.J. Butler and Sarah Stockwell, eds. (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013): 140-154.

Secretariat helped replace the Secretariat's reliance on Canadian contacts in advocating for expanded Commonwealth activities in 1969. The newly elected Trudeau Government in Canada was much more cautious about Commonwealth policy due to linguistic politics at home.¹⁸⁰

Smith's persistence and the Secretariat's early efforts to promote Commonwealth cooperation in conjunction with the failure of the *Fearless* Talks and the timely, if unexpected, support of Stewart, yielded extensive results during the Prime Ministers' Meeting. Not only did the discussion of Commonwealth cooperation help mitigate the Rhodesia discussions, but it also led to the approval and inauguration of several fresh Commonwealth efforts. The meeting acknowledged growing Commonwealth cooperation in technical assistance, education, science, law, medicine, and related technical fields, and followed up approval of the Secretariat's technical assistance proposal by commissioning a review of the program and report of its progress later in 1969.¹⁸¹ The Secretariat was also tasked with beginning studies on further cooperation in mass communications and media education as per a Pakistani proposal and was approved to hire an Information Officer to begin a Commonwealth Information Service per a Guyanese proposal.¹⁸² Building on proposals from the British delegation, a Secretariat Legal section was also approved and the Secretariat was tasked with initiating studies on regional education centres and the problems of Commonwealth youth. Feasibility studies for the Secretariat's own book development and exchange programme were also approved at the 1969 meeting.¹⁸³ Overall the meeting recognised the contributions of the Secretary-General and

¹⁸⁰ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 8, Telephone conversation between Mr. George Kidd, Ottawa and Mr. Arnold Smith, 16 December, 1968; Miller, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, 371.

¹⁸¹ "Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 1969 (London, 7-15 January): Final Communique," 146-147.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 147.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 148.

Secretariat staff, whose work to date had “more than adequately justified the decision to establish the Secretariat.”¹⁸⁴

Smith’s view of the meeting was that it had been a success primarily in the avoidance of political explosions and had resulted in few concrete measures. While he had hoped for more decisive approval for the book development and youth projects the meeting had nonetheless been successful in tabling these and other projects and moving them to the next stage of preparatory studies.¹⁸⁵ Most importantly to Smith, at the meeting “there was a strong impression of the growing appreciation among member governments and the responsible public of the effective role of the Secretariat in the evolution of the Commonwealth and in Commonwealth cooperation.”¹⁸⁶ By the 1969 Prime Ministers’ Meeting, the Secretariat had successfully staked out its place in Commonwealth affairs and was increasingly recognised as the vital central body envisioned by its proponents over the previous five years. More than in previous years the Commonwealth was functioning as an international organisation.

Outcomes

The cementing of the Secretariat’s role at the center of the organisation was particularly striking in the weeks after the meeting. Feedback from across the Commonwealth was overwhelmingly positive, including among the traditionally restrictionist governments of the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and India. The widespread passive resistance to the Secretariat’s role in Commonwealth meetings that had characterised these members’ previous modus operandi had given way to an appreciation for the work of the Secretariat and the balance the Secretariat had achieved in handling politically charged topics. Following the 1969 meeting, New Zealander

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ CSLA: 2001 – 101 (1), Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting: Post Mortem, 17 February, 1969.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

officials described the conference as one of the most constructive in recent years and Indian representatives praised the warm and friendly atmosphere characterised by genuine desire to find solutions to Commonwealth problems.¹⁸⁷ Members of the traditionally antagonistic Australian Government felt that the conference had been useful, well-run, harmonious, and well worthwhile.¹⁸⁸ Although newly elected Australian Prime Minister John Gorton remained wary of Secretariat expansion, and reckoned that the use of the Commonwealth could not be reasonably judged for another twenty years, he concluded that in the long term the organisation had “a pretty good chance of proving worth while [sic].”¹⁸⁹

Changes in British perspectives were the most striking. Harold Wilson had called the 1966 conference “the worst ever held” but considered the 1969 meeting “the most successful ever held.”¹⁹⁰ Wilson even personally wrote to Smith after the conference to congratulate him and his staff, noting that the conference was the “most soberly constructive and positive of any in recent years.”¹⁹¹ Some of this change had to do with the shift to the left in Wilson’s cabinet and a corresponding emphasis on multilateralism and aid more closely aligned to the Secretariat and wider Commonwealth.¹⁹² However, Secretariat staff liaising with the British Government noted positive reactions to the 1969 Prime Ministers’ Meeting went across party lines, indicating that the shift in British attitudes was broader than changes in the Wilson administration alone.¹⁹³

The degree of change in British attitudes was in part due to the extensive reorganisation of the British departments that dealt most directly with the Commonwealth. With the merger of the

¹⁸⁷ CSLA: 2001 – 101 (1), Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting: Post Mortem, 17 February, 1969.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ CSLA: 2001 – 101 (1), Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting: Minute by D.G. Nutter, 20 February, 1969.

¹⁹⁰ Alexander, “A Tale of Two Smiths,” 304.

¹⁹¹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 9, Letter from Harold Wilson to Arnold Smith, 16 January, 1969.

¹⁹² Alexander, “A Tale of Two Smiths,” 312-313.

¹⁹³ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 9 “Diary Jan. 1969,” PM 2: Memorandum by Noel H. Salter, 31 January, 1969.

Colonial and Commonwealth Relations Offices in 1966 and the subsequent merger of the Foreign and Commonwealth Offices in 1968, the most established British resistance to Secretariat expansion was gradually disbursed. The CRO initially had the most to lose as the Secretariat was specifically mandated to take over secretarial tasks from the CRO. After the creation of the Commonwealth Office many former CRO staff and ministers remained closely affiliated with Commonwealth affairs thus prolonging a hostile culture toward the Secretariat. With the subsequent merger of the Foreign and Commonwealth Offices and the further reassignment of key individuals, that culture of resistance was further diluted. Individuals like Arthur Bottomley, who had consistently opposed or pushed for restraint in establishing the Secretariat, were replaced by more sympathetic figures like George Thomson and Michael Stewart. While newer officials like Stewart were not necessarily well informed about the Commonwealth, they did not have as much to lose with the merger of diplomatic departments in contrast to Bottomley, whose political career began to decline after he was sacked from his new position of Minister of Overseas Development in 1967.¹⁹⁴

While many of the changes in personnel reflected the ministerial shuffling and left-right struggles of the Labour party in the late 1960s, these departments were broadly staffed and were already part of cross-party attempts to maintain the British Empire after the Second World War.¹⁹⁵ The reorganisation of British diplomatic offices was part of a wider post-war search for a new international role. As with Edward Heath's consultation with Smith in the lead-up to the 1969 conference, changing engagement with the British diplomatic offices illustrates that by 1969 the Secretariat played a central Commonwealth role in the thinking of British politicians

¹⁹⁴ "Lord Bottomley; Obituary," *The Times*, 6 November 1995.

¹⁹⁵ See: John Newsinger, "War, Empire and the Attlee government 1945-1951," *Race & Class* 60, no. 1 (2018): 61-76.

and staffers across party lines. In 1964 British officials demonstrated an inability to conceive of the Commonwealth as anything other than a British organisation. By 1969 British officials and ministers with this view had been sacked, reassigned, or converted by a strong Secretariat track record, and the threat of political pressure from newer Commonwealth members.

Arnold Smith's coordination with his connections in the Canadian Government to bolster the Secretariat's capacity and independence from British departments underwent a corresponding shift by the 1969 Prime Ministers' Meeting. While Canadian officials felt that the 1969 meeting had been a potential watershed moment for the Commonwealth and that in general the organisation seemed "back on the rails" after a rough period, Canadian coordination with the Secretariat was at a new low.¹⁹⁶ The new Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau approached the Commonwealth pragmatically and cautiously and did not see the Canadian delegation as having the central mediatory role envisioned by his predecessor Lester Pearson.¹⁹⁷ While Smith was disappointed in the lack of Canadian support, the change corresponded with decreases in passive resistance to the Secretariat among the restrictionist camp. Furthermore, active resistance from specific departments of the British Government waned as the Secretariat's own capacity for independent action grew. Thus, the Secretariat did not need to rely on Canadian assistance to the extent required in its early years.

Trudeau later reported to the Canadian House of Commons after the meeting that "the scope of the secretariat seems now to have been defined and its services identified."¹⁹⁸ Trudeau's impression from his first Prime Ministers' Meeting was also borne out in the Secretariat's own post-mortem of the 1969 conference. Secretariat staff noted the now-general approval and

¹⁹⁶ CSLA: 2001-101 (1), CPM Meeting (69), 25 February, 1969.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 28th Parliament, 1st Session, Volume 4, (21 January, 1969): 4459.

appreciation of their efforts and concluded that moving forward the Secretariat could “be more relaxed about our responsibilities, and should avoid the evangelical stance, since there is now no need for it.”¹⁹⁹ Rather than seeking to fulfill its basic functions in planning meetings and defending its mandate from detractors, in 1969 the Secretariat looked to refine and expand its existing role. By 1969 the Secretariat was equipped to work on expansion and refining its planning procedures. This was facilitated by the security of being a recognised central body in the Commonwealth that was self-sufficient in its operations and able to resist what remained of opposition to the Secretariat itself, without the need to rely on diplomatic back-channels. In many ways Trudeau’s estimation that the 1969 Prime Ministers’ Meeting could be a watershed in Commonwealth history was accurate. The meeting had demonstrated that the Secretariat was fully operational and highly effective in one of its main roles which in turn, resulted in a suggestion to close the chapter on Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meetings. In response to the growing diversity of government structures among Commonwealth members in 1969 the Secretariat resolved to rename the conferences “Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings.”²⁰⁰

The planning and servicing of Commonwealth meetings was a crucial feature of the Secretariat’s early responsibilities. Prime Ministers’ Meetings in particular spanned the various Secretariat responsibilities and were a means to embody the spirit of Commonwealth consultation while taking practical steps to meet the Secretariat’s mandate. Between 1965 and 1969 in pursuing its role the Secretariat faced widespread passive resistance in the restrictionist camp. These members gradually came to see the value of the Secretariat as it grew into a full interpretation of

¹⁹⁹ CSLA: 2001 – 101 (1), Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting: Post Mortem, 17 February, 1969.

²⁰⁰ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 8, Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Meeting: Meeting with High Commissioners on 12 December: Points for Discussion, 11 December, 1968.

its mandate. The stiff opposition of the CRO was also diminished by 1969 first by the merger of the CRO and the CO in 1966, and the further disbursal of the CRO's old bureaucratic culture with the creation of the FCO in late 1968.

Arnold Smith was able to use his personal connections in the Canadian Government and the broader support of the newer Commonwealth members to bolster the Secretariat's independence before that capacity was achieved by the Secretariat itself. By the time Pearson retired and Canadian support began to ebb, the Secretariat's own capacity was much greater and it was able to pursue its central role without such additional support. The expansionist members had supported the Secretariat through its early years and in numerous cases had applied diplomatic pressure on the British Government in support of the Secretariat. In logistics, meeting management, and topics like Rhodesia, the newer, developing members pressed the UK to accommodate the Secretariat. As the Commonwealth grew, British officials came to see more value in maintaining Commonwealth relations than in opposing the growth of the Secretariat. In this manner, both structurally with the Secretariat and functionally in meeting the demands of the members, the Commonwealth shifted to operating as an international organisation.

Chapter Ten: Other Ministerial Meetings: Law and Health

Introduction

The Secretariat's first forays into planning Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meetings illustrate the degree to which meetings provided the groundwork for Secretariat engagement in the wider politico-economic affairs of the Commonwealth. Beginning with the Lagos meeting the topics of Rhodesia and Commonwealth cooperation were intertwined with the planning process of each Prime Ministers' Meeting in the late 1960s. Secretariat planning efforts supported the "bread and butter" work of the Secretariat in servicing meetings but simultaneously provided points of access for the Secretariat to expand into broader political and economic spheres.

The Secretariat's success in servicing the larger Prime Ministers' Meetings supported a broader interpretation of the Secretariat's mandate that included other ministerial and officials' meetings. The officials who attended these smaller meetings more frequently saw the Secretariat as beneficial and helped generate support for the Secretariat within their home governments. The support of these mid-level officials helped influence the Commonwealth prime ministers to support expansion of the Secretariat even if those governments had reservations about the principle or cost of Secretariat expansion.

Secretariat involvement in ministerial and officials' meetings in areas like law, medicine, and education helped broaden organizational horizons and generate new ideas for Commonwealth cooperation.¹ The Secretariat's role in other meetings rapidly expanded to the point that even though there was no Prime Ministers' Meeting in the 1967-1968 fiscal year, Secretariat spending

¹ Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 107.

on conferences and meetings was second only to the wages of its growing staff.² This process helped further cement the association between Commonwealth meetings, the Secretariat, and Commonwealth cooperation. While discussions of Commonwealth cooperation and organizational revitalisation predated the Secretariat these ideas were increasingly associated with issue-specific meetings. For example, in preparation for the 1969 Prime Ministers' Meeting Secretariat background papers on Commonwealth cooperation focused on the number of official and ministerial level meetings that had been convened to promote greater cooperative efforts.³ Both the 1966 and 1969 Prime Ministers' Meetings relied heavily on background papers furnished by topical ministerial meetings. Such meetings were increasingly organised and serviced by the Secretariat. The Secretariat's mandate to service meetings became an avenue for expanded Commonwealth cooperation and the closer association between the Secretariat and cooperative projects.

This section explores Secretariat management of the Commonwealth Law and Health Ministers' Meetings. This chapter excludes the Education and Trade Ministers' Meetings which were nominally under the umbrella of the Commonwealth Economic Consultative Council (CECC). Secretariat management of the CECC is addressed in the following chapter. The newer, expansionist members expected the Secretariat to be involved in these areas just as the UN might be involved in a wide variety of fields. Pursuing a greater role in these meetings conformed to the expectations of the expansionist group and demonstrated several further themes about how the Commonwealth began to operate as an international organisation.

² LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 9, Commonwealth Secretariat: Report on Estimated and Actual Expenditure as at 30th June, 1968, 23 December, 1968.

³ For example see: LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 1, Commonwealth Co-operation (Draft) Background Paper, 20 June, 1968; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 1, Commonwealth Co-operation Background Paper (Supplement), 1 July, 1968.

By effectively managing meetings of specialised ministers the Secretariat gained allies from epistemic communities within member governments. Such communities worked to forge professional exchanges between countries, both in the public and private sectors.⁴ In the context of the Commonwealth, these professionals helped lobby restrictionist governments to support the Secretariat and to facilitate Commonwealth cooperative efforts in their respective fields. Managing ministerial meetings also gave the Secretariat a legitimate avenue to pursue a greater role in Commonwealth affairs. Because the Secretariat was tasked with managing ministerial meetings (as appropriate), servicing meetings of law and health could support Secretariat expansion into these areas without bringing allegations of empire building from the restrictionist camp. Effectively managing such ministerial meetings also led to a closer association between the Secretariat and constructive projects of Commonwealth cooperation. Productive ministerial meetings organised by the Secretariat were concrete examples of Commonwealth cooperation during a period of deep organisational divisions. A greater role in law and health was a way for the Secretariat to expand its capacity while demonstrating the worth and utility of the organisation. Finally, Secretariat management of Law and Health Ministers' Meetings helped standardise those meetings. Both meetings had precedents in previous Commonwealth efforts but had never been formalised or standardised. In contrast to the British propensity for ad hoc meetings which were prone to manipulation, Secretariat management created a basis of standards that resembled other international organisations and was transparent to the membership.

⁴ Akira Iriye, *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 14.

Law Ministers' Meetings

Commonwealth cooperation in the legal field illustrates the manner in which meetings paved the way for Secretariat expansion. From the earliest Secretariat involvement in the legal field in 1966 Smith and his staff were able to build allies in member governments and expand the Secretariat's role, particularly after the reorganisation of the CRO in late 1966. Secretariat management of the Commonwealth Law Ministers' Meetings culminated with the formation of a Secretariat Legal Division in 1969-1970.

In 1966, officials in the CRO still expected the Secretariat to play a secondary role to their own planning operations. The official view in the CRO reflected early British attitudes to the Secretariat that underscored a limited role to complement rather than replace British efforts. For instance CRO officials only began coordinating with the Secretariat for the 1966 Law Ministers' Meeting after Smith specifically inquired about the meeting and well after the CRO had begun its own consultations about meeting logistics.⁵ In the CRO's vision for the meeting, the British would plan and coordinate the meeting while keeping the Secretariat (perhaps selectively) informed and the Secretariat would provide the infrastructure and logistical support of Marlborough House with assistance from additional CRO staff as needed.⁶ In this vision, the Secretariat would literally service the meeting while the CRO conducted the important planning and organisational work including its coordination, the drafting of background papers, and establishing the content of the agenda.

CRO officials expressed this division of tasks in both their correspondence with Smith and circular letters issued to the wider membership. Officials in the CRO felt they had grounds to

⁵ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 8, Letter from R. Walker to Arnold Smith, 17 January, 1966.

⁶ Ibid.

organise the Law Ministers' Meeting. At the previous Law Ministers' Meeting in Canberra in 1964, delegates proposed that the next meeting be held in London in early 1966 and requested the British Government organise and host the 1966 meeting. While CRO representatives accurately noted that the British Government was following up on the wishes of the 1964 meeting, they disregarded the Secretariat's potential role in the meeting preparations. For instance, in 1966 the CRO had initiated consultations, proposed dates for the meeting, proposed to draft the agenda, and had already prepared key preparatory memoranda. The CRO couched Secretariat involvement in tenuous terms, stating that it believed it would be "appropriate if arrangements could be made for the Commonwealth Secretariat to service this meeting" and inquired of other Commonwealth Governments whether they would want the Secretariat to do so.⁷ Seeking other members' approval for Secretariat involvement conformed to the letter of the *Agreed Memorandum* rather than to its overarching mandate. With the CRO having already claimed the role of coordinator, proposed the meeting dates and agenda, and prepared key briefings, there was little substantial "service" left for the Secretariat to provide apart from sharing space in Marlborough House. The CRO circular stressed the centrality of the CRO in the meeting preparation to the point that nearly every sentence of the two-page letter contained the word "British" at least once.⁸

Had the Secretariat not been established, the CRO would be unquestionably acting on the wishes of the Commonwealth membership as both the prospective host and in the capacity of a surrogate secretariat (a role held by the CRO since 1947). The establishment of the Secretariat changed this dynamic in two ways. First, the facilities at Marlborough House, which by 1966 were well established as a Commonwealth Centre, were now under the management of the

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

Secretariat and not the CRO.⁹ Thus, the CRO would have to work with the Secretariat to use what had until recently been facilities under their own direction. Second, the CRO had to work around the text of the *Agreed Memorandum* which left the Secretariat's role in ministerial meetings open to interpretation. The organisation of the 1966 Law Ministers' Meeting was another field for the struggle between the Secretariat and the CRO over the nature of the former's role and whether Secretariat participation in ministerial meetings was "appropriate."¹⁰

The limitations implicit to the CRO's planning were not lost on Secretariat senior staff. While Smith was on a brief leave in February 1966, Deputy Secretary-General T.E. Gooneratne took up the correspondence with the CRO regarding the Law Ministers' Meeting. Gooneratne wrote to Robert Walker in the CRO and noted that the Secretariat would be prepared to service the meeting if approved by Commonwealth governments and noted that the British would "no doubt" keep the Secretariat informed of member replies in that regard. While Gooneratne's letter recognised the British role as per the previous Law Ministers' Meeting and an interpretation of the *Agreed Memorandum*, it was also clear that he considered greater Secretariat involvement a foregone conclusion. He suggested that as soon as [not if] the member governments approved of the British dates "even if only tentatively", and when [again, not if] they approved the Secretariat's role even "in principle," that communications and arrangements for the meeting should thenceforth be carried out through the Secretariat and not the British Government.¹¹ He also thanked the CRO for the offer of loaned staff but trusted that the Secretariat would be better staffed by the time of the meeting and would need not avail itself of the CRO's assistance in that

⁹ Marlborough House had been fully converted into a Commonwealth Centre in 1962. See: TNA: WORK 59/72, Ministry of Works Press Notice: Marlborough House Converted into a Commonwealth Centre: Major Conversion Job by Ministry of Works Described, 28 March, 1962.

¹⁰ *Agreed Memorandum on the Commonwealth Secretariat*, 6-7.

¹¹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 9, Letter from T.E. Gooneratne to R. Walker, Esq., 2 February, 1966.

regard.¹² Gooneratne advocated a full interpretation of the Secretariat's mandate laid out in the *Agreed Memorandum* which included the management of ministerial meetings.

Gooneratne went further in his discussion with the CRO and raised the topic of establishing a legal branch of the Commonwealth Secretariat. The idea of a Secretariat legal branch had also been raised at the 1964 Law Ministers' Meeting as a way to reinforce Commonwealth legal coordination and to reduce the costs of such coordination. For the newer expansionist members, Commonwealth legal coordination including a Secretariat legal branch would provide an inexpensive means to exchange legal best practices. Coordinating on legal matters in a way that was not controlled by the British Government was a practical advantage to the newer, expansionist members. For the newer members, a Secretariat-managed legal entity would facilitate exchanges on legal practices between all members, as opposed to British emphasis on common law. As member legal structures diversified, legal exchanges facilitated by the Secretariat could provide access to both common law legal advice and South-South legal exchanges.

The newer members' expectation that the Secretariat manage Law Ministers' Meetings informed Gooneratne's confident reply to the CRO and fit the mould of newer members' concerns about British management of Commonwealth meetings. As with other Commonwealth Meetings CRO officials had the tendency to insert British preferences into the meeting agenda. As CRO officials followed up on the 1964 meeting they paid selective attention to certain topics that the Law Ministers had proposed for future consideration. For example, based on the 1964 discussion of extradition treaties (a topic of particular interest to the British Government) the CRO proposed that the topic be included in the 1966 agenda, circulated a preparatory memorandum, and

¹² Ibid.

suggested that members include ministers familiar with the topic in their delegations. In contrast, CRO preparations completely omitted the topic of a Secretariat legal branch which had also been discussed in 1964.¹³ This CRO omission occurred even though the idea was supported by the British delegation in 1964. This underscored the CRO's propensity toward protecting their traditional authority, even if it involved contradicting the British delegation at the Law Ministers' Meeting, whose members continued to support the prospective coordinating role of the Secretariat in 1966.

Both the newer expansionist members and legal professionals supported the Secretariat role coordinating the Law Ministers' Meetings. Smith and the Secretariat staff used this support to circumvent the CRO, as they did with the Lagos Prime Ministers' Meeting (see Chapter Eight). Gooneratne suggested to CRO officials that discussing a Secretariat legal branch was a useful, timely, and important topic and proposed that it be added to the provisional agenda.¹⁴ Upon his return to Marlborough House, Smith and his deputies informed Commonwealth members that the Secretariat would be servicing the meeting and requested that any proposed agenda items or preparatory papers be sent to the Secretariat which would distribute them to both the membership and to the CRO as appropriate.¹⁵ By appealing to the wider membership the Secretariat was guaranteed greater support than by coordinating exclusively with the CRO.

In the same manner that Smith had leveraged his connections within the Canadian Government on many occasions, he also worked to shift coordination with the British Government to channels outside the CRO so far as possible. Smith pursued British cooperation to advance the proposed legal section via the Cabinet and court system. Smith particularly worked with the Lord

¹³ Ibid; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 8, Letter from R. Walker to Arnold Smith, 17 January, 1966.

¹⁴ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 9, Letter from T.E. Gooneratne to R. Walker, Esq., 2 February, 1966.

¹⁵ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 11, Commonwealth Circular Letter no. 50, 4 April, 1966.

Chancellor Baron Gardiner, a noted Labour reformist. Secretariat staff increasingly worked with the Lord Chancellor to organise the meeting beyond the control of the CRO. In a private meeting on April 19, Smith and Gardiner agreed that the Lord Chancellor would chair the Law Ministers' Meeting as host. The two discussed the meeting timetable, social occasions, press statements, and arranged a meeting of senior Commonwealth officials to finalise the agenda and meeting details.¹⁶ CRO officials received a record of Smith and Gardiner's meeting but were not party to the discussions themselves.¹⁷ Smith also submitted the logistical arrangements directly to the membership for approval, and so bypassed the possibility of the CRO influencing the agenda.¹⁸

By appealing to the wider membership and working with sympathetic British governmental departments the Secretariat seized the initiative for setting the agenda, drafting and distributing meeting papers, handling communications, and otherwise "servicing" the 1966 Law Ministers' Meeting. As with other Commonwealth meetings, in 1966 the CRO was increasingly restricted to tasks pertaining to logistical arrangements for the British role as host government. Although the CRO had postured to shape the planning and agenda of the Law Ministers' Meeting according to British preferences, this ran counter to the Commonwealth functioning as an international organisation and was unacceptable to the newer members. Smith and the Secretariat were able to use sympathetic connections within the British Government and the reliable support of the newer Commonwealth members to assert the Secretariat's mandate in planning Commonwealth ministerial meetings.

Towards a Secretariat Legal Section

¹⁶ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 12, Commonwealth Law Ministers' Meeting: Meeting between the Secretary General and the Lord Chancellor in the Lord Chancellor's Office at 5.30 p.m. on Tuesday, 19th April, 1966; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 12, Commonwealth Circular Letter no. 53, 20 April, 1966.

¹⁷ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 12, Commonwealth Law Ministers' Meeting: Meeting between the Secretary General and the Lord Chancellor in the Lord Chancellor's Office at 5.30 p.m. on Tuesday, 19th April, 1966.

¹⁸ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 12, Commonwealth Circular Letter no. 53, 20 April, 1966.

The Secretariat's work for the Law Ministers' Meeting was a stepping stone to organisational expansion with a Secretariat legal section as another central Commonwealth service. Proposals for a Secretariat legal branch had been raised during the Meeting of Commonwealth Law Ministers in Canberra, as well as during two other meetings of legal professionals held in Australia in 1964. At both the third Commonwealth and Empire Law Conference in Sydney and the Commonwealth Conference of Chief Justices in Canberra, delegates suggested a Secretariat legal section would be useful for sharing legal information and best-practices throughout the Commonwealth. Acting in part on the recommendations of these Commonwealth professional associations, the law ministers themselves advocated for a Secretariat legal section among their home governments.¹⁹ The law ministers envisioned the legal section facilitating exchanges of information on law and legislation in the Commonwealth, providing information on legal matters of mutual interest, assisting with intergovernmental legal projects, facilitating Commonwealth legal conferences, and facilitating consultation on legal matters during Prime Ministers' Meetings.²⁰

In 1964 when the law ministers invited the British delegation to initiate consultations for the next Law Ministers' Meeting in 1966, they also asked the British Government to facilitate consultations for the proposed legal section. The CRO had disregarded this request even though the British delegation of legal officials had supported it. When Secretariat staff took over preparations for the 1966 Law Ministers' Meeting the proposed legal section was incorporated into both the agenda and the wider planning of the meeting. In April 1966, the Secretariat facilitated an additional preparatory meeting of Commonwealth legal officials to draft a detailed

¹⁹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 10, Commonwealth Circular no. 44, 14 March, 1966.

²⁰ Ibid.

proposal for the legal section which would then be submitted to the law ministers.²¹ The committee produced a report elucidating the functions of a modest legal section in addition to outlining the qualifications and budgetary requirements for hiring two legal officers for the Secretariat.²² The Commonwealth law ministers accepted the recommendations of the preparatory meeting. The law ministers themselves did not have the authority to approve Commonwealth initiatives but strongly supported the establishment of a legal section and formally recommended it to the Commonwealth prime ministers.²³ Secretary-General Smith had already indicated the Secretariat's willingness to take on the responsibility of a legal section if approved by the membership and duly distributed the recommendations and papers from the Law Ministers' Meeting.²⁴

In order to avoid allegations of unilateral expansion the Secretariat issued a background paper that thoroughly grounded the idea of the legal section in the proposals from the 1966 Law Ministers' Meeting. The Secretariat brief also traced the genesis of the idea to 1964 before the Secretariat had begun operations.²⁵ Smith sought to avoid allegations of expansionism by stressing the role of the law ministers. For their part the law ministers ensured that the Secretariat legal section would be included on the agenda of the September 1966 Prime Ministers' Meeting when they formally recommended it to the prime ministers. Because the idea was endorsed by the law ministers, the legal section could not be construed as an attempt at "empire building" on

²¹ Ibid.; CSLA: 1997-28, Legal Section of the Commonwealth Secretariat: Report by Committee of Officials, 29 April, 1966.

²² CSLA: 1997-28, Legal Section of the Commonwealth Secretariat: Report by Committee of Officials, 29 April, 1966.

²³ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 13, Commonwealth Circular no. 54, 11 May, 1966.

²⁴ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 10, Commonwealth Circular no. 44, 14 March, 1966; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 13, Commonwealth Circular no. 54, 11 May, 1966.

²⁵ TNA: DO 161/398 Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, September 1966: Proposed legal Section of the Commonwealth Secretariat: Memorandum by the Secretary-General, 24 August, 1966; TNA: DO 161/398, Legal Section of the Commonwealth Secretariat: Report by Committee of Officials, 29 April, 1966.

Smith's behalf. Rather, the topic fell under the organisation of Prime Ministers' Meetings which was the most basic function of the Secretariat. The Secretariat's role in managing Commonwealth meetings was an avenue for expansion into new fields. Law ministers from across the expansionist and restrictionist camps more readily supported the Secretariat as a Secretariat legal section would directly benefit the law ministers' own projects regardless of their own governments' views on the Secretariat.

The September 1966 Prime Ministers' Meeting was a qualified success for the Secretariat (see Chapter Nine). The proposed Secretariat legal section was deferred to a subcommittee and then postponed entirely without approval.²⁶ However, the legal section had not been rejected and discussion was effectively pushed to the next Prime Ministers' Meeting in January 1969. In the interim Smith continued to suggest the utility of a legal section to members and worked with other professional legal bodies to build support for the initiative. For instance, in June 1968 Smith suggested to the Kenyan Minister of Economic Planning, Tom Mboya, that a Secretariat legal branch might be useful for sharing the experience of successful Kenyan constitutional reform which Mboya himself had helped design.²⁷ In November 1968 Smith met with Sean MacBride, Secretary-General of the International Commission of Jurists and confidentially told him about the proposed legal section. MacBride supported the idea and offered to discretely promote it among his Commonwealth contacts.²⁸ The delay between the Prime Ministers' Meetings allowed Smith to build support through his personal contacts in the Commonwealth and in other international bodies.

²⁶ TNA: FCO 49/198, Secretary of State's visit to Australia – February 1967, Australian attitude to Commonwealth Secretariat (Draft) Defensive Brief by Commonwealth Office, 31 January, 1967.

²⁷ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 1, Notes of Talk: Tom Mboya, Minister Economic Planning with Arnold Smith, Commonwealth Secretary-General and Tilak Gooneratne, Commonwealth Deputy Secretary-General at Secretary-General's residence – London 22nd June, 11.30 a.m., 1968.

²⁸ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 7, Record of Conversation between the Secretary-General and Mr. Sean MacBride, Secretary-General of the International Commission of Jurists, on Wednesday, 20th November, 1968.

By 1969 there was also greater support for adding constructive items to the 1969 agenda after the near destruction of the Commonwealth in 1966. Whitehall had devised a number of proposals on Commonwealth cooperation in education, on youth issues, and for legal matters.²⁹ The reorganisation of the British diplomatic service and the promotional work of British legal officials helped shift Whitehall's stance on Commonwealth legal cooperation between 1966 and 1969. The Secretariat legal section became part of a package of cooperative proposals designed to emphasise cooperation that was supported but not run by the British Government. The British Government in turn promoted these ideas in the wider restrictionist group. For instance, in preparation for a visit by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations to Australia in February 1967, British briefs were geared toward convincing the Australian Government to support the Secretariat legal section rather than the Australian Government's traditional support for the British Institute of Comparative Law. The basis of the British position was that the Secretariat legal section could be modest and cost-effective, would complement the work of the British Institute of Comparative Law, "and would remove the apparent anglo-centricity of the present arrangements."³⁰ In light of the divisive discussions on Rhodesia in 1966, emphasising the centrality of the Secretariat and British support for Commonwealth cooperation became more important than maintaining the status quo.³¹

After more than three years in the works, the Secretariat legal section was approved by the Commonwealth prime ministers in January 1969.³² The addition of a legal section added another facet to the Secretariat and brought the functions of the Commonwealth more into line with the

²⁹ TNA: FCO 68/171, Meeting between the Prime Minister and His Excellency Mr. Arnold Smith, Commonwealth Secretary-General on 9 December, 1968, at 6 p.m.

³⁰ TNA: FCO 49/198, Secretary of State's visit to Australia – February 1967, Australian attitude to Commonwealth Secretariat (Draft) Defensive Brief by Commonwealth Office, 31 January, 1967.

³¹ The support of Commonwealth legal coordination would also help promote British views on legal matters relating to decolonisation and Commonwealth membership (see Chapter Six).

³² "Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 1969 (London, 7-15 January): Final Communique," 148.

expectations of the newer members. The genesis of the legal section illustrates that the management of Commonwealth meetings was central to the Commonwealth's transition to an international organisation. Meetings were the initial access point for Secretariat expansion into the legal field. By effectively servicing meetings of Commonwealth law ministers the Secretariat made allies of legal professionals and ministers throughout the Commonwealth. These legal officials felt that the Secretariat would promote their own interests better than the CRO and supported the Secretariat (sometimes regardless of whether their home governments were expansionist or restrictionist). Although the Secretariat legal section was not approved quickly, by 1969 Commonwealth legal cooperation was a recognisably constructive project that was beneficial to both old and new members.

Medical Conference

The management of Commonwealth medical meetings was a stepping stone to greater Secretariat involvement in the medical field. Secretariat management of medical meetings conformed to the expectations of the newer members that the Commonwealth operate as a senior international organisation with services in a variety of fields. By successfully managing Commonwealth medical meetings the Secretariat also gained allies in the medical field who helped lobby their home governments in favour of the Secretariat, regardless of where their government sat on the expansionist/ restrictionist spectrum.

Much like Commonwealth legal activities, Commonwealth medical coordination was also a practical manifestation of Commonwealth cooperation that had precedents before the establishment of the Secretariat. Medical cooperation had roots in efforts to revitalise the organisation in the late 1950s. As with Commonwealth coordination in other fields such as

education, efforts in health were built on the work of non-governmental Commonwealth associations, such as the Commonwealth Medical Association founded in 1952. The promotion of greater Commonwealth coordination was part of wider British efforts to encourage organisational innovation and cooperation in both governmental and non-governmental spheres. The British strategy of the 1950s included proposals for new Commonwealth associations, new and more frequent ministerial conferences, and the provision of Marlborough House as a Commonwealth centre. These proposals were meant to demonstrate British interest in the organisation, and to expand British influence via the Commonwealth. In consequence they focused on British promotion and management of Commonwealth initiatives and stopped short of advocating for a Secretariat that would move such projects beyond Whitehall's control.³³

The Commonwealth Medical Conference was based on the success of the first Commonwealth Education Conference in 1959. The Education Conference had brought educational coordination to the governmental level and replicated the model of increasingly specialised ministerial meetings used in Commonwealth economics (see Chapter 12). The British Government proposed the first gathering of health ministers in 1964.³⁴ The first Commonwealth Medical Conference took place in Edinburgh the following October and was widely hailed as a success. The meeting led to the addition of Medical Fellowships to the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan as well as annual offers of postgraduate medical training for candidates from developing member countries.³⁵ The health ministers in attendance found their discussions fruitful and requested that the British Government arrange a second meeting in 1968.³⁶

³³ McIntyre, "Britain and the Creation of the Commonwealth Secretariat," 139.

³⁴ TNA: DO 161/398, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, September 1966: Commonwealth Medical Conference: Memorandum by Secretary-General, 23 August, 1966.

³⁵ TNA: FCO 49/198, Commonwealth Medical Conference 1965: Record of Meeting of Commonwealth Representatives Held in Geneva on 5th and 6th May, 1967 to Review progress and Consider Preparation for the

The Secretariat was not involved in the preparations for the first medical conference in October 1965 owing to logistical delays (see Chapter Five) and the initial priority of servicing Prime Ministers' Meetings. Nor did the British Government envision sharing the meeting preparations with the Secretariat in any substantive way. British officials maintained that according to the letter of the *Agreed Memorandum* the Secretariat would only service ministerial meetings when "appropriate" with the tacit understanding that this would require the approval of all member governments. The most immediate opportunity to seek approval for Secretariat involvement in planning the 1968 Medical Conference was at the September 1966 Prime Ministers' Meeting. CRO officials subsequently proposed that consultations for the Medical Conference be added to the agenda for the Prime Ministers' Meeting.

By 1966, the CRO had already acknowledged that the Secretariat was responsible for setting the agenda for the Prime Ministers' Meeting (see Chapter Nine). This addition also came in the context of a meeting between Wilson and Smith that same week to discuss positive aspects to add to the meeting to balance the tense discussions about Rhodesia.³⁷ However, it was clear that the British Government still took a narrow interpretation of the Secretariat's role in the proposed Medical Conference. The British view was that the Secretariat should only deal with the Medical Conference in two capacities. First, the Secretariat would include the Medical Conference on the agenda for the September Prime Ministers' Meeting. This involvement was assumed only because the Secretariat was responsible for planning the Prime Ministers' Meeting, not because it was responsible for planning the Medical Conference. Second, the Secretariat would provide the

Second Commonwealth Conference; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 8, Commonwealth Circular Letter no. 74/68, 5 December, 1968.

³⁶ TNA: FCO 49/198, Memorandum: Commonwealth Medical Conference: Meeting of Commonwealth Representatives prior to the World Health Assembly, 5th and 6th May, 1967.

³⁷ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 18, Note of the Meeting between the British Prime Minister and the Commonwealth Secretary-General on Friday 15th July, 1966.

practical servicing of the meeting (as with the Law Ministers' Meeting). The British Government itself expected to carry out pre-meeting consultations and any subsequent planning for the Medical Conference.

British representatives sought to buttress their proprietary stance over ministerial meetings with support from the wider restrictionist camp. Officials in the CRO advocated for the next medical conference to be held in Australia. They argued that this would allow other members to benefit from the strong Australian medical field while providing an opportunity for the Australian Government to act as host.³⁸ Apart from the Commonwealth Law Ministers' Meeting in September 1965 there had been no major Commonwealth meetings in Australia for a number of years. However, holding the meeting in Australia would also ensure Australian chairmanship. While it was still unclear whether the relatively new Holt Government would oppose the Secretariat to the same degree as the "almost pathological" opposition of the Menzies Government, Australian antagonism to the Secretariat was well-established and was likely to support the restrictionist leanings of the British Government.³⁹

While British officials sought to restrict the Secretariat's role in Commonwealth medical cooperation, Secretariat staff used their role preparing for the Prime Ministers' Meeting to demonstrate their capacity to service the Medical Conference. The Secretariat went beyond simply adding the Medical Conference to the agenda for the September 1966 Prime Ministers' Meeting, and prepared several detailed background papers and briefings on Commonwealth medical cooperation. Within those documents Smith and the Secretariat identified the recommendations made by the 1964 Commonwealth Medical Conference and proposed five

³⁸ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 18, Letter from R. Walker to T.W. Aston, Esq., 11 July, 1966.

³⁹ TNA: FCO 68/171, Minute from J.B. Johnston to PUS, 23 October, 1968.

potential working groups to address those recommendations (including committees on public health, medical education, medical personnel, nursing, and informational exchange).⁴⁰ The Secretariat worked to out-manoeuvre the restrictions imposed on it by the CRO by working to prepare the agenda for the Prime Ministers' Meeting while demonstrating initiative in following up on the health ministers' recommendations.

The overwhelming focus on the Rhodesian crisis at the September 1966 Prime Ministers' Meeting left little room for discussion of Commonwealth affairs including the Medical Conference.⁴¹ However, the initiative shown by the Secretariat was well received by the newer expansionist members. Before the British delegation could nominate Australia, the Ugandan Government offered to host the next Medical Conference on the condition they received organisational assistance from the Secretariat.⁴² The majority Afro-Asian caucus strongly supported the Ugandan proposal which was made-unanimous by the prime ministers in the latter stages of the meeting.⁴³

The British Government nonetheless pressed to restrict Secretariat involvement in the next Medical Conference. In spring 1967 officials in the new Commonwealth Office (successor to the CRO) maintained that the British Government should organise the 1968 Medical Conference and initiated an advanced planning meeting. The Commonwealth Office recommended that the planning meeting take place in Geneva in May 1967 and that the British Government convene and provide the secretariat for the meeting.⁴⁴ The timing and location proposed by the

⁴⁰ TNA: DO 161/398, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, September 1966: Commonwealth Medical Conference: Memorandum by Secretary-General, 23 August, 1966.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² *Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, 6th-15th September, 1966: Final Communique*, 10.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ TNA: FCO 49/198, Memorandum: Commonwealth Medical Conference: Meeting of Commonwealth Representatives prior to the World Health Assembly, 5th and 6th May, 1967.

Commonwealth Office would be convenient as most Commonwealth members would already be sending health officials to Geneva for the meeting of the World Health Assembly (WHA) later that month. The WHA determined the policy and oversaw the finances of the World Health Organization (WHO) and as such, joint Commonwealth action in the WHA could have tangible benefits for all Commonwealth members. Commonwealth leaders routinely met before sessions of other major international bodies to discuss their priorities and potentially develop joint proposals while economising on diplomatic travel. For example, finance ministers annually met the week before the International Monetary Fund convened (see Chapter 12), and Commonwealth permanent representatives in New York often met to discuss policy before meetings of the UN General Assembly. In this sense, the planning meeting proposed by the Commonwealth Office would be cost effective and would conform to well-established practices. However, the British Government had ulterior motives for proposing the May 1967 planning meeting. Whitehall had a long history of monitoring Commonwealth activities in other international bodies, particularly in the UN family of organisations.⁴⁵ Maintaining control of the pre-WHA meeting fit into a pattern of British attempts to control Commonwealth engagement in other international fora. By following up on the Commonwealth Medical Conference British officials demonstrated that they still considered the conference planning to be a British responsibility despite the support voiced for the Secretariat at the September Prime Ministers' Meeting. Much like the 1966 Law Ministers' Meeting, British planners envisaged a secondary role for the Secretariat, restricted to servicing rather than planning the meeting. British officials

⁴⁵ For example see: TNA: DO 181/87, United Kingdom Mission to the United Nation, Despatch no. 8: Report on the Commonwealth group at the XVIth Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 19 February, 1962; TNA: DO 181/87, Heads of Commonwealth Missions, 26 July, 1962; TNA: DO 181/87, Report on Leading Personalities at the United Nations Part I: Heads of Commonwealth Missions, 28 June, 1963.

again sought help from the restrictionist Australian Government by proposing that the planning meeting be hosted and thus chaired by the Australian permanent mission in Geneva.⁴⁶

In the short-term, the British gambit in Geneva was modestly successful in preventing the Secretariat from carrying out the full preparations for the Medical Conference. The meeting produced a detailed agenda in addition to several dozen pages of preparatory documents. The draft materials again focused on public health, medical education, medical personnel, nursing, and informational exchange between medical professionals throughout the Commonwealth.⁴⁷ The work of preparing the agenda and drafting background papers was done by member representatives following British planning and under an Australian chairman. The process resembled past Commonwealth meetings before the formation of the Secretariat when the British Government provided secretarial services on behalf of the members.

However, British success in denying the Secretariat this role in the Medical Conference was far outweighed by the wider implications of the planning meeting. While the Secretariat was not overly involved in the planning meeting, the assembled health officials relied heavily on materials drafted by the Secretariat for the September 1966 Prime Ministers' Meeting and agenda suggestions the Secretariat had subsequently gathered through circular correspondence with member governments.⁴⁸ The extra research work done by the Secretariat in preparation for the Prime Ministers' Meeting led to greater Secretariat input into the planning process for the

⁴⁶ TNA: FCO 49/198, Memorandum: Commonwealth Medical Conference: Meeting of Commonwealth Representatives prior to the World Health Assembly, 5th and 6th May, 1967; TNA: FCO 49/198, Commonwealth Medical Conference 1965: Record of Meeting of Commonwealth Representatives Held in Geneva on 5th and 6th May, 1967 to Review progress and Consider Preparation for the Second Commonwealth Conference.

⁴⁷ TNA: FCO 49/198, Commonwealth Medical Conference 1965: Record of Meeting of Commonwealth Representatives Held in Geneva on 5th and 6th May, 1967 to Review progress and Consider Preparation for the Second Commonwealth Conference.

⁴⁸ Ibid.; TNA: DO 161/398, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, September 1966: Commonwealth Medical Conference: Memorandum by Secretary-General, 23 August, 1966.

Medical Conference, even though the British Government had organised and convened the planning meeting.

The expectations of the newer, expansionist members also supported greater Secretariat involvement than envisioned by British officials. The Ugandan Government still expected Secretariat assistance and support for the Medical Conference. As with the 1966 Lagos Prime Ministers' Meeting, the logistics under the purview of the host government would be organised between the Secretariat and host without any British involvement.

The composition of the member delegations to the planning meeting further reduced political partisanship. The health ministers and attendant health officials focused on more technical subjects than the broader politics pursued by the prime ministers. At the Geneva meeting Commonwealth health officials recognised that the Secretariat would best advocate for increased cooperation in the medical field even if member governments opposed the expansion of the Secretariat. Based on the Secretariat's good record of planning Prime Ministers' Meetings and the utility of the Secretariat's background research to the Geneva meeting, delegates went so far as proposing the Secretariat take on the documentation and planning of the next Medical Conference, in addition to all future pre-WHA Commonwealth meetings.⁴⁹ Most surprising to Whitehall was that Sir William Refshauge, the Australian chairman, also welcomed the prospect of increased Secretariat participation in planning the Medical Conference. Despite British posturing to limit the Secretariat's role, the assembled health officials were decidedly in favour of greater Secretariat involvement in Commonwealth medical cooperation.

⁴⁹ TNA: FCO 49/198, Commonwealth Medical Conference 1965: Record of Meeting of Commonwealth Representatives Held in Geneva on 5th and 6th May, 1967 to Review Progress and Consider Preparation for the Second Commonwealth Conference.

When the Second Commonwealth Medical Conference convened in Kampala in September 1968, the delegates welcomed the Secretary-General alongside the Assistant Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO).⁵⁰ The conference recognised the Secretariat's work in logistical planning and as a contributor to the conference documentation which had "made possible a more comprehensive review of the existing facilities and potentialities for Commonwealth medical co-operation than had ever before been undertaken."⁵¹ The Commonwealth health ministers specifically noted that even though the organisation had broader political differences over British policy in Africa, the Commonwealth family was fundamentally a good institution.⁵² Even the British Minister of Health, Sir Kenneth Robinson, made a point of saying that the United Kingdom was trying not to dominate the Commonwealth and would continue working to contribute as an equal partner.⁵³ The conference formally recommended that a doctor be added to the Secretariat staff to function as a medical advisor, to help coordinate medical cooperation through the Commonwealth, and to help prepare annual pre-WHA meetings and triennial Medical Conferences.⁵⁴

In spite of early British posturing to prevent the Secretariat from taking a full role in ministerial-level meetings, the preparation and execution of the 1968 Medical Conference illustrated several key features of the evolving role of the Secretariat. At the most basic level, the planning process demonstrated the degree to which the wider membership had accepted a liberal interpretation of

⁵⁰ Canadian Public Health Association, "The Second Commonwealth Medical Conference," *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 59, no. 12 (December 1968), 489.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 4, Second Commonwealth Medical Conference: Communiqué, 12 September, 1968; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 4, Mr. Smith's Engagements, September 1968.

⁵² LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 4, Second Commonwealth Medical Conference: Communiqué, 12 September, 1968; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 4, Commonwealth Prognosis: Still Alive and Kicking, Report by Daniel Matovu for Gemini News Service, 9 September, 1968.

⁵³ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 4, Commonwealth Prognosis: Still Alive and Kicking, Report by Daniel Matovu for Gemini News Service, 9 September, 1968.

⁵⁴ Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 121.

the Secretariat's mandate that included full responsibility for official and ministerial-level meetings. This was largely due to the newer members' confidence in the Secretariat, both in principle and in a growing record of well-managed meetings. For the next pre-WHA Commonwealth meeting in Boston in January 1969 the Secretariat initiated, planned, and convened the meeting without any external support and in a non-Commonwealth country (therefore without host assistance).⁵⁵ The Secretariat's good work in Prime Ministers' Meetings paved the way to a greater role in medical meetings and ultimately to expansion of the Secretariat itself.

The 1968 Medical Conference also demonstrated that more specialised ministers and officials saw more potential in the Secretariat and were less partisan than their home governments. While Whitehall postured to maintain an older style framework for Commonwealth Medical Coordination, their efforts were frustrated in part by support for the Secretariat within the British and Australian delegations. Health officials saw the value in medical coordination across the Commonwealth, and this priority superseded the views of their respective expansionist or restrictionist governments. They perceived that the Secretariat would best support their projects amidst turbulent international politics and that dedicated attention and multilateral coordination by the Secretariat would provide support on a scale previously unobtainable in their home countries. By effectively managing health meetings and advancing the ideas of health officials, the Secretariat gained allies within the medical community who lobbied their home governments in favour of the Secretariat.

Commonwealth members increasingly accepted the recommendations of ministerial meetings at face value, including those ministers' support for the Secretariat. The growing scale of the

⁵⁵ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 9, Commonwealth Circular Letter no. 3/69, 30 January, 1969.

Commonwealth meant that all matters of common concern could not be discussed during the traditional Prime Ministers' Meetings. Commonwealth governments recognised this and increasingly relied on proposals and background papers provided by other ministerial gatherings. The weight of the health ministers' recommendations therefore grew for practical reasons. Perhaps more importantly, medical cooperation like the 1968 Medical Conference was a true instance of productive Commonwealth cooperation during some of the organisation's most divided years. The conference produced a variety of cooperative initiatives, was held outside of London, featured rotating chairmanships for different sessions, and generally exemplified the values-based rhetoric and vision of Arnold Smith and the Secretariat. The Secretariat's practical ability to convene meetings was bolstered by a successful example of the oft-hailed but seldom-seen commonality of the Commonwealth in the 1960s. It was an indication that the organisation could perhaps practice what it preached and that the Secretariat could help it do so.

Conclusion

The oft-quoted axiom that consultation was the life blood of the Commonwealth was demonstrated in how the Secretariat's role organising and servicing Prime Ministers' Meetings paved the way for Secretariat expansion into fields such as law and medicine. In these specialised fields the older Commonwealth members had considerably more developed professional communities, yet all members stood to gain from increased Commonwealth coordination. For member countries with more developed professional fields, Commonwealth cooperation was a means to promote their own models abroad and gain exposure to new ideas and practices from around the world. For the newer members coordinating with the Commonwealth was an opportunity to build capacity through training and exchange initiatives. In both cases, these professionals were early supporters of the Commonwealth Secretariat,

perceiving its unique ability to facilitate cooperation. For the newer members, an independent Secretariat would help ensure that any British initiatives (like the medical conference) were not part of a neocolonial agenda. For the older members, there were significant potential political dividends to constructive professional cooperation. Professional cooperation was one of the few quantifiable instances of Commonwealth cooperation in the 1960s. However, if the older members wished to capitalise on professionals' interest in Commonwealth coordination as a means to gain influence in the wider Commonwealth, they would have to work with the Secretariat.

For professional communities and specialised ministers within all member governments, the central role of the Secretariat also ensured that their interests and ideas were heard amid the macro-level politicking of the wider organisation. Within their first two official ministerial meetings, both the Commonwealth law and health ministers advocated for a dedicated branch or officer in the Secretariat to better address their concerns. The Secretariat's efforts to standardise ministerial meetings as the Commonwealth grew also led to ministerial papers and recommendations being submitted to the prime ministers more readily. For specialised ministers, the Secretariat was more reliable than their home governments in ensuring their perspectives were heard. Furthermore, the Secretariat could encourage international cooperation and exchange on a greater scale than their home governments. In consequence, Commonwealth law and health officials supported a greater role for the Secretariat regardless of where their home governments sat on the spectrum of expansionists and restrictionists.

Both restrictionist and expansionist Commonwealth Governments, as well as the professional communities within them, stood to gain from increased Commonwealth professional coordination. Yet the success of such coordination was firmly rooted in the Secretariat. The

Secretariat's role in planning Commonwealth meetings opened the door to expansion into other areas by demonstrating the Secretariat's capacity, by gaining allies in Commonwealth professional communities, by promoting genuine cooperation, and by implementing more standard protocols for meetings. The management of specialised ministerial meetings was another step toward a Commonwealth that looked and functioned more as an IO than a club.

Chapter Eleven: Economic Meetings

Background

The process of the Secretariat taking over management of Commonwealth economic meetings was again characterised by widespread passive resistance among the restrictionists, intense but short lived resistance from the CRO, and growing Secretariat capacity facilitated by networks in the Commonwealth (most notably the Canadian Government and the newer members with a vested interest in a given meeting). However, earlier developments in the Commonwealth's economic machinery distinctly shaped the Secretariat's role in economics as well as the handover of economic meetings. These earlier developments created economic machinery that was in theory, more independent of British administration and more akin to other international organisations. The following two chapters do not focus on Commonwealth economic issues themselves.¹ Rather, they focus on the Commonwealth machinery designed to discuss economic issues, and how the formation of the Commonwealth Secretariat affected the structure and management of that economic machinery.

Discussion about managing economic machinery was a significant concern in the Commonwealth of the 1960s. The existence of intermediate Commonwealth economic bodies raised the stakes concerning Secretariat engagement in Commonwealth meetings in several ways. Much like the CRO, the personnel of the British-designed and largely British-staffed Commonwealth Economic Committee (CEC) were anxious about reorganisation and job

¹ For further information on those issues see: D.K. Fieldhouse, "The Metropolitan Economics of Empire," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume IV: The Twentieth Century*, eds. Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis, 88-113 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Paul L. Robertson and John Singleton, "The Commonwealth as an Economic Network," *Australian Economic History Review* 41, no. 3 (November 2001): 241-266; Alec Cairncross and Barry Eichengreen, *Sterling in Decline: The Devaluations of 1931, 1949 and 1967, Second Edition* (Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 1983).

security. Though not as hostile as the CRO, the CEC was nonetheless another group of personnel who were unsure of the Secretariat and its future role in managing Commonwealth meetings. On a broader scale, for both the wider membership and the British Government, the stakes of economic meetings were higher than other Commonwealth ministerial meetings. Legal and medical coordination focused on sharing best practices in systems already thoroughly exported and inherited throughout the British Empire.² Commonwealth engagement in these areas appealed to ostensibly shared Commonwealth values and had long-term professional and political value. Economic coordination on the other hand affected the potential cost and benefits of Commonwealth engagement in more clear-cut terms. The potential advantages of sharing medical or legal best practices could only be gauged over the long-term, as participants built up relevant professional fields. The comparatively tangible short-term economic calculations raised the stakes of economic coordination and thus the stakes of coordinating economic meetings where member governments or regions' economic interests might be pitted against one another.³

Commonwealth economics were of keen interest to all members in an era characterised by increasing international and UN economic interventions, British negotiations with the EEC, the politics of Cold War patronage, and growing allegations of neocolonialism through economic policy. For the British Government, Commonwealth economic meetings were bound up in systems of Commonwealth preferences and trade, managing balances of payment within the Sterling Area, ongoing British negotiations with the EEC and calls for increased aid to former colonies. For the wider restrictionist camp, central features of economic meetings were control of the purse strings governing Secretariat expansion and maintaining a small Secretariat. For newer,

² While many Commonwealth members were actively diverging from the British style of parliamentary monarchism and democracy, many retained these systems in full or hybrid forms. In all cases, the personnel of many new postcolonial governments were trained in the British legal system.

³ Tomlinson, "The Decline of the Empire," 209.

developing members, economic leverage and calls for increased aid were at stake, in addition to the growth of the Secretariat that would advocate for such measures on their behalf.

These diverse concerns were borne out in discussions about the future structure of the Secretariat's role in economic affairs. The economic stakes of the Commonwealth were increasingly relegated to specialised economic conferences (soon to be the Finance and Trade Ministers' meetings). As with other ministerial meetings (see Chapter 10) the growth of the Commonwealth meant that all issues of common concern could not be fully discussed during Prime Ministers' Meetings. While the Secretariat and member governments prepared the background papers and materials for the political issues of the Prime Ministers' Meetings, the finance and trade ministers submitted reports and recommendations on economic issues for discussion and approval by the prime ministers. The finance ministers held a great deal of sway on economic issues and in some cases had the authority to approve economic programmes themselves. Unlike strictly political issues, by the mid-1960s the core Commonwealth economic discussions were conducted at the ministerial and committee level in specialised conferences rather than at the Prime Ministers' Meetings (the latter relying on the work of the former). Thus, the management of economic meetings became the main field in the struggle over the economic future of the Commonwealth including cooperation on international monetary policy, preferential trade agreements, economic aid, and the role of the Secretariat in facilitating such cooperation.

Economic Machinery to 1965: The CEC and CECC

In most cases the management of Prime Ministers' Meetings was directly negotiated between parts of the British Government and the Secretariat. Meeting management was more complicated

in the realm of economics. The importance of economics within the Commonwealth had encouraged the specialisation of Commonwealth economic bodies earlier than in other fields. After the First World War the Imperial Economic Conference of 1923 was the first dedicated economic conference of Prime Ministers accompanied by economic advisors. The Imperial Conference in Ottawa in 1932 was also dedicated to economic issues with preferential imperial tariffs at the forefront of the discussion.⁴ During the interwar period, a range of economic bodies were also formed to carry out the quotidian economic work of the British Empire and early Commonwealth. Most notable were the Imperial Economic Committee (IEC), designed to find and expand markets for Commonwealth agricultural products, and the Empire Marketing Board (EMB), designed to promote the consumption of imperial and Commonwealth products in the United Kingdom. Both the IEC and EMB were formed on the recommendation of the 1923 Imperial Economic Conference and included both colonies and self-governing Commonwealth members. The day-to-day workings of Commonwealth economic coordination were thus specialised into sub-organisations and precedent set for the specialised conferences that later informed the work of the prime ministers.

The IEC became the largest piece of Commonwealth economic machinery following the Second World War, after which it was revived and redubbed the Commonwealth Economic Committee or CEC.⁵ By this time the CEC had absorbed the work of the EMB and through the 1950s the scope of the Committee's functions continuously expanded to include marketing, research, and

⁴ For Background on interwar Commonwealth economic cooperation see: Preston Arens, "Strictly Non-committal": British Economic Policy and the Commonwealth," *The Round Table* 107, no. 5 (October 2018): 571-583.

⁵ Mohammad Ikramullah, "The Commonwealth Economic Committee and its Work," *Pakistan Horizon* 16, no. 1 (First Quarter, 1963), 15-16.

coordinating intelligence on a wide range of commodities. By 1963 the CEC had grown to be the only standing committee on economic matters in the Commonwealth.⁶

Yet the CEC remained a largely British construct aimed at supporting Commonwealth trade on the older, hub-and-spoke vision of an imperial Commonwealth. While the meetings of the CEC gradually expanded with the growing Commonwealth membership, the Committee's permanent staff remained predominantly British. The expansion of the CEC in the immediate postwar years culminated with the formation of the Commonwealth Economic Consultative Council (CECC) in 1959. The CECC was formed on the recommendation of the Commonwealth Trade and Economic Conference held in Montreal in September 1958. The CECC marked the consolidation of existing Commonwealth economic machinery into one body intended to oversee Commonwealth economic activities more generally.⁷ The Council was comprised of the CEC and Commonwealth Education Liaison Unit (CELU) in addition to finance ministers, statisticians, and senior economic officials from throughout the Commonwealth.⁸ Trade ministers and aides were represented both at CEC meetings and as specialists within the wider council, though without a clear or permanent role at either level. The council itself was effectively made up of the Commonwealth finance ministers, who had seen the British proposal through the Trade and Economic Conference and now met under the auspices of the CECC.⁹

⁶ Ibid., 15.

⁷ Ibid., 17.

⁸ Ibid., 16; Roderick James MacMillan MacLeod, "The Evolving Role of the Commonwealth in Canadian Foreign Policy, 1956-1965," (PhD Diss., University of London, 1994), 163, 178.

⁹ TNA: CO 936/884, Minute from D.A. Shepherd to Mr. Axworthy, 21 May, 1964.

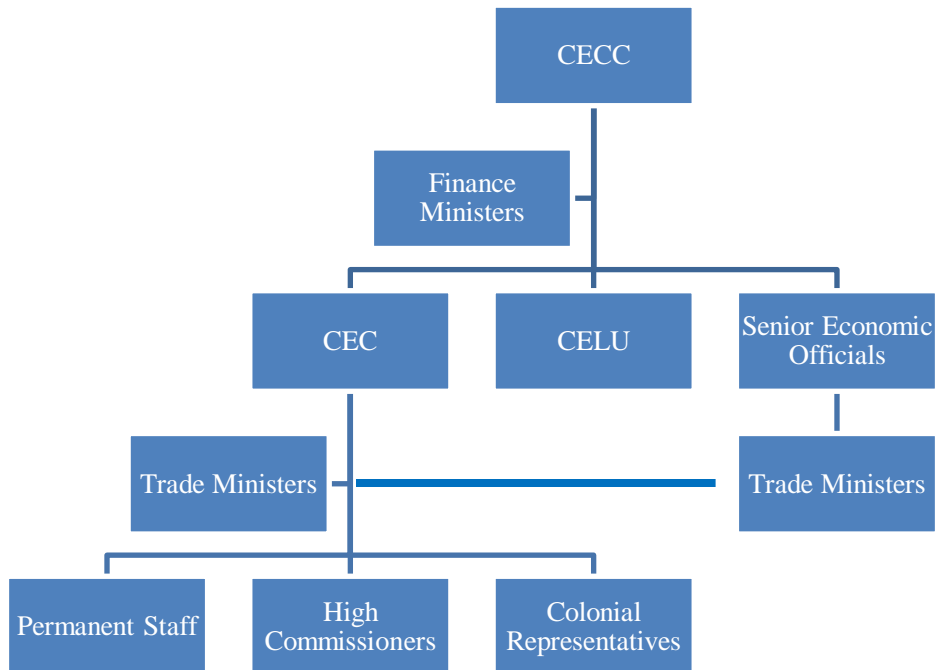


Figure two: Composition of the CECC

While framed as a constructive, cooperative project, the consolidation of the CECC in 1959 was a somewhat shallow effort. Echoing the post-1949 status quo, with the CECC proposal the British Government aimed to demonstrate their interest in revitalising the Commonwealth without changing its day-to-day functions. The rationale for the CECC was on the one hand to maintain British centrality, and on the other to appease the older Commonwealth members who remained suspicious of any centralised Commonwealth bodies which might infringe on member sovereignty.¹⁰ The CECC was more akin to a well-named cabinet committee which evoked new functions and directions without altering the attendance of the room. The CEC and CELU were the only well-defined and permanently staffed (by Britain) components of the Council. The various representatives and ministers included in the CECC (see figure two) were constantly in flux and held a variety of other roles at multiple levels without and within the CECC. While the

¹⁰ MacLeod, “The Evolving Role of the Commonwealth in Canadian Foreign Policy,” 163, 175, 180.

CECC was comprised of finance ministers from throughout the Commonwealth the British controlled CEC provided background information to the Council, and the CRO organised CECC meetings and agendas. The information available to the Council was thus shaped and controlled by the British Government, belying the ostensibly democratic structure of the Council itself. Much like the pre-Secretariat Commonwealth, the CECC was more a concept than a structure. The organisation, and indeed Commonwealth economics on a broader level, functioned more like a cabinet committee than an international body, with fluid constituents operating under a broad hierarchy.

However, while the CECC changed very little in terms of the economic functions of the Commonwealth, its formation set the stage for later debates on the Secretariat's role in Commonwealth economics. First, the broader mandate of the CECC supported the expansion of the day-to-day functions carried out by the CEC, which remained the working core of the CECC. This expansion included a sizeable addition of (mostly British) CEC staff, the appointment of a permanent salaried chairman, and the establishment of a Commonwealth Centre at Marlborough House to house the CEC. The services provided by the CEC were also expanded, including the provision of factual, up-to-date economic information on a wider range of commodities and products, as well as the ability to carry out bespoke economic studies on behalf of member governments.¹¹ The CECC structure also facilitated greater involvement of the Commonwealth trade and finance ministers in the economic workings of the Commonwealth. The new CECC was responsible for organising Commonwealth economic meetings in conjunction with the CRO

¹¹ Ikramullah, "The Commonwealth Economic Committee and its Work," 17; TNA: DO 222/21, Commonwealth Economic Committee: New and Expanded Work: Progress Report, 28 October, 1959; TNA: DO 222/21, Commonwealth Economic Committee: Finance Committee: Estimates for Financial Year 1959-60, 8 December, 1958.

including routine CEC meetings and eventually specialised economic conferences.¹² Thus, in the CECC there were inklings of an independent, member-run Commonwealth economic body based on the provision of information and servicing of meetings.

The centrality of meetings was reinforced by the CECC, which encouraged greater specialisation of Commonwealth economic gatherings. While the council was composed of various bodies and classes of officials and ministers, the CECC leadership consisted of the Commonwealth finance ministers.¹³ The annual meetings of the CECC were effectively meetings of Commonwealth finance ministers and set the stage for dedicated Finance Ministers' Meetings beginning in 1965. It followed that if the finance ministers would have dedicated meetings, the Commonwealth Trade and Economic Conferences could be further divided into dedicated Trade Ministers' Meetings and other specialised economic gatherings distinct from the growing Prime Ministers' Meetings. The growth of the Commonwealth in the early 1960s rendered the combined prime ministerial and economic conferences of the past too cumbersome, and the creation of dedicated conferences facilitated more in-depth discussion.

The CECC encouraged specialisation of Commonwealth economic meetings and the relabelling of various economic gatherings. Yet the Council's "on-the-ground" work was still based on an Anglo-centric vision of Commonwealth economics and its core constituent, the CEC, was largely staffed by British personnel. However, the formation of the CECC was an important conceptual step towards the decision to establish the Secretariat six years later. Not only was the organisation centrally located with both a permanent staff in the CEC, and regular if ad hoc, council meetings, but its main functions were to provide information services, to facilitate

¹² MacLeod, "The Evolving Role of the Commonwealth in Canadian Foreign Policy," 163.

¹³ Ibid., 163, 178; Ikramullah, "The Commonwealth Economic Committee and its Work," 16.

cooperation, and to organise relevant meetings. The formation of the CECC as a supervisory body in 1959 somewhat decentralised the economic functions of the Commonwealth, even if it was a politically motivated project that lacked substance at the time.¹⁴

The Role of the Secretariat

Building on the conceptual, if not concrete advances of the CECC, Secretariat involvement in the management of Commonwealth economic meetings was nigh a foregone conclusion by the time it was formed in 1965. Unlike with other areas, the role of the Secretariat was explicitly stated: the *Agreed Memorandum* stipulated that the Secretariat should take on the organisation of CEC meetings as well as the annual conference of the wider CECC.

A comprehensive Review of Intra-Commonwealth Organisations conducted by an independent Review Committee was also mandated in the *Agreed Memorandum*. The memorandum further outlined that the Secretariat should work in close consultation with the CEC pending the report of the Review Committee.¹⁵ Discussion of the potential absorption of the CEC by the Secretariat had been tabled along with the Secretariat at the 1964 Prime Ministers' Meeting.. The potential absorption of the CEC by the Secretariat would functionally disband the CECC by reallocating responsibility for the core component of the organisation and making-redundant the finance ministers' roles as heads of the Council. The decision to make the Secretariat responsible for the annual meetings of the CECC immediately, rather than waiting for the findings of the Review Committee, reflected the council's lack of substance and need for reorganisation. Even the possibility of a Secretariat takeover of the CEC pushed for the council to be reorganised and rebranded. Indicative of this change was that once the Secretariat was formed, annual CECC

¹⁴ MacLeod, "The Evolving Role of the Commonwealth in Canadian Foreign Policy," 164.

¹⁵ *Agreed Memorandum on the Commonwealth Secretariat*, 5-7.

meetings were renamed Commonwealth Finance Ministers' Meetings' (the first of which was held later in September 1965). The new structure of specialised Finance Ministers' Meetings encouraged the parallel development of the first dedicated Trade Ministers' Meeting in 1966.

The effective disbandment of the CECC in advance of the Review Committee's 1966 report reflected the ad hoc and shallow construction of the Committee. The reorganisation also played into debates about the servicing of Commonwealth ministerial meetings. The *Agreed Memorandum* left the question of ministerial meetings open to interpretation on a case-by-case basis, with Secretariat involvement "where appropriate" according to the consensus of the membership.¹⁶ In 1965 the text of the *Agreed Memorandum* did not explicitly grant approval for the Secretariat to participate in the planning of the new ministerial level economic meetings. However, the Secretariat was made responsible for economic meetings in general, would potentially absorb the CEC within a few years, and in the meantime was responsible for the meetings of the economic bodies (CECC and CEC) that would otherwise encompass the activities of both finance and trade ministers.

The expectation that the Secretariat would assist in planning the new, specialised ministerial-level economic meetings was bolstered by a long record of British attempts to influence Commonwealth economic activities to the benefit of the United Kingdom. Although all members naturally pursued economic self-interest in the Commonwealth, the neocolonial implications of British efforts and the Anglo-centricity of existing economic machinery were of particular concern to the newer members and Secretariat alike. The process of forming the Secretariat threw into relief British influence in the economic machinery of the Commonwealth and

¹⁶ Ibid., 6.

encouraged newer members to support the expansion of the Secretariat in the economic realm, including the absorption of the CEC.

British influence was particularly manifest in the CEC, which had been constructed and staffed on British initiative. After the Commonwealth Secretariat was proposed in 1964, the British Government envisioned the CEC and Secretariat working together. However, British officials expected that coordination would be carried out between the CEC, the Secretariat, and the British Government itself.¹⁷ In this manner the CEC would remain a tool for British influence and the activities of the Secretariat in the economic sphere would be mitigated by the existing machinery of the CECC. Soon after the proposal to establish the Secretariat was tabled in July 1964, the CRO advised Cabinet that the Secretariat might work alongside the CECC and its constituent parts, but that it was imperative “the Secretariat should not exert a stranglehold or interfere with the normal working of these bodies...”¹⁸ If the Secretariat absorbed the CEC and other administrative functions arrogated to the CECC, it would essentially replace the CECC as the Commonwealth’s central economic organ. The expanded role of the Secretariat would mean less ability for CRO staff to justify their own role coordinating economic meetings and less opportunity for the British Government to pursue its own interests by shaping Commonwealth economic activities. The specific risk to the CRO was compounded by the end of the British Overseas Trade Corporations scheme in 1965, which had been supported by the CO and CRO in the late 1950s as a means of encouraging colonial and Commonwealth investment.¹⁹ The end of the scheme effectively removed a subsidy for imperial and Commonwealth investment and reflected the waning commercial importance of such connections for the British economy.

¹⁷ TNA: T 312/707, Note on the Commonwealth Secretariat by Saville Garner, 27 August, 1964.

¹⁸ TNA: CAB 148-7, Commonwealth Secretariat: Memorandum by the Commonwealth Relations Office, 30 July, 1964.

¹⁹ Sarah Stockwell, “Trade, Empire, and the Fiscal Context of Imperial Business during Decolonization,” *Economic History Review* 57, no. 1 (2004), 153-154.

Labour's renewed interest in the EEC was a further indication that the CRO was losing economic arguments for its continued existence. The expansion of the Secretariat ultimately had the potential to threaten British sway over Commonwealth economic machinery, and the very existence of the Secretariat problematized that influence through the CECC.

Yet in 1965 the prime ministers had made clear that they envisioned a greater role for the Secretariat in economic affairs. The *Agreed Memorandum* outlined the Secretariat's prospective economic role. In November 1965, Samuel Odaka, the Ugandan Foreign Minister, even seemed surprised that the Secretariat would involve itself in political disputes such as the Rhodesian crisis rather than focusing on economic consultations.²⁰ The newer members expected the Secretariat to have a more comprehensive role, particularly in economics. Subsequent developments with the Medical Conference and Law Ministers' Meetings affirmed that moving forward the work of the Secretariat would include ministerial meetings. However, the degree of British interest in Commonwealth economics and the ambiguities of the CECC allowed opposition to Secretariat expansion to persist much later than in other areas such as health or law. British economic interests were fundamentally based on an older, imperial vision of Commonwealth economics. This was manifested in how the British Government dealt with changes in the CEC and proposals for Commonwealth aid.

Through two case studies, the following section examines how the CRO and the wider British Government worked to maintain economic control and influence in the Commonwealth. British handling of issues of colonial representation at CEC meetings and questions of CEC efficiency and reform through 1964 and 1965 illustrate how British attempts to control Commonwealth

²⁰ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Vol. 1, File 3, Meeting with Foreign Minister of Uganda, 2 November, 1965; Vivekanandan, "The Commonwealth Secretariat," 317.

economic machinery in the CEC resulted in stronger support for the nascent Secretariat. Newer members, (particularly in the Caribbean) supported the expansion of the Secretariat into the realm of economic affairs. For the expansionist members, a greater economic role for the Secretariat would help them derive the most economic benefit from the Commonwealth. They believed the Secretariat would simultaneously advocate for their interests and ensure that existing programs were not manipulated by the British Government. Many of these economic concerns came to the fore during the 1966 Prime Ministers' Meeting, which was the first since the formation of the Secretariat to include a full discussion of world affairs including economics. British attempts to maintain a degree of control over Commonwealth economics ultimately encouraged greater support for the Secretariat.

Representation at the CEC

The pushback over economic issues visited on the British delegation at the 1966 Prime Ministers' Meeting was spurred by a lack of change despite the formation of the CECC seven years earlier. The CECC was ostensibly a jointly managed body under the direction of the Commonwealth finance ministers. However, its day-to-day operation was carried out by the CEC which remained a British-built and staffed entity. Preparations for the March 1964 CEC meeting illustrate the extent to which the British Government controlled the workings of the CEC before the establishment of the Secretariat.

The 1964 meeting was envisioned as an opportunity for Commonwealth coordination at the first United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD I), which opened in March 1964. As British officials began the planning process for the pre-UNCTAD meeting, the South Rhodesian Government (soon to be Rhodesia) requested to attend the UNCTAD meeting as

successor to the defunct Central African Federation (CAF) which had dissolved the year before. The constitutional problem with the Rhodesian request was that the constituent parts of the defunct federation (South Rhodesia, North Rhodesia, and Nyasaland) had reverted to colonial status after the federation's demise. While the federation had been independently represented, its constituent parts had not. British officials concluded that they would follow UN protocols at the pre-UNCTAD meeting in order to ensure continuity in Commonwealth representation. Only full Commonwealth members were entitled to be represented at the pre-UNCTAD meeting, but the British Government would revisit this position depending on the findings of the UN.

The question of whether Southern Rhodesia could attend ultimately depended on its status as a "state" in the eyes of the UN. There was a case to be made for this as Southern Rhodesia had had responsible government since 1923 and had generally been permitted a higher degree of self-government than the other parts of the CAF because of its larger number of white settlers. Although Southern Rhodesian had not officially attained Dominion status and was technically still a colony like North Rhodesia and Nyasaland, it was treated as a de facto Dominion prior to the formation of the CAF. With this background in mind, the CRO felt that there was merit to the South Rhodesian query while North Rhodesia and Nyasaland were "certainly not eligible for attendance at either the UN conference or the preparatory Commonwealth meeting".²¹ Carl Watts argues that in the early stages of the Rhodesian crisis the South Rhodesian settler government was pursuing a policy of "creeping sovereignty" to obtain international recognition and legitimacy through representation and exchange of representatives in the Commonwealth

²¹ TNA: CO 936/884, Summary of Meeting held in the C.R.O. on February 14th 1964 to discuss the Central African Territories' Membership of Commonwealth Organisations and Attendance at the U.N. Conference on Trade and Development.

and other international fora.²² South Rhodesian representation at either the Commonwealth or the UN meeting would help support such efforts to establish international legitimacy. Although the British Government was cautious in all colonial politics, the South Rhodesian Government had sympathy in the British Government, both in the CO and CRO, and across party lines. However, in the context of the UNCTAD meeting, South Rhodesian attendance depended on the Rhodesian Government's ability to convince the UN that it were the inheritor state of the CAF. If the UN did not find Southern Rhodesia to be a state, it would have to be represented along with North Rhodesia and Nyasaland as colonies under the umbrella of the United Kingdom delegation.²³

The South Rhodesian Government was unsuccessful and found not to be a successor state by the UN and therefore only entitled to UNCTAD representation under the umbrella of the British delegation. According to British policy, South Rhodesia was therefore ineligible to attend the pre-UNCTAD Commonwealth meeting. However, the CRO was prepared to honour the Rhodesian request to attend the pre-UNCTAD Commonwealth meeting, regardless of the Rhodesian standing before the international community and regardless of its lack of Commonwealth membership. Though the CRO toyed with the idea of inviting North Rhodesia and Nyasaland, they ultimately decided not to formally invite those two to the Commonwealth meeting, but to permit them to attend if they pressed the issue.²⁴ The British found this a "rather ticklish issue" as it not only laid bare the racial and structural inequalities of the former CAF, the Colonial Office (CO), and the CRO, but it also opened the door for other colonies on the path to

²² Watts, *Dilemmas of Intra-Commonwealth Representation*, 324.

²³ TNA: CO 936/884, Summary of Meeting held in the C.R.O. on February 14th 1964 to discuss the Central African Territories' Membership of Commonwealth Organisations and Attendance at the U.N. Conference on Trade and Development.

²⁴ TNA: CO 936/884, Minute from J.W. Vernon to Mr. Trafford Smith, 13 February, 1964; TNA: CO 936/884, Summary of Meeting held in the C.R.O. on February 14th 1964 to discuss the Central African Territories' Membership of Commonwealth Organisations and Attendance at the U.N. Conference on Trade and Development.

independence (in the most immediate cases, Malta and Guyana) to request conference representation as though they were already sovereign states.²⁵

The 1964 pre-UNCTAD Commonwealth meeting thus presented a series of problems for the British Government. Many of these problems were similar to those encountered by the CRO concerning Commonwealth membership applications (see Chapter Six). First was the issue of image, both in terms of structural racism and in the discrimination of representation among CAF successor governments. Second was the problem of maintaining British suzerainty up to the official date of independence and thus maintaining British sovereignty according to both British policy and international norms.²⁶ Third was the potential opposition of recently independent colonies to British economic initiatives during the CEC meeting itself and finally, the literal problem of affording colonies a seat at the table (in addition to name cards, office space, flag poles, and parking spaces).²⁷ By the time the CRO and CO began coordinating a common approach to the issue, the CO had already issued a public statement framing the meeting as a broader gathering that would include the central African colonies. While the CO and CRO resolved to consult closely thereafter, both departments considered the “damage done,” and turned to mitigating the outcome.²⁸

Having belatedly realised the multitude of issues deriving from offering South Rhodesia independent representation, the CO and CRO sought to exploit the flexible structures of Commonwealth economic coordination. Not able to back out of colonial representation at the

²⁵ TNA: CO 936/884, Minute from J.W. Vernon to Mr. Jerrom, 13 March, 1964.

²⁶ For greater discussion of the growth of national sovereignty as an international norm, see: Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace*.

²⁷ TNA: CO 936/884, Commonwealth Economic Consultative Council Brief no. 5: Status of Southern and Northern Rhodesia at Commonwealth Economic Consultative Council, March, 1964: Status of Southern Rhodesia: Brief by the Commonwealth Relations Office, 13 March, 1964.

²⁸ TNA: CO 936/884, Minute by J.W. Vernon, 16 March, 1964.

pre-UNCTAD meeting, they resolved “to blur so far as possible the usual distinction between independent members...and non-independent territories” and to drop the usual CEC designation in favour of calling it a “special” meeting.²⁹ In so doing, the meeting would be rendered *sui generis* and therefore not threaten British control over colonial affairs. Reflecting on this development, British officials even considered that this “special” meeting affirmed their role in inviting select colonies to participate in Commonwealth economic conferences under the nominal umbrella of the British delegation (as they might in the UN). Reifying the central British role and creating competition among colonies for inclusion at Commonwealth meetings could be beneficial to UK interests. Such an arrangement would allow the British to selectively offer “enhanced status” invitations to colonies and thereby manipulate the number of attendees, affirm the subordinate constitutional status of colonies, and to simply not invite colonial territories opposed to British policies.³⁰ This solution would simultaneously resolve the issues of image, sovereignty, and precedent-setting while ensuring an echo chamber of support for British economic policies. Officials in the CRO used this rationale during the planning of the 1964 pre-UNCTAD meeting to specifically exclude British Guyana on the grounds of hostility towards the UK.³¹ As with the debates over representation in the Secretariat preparatory committee later that year (see Chapter Three), British handling of CEC meetings allowed British interests and the central role of the CRO to be obscured under the banner of providing secretariat-style services for both the Commonwealth and its affiliated organisations.

²⁹ TNA: CO 936/884, Minute from J.W. Vernon to Mr. Jerrom, 13 March, 1964; TNA: CO 936/884, Commonwealth Economic Consultative Council Brief no. 5: Status of Southern and Northern Rhodesia at Commonwealth Economic Consultative Council, March, 1964: Status of Southern Rhodesia: Brief by the Commonwealth Relations Office, 13 March, 1964.

³⁰ TNA: CO 936/884, Minute from D.A. Shepherd to Mr. Axworthy, 21 May, 1964; TNA: CO 936/884, Minute from C.A. Axworthy to Mr. Jerrom, 27 May, 1964.

³¹ TNA: CO 936/884, Minute from C.A. Axworthy to Mr. Jerrom, 27 May, 1964.

The advantages of controlling meetings, both for the CRO and for the wider British Government, fostered restrictionist attitudes when the Commonwealth Secretariat was proposed in the summer of 1964. In the long term however, British attempts to pursue their own interests under the guise of providing Commonwealth services encouraged rapprochement between the CEC and the Secretariat as well as wider support for the Secretariat among the newer members who remained suspicious of British intentions.

CEC Efficiency

After the decision to form the Secretariat in 1964, the CRO expanded its efforts to support the CEC and by extension, its own role in planning Commonwealth economic meetings. The imminent formation of the Secretariat in the summer of 1965 reinforced the possibility of the CEC being absorbed by the Secretariat and caused uncertainty and a degree of “malaise” in the organisation.³² Some of this anxiety was based on concerns of job security, wages, and whether the Secretariat would take over the CEC’s office spaces in Marlborough House.³³ However, the dysfunction of the CEC also touched on deeper structural issues about the purpose of the organisation. The CEC had been formed to conduct market research and coordinate commodities intelligence in the Commonwealth thereby promoting organisational trade by matching buyers and sellers. Based on its roots as the Imperial Economic Committee, the CEC was designed to function in a colonial economic system with clearly defined producers and consumers for raw materials and manufactured goods. If Commonwealth trade had ever conformed to such a model, it had certainly ceased to do so by the mid twentieth-century. By the 1960s, the efficiency of the CEC was questionable at best and raised eyebrows in the Colonial Office, where one staffer felt

³² TNA: DO 215/196, Minute from H.A.F. Rumbold to Sir S. Garner, 2 April, 1965.

³³ TNA: DO 215/196, Minute from H.A. F. Rumbold to Mr. Keeble, 1 April, 1965.

that it was “not a terribly effective body [that] was started about 1932 but...has lost its head of steam long since.”³⁴

In March 1965, C.J. Cruickshank, the Executive Secretary of the CEC, outlined these concerns in a letter to the CRO. While Cruickshank considered the potential merger with the Secretariat to be none of his business, he was keenly aware of the unrest amongst his CEC staff and the inefficiencies of the committee. In writing to the CRO, Cruickshank asked what the real purpose and objectives of the CEC were, whether the CEC was achieving those objectives in an efficient and cost effective manner, and whether that work was duplicating other international efforts such as UNCTAD or the GATT.³⁵ In anticipation of the review of the intra-Commonwealth organisations, Cruickshank wished to proactively conduct an internal investigation of the CEC and to ask Commonwealth members whether they considered the CEC to be useful, whether it was worth maintaining at its present scale and cost, and what its relationship to the new Secretariat should be.³⁶

Cruickshank’s inquiry threatened to bring membership scrutiny of Commonwealth economic machinery. Such scrutiny would necessarily expand beyond the CEC to the wider umbrella of the CECC and expose the shallow, political nature of the organisation. The lack of efficiency or depth in the CECC’s work would invariably support the amalgamation of the CEC into the Secretariat and thus remove a key British tool of economic influence. Cruickshank’s letter threatened not only the viability of a vehicle for British influence, but would also support a stronger Secretariat beyond British control and would potentially expose the British initiative as shallow and based on ulterior motives. Officials in the CRO were alarmed and swiftly

³⁴ TNA: CO 936/884, Minute from W.A. Morris to Mr. Christofas, 8 September, 1965.

³⁵ TNA: DO 215/196, Letter from C.G. Cruickshank to Sit Algernon Rumbold, 16 March, 1965; Jim Tomlinson, “The Decline of the Empire,” 213.

³⁶ TNA: DO 215/196, Letter from C.G. Cruickshank to Sit Algernon Rumbold, 16 March, 1965.

coordinated with the Chairman of the CEC to forbid the circulation of Cruickshank's paper and to bar him from making any policy-related suggestions in future.³⁷ In addition to preventing the circulation of the paper, CRO officials orchestrated "a paternal letter" to Cruickshank to outline that he had got off to a very bad start, was a poor "politician" and that he should be more careful and circumspect. In so many words the letter suggested that Cruickshank get on with his work "quietly and unobtrusively" and that "if he did not do better, it would not bode well for his future prospects."³⁸ While Cruickshank threatened to resign over the issue, by the first of April he had nonetheless withdrawn the paper and quietly agreed to stay on after being offered a raise in pay.³⁹

Cruickshank still had reservations about the effective functioning of the CEC but the CRO considered the threatening paper contained.⁴⁰ Through a combination of official action, veiled threats, and payment, CRO officials had prevented an inquiry about the operation of the CEC and about its relationship to the Secretariat from being conducted, and more importantly, had prevented the question from being raised among the membership. The CRO and wider British government were keen to avoid questions about British intentions, given there were already suspicions of their motives amongst the wider membership in light of the deteriorating situation in Rhodesia. Extending the life of the CEC also gave the British Government the potential to continue to sway Commonwealth economic discussions for at least another year. In the context of British negotiations with the EEC, such economic options took on increased importance. Because the CEC conducted research on markets, commodities, and trade in the Commonwealth, the committee had the ability to shape the economic information submitted to the

³⁷ TNA: DO 215/196, Note of Conversation between Sir A. Rumbold, Sir R. Hall and Mr. Keeble on 26 March at the Commonwealth Relations Office, 1965.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ TNA: DO 215/196, Letter from C.G. Cruickshank to Sir Robert Hall, 1 April 1965.

Commonwealth membership (including prime ministers and ministers of trade and finance). By maintaining control of the CEC the British Government retained the ability to shape that information and cast Commonwealth trade in whatever light was most favourable to British interests.

Though Cruickshank's paper was not publicised, he had identified some significant inefficiencies in the CEC and rendered-questionable its actual purpose. Responding to Cruickshank's concerns in an outwardly conciliatory yet threatening letter, the CRO noted that the CEC had symbolic value distinct from what the Committee actually did and that this symbolic value could only be assessed at levels much higher than Cruickshank, the CEC itself, or even the CECC.⁴¹ While there was certainly symbolic value to such economic bodies, it was tokenistic at best.⁴² Freeman Stewart, head of the Commonwealth Education Liaison Unit (another constituent part of the CECC), confided in Arnold Smith during the latter's first month as Secretary-General that the two of them were the only elected positions in the Commonwealth, "...since the other [organisations] were run more as British Government creations."⁴³ The CEC continued as a means for the British Government to generate and promote economic information most convenient to Whitehall, not the wider membership of the Commonwealth.

The extent to which the CEC was a British construct was clear in the chain of command that Cruickshank followed when he began to question the functions of the committee. Cruickshank first consulted the CRO rather than anyone in the CECC, which was ostensibly responsible for the CEC (see figure two). The degree of British control over the CEC was also evident in the track record of the CEC chairman. The chairman position had only recently become a permanent

⁴¹ TNA: DO 215/196, Letter from Robert Hall to C.W. Cruickshank, Esq., 30 March, 1965.

⁴² MacLeod, "The Evolving Role of the Commonwealth in Canadian Foreign Policy," 163, 175.

⁴³ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 1, Diary Entry, Friday 3 September, 1965.

(and paid) position. In 1963, the first paid chairman Sir Mohammad Ikramullah of Pakistan, took pride that both historically and under his watch, “the Committee d[id] not hand out judgments on controversial matters.” Rather, it supplied basic information and left the reader to form their own conclusions. “On this basis it ha[d] succeeded in doing its work quietly and for so long without getting involved in controversy.”⁴⁴ The chairman’s cooperation with the CRO the following year to block Cruickshank’s inquiry indicates how the structure of CEC leadership was based on deference to the British and maintaining an ostensibly non-confrontational but inherently Anglo-centric bureaucratic culture. The CEC did provide some economic services to Commonwealth members but was growing inefficient as a constituent part of the chiefly symbolic CECC. The economic machinery of the Commonwealth had been built by the British based on a colonial economic system, and was maintained because it suited British interests.

Ministerial Meetings

The creation of the Secretariat in 1965 underscored the need to reorganise the economic machinery of the Commonwealth, which had previously been discussed at the 1964 Prime Ministers’ Meeting. The ambiguous organisation of the CECC and general lack of clarity in Commonwealth economics had facilitated British efforts to manipulate them (as outlined in the above case studies) and was unacceptable to the newer, recently independent members. The success of the Commonwealth Law Ministers’ Meeting in September 1964 and the meeting of health ministers in October 1965 were proof-of-concept that new ministerial meetings could be centrally organised by the Secretariat and provide useful information to support the traditional meetings of Commonwealth prime ministers.

⁴⁴ Ikramullah, “The Commonwealth Economic Committee and its Work,” 21.

The model of ministerial meetings was thus applied to the ambiguous CECC and facilitated the dispersal of the council, as well as the now-unwieldy Commonwealth Trade and Economic Conferences. In their place, the Secretariat oversaw standardised meetings of finance ministers, trade ministers, and education ministers. The balance of the CECC (largely the CEC) was absorbed into the Secretariat in late 1966.

The nature of the CECC supported the Secretariat takeover in several ways. First, the economic functions of the Commonwealth had already been somewhat decentralised by the CECC. The Secretariat takeover of economic meetings was thus more easily accomplished than in other areas where the Secretariat was in direct competition with British departments (as with the Prime Ministers' Meetings). Second, the CECC itself was effectively made up of the Commonwealth finance ministers and thus represented the whole of the membership. Because the Council was at the head of the CECC, Secretariat management of CECC meetings both democratised the management of economic affairs and reduced the ability of the British Government to control the flow of information to the council. Further, the closer relationship with the CECC gave the Secretariat responsibility for other areas under the CECC, such as the CEC, and meetings on trade and education.⁴⁵

However, while the Secretariat takeover of Commonwealth economic meetings was relatively straightforward, the stakes of economic affairs fostered British resistance to Secretariat expansion that was manifested in other ways. The following section explores the Secretariat takeover of the Commonwealth Finance Ministers' Meetings in dialogue with the origins of the Commonwealth technical assistance programme. This case study shows how the management of Commonwealth economic meetings was a crucial site for building support for Secretariat

⁴⁵ Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 108.

proposals and for advocating for newer members' vision for the organisation. The first step in pursuing that vision was shifting the workings of Commonwealth economics from the CECC to the Secretariat.

Chapter Twelve: Finance Ministers' Meetings and Commonwealth Aid

The key to rebuilding Commonwealth economic machinery around the Secretariat was the management of the CECC meetings, newly rebranded as the Finance Ministers' Meetings (see Chapter 11, Figure Two). Amid suspicions of British influence on the functioning of the CECC the prime ministers of newer member states made early calls for the management of CECC meetings to be reallocated to the Secretariat. Newer members expected the Secretariat to have a stronger economic role akin to other international organisations. While the core of the CEC would remain intact pending the findings of the Review Committee, the expectation that the Secretariat participate in the planning of the ministerial level economic meetings was built into the *Agreed Memorandum* and in the wider proceedings of the 1965 Prime Ministers' Meeting.

In their June 1965 meeting the prime ministers tasked the Secretariat with preparing for the 1965 Finance Ministers' Meeting, which was planned to take place in Kingston, Jamaica before the next International Monetary Fund (IMF) meeting that October.¹ This call came within the first week of the Secretariat's existence and long before an economic Deputy-Secretary-General had even been hired. The urgency with which the expansionist members pushed for Secretariat involvement in Commonwealth economic affairs attests to the importance of economic issues for those members and their confidence that the Secretariat would improve the Commonwealth's economic machinery. The Secretariat's subsequent role in the Finance Ministers' Meeting marked an important conceptual shift in the workings of Commonwealth economics. While the *Agreed Memorandum* outlined that the Secretariat would organise the meetings of the CECC and ministerial meetings where appropriate, CECC meetings were already de facto meetings of

¹ TNA: DO 215/272, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers 1965: Meeting of Commonwealth Finance Ministers in Jamaica: Brief by the Commonwealth Relations Office, June, 1965.

Commonwealth finance ministers. Previous Commonwealth meetings in anticipation of the annual IMF meeting had been held as CECC meetings. Thus, the annual gathering of the CECC was simply relabelled in 1965 as the first Commonwealth Finance Ministers' Meeting.

While seemingly a point of nomenclature, the relabelling of CECC meetings greatly reduced the ambiguities of the CECC and its operation and brought the Finance Ministers' Meeting into line with other newly organised ministerial meetings. Because the Secretariat had been so recently established, its role in the 1965 Finance Ministers' Meeting was limited. Staff of the CEC and CRO had already begun planning the meeting in conjunction with the Jamaican Government earlier that year. With limited staff and resources, Secretariat personnel worked to draft background papers for the meeting in spite of having only begun operations three weeks before.² The background papers furnished by the Secretariat were largely based on recent British and American publications about the world financial situation and reflected the Secretariat's limited capacity to assist with the meeting.³

The Secretariat's limited work for the 1965 Finance Ministers' Meeting conformed to early expectations outlined in the *Agreed Memorandum*. It stipulated that initially the Secretariat should preferably rely on outside economic publications rather than engaging additional staff.⁴ This was to be a temporary measure while the Review of Intra-Commonwealth Organisations completed its report. It was likely the Review Committee would recommend the CEC be absorbed into the Secretariat as an economic branch, thus removing the need for more staff. In

² LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 1, Commonwealth Economic Consultative Council Draft Communique, 23 September, 1965; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 1, Commonwealth Circular no. 7, 17 September, 1965.

³ CSLA: 1997 – 12 “Meeting of Commonwealth Finance Ministers, Sep 1965: Background Papers 17 Jun 1964 – 21 Jun 1965,” Highlights of Recent Discussions of International Liquidity, 21 July, 1965; CSLA: 1997 – 12, Remarks by the Honorable Henry H. Fowler Secretary of the Treasury before the Virginia State Bar Association at the Homestead, Hot Springs, Virginia, Saturday July 10, 1965, 6:00 P.M.

⁴ *Agreed Memorandum on the Commonwealth Secretariat*, 5.

the meantime, while cost-effective, this arrangement reduced the Secretariat's capacity to service economic meetings before the completion of the Review Committee's work. For the time being this arrangement appealed to both restrictionist preferences for a small and easily managed Secretariat, while leaving the door open to Secretariat expansion in the future. However, in terms of the practical preparations for the meeting, CRO and CEC staff had already planned the bulk of the meeting in addition to preparing instructional briefs for the Chairman and the Secretary-General regarding scheduling, protocol, and agenda items.⁵ The Secretariat's role was restricted both as a reflection of its limited capacity and because the CEC and the CRO envisioned the Secretariat in an auxiliary role regardless of the expectations of the wider membership. In this scenario the Secretariat would provide supplemental information only, rather than planning the meeting which would threaten the established roles of the CEC and CRO.

Secretariat staff fulfilled this limited role in 1965. The Finance Ministers' Meeting was one of the first in which the Secretariat had any role and Secretary-General Smith personally attended the meeting in Kingston. Secretariat involvement in the Finance Ministers' Meeting set an important precedent for the future workings of Commonwealth economics. In the context of other new ministerial meetings, the 1965 Finance Ministers' Meeting made clear that the ministerial-level meeting could be organised by the Secretariat rather than British personnel. The direct liaison between the Secretariat and the finance ministers also set the basis for consultation between representatives of all Commonwealth members and the Secretariat, without the involvement of the CRO and with much less ambiguity than the previous workings of

⁵ CSLA: 1997 – 25 (1) "Commonwealth Finance Ministers' Meeting, Montreal, September 1966 – 29 Apr 1966 – 11 Sep 1966," Notes for the Chairman: Commonwealth Economic Consultative Council: 1966 Finance Ministers' Meeting, September 21-22, Montreal; CSLA: 1997 – 25 (1), Notes for the Secretary-General: Commonwealth Economic Consultative Council: 1966 Finance Ministers' Meeting, September 1966, Montreal.

Commonwealth economics. This reduced the ability of British officials to exploit the flexible structures of the Commonwealth to mask economic manipulation.

Perhaps more importantly, by working directly with member representatives, the Secretariat would organise the meetings and prepare the background information for the finance ministers.

Under the old system of Commonwealth economic machinery, while the CECC itself was comprised of finance ministers from throughout the Commonwealth, council meetings were organised by the CRO and informed by the British-staffed CEC. Thus, the British Government retained a great deal of control over the workings of the organisation including the timing of meetings, the content of the agenda, and the composition of background papers and reports. With the new Secretariat British officials would not have the same ability to influence meetings of Commonwealth economic ministers.

The Secretariat's new role servicing meeting of Commonwealth finance ministers impacted other economic problems such as the question of Commonwealth aid and development assistance.

Calls for increased aid were a persistent feature of the Commonwealth through the 1960s and were as consistently raised by newer Commonwealth members as they were denied by the British Government. With the formation of the Secretariat these calls shifted to the Secretariat, which was able to more effectively advocate for the membership in the face of British control of the Commonwealth's economic machinery.

Whitehall's opposition to calls for greater aid and technical assistance in the Commonwealth was a long-standing trend across party lines. Leading up to the formation of the CECC in the late 1950s, the Conservative Cabinet under Anthony Eden reasoned that because other Commonwealth members derived benefit from Britain's colonies "in terms both of material

strength and influence in the world,” that it was not unreasonable to ask that they assist the British in finding solutions to colonial problems and that “the United Kingdom Government should not be expected to bear alone the full burden of those problems and of the criticism to which they give rise.”⁶ In practical terms the British expected Commonwealth support in the United Nations and that other wealthy Commonwealth members assist in paying for Commonwealth initiatives, including aid and economic development.

A Commonwealth programme of multilateral aid and technical assistance, coined The Special Commonwealth African Assistance Plan (SCAAP), was subsequently established in 1960 but it was limited in scope. It had been approved in principle by the prime ministers in May 1960 and was further considered by the CECC in its meeting later that year.⁷ The plan was designed on the basis of using the CECC as a means of matching donors and recipients within the Commonwealth. “The essence of the Plan [wa]s therefore not the co-ordination of assistance from different countries but the expansion of the total through negotiations between Commonwealth countries in Africa requesting assistance and Commonwealth countries offering it.”⁸ Behind closed doors however, officials in the CRO admitted that “the African scheme [wa]s designed to prevent the Commonwealth governments in Africa from turning to undesirable sources e.g. Communists, for the technical help they want in building up their armed forces.”⁹ The scheme was imbued with overtones of the Cold War and came at a time when the British

⁶ TNA: DO 121/246, Smaller Colonial Territories: Draft Report of the Official Committee on Colonial Policy, 13 June, 1956.

⁷ “Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 1960 (London, 3-13 May): Final Communique,” in *The Commonwealth at the Summit: Communiqués of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings, 1944-1986* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1987), 62.

⁸ *Commonwealth Secretariat: Commonwealth Economic Consultative Council: Commonwealth Finance Ministers’ Meeting 1966: Report of the Commonwealth Economic Committee about the Special Commonwealth African Assistance Plan for the year 1965* (Montreal: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1966), 1-2.

⁹ TNA: DO 164/55, Minute from A.W. Snelling to General Price, 10 September, 1962.

Government was “doing [its] best to promote sales of war material to the Commonwealth.”¹⁰

The plan also conformed to the Conservative economic thinking of the 1950s in the sense that it did not advocate increased Commonwealth aid and sought to distribute the burden of such aid among the older more developed members of the organisation.¹¹

The Labour government that came to power under Harold Wilson in October 1964 did not necessarily share its conservative predecessors’ desire to outsource colonial responsibilities, but it did share the inherent British concern for keeping Commonwealth costs at a minimum. To that end the Wilson Government chiefly supported internal British initiatives for bilateral aid that either maintained equilibrium or decreased financial commitments to the Commonwealth. Such bilateral efforts had been extensively negotiated by the Macmillan Government with the introduction of the British Overseas Service Aid Scheme in 1961 and were continued by the Wilson Ministry.¹² Bilateral agreements allowed greater conditions to be attached to aid and greater credit to be taken by the British Government.¹³ Part and parcel to this policy, the Wilson ministry consistently opposed initiatives that might result in central Commonwealth oversight or increased financial commitments to Commonwealth aid. For example, in November 1964 Prime Minister Eric Williams of Trinidad proposed a special Commonwealth ministerial meeting to specifically address issues of Commonwealth economics. Williams called for the recently proposed Secretariat to prepare and present “formal papers within a formal agenda as distinct

¹⁰ TNA: DO 164/55, Note on Links between U.K. and Commonwealth Forces, 29 September, 1960; Stockwell, *The British End of the British Empire*, 87.

¹¹ These expectations echoed the establishment of the Colombo Plan in 1950. While the plan was proposed by Indian representatives it was initially established on the basis of shared cost in the Commonwealth, and later shared cost beyond the Commonwealth. Further, the programme also aligned to British policy goals in Southeast Asia with its emphasis on development as a means to counter the spread of communism in the region.

¹² Stockwell, “Britain and Decolonization,” 79.

¹³ Brinley Thomas, “Intra-Commonwealth Flows of Capital and Skills,” in *A Decade of the Commonwealth, 1955-1964*, eds. W.B. Hamilton, Kenneth Robinson, and C.D.W. Goodwin (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1966), 419.

from slipshod and ad hoc discussions” to date. Williams sought an agenda addressing Commonwealth trade (including preferences, commodity agreements, and terms of trade), immigration, and economic aid and technical assistance.¹⁴ Addressing these concerns would help meet the needs of the Trinbagonian economy and those of other developing nations with economies largely dependent on conditions in industrial countries.¹⁵ Williams also pointed out that a meeting discussing these ideas would fit within the Labour Party’s own recent election programme.¹⁶ However, Wilson returned a “sympathetic but temporising reply” to Williams, indefinitely delaying any such discussion because his government felt that both the timing and methods were wrong.¹⁷ In a similar sense in the first year of the Wilson ministry expenditure on the Special Commonwealth African Assistance Plan began to decline as did the number of Commonwealth trainees covered by the the United Kingdom’s Overseas Service Aid Scheme.¹⁸

The Wilson Government instead focused on the newly created Ministry of Overseas Development (formed in November 1964) as its primary method of distributing aid funding.¹⁹ By September 1965, just before the First Commonwealth Finance Ministers’ Meeting, personnel in the Colonial Office noted that most of their dealings with Commonwealth organisations (including for aid distribution) had already been reallocated to the ODM. The exception to this transfer was the CEC in which the CO retained a particular interest that they felt should be better

¹⁴ TNA: T 312/707, Letter from Eric Williams to Harold Wilson, 26 October, 1964.

¹⁵ Eric Armstrong, “Projections of the Growth of the Economy of Trinidad and Tobago,” *Social and Economic Studies* 12, no. 3 (September 1963), 283.

¹⁶ TNA: T 312/707, Letter from Eric Williams to Harold Wilson, 26 October, 1964.

¹⁷ The British also suspected that this was a veiled form of pressure against British policies in the UN conference on Trade and Development. See: TNA: T 312/707, Proposal from the Prime Minister of Trinidad for a Commonwealth Economic Seminar: Minute from W.A. Nield to Mr. Caulcott, 13 November, 1964; TNA: T 312/707, Draft Reply to the Rt. Hon. Dr. Eric Williams, 3 November, 1964.

¹⁸ *Commonwealth Secretariat: Commonwealth Economic Consultative Council: Commonwealth Finance Ministers’ Meeting 1966*, 1.

¹⁹ Tomlinson, “The Decline of the Empire,” 209-210.

coordinated with the CRO.²⁰ By the autumn of 1965 British interaction with Commonwealth aid and development was fully transferred to the ODM while general economic dealings were centred through bilateral trade agreements or through the CEC for more specific programs.

The interplay between British departmental re-organisation, Commonwealth aid and development funding and the Secretariat's role in the Commonwealth Finance Ministers' Meetings came to a head in September 1966.²¹ At the September 1966 Prime Ministers' Meeting (see Chapter Nine) Secretary-General Smith advanced a plan to increase Commonwealth aid coordination in response to the desires of the newer members and as a bid to boost Commonwealth cooperation in an otherwise divisive year. Smith saw this as a way to strengthen the Commonwealth by providing an opportunity for constructive cooperation and went so far as to specifically note this potential benefit in his proposal.²² The Secretariat proposal explored a variety of Commonwealth aid possibilities but in order not to infringe on existing channels of bilateral aid or duplicate multilateral UN programmes focused in particular on technical assistance.²³ In the proposal Smith reasoned that because of the shared language and administrative methods of many Commonwealth members, cooperation in technical assistance and training would likely be the most effective and cost efficient way for the organisation to help its developing members.²⁴ Cooperation in technical assistance could be boosted with a modest budget of one half of one percent of members' existing aid budgets and if approved in principle by the prime ministers, could be explored further by a dedicated meeting of relevant experts.²⁵ In the meantime, the proposal outlined several possible ways to boost Commonwealth aid in

²⁰ TNA: CO 936/884, Minute from W.A. Morris to Mr. Christofas, 8 September, 1965.

²¹ For further background of this interplay see: Riley, "Tropical Allsorts," 840-841.

²² LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 19, Commonwealth Assistance Programmes: Memorandum by the Secretary-General, 9 August, 1966.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

technical assistance. These included better coordination with third party technical assistance bodies, new regional Commonwealth plans echoing the SCAAP or Colombo Plan for the Caribbean or Mediterranean members, or using the Secretariat to boost technical assistance. The latter suggestion could be supported by creating a Secretariat-based technical assistance service, using the Secretariat to manage individual large-scale development projects, or creating a Commonwealth planning service in the Secretariat to match donors and recipients and to act as consultation service.²⁶

The Secretariat proposal was modest and stayed well within cited parameters of both the Secretariat's functions and Commonwealth aid coordination as stipulated by the prime ministers in the *Agreed Memorandum* and subsequent Commonwealth meetings. Yet the older, restrictionist Commonwealth members generally (including Australia, New Zealand, and India) and Britain in particular were resistant to the idea of committing to a wide-reaching program that might expand the Secretariat and impose third party direction over how such aid funding was used.²⁷ Unlike nongovernmental organisations or bilateral aid channels, the Secretariat was beholden to the Commonwealth members. Under a multilateral aid programme managed by the Secretariat, aid recipients had more of a say in the management of that aid, which NGO and bilateral programs had greater potential for limits and strings attached by donor nations. For the restrictionist members not to overtly support Commonwealth aid would be politically damaging, and so the restrictionist governments supported the idea of Commonwealth aid in principle, but with significant reservations and little action.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 18, Note of the Meeting between the British Prime Minister and the Commonwealth Secretary-General on Friday 15th July, 1966.

Behind closed doors, the British Government again wrote off the idea of further aid coordination, this time considering it to be “a determined effort at empire building on Smith’s part and that it stretched beyond legitimate limits the functions for the Secretariat which were laid down in the *Agreed Memorandum*.”²⁸ The role of the Secretariat was a central point of contention in the British Government. The first copy of the Secretariat’s proposal sent to Sir Saville Garner on August 9 had every reference to the lack of Commonwealth aid coordination underlined and marginally noted with “criticism not accepted.” Also underlined were any references to a centrally organised Secretariat effort to fill the apparent gap in Commonwealth aid coordination.²⁹ The initial British reaction was to defend the existing Commonwealth aid arrangements and oppose any further role for the Secretariat. Central to this response was the wider stance of the Wilson Ministry “that there would be no additional money available from Britain.” The British made clear to both Smith and Deputy Secretary-General Gooneratne that “it was most unwise to make this proposal.”³⁰ In the meantime, the ODM, now under the leadership of Arthur Bottomley, one of the Secretariat’s old opponents, systematically sought out loopholes to undermine the proposal draft.³¹

While some officials in the new Commonwealth Office (CO) would have preferred to “have it out privately with the Secretariat now rather than to duck it altogether until the Prime Ministers’ Meeting,” the topic of aid was nonetheless broached during the conference.³² Arthur Bottomley (formerly of the CRO) attended in his new capacity as Minister of Overseas Development and

²⁸ TNA: DO 161/398, The Role of the Commonwealth Secretariat in Connexion With Aid: Memorandum from A.W. Snelling to Sir N. Pritchard, 29 July, 1966.

²⁹ TNA: DO 161/398, Commonwealth Assistance Programmes: Memorandum by the Secretary-General, 9 August, 1966.

³⁰ TNA: DO 161/398, Minute from Mr. Turner to Mr. Molyneux, 11 August, 1966.

³¹ TNA: DO 161/398, The Role of the Commonwealth Secretariat in Connexion With Aid: Memorandum from A.W. Snelling to Sir N. Pritchard, 29 July, 1966.

³² TNA: DO 161/398, The Role of the Commonwealth Secretariat in Connection with Aid: Minute from J.A. Molyneux to Mr. Hamilton and Sir N. Pritchard, 1 August, 1966.

defended British efforts. Bottomley asserted the British commitment to aid and development, but found it difficult to endorse the Secretary-General's proposal, stating that the British Government could not pledge any further funds, and that it would be wrong to raise false hopes in that regard.³³ Similar to Prime Minister Wilson's reply to Eric Williams two years earlier, Bottomley gave a "temporising" answer, and suggested that both the timing and method of the Secretary-General's proposal were wrong, but might be revisited at a more propitious future date.³⁴

Arnold Smith had been campaigning widely on behalf of the newer members for a better organised programme of Commonwealth aid and development assistance. In addition to the strong support of the Canadian Government, Smith had discussed the matter widely including with Eric Williams in March of that year, as well as beyond the Commonwealth with Marcel Landey, the UN chief economic commissioner for Africa.³⁵ Ceylonese representatives were also supportive and congratulated Smith on his proposal during the conference, while also calling on Bottomley to view the proposal with sympathy and understanding towards the wider Commonwealth.³⁶ The Secretariat proposal had come at the "worst possible timing" in terms of British economics, policy, and attitude toward the Commonwealth, in addition to the deep divisions in the organisation itself.³⁷ On a politically defensive footing and feeling the adverse effects of an economic downturn, the British delegation had gone into the meeting committed in

³³ TNA: DO 207/231, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, September, 1966: Minutes of the Fourteenth Meeting held at Marlborough House, London, on Thursday 15 September, 1966, at 10.00 a.m.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 10, Report of Visit to Trinidad, Canada and United States, of Secretary-General, Accompanied by Mr. M.J. Wilson, 23rd March – 5th April, 1966; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 19, Note for Diary, 19 August, 1966.

³⁶ TNA: DO 207/231, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, September 1966: Minutes of the Fourteenth Meeting held at Marlborough House, London, on Thursday 15 September, 1966 at 10.00 a.m.

³⁷ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 20, Letter from T.E. Gooneratne to Arnold Smith, 2 August, 1966.

neither principle nor detail to the proposal and remained so through the proceedings.³⁸ In order to break the resulting deadlock Canadian Prime Minister Lester Pearson suggested that the topic be deferred rather than abandoned and “the Meeting agreed that the proposals in the Secretary-General’s memorandum should be put on the Agenda of the Planning Conference, which the Secretary-General had already been asked to arrange.”³⁹

While the Secretariat proposal carried through the September 1966 Prime Ministers’ Meeting, the focus on Rhodesia and “the cautious negativeness of bureaucrats” were not a constructive climate for such projects, even with the general support of the newer Commonwealth members.⁴⁰ Harold Wilson and the British delegation were willing to broadly discuss economic issues at the Prime Ministers’ Meeting, but that discussion was based on the work already done by the trade ministers at their meeting the previous June and deferred many outstanding issues to the meeting of finance ministers in Montreal the next week.⁴¹ Smith’s proposal was effectively tabled and only “survived” the 1966 Prime Ministers’ Meeting.⁴²

However, while the Secretariat proposal received little attention from the prime ministers amidst divisive political discussions in early September, the proposal received explicit endorsement from the Commonwealth finance ministers when they met in Montreal the following week. As the Secretariat grew from 1965 to 1966 to fully service Finance Ministers’ Meetings, the finance ministers came to support Secretariat initiatives in the realm of Commonwealth aid. The support of the finance ministers was important in raising the profile of aid issues (beyond the central

³⁸ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 20, Letter from A. Cohen to T.E. Gooneratne, 3 August, 1966.

³⁹ TNA: DO 207/231, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, September, 1966: Minutes of the Fourteenth Meeting held at Marlborough House, London, on Thursday 15 September, 1966, at 10.00 a.m.

⁴⁰ Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 109.

⁴¹ TNA: DO 207/231, Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, London, September, 1966: Minutes of the Fourteenth Meeting held at Marlborough House, London, on Thursday 15 September, 1966, at 10.00 a.m.

⁴² Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 110.

political issues of the day) and garnering support from throughout the Commonwealth and from within the various members' governments.

By 1966, although its capacity to service meetings was still being built, the Secretariat had taken on a much greater share of preparations for Finance Ministers' Meetings. The September 1966 Finance Ministers' Meeting in Montreal was fully serviced by the Secretariat both in terms of information (background papers, agenda items, and memoranda) and practical logistics. After the Lagos Prime Ministers' Meeting the 1966 Finance Ministers' Meeting was the second Commonwealth meeting outside of London fully organised by the Secretariat. The expansion of the Secretariat staff and the experience of having serviced a number of meetings including two larger Prime Ministers' Meetings had greatly increased the Secretariat's capacity to field the meeting. However the Secretariat's central role in the 1966 Finance Ministers' Meeting was also facilitated by the changing stance of the CEC and the contributions of the Canadian Government, which ensured that the Secretariat would not be reliant on the British in general and the CRO (later CO) in particular.

The Secretariat's role in the 1966 Finance Ministers' Meeting was also facilitated through Arnold Smith's personal connections in the Canadian Government. In a visit to Ottawa in March 1966, Smith asked Prime Minister Pearson if the Canadian Government would consider hosting the September Finance Ministers' Meeting. At the 1965 Finance Ministers' Meeting the Nigerian Government had offered to host the 1966 gathering, but the coup d'état just after the Lagos Prime Ministers' Meeting that January had removed Lagos as a viable option though Nigeria remained in the Commonwealth. Amid the tensions over Rhodesia that were likely to continue in the September Prime Ministers' Meeting, Smith also found the idea of hosting the Finance Ministers' Meeting in London to be ill-advised. Because Canada enjoyed a good reputation with

both old and new members of the Commonwealth, Smith hoped the Canadian Government would offer to host the Finance Ministers' Meeting which would be perceived as a neutral location. While the Canadian Government did not have any particular desire to host a meeting in light of the deep ongoing tensions in the Commonwealth, they agreed to do so if the Secretary-General found that most members would support a meeting in Canada.⁴³ This would also ensure that as host, the Canadians would chair the meeting and thus reduce the likelihood of a partisan chair creating antagonism between Britain and the newer members over financial policies touching Commonwealth programmes, sanctions in Rhodesia, or aid and development.

As Smith suspected, after initial consultations, the wider membership strongly supported the Canadian Government hosting the Finance Ministers' Meeting which subsequently took place in Montréal from September 21-22. The Secretariat serviced the majority of the meeting but the Canadian Government also gave additional help in key areas such as drafting an extensive brief on the world's industrial economies and loaning a number of staff to assist the Secretariat that was "slightly on the high side" even for a host government.⁴⁴

With the assistance of an increasingly friendly CEC, in addition to that of the Canadian Government under Pearson, the Secretariat was able to take over management of Commonwealth Finance Ministers' Meetings without having to rely on British support, or even to refer to the CRO/CO in any way. The 1966 Finance Ministers' Meeting was particularly successful for Smith who garnered majority support of the finance ministers for his program of multilateral Commonwealth assistance. While there was discussion of the situation in Rhodesia among the

⁴³ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 10, Report of Visit to Trinidad, Canada and United States, of Secretary-General, Accompanied by Mr. M.J. Wilson, 23rd March – 5th April, 1966.

⁴⁴ CSLA: 1997 – 25 (1), Finance Ministers' Meeting of the Commonwealth Economic Consultative Council, Montreal, Canada, September 1966: Economic Developments in Some Industrialized Countries (A Review by Canadian Officials); LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 1, File 13, Commonwealth Finance Ministers' Meeting, Montreal, September 21-22, 1966: Draft Note Regarding Tentative Arrangements for Consideration, 11 May, 1966.

assembled finance ministers, unlike at the Prime Ministers' Meeting the week before, Rhodesia was not the central point of the meeting. There was thus a more balanced approach to a broader array of financial topics during the meeting, rather than the intense focus of the Prime Ministers' Meeting. Similarly, there was less contestation over the workings of the meeting. There was no caucus of new members or clique of older members, nor was there CRO/CO posturing for control of the meeting agenda, all of which facilitated the treatment of aid and development topics.⁴⁵

With increasing assistance from the CEC and sustained support from the Canadian Government, the 1966 gathering of finance ministers was a much more balanced meeting. At the meeting the assembled ministers made clear that they saw the problem of aid and development in the context of wider economic challenges facing developing countries.⁴⁶ Aid could therefore not be relegated to the margins in favour of talks on trade or international finance. This approach cast Secretariat aid coordination in terms of cost effectiveness, efficiency, and a bigger economic picture. While the prime ministers had deferred consideration of the proposal to the meeting of Commonwealth economic planners, the explicit support of the finance ministers lent a much stronger basis for the Secretariat proposal for Commonwealth aid and technical assistance.

In spite of the wider member support through the finance ministers, the restrictionist Commonwealth governments (United Kingdom, Australia, India, and New Zealand) remained reluctant to cooperate with the Secretariat concerning aid and technical assistance. In February 1967, Smith called a meeting of Commonwealth High Commissioners at Marlborough House to discuss prospective agenda items for the Nairobi Meeting of Commonwealth Planners Smith had

⁴⁵ Barber, "The Impact of the Rhodesian Crisis on the Commonwealth," 92.

⁴⁶ "Meeting of Commonwealth Finance Ministers, Montreal, 1966: Communiqué," in *Commonwealth Economic Consultative Council: Meeting of Commonwealth Finance Ministers, Montreal, 21st – 22nd September, 1966: Minutes of Meetings and Memoranda* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1966), 52.

been asked to organise by prime ministers in 1966.⁴⁷ In short order representatives from the Commonwealth Office wrote to Smith suggesting that the agenda be adjusted to put more emphasis on general economic planning rather than Commonwealth assistance. The stance of the CO was that the former topic was of greater importance and therefore the prospective timing of the meeting should be adjusted so that a full week be devoted to economic planning with aid experts joining the meeting at an unspecified later stage.⁴⁸ A letter from Australian High Commissioner J.L. Knott was even more explicit about the place of aid and technical assistance on the agenda. Knott cautioned Smith that he “should exercise some restraint in organising the Nairobi meeting as to prevent the arousing of great expectations on the part of the uninformed about the likely outcome of the officials’ deliberations.”⁴⁹

Indian officials also wrote to Smith with a suggested agenda item. Elaborating on a past Indian proposal, the Indian Government proposed the establishment of a multilateral market development fund that would encourage development through export promotion and trade rather than technical assistance.⁵⁰ The Indian proposal had the potential to diversify Secretariat operations and could complement a programme of aid and technical assistance. However, India was also more developed than the newer members, so the Indian Government saw less need for aid and technical assistance and could more readily afford to be wary of centralised projects. The Indian Government had benefitted from the Colombo Plan since 1950 and had also supported the SCAAP since 1960. India therefore had less need for aid and technical assistance, a long history of engaging with Commonwealth regional assistance programmes, and well-entrenched suspicion of external oversight. These factors contributed to Indian restrictionism regarding the

⁴⁷ CSLA: 2001 – 117 (1) “Review of the Technical Cooperation Plan 18 Dec 1968 – 3 Aug 1970,” Commonwealth Circular Letter no. 105, 24 February, 1967.

⁴⁸ CSLA: 2001 – 117 (1), Letter from Joe Garner to Arnold Smith, 27 February, 1967.

⁴⁹ CSLA: 2001 – 117 (1), Letter from J.L. Knott to Arnold Smith, 2 March, 1967.

⁵⁰ CSLA: 2001 – 117 (1), Commonwealth Circular Letter no. 100, 2 February 1967.

Secretariat proposal, albeit for different reasons than the other restrictionists. In the interim, by proposing that Commonwealth development could be accomplished through market development, the Indian Government echoed the previous functions of the CEC and the status quo of existing Commonwealth operations. Secretariat staff were apprehensive about the Indian proposal as it was “neither specific enough nor detailed enough to allow one to judge whether or not a workable scheme can be based on their outline.”⁵¹

Further complicating the work of the Secretariat was British obstruction regarding past records of the CECC. As the incorporation of the former CECC into the Secretariat progressed through 1967, Smith requested access to previous records and meeting documents which included CEC records, as well as information pertaining to the work of the Commonwealth finance ministers. Prime Minister Wilson’s Cabinet saw no harm in Smith himself accessing CECC records but granted him access only on a personal basis as a Canadian diplomat, rather than as Commonwealth Secretary-General. The British Cabinet refused to formally acknowledge Smith’s request and denied that he had any claim or right to access CECC documents in his capacity as Secretary-General.⁵² The denial of Smith’s request was justified by concerns of information security in the diversely-staffed Commonwealth Secretariat. However, by 1967 the Secretariat had already formally taken over the management of CECC meetings and was in the process of amalgamating the entirety of the CEC. British opposition went against the new structure of Commonwealth economic machinery in order to shield the British Government from the scrutiny of other members and to impair Smith’s ability to efficiently build the capacity of the Secretariat.

⁵¹ CSLA: 2001 – 117 (1), Comments on Commonwealth Market Development Fund, 20 December, 1966.

⁵² TNA: CAB 164/70, Supply of Commonwealth Economic Consultative Council Records to Commonwealth Secretary-General, 27 June, 1967; TNA: CAB 164/70, Letter from N. Pritchard to Arnold Smith, 5 April, 1967.

In the face of British obstructionism and the general opposition of the restrictionist camp, Smith endeavoured to diplomatically build support for the Secretariat proposal in anticipation of the Nairobi meeting. Again employing his connections in the Canadian Government, Smith wrote to K.B. Lall, the Indian Secretary of Commerce, to suggest a meeting between Lall and Maurice Strong, head of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).⁵³ In Smith's estimation, the latter was "a man combining idealism and great entrepreneurial skill" who he hoped would be able to build support for the Secretariat proposal while travelling to India through his work at CIDA.⁵⁴ Although Lall and Strong were unable to meet due to conflicting schedules, Smith's efforts again show his reliance on connections in the Canadian Government to help garner support for the Commonwealth Secretariat.⁵⁵

Smith also mounted a sustained effort to promote the Secretariat proposal by personally meeting with key British officials in early 1967. In a meeting with Sir Saville Garner in January, Smith pointed out that the idea of multilateral Commonwealth cooperation was originally a British idea that once enjoyed support from the British Government.⁵⁶ He reasoned that even though present economic circumstances in the United Kingdom might preclude major British financial contributions, this was no reason that the Secretariat proposal could not move ahead.⁵⁷ "In an attempt to weaken the opposition of British officials to the proposals ahead of the meeting" Smith also met with Harold Wilson in April. Smith complained of "considerable opposition in the Ministry of Overseas Development and in certain other of the developed Commonwealth

⁵³ CSLA: 2001 – 117 (1), Telegram from Arnold Smith to Mr. K.B. Lall, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Commerce, New Delhi, 22 March, 1967.

⁵⁴ Ibid.; Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 116.

⁵⁵ CSLA: 2001 – 117 (1), Letter from K.B. Lall to Arnold Smith, 3 April, 1967.

⁵⁶ Ashton, "British Government Perspectives," 80.

⁵⁷ TNA: FCO 49/74, Letter from Saville Garner to Sir N. Pritchard, 11 January, 1967.

countries.”⁵⁸ Smith also noted the considerable support the proposal had garnered from the developing members and reminded Wilson “that the Prime Ministers had directed him to study ways of providing aid to the developing countries on a multi-lateral basis” and that he would pursue that directive.⁵⁹ Pursuing that directive, Smith requested that Wilson include Dr. Thomas Balogh of the ODM and Sir Donald McDougall, the Director General of the British Department of Economic Affairs, in the United Kingdom Delegation to Nairobi.⁶⁰ Smith considered both of these men to be competent and sympathetic to the Secretariat and hoped their inclusion might diffuse some tension with the Wilson Government by engaging with key economic departments while also building Secretariat support at the meeting itself.

Smith’s remarks at the opening of the Nairobi meeting on May 24 reflected a measured approach towards the restrictionist members as well as the support he enjoyed among the newer, developing members. Smith referred to his vision of the Commonwealth as an instrument for international cooperation rather than a bloc and evoked the need to revitalise Commonwealth cooperation in the face of neo-isolationism, disenchantment, and public apathy.⁶¹ Smith reminded the planning experts in attendance that since the idea of a multilateral Commonwealth aid and technical assistance programme had been tabled three years earlier no action had been taken. He went on to note the benefits of a multilateral approach including greater capacity to provide services, the ability to match recipients and donors, the benefit of more diverse viewpoints and members, and less partisanship among technical experts working through multilateral framework. Finally, Smith reassured the delegations that the Secretariat would work

⁵⁸ Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 110; TNA: FCO 49/198, Extract: Record of a Meeting between the Prime Minister and the Commonwealth Secretary-General at no. 10 Downing Street at 12 noon on Wednesday April 5, 1967.

⁵⁹ TNA: FCO 49/198, Extract: Record of a Meeting between the Prime Minister and the Commonwealth Secretary-General at no. 10 Downing Street at 12 noon on Wednesday April 5, 1967.

⁶⁰ Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 110.

⁶¹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 2, File 10, Opening Statement by the Secretary-General, 25 May, 1967.

to avoid wasteful duplication of existing technical assistance services and would use the shared language and administrative practices of the Commonwealth to ensure maximum efficiency for a small starting budget.⁶² Smith's opening speech expressed his vision for the future of Commonwealth cooperation and trod a line between reassuring the older members concerned with cost and Secretariat expansion, and supporting the idea and initiatives of the newer members. Smith's speech echoed his vision of the Secretariat as a versatile international instrument that would complement, not compete with other international organisations.

At the Nairobi meeting the early suggestions of the Secretariat for ways to boost Commonwealth aid and technical assistance were condensed into two distinct actionable programmes. The first was the recruitment of "a headquarters group of about six staff (development economists, statisticians, public administration experts) who could respond quickly to requests to visit countries, identify problems, and recruit specialists who could deal with them."⁶³ This small team of experts would act as consultants focused "on meeting the planning, rather than operational needs of governments" including national and sectoral planning, development project preparations, statistics, and financial and public administration.⁶⁴ The second was the establishment of a fund for technical cooperation designed to support the recruitment and deployment of technical experts, the so-called headquarters group to meet member requests for assistance. The newer, developing members were particularly supportive and worked with the Secretariat to advance the aid proposal through the meeting. Indian officials later congratulated Smith on his skillful role guiding the proceedings, even though they themselves did not wholly

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 111.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

support the Secretariat programme.⁶⁵ Smith later recalled that Philip Ndegwa, one of Kenya's top officials in economic planning and chair of the meeting, "made a superb speech castigating the rich for stingy negativity" which helped win a qualified success for the technical assistance programme.⁶⁶

The first part of the proposal (the establishment of a Special Commonwealth Technical Assistance Programme), was formally recommended to member governments by the Nairobi Conference. However, the concerns of the older members heavily curtailed the Secretariat proposal. While the Secretariat would be able to recruit a small team of experts, the Australian delegation refused to commit any funds and those available from New Zealand were small. The bulk of the program relied on the support of Britain and Canada, who agreed to fund the hiring of two experts each.⁶⁷ Any such hiring was to be done on lines of credit provided by the three donor countries which retained the right to approve or reject the Secretariat's prospective recruits.⁶⁸

The second portion of the proposal (the establishment of a central development fund) was advanced to a feasibility study but was not formally recommended to member governments by the Nairobi Meeting.⁶⁹ The qualified success noted by Smith was that the principle and personnel had been approved while direct funds had not. Concerns over Secretariat expansion and financial commitments persisted in the weeks following the meeting. Australian representatives inquired directly with Smith about Secretariat hiring and estimated costs (even though the Australian

⁶⁵ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 2, File 10, Letter from V.K. Ahuja to Arnold Smith, 30 June, 1967.

⁶⁶ Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 111.

⁶⁷ TNA: FCO 68/171, Meeting between the Prime Minister and His Excellency Mr. Arnold Smith, Commonwealth Secretary-General on 9 December, 1968, at 6 p.m. – Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting 7-15 January, 1969: Talking Points: Commonwealth Programme of Technical Co-operation.

⁶⁸ Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 111.

⁶⁹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 3, File 1 "Diary Sept. 1967," Press Conference, 21 September, 1967.

Government did not commit any funds) and members in the British House of Commons asked about how the costs would be shared among Commonwealth members before papers from the Nairobi Meeting had even been officially distributed.⁷⁰

Smith remained optimistic about the outcomes of the meeting, anticipating that the member governments would ultimately approve the qualified proposal.⁷¹ In a general sense the Nairobi meeting had approved incremental steps towards a development fund and a programme of Commonwealth aid and technical assistance. More importantly the outcomes of the meeting were significant because “the developing members of the Commonwealth were closely involved in the formulation of the schemes.”⁷² Although the Secretariat proposals had been quite limited in the process, the support of the newer members both in the meeting and among their home governments was guaranteed.

Secretariat staff were able to further strengthen this support at the 1967 Finance Ministers’ Meeting, hosted by the Trinbagonian Government that September. In light of the previously rejected bid by the Trinbagonian Government to call a meeting specifically on Commonwealth aid, and the regional concern of Caribbean states for the representation of the associated states, it is perhaps not surprising that the Trinbagonian Government offered to host the meeting. The Secretariat had a strong ally in the Trinbagonian Government not only as a host, but also as a supporter of Smith’s vision for a multilateral programme for Commonwealth aid. Now with the capacity to fully and independently organise the Finance Ministers’ Meetings, the Secretariat

⁷⁰ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 2, File 10, Record of Conversation between the Secretary-General and Mr. L. Engledow, Assistant Secretary, Department of External Affairs, Canberra, on Monday, 26 June, 1967; Hansard, Commonwealth Planners Conference, Nairobi, (HC Deb 27 June 1967 Volume 749 c248).

⁷¹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 2, File 10, Notes for address by Mr. Arnold Smith, Commonwealth Secretary-General, to the Annual Conference of the Commonwealth Press Union, Marlborough House, London, 13th June, 1967.

⁷² LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 3, File 1, Meeting of Commonwealth Finance Ministers and Senior Finance Officials, Port of Spain, September, 1967: Minutes of Third Plenary Meeting, Thursday, 21 September, 1967 – 9:30 a.m.

was able to include on the agenda a “full discussion of the problems of development” including a review of the Secretary-General’s report on the flow of Commonwealth aid and other Secretariat-drafted background papers on aid specifically.⁷³ The Secretary-General’s report echoed the finance ministers’ previous statements by framing Commonwealth aid in the context of global economic affairs, but made a specific point of noting that the Nairobi proposals went beyond anything offered by previous regional Commonwealth aid programmes (such as the SCAAP).⁷⁴ The report illustrated how the Secretariat had the capacity to bridge regional Commonwealth projects and the global economic issues being discussed by the finance ministers.

At the opening of the 1967 Finance Ministers’ Meeting, the Governor General of Trinidad and Tobago, Sir Solomon Hochoy, stressed that in spite of other concerns among the developed countries, the increasing economic gap between developed and developing countries was of vital importance to the majority of the member countries in attendance. In his remarks he emphasised the need to find a solution to the problems of development and noted the important role of the Secretariat in advancing Commonwealth cooperation, providing expertise, and serving as a “the non-national focal point” of the organisation.⁷⁵ Upon his election to the chairmanship of the meeting, Eric Williams (who was both prime minister and finance minister of Trinidad and Tobago), was even more explicit about the imperatives of the meeting and the central role of the Secretariat. Williams stated that “the hopes and aspirations of the peoples of the less-developed areas of the Commonwealth and of the World...are based to a large measure on the creation of a

⁷³ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 3, File 1, Communique: Meeting of Commonwealth Finance Ministers, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, September, 1967; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 1, Commonwealth Circular Letter no. 45/68, 5 June, 1968.

⁷⁴ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 1, Commonwealth Circular Letter no. 45/68, 5 June, 1968.

⁷⁵ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 3, File 1, Meeting of Commonwealth Finance Ministers and Senior Finance Officials, Port of Spain, September, 1967: Minutes of Opening Meeting, Wednesday 20 September, 1967 – 10.00 a.m.(5559)

stable yet flexible international monetary situation and a mechanism... above all that promotes the growth of trade on mutually advantageous terms and the flow of development capital to the less-developed countries.” He continued to welcome Smith and his staff, lauding “their attitude and their approach to their tasks [through which] they have succeeded in giving a new meaning to the concept of the Commonwealth.”⁷⁶ Trinbagonian officials made clear the importance of aid and development to the wider membership and emphasised the value of the Secretariat in advocating on their behalf.

During the conference itself, Canadian and British delegates took a measured approach while the Australian delegation expressed concerns with the Secretary-General’s report on Commonwealth aid. However, the developing members strongly supported the Secretariat’s efforts. Jamaican and Tanzanian representatives called for follow-up action on the Nairobi recommendations, including a scheme to fund the administrative centralisation of development aid in the Secretariat.⁷⁷ Trinbagonian representatives noted that the technical assistance provided by the Secretariat had already boosted developing members’ ability to absorb and effectively allocate capital aid. They called for further investigation into the technical development fund and other types of capital aid tied to finance rather than just personnel.⁷⁸ At the conclusion of the meeting the finance ministers ultimately expressed their support for the Secretariat proposal and the

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 3, File 1, Meeting of Commonwealth Finance Ministers and Senior Finance Officials, Port of Spain, September, 1967: Minutes of Third Plenary Meeting, Thursday, 21 September, 1967 – 9.30 a.m.; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 3, File 1, Meeting of Commonwealth Finance Ministers and Senior Finance Officials, Port of Spain, September, 1967: Minutes of Fourth Plenary Meeting, Thursday, 21 September, 1967 – 3.15 p.m.

⁷⁸ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 3, File 1, Meeting of Commonwealth Finance Ministers and Senior Finance Officials, Port of Spain, September, 1967: Minutes of Third Plenary Meeting, Thursday, 21 September, 1967 – 9.30 a.m.

outcomes of the Nairobi meeting and hoped that the feasibility study about the technical assistance fund would yield positive results.⁷⁹

The support of the finance ministers in 1966 and 1967 helped advance the Secretariat proposal and subsequent recommendations of the Nairobi meeting. By the end of the 1967 Finance Ministers' Meeting, enough member governments had approved the recommendations of the Nairobi meeting to ensure that the Special Commonwealth Technical Assistance Programme would come into effect.⁸⁰ The Secretariat-based headquarters group of four technical assistance officers (financed by Canada and Britain) was subsequently recruited over the winter and became operational in July 1968.⁸¹ While the programme fell short of the initial Secretariat proposal, with the help of the finance ministers the concept of Commonwealth technical assistance could at least be implemented.

The interplay between the organisation of the Finance Ministers' Meetings, the development of the Secretariat's capacity to service such meetings, and the growth of the Special Commonwealth Technical Assistance Programme between 1965 and 1968 illustrate the importance of meetings in the evolution of the Commonwealth organisation. The support of the newer member governments and Smith's personal contacts in the Canadian Government facilitated the Secretariat taking on the servicing of Commonwealth ministerial meetings. With these supports, the Secretariat was less reliant on an inconsistent British Government pursuing diverse policy goals, and composed of a range of departments with attitudes ranging from friendly to hostile. This independence fostered good relations with the Commonwealth finance ministers and

⁷⁹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 3, File 1, Meeting of Commonwealth Finance Ministers and Senior Finance Officials, Port of Spain, September, 1967: Minutes of Fourth Plenary Meeting, Thursday, 21 September, 1967 – 3.15 p.m.; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 3, File 1, Communique: Meeting of Commonwealth Finance Ministers, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, September, 1967, 21 September, 1967.

⁸⁰ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 3, File 1, Press Conference, 21 September, 1967.

⁸¹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 2, Commonwealth Circular Letter no. 57/68, 10 July, 1968.

improved management of Commonwealth economic meetings as the Anglo-centric yet convoluted structure of the CECC was reorganised. The effective management of the Finance Ministers' Meetings helped garner support for the Secretariat's technical assistance programme. Advances in Commonwealth technical assistance were steady through 1967 and 1968 despite the divisive proceedings of the 1966 Prime Ministers' Meeting, and the lengthy pause before the next gathering of prime ministers in 1969.

The central coordination of Commonwealth meetings through the Secretariat, rather than the British Government, allowed these advances without interference. For instance, the recommendations of the Nairobi meeting in 1967 were submitted directly to member governments. Those recommendations were not submitted to any British department, nor did they have to wait for the approval of the assembled prime ministers or even the finance ministers.⁸² Under the old system of the CECC, discussion on aid and development would either be handled by the CEC in conjunction with the CRO (passing them through the unreliable filter of the British Government) or would be submitted to the finance ministers as the de facto members of the CECC. The simplification of Commonwealth economic machinery with the Secretariat allowed maximum support for aid initiatives to be built without referring to the British Government or relying on less frequent gatherings of Commonwealth prime ministers.

The streamlining of this process and its implications for Commonwealth aid and technical assistance was particularly clear at the 1968 Finance Ministers' Meeting. Logistically, while the meeting took place in London and was hosted by the British Government, the majority of the proceedings took place at the neutral location of Marlborough House. Because of the location of the meeting and because the CRO had long-since been reorganised, most preparations for the

⁸² LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 3, File 1, Press Conference, 21 September, 1967.

1968 Finance Ministers' Meeting were carried out by the Secretariat. Deputy Secretary-General Gooneratne headed up those efforts, including carrying out the consultations for dates, the meeting agenda, and setting officials' meetings to work out the logistics.⁸³ The British Government provided a social programme as well as facilities to host the largest sessions that had outgrown the space available at Marlborough House but little else. Meanwhile, the Secretariat was responsible for many functions that had in the past been areas of friction between the Secretariat and the British. For instance, the Secretariat oversaw press arrangements, conference documentation, agenda adjustments, seating, timing, and the election of a chairman without contest.⁸⁴

During the 1968 Finance Ministers' Meeting itself, Secretariat efforts received further support based on "an impressive early record" of the technical assistance programme.⁸⁵ The programme had completed a number of projects at a scale greater than national organisations could accomplish, and at a speed far more effective than the United Nations and other large international agencies.⁸⁶ Arnold Smith reported a 54% increase in flows of Commonwealth agricultural development funding, a 10% increase in intra-Commonwealth development loans, a 9% increase in technical assistance funds, a 14% increase in technical advisors posted throughout the Commonwealth, and an 11% increase in student and trainee exchanges.⁸⁷ Taken together, these gains represented a 4% overall rise in intra-Commonwealth financial and technical

⁸³ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 1, Commonwealth Circular Letter no. 45/68, 5 June, 1968; LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 1, Minutes of Meeting of Commonwealth Representatives held at Marlborough House at 3.00 p.m. on 20 June to Discuss Arrangements for Finance Ministers' Meeting, 1968.

⁸⁴ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 4, Commonwealth Finance Officials' Meeting: Notes for the Secretary-General for the Preliminary Meeting of Heads of Delegation – Monday 23rd Sept. 9.30 a.m., 1968.

⁸⁵ Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 116.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 4, Meeting of Commonwealth Finance Ministers and Senior Finance Officials, London, September, 1968: Minutes of Meetings and Memoranda: Minutes of the Third Plenary Meeting, Thursday 26 September, 1968 – 9.30 a.m.

assistance. Representatives from Botswana (one of the first members to receive technical assistance under the scheme) congratulated the Secretariat on making development aid such a high priority and lauded the outcomes of the Nairobi meeting and the technical assistance programme at large.⁸⁸ Canadian representatives continued to support the Secretariat programme and called for full support of the Nairobi recommendations.⁸⁹

This support continued beyond the 1968 Finance Ministers' Meeting and influenced the subsequent planning for the 1969 Prime Ministers' Meeting. In an informal meeting of Commonwealth Representatives on November 19, developing members asked that a draft Secretariat background paper on Commonwealth co-operation be revised to include more emphasis on economic aid and technical assistance. "It was in this direction that the developing members in particular would look to see proof of the value of the Commonwealth."⁹⁰ Arnold Smith hoped to follow up on the recommendations of the Nairobi meeting and the positive track record of the technical assistance programme to get approval of the prime ministers for the multilateral aid and technical assistance fund proposed in 1967.⁹¹ Pursuing that aim, Smith sought to coordinate with the British and Canadian Governments in the lead-up to the 1969 Prime Ministers' Meeting.

In a meeting with Sir Arthur Snelling, the Deputy Undersecretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Relations (of the newly amalgamated Foreign and Commonwealth Office or FCO), Smith advocated for the value of a multilateral approach and for at least token support

⁸⁸Ibid.; For details on Botswana projects including regulation of mining companies and legal aid in border dispute, see: Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 116.

⁸⁹ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 4, Meeting of Commonwealth Finance Ministers and Senior Finance Officials, London, September, 1968: Minutes of Meetings and Memoranda: Minutes of the Third Plenary Meeting, Thursday 26 September, 1968 – 9.30 a.m.

⁹⁰ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 7, The Commonwealth: Preparation of Background Paper for the Prime Ministers' Meeting: Notes on discussion with Commonwealth Representatives at 3.00 pm on Tuesday, 19 November 1968, at Marlborough House.

⁹¹ Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 117.

from the British. Snelling “feared that there might be a risk of some clash of views over this” at the meeting as “both in terms of political kudos and balance of payments” he thought bilateral aid to be a more beneficial system.⁹² While Snelling agreed to review the proposal with the ODM in light of Smith’s arguments, in private he noted that “we [the FCO] and the ODM regard it as empire-building on his [Smith’s] part and are opposed to his somewhat grandiose and expensive ideas.”⁹³ British officials again viewed Smith’s activities as personal aggrandisement rather than a genuine effort to provide services to member governments. As in other areas of Commonwealth management (like the membership question or Prime Ministers’ Meetings), British officials had difficulty considering the Secretariat to be a legitimate Commonwealth body.

In the interim, coordination between the Secretariat and the Canadian Government was initially more promising. While in Ottawa earlier in 1968, Smith had again spoken with Maurice Strong who offered a sum of 10 million dollars of the CIDA budget to jump-start the Commonwealth technical assistance fund. This funding was conditional on the approval of the newly elected Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau who promised Smith “sympathetic consideration to the idea.”⁹⁴ While Trudeau appeared to be committed to this plan, he also expressed fears that funding the Commonwealth and not a Francophone international organisation would exacerbate growing tensions between English and French Canada.⁹⁵ Smith argued that the Canadian Government should allocate funds equally between the Commonwealth and francophone international bodies so as to build support for the Canadian Federal Government in Quebec while also providing leadership within the Commonwealth. However, fears over Canadian domestic unity prevailed.

⁹² LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 7, Multilateral Aid: Note of discussion between Commonwealth Secretary-General and Sir A. Snelling.

⁹³ Ibid.; TNA: FCO 68/171, Minute from A.W. Snelling to Sir P. Gore-Booth, 1 November, 1968.

⁹⁴ Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 116-117.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 117.

While Trudeau had prepared a speech announcing the \$10 million pledge from CIDA, on the eve of the 1969 Prime Ministers' Meeting, he withdrew the Canadian offer.⁹⁶

The expansionist members continued to press for a full-scale programme of aid and technical assistance along the lines of the Secretariat's original proposal. However, without the decisive show of Canadian support, and with ongoing resistance from the restrictionist delegations of Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and India, the proposal met a stalemate during the Prime Ministers' Meeting. While follow up action to the Nairobi proposals was not ruled out, neither were any firm decisions taken.⁹⁷ The conference communique included statements in support of existing methods of bilateral aid as well as statements in support of a multilateral Commonwealth programme.⁹⁸ The communique reflected the general course of the meeting, the success of which the Secretariat regarded as "of a negative nature, since much of it can be described as success in avoiding what might have been a more acrimonious and explosive Meeting." The Secretariat post mortem noted that "in positive terms, there was limited, if any, success achieved in the discussion of the most political controversies...[and] in the non-political sphere, it could be said that some room was left for more success in respect to some of the schemes for Commonwealth cooperation which had been put to the Meeting..."⁹⁹

However, while the 1969 Prime Ministers' Meeting slowed the implementation of the technical assistance programme the gathering was nonetheless a further qualified success for the Secretariat. Smith had made a number of suggestions for ways to follow up on the Nairobi proposals and the prime ministers agreed to an extension of the technical assistance programme pending a comprehensive review later in 1969. While far short of the original CIDA proposal,

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ CSLA: 2001-101 (1), CPM Meeting (69), 25 February, 1969.

⁹⁸ "Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 1969 (London, 7-15 January): Final Communique."

⁹⁹ CSLA: 2001 – 101 (1), Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting: Post Mortem, 17 February, 1969.

the Canadian Government nonetheless pledged to contribute 40% of an initial technical assistance fund to a maximum of \$350,000 pending review of the programme.¹⁰⁰ The Secretariat's review of member speeches later listed separate statements of support for expanded technical assistance (including the establishment of a technical assistance fund) from nearly all developing members. Of the statements included in the review, 15 specifically noted support for technical and development assistance, which included lip service from the British Government, versus three (Australia, New Zealand, and India) specifically opposing the idea.¹⁰¹ Ultimately, the Commonwealth was in better shape and the Secretariat enjoyed a better reputation than it had at the last Prime Ministers' Meeting in 1966. The majority of the membership supported further advances in Commonwealth technical assistance and as expressed by the Canadian Government, looked forward to the review of the Nairobi Scheme later that year.¹⁰²

The 1969 Prime Ministers' Meeting again illustrated the degree to which meetings of Commonwealth finance ministers affected the advancement of the technical assistance programme. As with the previous Prime Ministers' Meeting in 1966, there was little advancement of the Secretariat proposal among member Heads of Government. The Secretariat proposal had been largely supported and developed in conjunction with member finance ministers in the intervening years, and was again deferred to the judgement of the finance

¹⁰⁰ CSLA: 2001 – 101 (1), Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting: Post Mortem, 17 February, 1969; Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 118-119; CSLA: 2001 – 117 (1), Establishment of a Multilateral Fund for the Commonwealth Programme for Technical Co-operation, 13 January, 1970.

¹⁰¹ CSLA: 2001 – 101 (1), Attitudes towards the Commonwealth as expressed at Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting or in public statements, 10 February, 1969.

¹⁰² CSLA: 2001 – 101 (1), Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting: Post Mortem, 17 February, 1969; CSLA: 2001-101 (1), CPM Meeting (69), 25 February, 1969.

ministers, as the review of the Nairobi scheme was scheduled in conjunction with the next Finance Ministers' Meeting in Barbados that September.¹⁰³

By 1969 there was no contestation over the Secretariat's role in planning Commonwealth meetings. The planning process was well-honed, and by August of that year the Secretariat had prepared detailed administrative arrangements for three consecutive meetings in Barbados, including the planning officials review meeting (September 22-23), a meeting of senior finance officials to finalise the agenda for the Finance Ministers' Meeting (September 23-24), and the Finance Ministers' Meeting itself (September 25-16).¹⁰⁴ The administrative and logistical details of the meeting illustrate an important feature of the Secretariat's management of economic meetings.¹⁰⁵ The comprehensiveness and independence of the Secretariat's arrangements for the three Barbados meetings show the extent to which economic meetings were firmly under the management of the Secretariat in 1969. No single piece of logistical coordination was in itself exceptional, but the management of each one had been contested in preceding years. After the 1969 Prime Ministers' Meeting, the Secretariat ostensibly had less need for an "evangelical stance" to its work, as the handover of administrative functions was effectively complete.¹⁰⁶

Recognising that the management of meetings alone would not ensure success, Smith continued to work to increase the chances of adoption for an expanded technical assistance programme

¹⁰³ CSLA: 2001 – 177 (2), Commonwealth Circular Letter no. 52/69, 16 July, 1969.

¹⁰⁴ CSLA: 2000 – 122 "Commonwealth Finance Ministers' Meeting, Barbados 1969, 12 Nov 1968 – 17 Sep 1969," Minutes of Meeting of Commonwealth Representatives held at Marlborough House on Thursday, 21 August, 1969, at 3 p.m. to discuss arrangements for Meetings of Commonwealth Finance Ministers and Finance Officials and for Review of Commonwealth Programme for Technical Co-operation to be held in Barbados in September, 1969.

¹⁰⁵ Each of these plans included detailed arrangements for timing, location, delegation directories, travel and baggage, opening formalities, available Secretariat staff, the agenda, conference and living accommodations, records keeping and document distribution, security, seating, communications, press arrangements, transportation, secretarial services, social programmes, and refreshments. For example see: CSLA: 2000 – 122, Meeting to Review the Commonwealth Programme for Technical Co-operation, Bridgetown, September 1969: Administrative Arrangements: Note by the Secretary, 30 July, 1969.

¹⁰⁶ CSLA: 2001 – 101 (1), Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting: Post Mortem, 17 February, 1969.

including the fund for technical assistance. In July 1969, he proposed that the prospective fund for technical assistance be established with an initial sum of £500,000, half the sum of the original Secretariat proposal.¹⁰⁷ Smith also sought further support from the Canadian Government. Writing to Ivan Head in the Canadian Prime Minister's Office in early September, Smith hoped the Canadian Government would support the technical assistance programme as the review meeting neared. Recognising the Canadian Government's earlier fears Smith argued that in addition to encouraging development and long-term international cooperation, providing "somewhat parallel support for Commonwealth and Francophone programmes could...make a great deal of sense, politically, for a country such as Canada"¹⁰⁸ As with the preparations for the 1969 Prime Ministers' Meeting (see Chapter Nine), the new Trudeau Government was less enthusiastic than the preceding Pearson Government and was in the midst of a comprehensive review of Canadian foreign policy.¹⁰⁹ Maurice Strong's \$10 million proposal was never revisited. However, while reduced, Smith still enjoyed support from the Canadian Government for the revised £500,000 proposal in addition to the staid support of the developing members.

The economic planners that met in Barbados that September were also impressed with the record of the technical assistance programme. Both in terms of the speed and the high quality of the projects undertaken, the review meeting lauded the Secretariat's efforts. In the 14 months since commencing operations, the programme's four-man headquarters group had completed no less than 30 separate missions to 13 countries, territories, and regional agencies. The review meeting strongly recommended that the programme be expanded by recruiting at least seven new staff members to cover a widening range and number of assistance requests. The meeting also advised

¹⁰⁷ CSLA: 2001 – 117 (1), Letter from Arnold Smith to Commonwealth Ministers of Education, 25 July, 1969.

¹⁰⁸ CSLA: 2001 – 117 (2), Letter from Arnold Smith to Ivan Head Esq., 8 September, 1969.

¹⁰⁹ Mary Halloran, John Hilliker, and Greg Donaghy, "The White Paper Impulse: Reviewing Foreign Policy under Trudeau and Clark," *International Journal* 70, no. 2 (June 2015), 311.

that the proposed technical assistance fund be established.¹¹⁰ These recommendations were passed on to the Finance Ministers' Meeting two days later. The majority of member finance ministers supported the Secretariat initiative and called for the technical assistance programme to be "expanded as fast as was feasible"¹¹¹ The developing members in particular called for the Secretary-General to urgently work on establishing a technical assistance fund at the starting figure of £1 million per the original Secretariat proposal in 1966.¹¹²

Despite the glowing review of the programme and the overwhelming support of the membership, British and other restrictionist representatives demurred. While the British delegation would not oppose the conference majority, they noted that accepting the principle of a technical assistance fund "would imply absolutely no commitment on Britain's part to contribute to such a fund."¹¹³ While oppositional at the conference, Indian representatives more bluntly refused several months later with a press release stating that the Indian Government would not be contributing to the fund.¹¹⁴ Ultimately, in September 1969 the establishment of a technical assistance fund was approved in principle by the finance ministers and advanced to a feasibility study.¹¹⁵ However, British officials in the FCO privately noted with satisfaction that the fund, to which Arnold Smith was "passionately attached," had been blocked.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰ CSLA: 2001 – 117 (1), Meeting to Review the Commonwealth Programme for Technical Co-operation: Report to Governments, 24 September, 1969.

¹¹¹ CSLA: 2000 – 122, Commonwealth Secretariat Press Release: Meeting of Commonwealth Finance Ministers, Bridgetown, September, 1969: Communique, 26 September, 1969.

¹¹² CSLA: 2001 – 117 (1), Meeting to Review the Commonwealth Programme for Technical Co-operation: Report to Governments, 24 September, 1969; Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 117.

¹¹³ CSLA: 2001 – 117 (1), Meeting to Review the Commonwealth Programme for Technical Co-operation: Report to Governments, 24 September, 1969.

¹¹⁴ CSLA: 2001 – 117 (2), Commonwealth T.A. Fund: Extract from "The Financial Express" dated 24 December, 1969.

¹¹⁵ Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 117-118.

¹¹⁶ TNA: FCO 68/171, Commonwealth Secretariat Senior Staff: Minute by B.G. Smallman, 6 November, 1969.

Officials in the FCO acknowledged that a shift in British policy over multilateral aid was possible in the coming years but worried over the potential costs, both in monetary terms and in terms of the expansion of the Secretariat.¹¹⁷ In the meantime, FCO staff agreed with officials in the ODM who refused to cooperate with the Secretariat during the first year of the technical assistance programme. Reporting to Arnold Smith in anticipation of Smith's follow up to the finance ministers' recommendations in January 1970, Gordon Goundrey, (Director of the Secretariat's Economic Development and Research Division) complained of ODM obstructionism.¹¹⁸ Goundrey recounted his division's "very unhappy" experience with the ODM which frequently underpaid (and thus disincentivised) technical staff eligible for Commonwealth deployment and refused to share information with the Secretariat.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, ODM officials felt the need to reconsider and reassess the recommendations of the headquarters group before accepting them. Goundrey noted that such "a re-examination of the technical assistance request to see if it is needed or would be of value calls into question the whole philosophy of the Nairobi Scheme and the competence of the Headquarters Group."¹²⁰

In the case of the ODM, the restrictionism of the British Government was escalated to full efforts to undermine the success of the technical assistance programme. Those efforts were particularly stark in contrast to the work of the developing members. While the developing members stood to gain the most from the technical assistance fund, a number had already expressed their willingness to contribute to that fund and followed up with cash offers to make clear that self-

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ CSLA: 2001 – 117 (1), Establishment of a Multilateral Fund for the Commonwealth Programme for Technical Co-operation, 13 January, 1970.

¹¹⁹ CSLA: 2001 – 117 (1), Letter from Gordon Goundrey to Arnold Smith, 10 January, 1970.

¹²⁰ Ibid,

help was an important element of the Commonwealth programme.¹²¹ As Smith put it in July 1969, the philosophy of the multilateralism “removes the usual distinction between donor and recipient countries, and replaces this by a more profound concept of mutual assistance” meaning that “however small their size, or however limited their resources, all Commonwealth countries are potential donors in this programme, and have a real contribution which they could make which would be of benefit to other members of the Commonwealth and thus to the cohesion of the association itself.”¹²²

The Commonwealth Fund for Technical Assistance was eventually approved by the finance ministers at their meeting in Cyprus in 1970 and was implemented following the Singapore Heads of Government Meeting in 1971.¹²³ In the interim, many features of previous debates persisted. Smith again unsuccessfully appealed to the Canadian Government for a show of leadership that might “galvanise the whole thing into new and constructive directions, to which lip service has been paid...but this far little else.”¹²⁴ There were further delaying tactics by the richer, restrictionist members of the organisation which slowed the implementation of the programme through multiple stages of approval and feasibility studies.¹²⁵ The British Government continued to obstruct the expansion of the Secretariat in a general sense, with specific departments like the ODM making more concerted efforts. Finally, the newer members continued to support the Secretariat programme. Support from the expansionist members was made in the context of the wider UN “Decade of Development” and was a central priority for

¹²¹ CSLA: 2001 – 117 (2), Commonwealth Co-operation in Development: Background to the Nairobi Meeting: Part D: Areas for further Commonwealth Co-operation, 7 May, 1969; CSLA: 2001 – 117 (1), Letter from P.M. Landell-Mills to Arnold Smith, 16 January, 1970.

¹²² CSLA: 2001 – 117 (1), Letter from Arnold Smith to Commonwealth Ministers of Education, 25 July, 1969.

¹²³ Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 117-118.

¹²⁴ CSLA: 2001 – 117 (2), Letter from Arnold Smith to George Kidd, Esq., 18 December, 1968.

¹²⁵ Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 118.

those members.¹²⁶ However, as the genesis of the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Assistance illustrates, even with the appreciable changes in the economic workings of the Commonwealth, newer members had the most success advancing their priorities by working with the Secretariat through the forum of the Finance Ministers' Meetings.

The Secretariat taking on the management of the Finance Ministers' Meetings was an important step to democratising the economic functions of the Commonwealth and building support for the technical assistance programme. Meetings of finance ministers were a useful forum for newer members to advance proposals in conjunction with the Secretariat, particularly as those proposals generally received more attention than at the larger Prime Ministers' Meetings. Smith later recalled that the implementation of the technical assistance programme shifted the nature of ministerial meetings to be more action oriented. In his estimation, the development of the technical assistance programme in conjunction with the finance ministers set an example to other ministerial meetings (including health, law, education, and trade). Thereafter, other ministerial meetings began to receive more numerous requests and proposals from Commonwealth members for sector-specific actions and initiatives.¹²⁷

The increased emphasis on the Finance Ministers' Meeting was indicative of a certain level of standardization in the new structure of the Commonwealth. New ministerial meetings had been added and the CECC had been dispersed into specialised meetings of finance, trade, and education ministers. By 1969 the economic workings of the Commonwealth more closely aligned with other areas of Commonwealth operations and all meetings were managed by the Secretariat under a standard format (see figure three). This standardisation reflected the growing

¹²⁶ For example see: "Meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, 1969 (London, 7-15 January): Final Communique."; *Commonwealth Heads' of Government Meeting, Singapore 14 – 22 January 1971. Final Communique* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1971).

¹²⁷ Smith, *Stitches in Time*, 112.

capacity of the Secretariat (enabling for instance, the consecutive detailed plans for the three economic meetings in Barbados in 1969) as well as the Secretariat's greater transparency. The clear procedures for Commonwealth meetings starkly contrasted the murky ad-hocery under the British Government in the early 1960s.

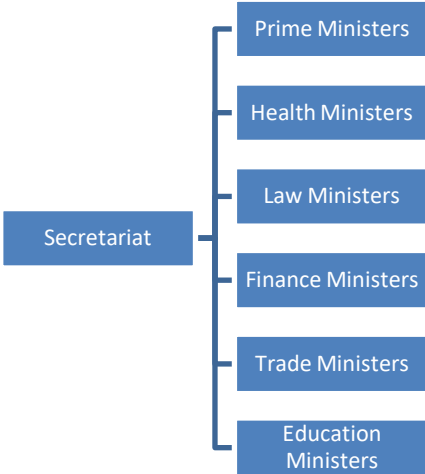


Figure Three: Management of Commonwealth meetings in 1970.

In the long-term, the growth and expansion of ministerial level meetings under the Secretariat had mixed results. Apart from greater transparency and effectiveness in meeting logistics, the genesis of the technical assistance programme demonstrated that ministerial meetings could be an effective way for members to advance projects of interest. Ministerial meetings were in many ways a preferable forum as they convened more frequently, had the authority to approve the recommendations of meetings of lesser officials, could make recommendations to the prime ministers, were not as inhibited by political concerns as the prime ministers, and were comprised of field-specific specialists. These advantages were used particularly by the newer, developing members to make sustained efforts towards building the Commonwealth technical assistance programme.

However, despite the opportunities inherent in such ministerial meetings, their efficiency also decreased with greater standardization. Restrictionist members were able to effectively delay the implementation of the technical assistance programme for example, using the process of feasibility studies and recommendations which were inherent to the structure of Commonwealth meetings. In this sense, the ministerial meetings came to replicate the political nature of the Prime Ministers' Meetings. Delegations later in the 1960s were more prone to toe the line of their home governments than to engage as specialists. The standardised format and structure of Commonwealth meetings was met with standardised delegations armed with standardised policies. By 1970 the structure of the Commonwealth and the consultations at its core more closely resembled an international organisation like the United Nations than the imperial club of yore.

Epilogue: Singapore 1971

By 1970 the Commonwealth no longer resembled the imperial club of 1964.¹ Secretariat staff noted that the most recent 1969 Prime Ministers' Meeting made Commonwealth gatherings "resemble sessions of the U.N. General Assembly" rather than the old-style Commonwealth gatherings.² In 1970, the Prime Ministers' Meetings were also redubbed Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGM) to better reflect the diverse systems of government represented by the membership.³ The next CHOGM took place in Singapore in January 1971.

The organisational changes begun by African membership and precipitated by the formation of the Commonwealth Secretariat had more or less stabilised by the time the Heads of Government convened in Singapore. The Singapore meeting emphasized Commonwealth diversity and produced a new Declaration of Commonwealth Principles. The 1971 Singapore Declaration conformed to the Commonwealth *modus operandi* identified by John Holmes in 1962 (see Chapter One), namely, that "the Commonwealth has always developed by adjusting to circumstances and concocting its theory retroactively."⁴ In keeping with this pattern, the assembled leaders in 1971 issued a declaration adjusting Commonwealth theory in response to the changes of the late 1960s, just as the assembled prime ministers in 1951 issued a declaration of shared values in response to the changes of the late 1940s.

The 1971 Singapore Declaration set the basis for subsequent codification of Commonwealth values, which were elaborated in the 1991 Harare Declaration and the 2013 Commonwealth

¹ Watts, *Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence*, 111-112.

² CSLA: 2014 – 076 "Heads of Government Meeting: Singapore, 1971: Preliminary Arrangements, 22 Jul 1970 – 19 Aug 1977," Record of Discussion at a Working Dinner Given by Sir Denis Greenbill on 20 July, 1970.

³ LAC: MG 31 E 47, Volume 4, File 8, Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting: Meeting with High Commissioners on 12 December: Points for Discussion, 11 December, 1968.

⁴ Holmes, "The Impact on the Commonwealth of the Emergence of Africa," 291.

Charter.⁵ Philip Murphy describes this as “the slow and tentative process of defining a set of shared values,” often in the face of blatant contradictions in member states’ actions and domestic policies. Murphy notes that the values of the contemporary Commonwealth are so vague as to mean nothing and member states have come to ignore them accordingly.⁶ The codification and apparent ossification of Commonwealth values in more recent years has been covered extensively by scholars looking at the contemporary organisation. However, these problems of values predate the contemporary Commonwealth and are linked to the creation of the Commonwealth Secretariat in 1965. The Singapore Declaration facilitates tracing the changes in the Commonwealth over the decade of the 1960s. The 14 clauses of the Declaration exhibit the adaptation of older Commonwealth values to the new organisational realities, the influence of the newer expansionist members, and the novel influence of Smith and the Secretariat. The Singapore Declaration reflected the changes of the 1960s and established the ideational challenges of the modern Commonwealth identified by Murphy.

Many of the clauses of the Singapore Declaration were familiar pieces of Commonwealth rhetoric. The first clause echoed the Statute of Westminster and underscored member sovereignty and that the Commonwealth was a voluntary association of states cooperating on matters of common interest. The fourth clause recognised that the shared principles of the Commonwealth gave the organisation a unique ability to influence international society for the betterment of all.⁷

⁵ See: “Commonwealth Declarations,” About Us, The Commonwealth, last modified 2020, <https://thecommonwealth.org/about-us/commonwealth-declarations>.

⁶ Murphy, *The Empire’s New Clothes*, 140.

⁷ “Declaration of Commonwealth Principles,” The Commonwealth, <https://thecommonwealth.org/declaration-commonwealth-principles>.

However, the Singapore Declaration also bore the indelible imprint of the newer members. For instance, the fifth clause echoed earlier declarations about the Commonwealth's commitment to peace, security, and prosperity, but noted that supporting the United Nations was a key step to maintaining peace, and that the Commonwealth membership would continue to support the UN as a force for peace in the world.⁸ The second clause was a familiar celebration of Commonwealth diversity including geography, religion, tradition, cultures, and races. However, by 1971 the clause on Commonwealth diversity also included a diversity of languages and institutions whereas the past emphasis on shared working language, institutions, and administrative practices was gone.⁹

The issue of race also bore the marks of new members' perspectives and activism. For example, while the 1964 communique indicated race was one of the most significant problems in world affairs, the 1971 Declaration was much more explicit. The seventh clause called racial prejudice a "dangerous sickness threatening the healthy development of the human race" and racial discrimination an "unmitigated evil." The eighth clause espoused the Commonwealth's continued opposition to colonial domination and racial oppression. The Commonwealth would oppose the "evil policy" of racial discrimination both at home and abroad and deny any assistance that might help countries with discriminatory laws continue such policies.¹⁰ The vagueness of this pledge left such "assistance" to be defined by members' own judgement. In practice the pledge criticised the British Government for the continued sale of arms to apartheid South Africa and the caveat allowed the British to justify those continued sales. However, the explicit wording of the clauses dealing with racial discrimination and colonialism was the

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

consensus of the postcolonial majority, rather than the Commonwealth status quo of the 1950s. And so, these clauses reflect not only the evolution of the Commonwealth, but also the deep divides that existed within the organisation as it entered the 1970s.

The sweeping vision of newer members and the obstructive caveats of the old Anglo-core were also clear in clauses relating to economics. The ninth and tenth clauses styled the disparity of wealth between rich and poor nations as “too great to be tolerated” and pledged the Commonwealth to cooperate towards overcoming poverty, ignorance and disease, and to work towards universally better, more equal standards of living. However, a limiting caveat was included in the ninth clause that called for that cooperation to pursue the “progressive removal” of economic inequalities, thereby allowing the wealthier members to interpret the imperative of economic development as they wished. A similar limit in the tenth clause juxtaposed the freest possible trade with the special circumstances of developing nations, and further juxtaposed public and private measures toward sustainable economic development.¹¹

The Singapore Declaration also echoed a number of perspectives advanced by Arnold Smith in his bid to create an accessible vision for the future of the Commonwealth. For instance, the third clause emphasised that Commonwealth membership was compatible with other international groups and alliances including the non-aligned movement. The eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth clauses all emphasised that the Commonwealth was an exemplary multilateral association and was one of the most fruitful means of facilitating international cooperation, and making real contributions to peace, freedom, and “the enrichment of life for all.”¹² These ideas were core

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

tenets of Smith's "usual gospel" and his concept of the Commonwealth as an international instrument among many (see Chapter Four).

The Commonwealth values espoused in earlier declarations were still evident in the Singapore Declaration but were modified to the shape of the new Commonwealth. More notable in the Singapore Declaration were the strong statements on race and economics. These statements were advanced by developing members in the Global South and were much more prominent than in any previous declaration. Such statements came in conjunction with statements outlining the vision of the Commonwealth put forward by Smith and the Secretariat. Overall, the concept of the Commonwealth as an international organisation working on behalf of its members and cooperating with other international bodies more heavily shaped the Singapore Declaration than any previous Commonwealth statements.

Yet the Singapore Declaration also featured far more rhetorical to and fro and limiting caveats than previous declarations by Commonwealth leaders. Most Commonwealth gatherings had hitherto been able to achieve a good degree of consensus on all but a few issues. In contrast, the text of the Singapore Declaration included far more caveats that limited the idea that the Commonwealth was a major IO with an activist and executive Secretariat. The simultaneously activist and conservative rhetoric built into the clauses of the Singapore Declaration demonstrated the inherent tension between the restrictionist and expansionist visions for the organisation, and the reality that the Commonwealth was fundamentally different than before 1965. By 1970, the Commonwealth was "a microcosm of the UN, though without superpowers."¹³ There were more members than ever before and the number was expected to keep growing. The majority of members were former colonies in the Global South, with an

¹³ Doxey, *The Commonwealth Secretariat*, 10.

increasing number of small states in their ranks. Commonwealth meetings were conducted more along the lines of the UN General Assembly. Meetings were convened by the Secretariat and marked by the exchange of prepared statements rather than informal conversation. The meetings also saw increasing use of the bloc approaches successfully used by Third World members in the UN. The Commonwealth was quickly developing a family of affiliated professional organisations not unlike the UN, and there was arguably more work or practical value being carried out at this sub-state multilateral level than between member governments themselves. Ministerial meetings had also been standardised and member policies were increasingly homogenous across different Commonwealth fora.

The crux of these changes was that the Commonwealth was no longer as Anglo-centric as before and was more firmly in the control of a Secretariat accountable to the wider membership, rather than to Whitehall. In order to maintain any sort of advantage or special relationship with the Commonwealth, UK policy was increasingly geared toward preventing the Commonwealth from exerting the same pressure that the UN had exerted on the UK over the past decade, rather than maintaining control of the Commonwealth itself. The values and structures of the organisation had been realigned to reflect the Commonwealth as an international organisation, rather than the club of old. Problems of racial politics, particularly in relation to Rhodesia and South Africa, continued to dominate Commonwealth activities for the next twenty years. But the to and fro of the Singapore Declaration set the stage for debates over the values, priorities, and direction of the modern Commonwealth that have carried forward to today.

Conclusion

From the Commonwealth's earliest meetings in the late 19th century, publicly stated values served both as aspirational ideals and measures to define and govern the organisation. The transformation of the Commonwealth from an imperial club to an international organisation involved reinterpreting those values to better suit the vision of the membership as to what the organisation was, and what it should be. More so than the 1951 Leaders' Declaration or the 1949 London Declaration, the Singapore Declaration reflected the new reality of a Commonwealth dominated by the concerns of the newer, developing members, but still marked by the reluctance of the older members.

As a reflection of the Commonwealth's values and structures, the Singapore Declaration was recognisably modern. The to and fro language of the Declaration reflected the Commonwealth's unprecedented size and diversity. It underscored that consensus among members was not required, and was no longer assumed (the former was a longstanding idea, but the latter was novel) It also employed loftier language and was more formally crafted than previous statements and echoed the functional similarities between the Commonwealth and the UN. The Singapore Declaration marked the triumph of the expansionist vision of the Commonwealth as an IO over the restrictionist vision of the Commonwealth as a club.

Faced with this unfamiliar milieu, the restrictionist governments progressively disengaged from the Commonwealth after 1971. They remained members but increasingly pursued their national goals through other associations and diplomatic channels. If nothing else, the restrictionists could rest in the knowledge that they were right. The expansion of Commonwealth membership and the formation of the Secretariat had irreversibly changed the organisation and the old club-like

atmosphere was gone. The restrictionist members now had to worry about Commonwealth interventionism and scrutiny in nearly all areas of international and domestic policy, including international politics, conflicts, immigration, colonial policy, and economic negotiations. For the British Government, the Commonwealth ceased to be the platform for British influence it once was. Fears in the CRO that their department would be made-redundant were entirely borne out, as with concerns in the CO and CEC about reassignment and general upheaval in the workplace. The principle of Commonwealth consensus and informal conversation was also gone as the Commonwealth became a large and somewhat unwieldy international body. The Commonwealth as an IO could be a frustrating place and by 1971 the organisation added more evidence to Cyril Northcote Parkinson's only semi-humorous "coefficient of inefficiency" which argued that any decision making body becomes chronically inefficient once its exceeds 20 or so members.¹

The expansionists' persistent efforts had supported the transition of the Commonwealth to an IO, and it was the expansionist members who benefitted most from the transition. The creation of the Secretariat and the Secretariat takeover of Commonwealth administration and services from the British Government had effectively decolonised the Commonwealth itself.² By 1971 the newer members in particular could be less apprehensive about British neocolonial designs hidden in the operations of the Commonwealth. Despite the inefficiencies inherent to larger organisations, Commonwealth meetings were increasingly standardised and transparent. Ministerial meetings in turn generated support for practical initiatives like the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation, and other programmes with tangible benefits for the members. While the Commonwealth was perhaps less efficient as an IO than as a club, as a large IO it could

¹ C. Northcote Parkinson, *Parkinson's Law and other Studies in Administration* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1957), 37.

² Lloyd, *Diplomacy with a Difference*, 228.

accomplish more in terms of multilateral projects. After the formation of the Secretariat, the newer members saw a genuine growth in programmes beneficial to them as the new majority.

Such pros and cons according to the expansionist and restrictionist perspectives are often lost in Commonwealth historiography. Recent trends of the New Imperial History often consider the Commonwealth as a derivative history of other fields and topics such as the British Empire, Rhodesia, decolonisation, etcetera, and presents a linear narrative of organisational decline. Apart from David McIntyre's extensive bibliography (See Introduction) very few studies approach the history of the Commonwealth with a specific focus on the organisation itself, or with an eye to organisational evolution.. This thesis contributes to that modest literature by focusing on the organisational history of the Commonwealth. This thesis agrees that the Commonwealth's transition from an imperial club to an IO hinged on the creation of the Commonwealth Secretariat in 1965. More importantly, by focusing on how that transition took place, this project supports an alternative focus and periodization of Commonwealth history centred on 1965, rather than 1949 or 1931. The organisational changes brought about by the creation of the Secretariat had greater implications for creating the so-called "modern" Commonwealth than did the London Declaration or Statute of Westminster.

By focusing on the changes brought about by the formation of the Secretariat, this project also supports the consideration of a novel set of actors in Commonwealth history. The expansionist and restrictionist groups, and the mediating Secretariat are actors that have been noted by other authors but have not been employed as an overarching framework for understanding organisational evolution. These groups have particular relevance to the administrative history of the Commonwealth as they were the chief actors in determining *how* the evolution of the Commonwealth actually took place. This project makes a unique contribution to the field of

Commonwealth history by focusing on that evolutionary process and also opens up lines of inquiry for further study into Commonwealth engagement in the wider international context of the 1960s. As Akira Iriye argues about the 1950s, international organisations were actors in the drama of the Cold war, and often played roles antithetical to the main protagonists.³ By focusing on how the Commonwealth Secretariat operated as an actor in relation to the Rhodesian crisis and Commonwealth cooperation, this study foregrounds future research on the Secretariat's role in the Cold War.

Through this thesis I argue that the evolution of the Commonwealth occurred primarily through Commonwealth meetings, and more importantly, through the management and planning of such meetings. The management of Commonwealth meetings was a key field of struggle between differing visions for the future of the organisation. Tensions between the expansionists and restrictionists and the Secretariat trying to bridge those perspectives were not only played out during Commonwealth meetings themselves, but also in the preparation and administration of those gatherings. The Secretariat's capacity to do so was bolstered by diplomatic back-channels, particularly in the Canadian Government under Pearson. The eventual waning of CRO opposition also facilitated the success of Secretariat efforts to take on the management of Commonwealth meetings.

The topics discussed at Commonwealth meetings and the decisions of Commonwealth leaders through the 1960s are well documented. However, this study asserts that the planning of the meetings themselves was just as important in deciding the future of the organisation. Not only did the planning process ensure that the wider meetings of Commonwealth leaders took place at all, but the ongoing negotiations between the Secretariat and the British Government and

³ Iriye, *Global Community*, 65.

between the wider expansionist and restrictionist groups shaped the functions of the Commonwealth as it transitioned into an IO. Reading between the lines of major Commonwealth developments in the 1960s uncovers a rich administrative history that not only contributes to our understanding of the Commonwealth's organisational evolution, but also to the wider history of international relations and organisations in the twentieth-century.

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Appendix: Timeline of Postwar Commonwealth Membership (to 1970)

- 1947
 - August - India, Pakistan
- 1948
 - February- Ceylon (Sri Lanka)
- 1957
 - March - Ghana
 - August - Malaysia
- 1960
 - October - Nigeria
- 1961
 - March - Cyprus
 - April - Sierra Leone
 - October - South Africa withdraws
 - December - Tanzania
- 1962
 - August - Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica
 - October - Uganda
- 1963
 - December - Kenya
- 1964
 - July - Malawi
 - September - Malta
 - October - Zambia
- 1965
 - February - The Gambia
 - October - Singapore
- 1966
 - May - Guyana
 - September - Botswana (Bechuanaland)
 - October - Lesotho (Basutoland)
 - November - Barbados
- 1968
 - March - Mauritius
 - September - Swaziland (Eswatini)
 - November - Nauru
- 1970
 - June - Tonga
 - August - Samoa
 - October - Fiji