



University of London
INSTITUTE OF COMMONWEALTH STUDIES

VOICE FILE NAME: CRTA Witness seminar, March 2014

Key:

HC = Hugh Craft
SO = Sue Onslow
TW = Terry Walls
MH = Malcolm Hazell
DB = Denis Blight
JS = Jon Sheppard
CM = Colin Milner
SN = Satendra Nandan
JE = John Eyres
KJ = Kanti Jinna
JD = Jumoka Debayo
MaH = Maureen Hickman
PW = Pera Wells
MW = Michael Wilson

HC: Welcome, everyone. This is rather a diverse group of people we have invited by invitation, and of course this seminar is open to anyone that wants to be here, so members of the general public are very welcome. A lot of people here have had direct experience of the Commonwealth Secretariat, or the Commonwealth in its various forms in government or business or non-governmental organisations, and you are all equally welcome. For others among you who have lived and worked in Commonwealth countries, some have held district offices in Africa and various places, and also nationals of Sri Lanka and Fiji. Others have had an academic interest.

Sue will explain the strategic and direct objective of this seminar and her project at the moment, but please can I encourage you to participate if you wish. I guess you will have to speak clearly so we can all be recorded adequately, and as much as possible stick to the strategic objectives of the project. This has been running for some time now and Sue says she has done over 30 interviews. This is the second witness seminar: there was one in London last June on the Commonwealth Secretariat. I have gone into her website in the Institute of Commonwealth studies and read some of the interviews, which are fascinating. I am trembling a little bit when you interview me towards the middle of the week to wonder if I can recall all of those intricate forensic details that you are looking for; but it is a wonderful project and we wish you well with it. It is our great pleasure to welcome you here to Canberra today, so thank you for coming. Dr Sue Onslow. *[clapping]*

SO: Thank you very much, and my sincere thanks to Hugh for setting up this excellent meeting. I am delighted to be here in Australia and running this seminar, in addition to the one-on-one interviews I will be doing during the remainder of my time here. I would also like to thank the Round Table, and particularly Pera Wells and Steve Ethridge whom, I know, have been particularly instrumental in gathering you together.

This witness seminar forms in essence a group interview. It's a group discussion, and forms an integral part of our overall oral history of the modern Commonwealth project which we are running at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies. This was designed expressly to interview 60 top people across the Commonwealth on the Commonwealth as a diplomatic actor since 1965. This means the interview programme runs from the creation of the Secretariat in 1965, up to and beyond the Perth CHOGM of 2011, and I have also included questions on last November's CHOGM in Sri Lanka. The interviews I am doing here in Australia include Malcolm Fraser, John Howard, Bob Hawke and Michael Kirby in Sydney on Friday. I'm then flying down New Zealand where I will be talking to people from [the] Secretariat in its very early days: Gerald Hensley and hopefully David McDowell. I will also be interviewing former SG Sir Don McKinnon for the second time, and former leading civil servant in the New Zealand Foreign Ministry, Simon Murdoch. Then I go up to Fiji where I will be interviewing those who have been on the receiving end of Commonwealth strictures: Sitiveni Rabuka, together with members of the Fijian diplomatic corps, to try to evaluate the significance of the Commonwealth in Fiji's troubled history since 1987 and return to democracy. It is all very well interviewing 'within' the Commonwealth, but actually to get the other side's viewpoint of the place and contribution of the Commonwealth in international diplomacy has been very illuminating: for instance, I've also done extensive interviews in South Africa, to evaluate perceptions within the National Party and the ANC of the contribution of the Commonwealth on the ending of apartheid and transition to black majority rule.

So to summarize: the overall purpose of the project is to capture the range and means of Commonwealth diplomacy since 1965, and to provide insights into the association's relative effectiveness. In essence, we are creating a library of knowledge, as research facilitation into this unique 'soft power' association. These interviews are fully searchable and on a designated website with supporting documents so that researchers, journalists, politicians, policy makers can go back and consult the record and use this as an additional tool for understanding the archives themselves. (It must be said that the archives at the Secretariat are much stronger on political affairs, than as records of discussions and ComSec work on economics and development.)

Thank you very much, Hugh. Please, I'm going to ask you to talk first. When it comes to the wider discussion, ladies and gentleman, please I could ask you to identify yourselves first? This is necessary to create a comprehensible and comprehensive transcript. Should you forget, I will remind you. I am also aware that there is a great deal of knowledge in this room on the Commonwealth and the Secretariat. Please excuse me if I am obliged to cut you relatively short, so as to allow other people time to contribute. I do have to be relatively strict on this, so I apologise at the start. So, Hugh, please do begin.

HC: Thank you so much. I think I have got 15 minutes to introduce my discussion followed by John Eyres, who is going to speak about economics and development; and Jon Sheppard who is going to speak about political developments. So welcome.

My contribution today is really relating to the nature of the Secretariat as an international institution and how that has evolved and changed over the years. What I am going to say is very much what I have focused on in my speech to the annual Commonwealth dinner just two weeks ago, and to elaborate on that slightly. The subject then was 'Is the Commonwealth in Crisis?' I am not going to tackle that question today but some of what I am saying will probably relate to the difficulties that I perceive in the way the Secretariat is operating today. You will be able to draw your own conclusions as well as me making a few suggestions.

I began about talking about the nature of the Commonwealth as an international institution and it's important to understand that for reasons that I hope you will see clear and what I am going to do is reflect on how that institution has been evolving over the years and its implication at present.

SO: Hugh, I wonder if you could keep your initial remarks primarily historical? That would be excellent, although of course your reflections on the current Commonwealth are very valuable and necessary.

HC: The Secretariat kicked off the modern Commonwealth in 1965. When you think about institutions, you might then ask, 'where was the Commonwealth in 1947 when the United Nations was created?' Most will still automatically think of the United Nations in one form or another when we think about international organisations - the predominant UN building in New York and in Geneva - and we also read in the press about the way the Australian government supports international organisations. For example, the \$370million budget they have set aside for the G-20 during 2014. There are thousands of international organisations, most of which like the Commonwealth have evolved over the post-WWII years. Some are large, some are small, some are regional, some are like the EEC or the Pacific Islands Forum, some non-governmental like Greenpeace or World Vision; and others have a specific purpose, like NATO. The interesting thing about the Secretariat, as Anthony Lowe has said, is that it seems to be a young organisation when in fact it [the Commonwealth] is over 100 years old. The reason that I am putting this emphasis here is that we are dealing with an organisation which is evolving and which is changing, and that is reflected in the way its history has played itself out. One categorisation I have found easy is one that is made by academics and others between 'hard' and 'soft' organisations. You have organisations like the UN and its agencies, which are legally based which are treaty driven, which you sign up to and will be voted by a majority. The Commonwealth, right from its inception, has been consensual; it has been voluntary, there has been no charter, there has been no treaty, there has been no signing up to [it]. That makes for a very different characterisation of the Commonwealth as an institution and [the] other institutions [which] have evolved from that. I believe the Commonwealth has had some role in impacting on the way other organisations have developed in this sub-form. So, if you go from the United Nations at one extreme to the Non-Aligned Movement at the other, which has no organisational structure [*the NAM does have a degree of intergovernmental institutional structure*], somewhere in between you find the Commonwealth, along with organisations like APEC, the G-20 and further along the Pacific Islands Forum. The thing is that the Commonwealth is by nature different to other organisations, and its history is reflected how that has changed. Now I believe it is changing and it has changed since 1965. It is assuming certain roles to give it a different character and becoming more and more like other legal, obligatory based bodies. For example, in the past year we have been given a Charter. Now many regard that as being a positive development and it probably is. However, the Charter constitutes a formal statement of ideals and aspirations that haven't necessarily been an essential part of joining the Commonwealth, or being part of the Commonwealth framework in the past.

[As another example] CMAG has been set up [in 1995] and John Sheppard will no doubt be saying more about this. CMAG was set up as a sort of watch dog so it is watching over the political development, the good governance, the democratic progress of its individual countries. In some countries in the Commonwealth, in particular in Africa, they regard it as having assumed regrettably a security type role which is not akin to the original Commonwealth that they joined. Then, thirdly, you have a sort of bureaucratic management structure that has been absent in the past and no doubt has been important in terms of budgetary controls and transparency. No one is doubting that but it has meant that the Commonwealth is controlled by a small committee in London which wasn't the case when I was working for the Commonwealth; for example, they have a very tight role on budget, they are very aware they are cash strapped so the so-called ABC countries, [Australia, Britain and Canada], are very conscious of extracting some sort of economic and

financial gains of the Secretariat. So the management committee is very much in control of how the agenda is shaped. Now all of this is no doubt a good thing, but the point I am making is, the Commonwealth since 1965 has undergone changes which have not always been an essential part of its character. Now we talk about the Commonwealth being unique. Almost every document you read about the Commonwealth either in 1965 or in 2014 is that we should be valuing its unique character. Now what is that unique character? As I said earlier, Anthony Lowe writing in 1988 - Anthony, who is the sole convenor of this Round Table, is not well at the moment and I hope Sue is going to get the chance to see him at least in a sort of courtesy call - said "When you are talking about the Commonwealth, you are talking about the institution that is still somewhere near the beginning of its existence but is arguably about 100 years old". What this says is that long before 1965 or World War II, the Commonwealth was evolving in important ways and this is what makes the Commonwealth unique because it brings together not just history and modern history at that, but memory, kinship, mythology and legend; it brings all these things to bear on the way the organisation has been formed and the way it is intended to be run. All of this contributes to its strengths and weaknesses. This is, in my view, where the Commonwealth is under its most pernicious threat. Although we are not talking about that today, the evolution of the Commonwealth has not always been in its favour. The new management, I think, is having difficulty coming to terms with the difference that's being imposed on them: by almost nearly all liberal management techniques in a sense, and also what individual governments think about how the Commonwealth should perform.

Now the important thing is to note that not all Commonwealth governments are happy about the way the Commonwealth is now being organised because they think back to 1965 and they don't necessarily concur, even though they might do so at heads of government meetings, with these new sort of markers which are meant to be sort of performance indicators. So you find that management committees in London and at the recent CHOGM in Colombo that some of the developing Third World countries in the Commonwealth are almost threatening walk out because of the dominance of the ABC countries their insistence on the way the Secretariat and its business is performed. That's basically what I wanted to say. The features of this modern Commonwealth is different to what was in 1965: now it is less voluntary, less consensual and more running according to charters and to expectations under management models and to operation of the diplomacy, as is practiced in the Western countries.

One final thing and I know not everyone will agree with this: when I was in the Secretariat in the 1980s, the responsibility for handling the NGO/ civil society Commonwealth was always a matter of dispute and debate and it used to be therefore passed around. Once it was under the education area, another time it was with CFTC, another time it landed on my lap as Director of the International Affairs Division and we dealt with the NGO community. That was the way the Secretary General wanted it because this was an inter-governmental organisation, and there was not a government that actually embraced the civil society movement. Now that has changed - for better or the worse, that's a matter of debate. I've got a feeling that one of the problems associated with the operation of the modern Commonwealth is what I call the 'NGO take over', and the NGO agenda has assumed an importance within the Commonwealth that wasn't intended from the start. Why that has happened, I don't know, but with the passage of time the importance of the civil society sector [has risen]. It didn't happen in my day and I would be surprised if it would have happened under Sonny Ramphal if he was Secretary General today. The more you diffuse the operation of the Commonwealth, the more you end up with long communiques, or declarations (the final communique at the last heads of government meeting was about 11,000 words), the more confused the Secretariat is going to become about what its proper mandate is and how it should be operated. We are not talking about that today, we are talking about the history, but it does reflect the change from 1965. Thank you, that's all I have to day.

- SO: Thank you, Hugh. Please could I ask you just to elaborate on what impact you think the Commonwealth had on other institutions during your time at the Secretariat? You seem to be pointing to a cross-fertilisation of international institutions.
- HC: Well, I think the impact in my time and which has been growing since as well, has been on two things: one is in the practice of summitry. I am a very strong believer that the Commonwealth practice of summitry has been a very positive influence in the 40 or 50 years of its existence. You have going into being, for example in the beginning, the South Pacific Forum and the Caribbean Community and they are all based on the Commonwealth model, voluntary, no signing up, consensual, leaders of heads of government, and limited number of officials. When I came back from London one of the first jobs I had in Foreign Affairs was to run the very first APEC meetings which were initially with Bob Hawke and Gareth Evans; I was asked to head up the Secretariat and we were thinking about the format of the meeting. I put forward the Commonwealth model which had the leaders sitting around the table with two officials. Now that seems automatic these days, everyone believes in it but, back in those days, it was fairly revolutionary. All of the officials wanted to be in on it and so you find that summitry as the Commonwealth office has always practised it and was refined by Pierre Trudeau and Sonny Ramphal with a retreat. So, preferably with a retreat, but that informal heads of government talking to one another; set speeches are ruled out of order. In terms of contribution; you might have someone leading the discussion but free and easy discussions across the table and no lesser interference of officials and I think that is the major contribution of the Commonwealth to international politics.
- SO: Why didn't the Commonwealth keep going with the Commonwealth regional heads of government meetings which were initiated by Malcolm Fraser in the late 70s. The first CHOGRM was held in Sydney in 1979 but it seems that without the input of a medium power within the Commonwealth, that withered and died; and I find that odd. Are you suggesting the South Pacific Forum was a substitute for Pacific regional heads of government meeting?
- HC: No, it wasn't you know. Malcolm Fraser and I went to three of those CHOGRM meetings. I was conference secretary at three of them and I was in Suva when the first one happened and in Sydney when they had the big explosion, remember that in the hotel?
- SO: I do.
- HC: But, I think Malcolm Fraser was ahead of his time in those days. What is APEC? APEC became something like that, the wider Pacific community involved in discussions about key things. Of those first CHOGRM meetings I was involved in, one was in Fiji, one was in Papua New Guinea and one was in New Delhi. They encumbered the wider region, not just the Pacific but the two overlapping regions and the subjects for discussion were international terrorism, drug trafficking as well as economic and trade and those sort of things. Fraser had it right in my view and the real problem was that Sonny Ramphal didn't want the Secretariat to be disintegrated. Malcolm Fraser proposed that the Commonwealth set up an office in Australia and they had already talked about Rock Hampton or Townsville or Cairns as the Secretariat headquarters. Now Sonny resisted that as he believed that would fragment the Secretariat; it would dilute its importance and so it was something that Fraser wanted but the Secretariat didn't. In the end Sonny won out on that.
- TW: Sue, can I just put something...
- SO: Please can you just read your name for the record?
- TW: Terry Walls. You mention the retreats and what I've noticed with the retreats and the one that I was involved in, Coolum, was in the past they lasted a lot longer. What has been happening [has been a contraction] because of the distance; Coolum turned out, from memory, to be half a day. The London one they went up to Scotland and that was only for a couple of hours I think, is that the opportunity...

HC: On a train–

TW: ...it seems to me that the retreats were a crucial part of where the leaders get together without officials around and they express their views. It seems to me that it is now being stage managed, that what is going to be said by 53 leaders in two and a half hours has all been written for them. Does the retreat have a future?

HC: You are absolutely right. “Stage managed” are the right words and you’d know Terry. You were closely involved in Coolum and Brisbane before it and what became known as the Coolum model, John Sheppard was involved as well. How we had to change the location because of 9/11 and the whole thing was retracted and put virtually behind walls of steel; and the retreat and the heads of government meeting were melted into one. *[laughs]* Interestingly, enough, and John will appreciate this having set up heads of government meetings, trying to get the informality of a retreat is almost impossible. In the old days, they used to go off and play golf, and sit around a bar and talk to one another and all that sort of thing; and they used to resolve problems. For example, the whole of the South African settlement, the Nassau meeting was solved by half a dozen of them. I think David Lange used to say something like “the rest of us was sort of looking through the glass pane”. But they got this agreement with Thatcher – well, not an agreement with Thatcher but they got something they could push through that meeting and it ended up in the EPG and one of the most successful Commonwealth operations. But these days...You remember in Coolum we had to set up a room for 54 heads of government in an informal set up, but John Howard loves the...What’s the loungers that he likes?

MH: Chesterfield.

HC: Chesterfield, that’s right *[laughing]*. You’ll remember this, Malcolm. You were there. I remember seeing you there on the spot.

Rick Stinson who did that job for us had to pack up a setting of table and chairs and send down to deliver them to Malcolm Fraser and the Prime Minister’s office so that the Prime Minister - rightly, I am not criticising that - could come out and see the sorts of things that we were going to use. But when you looked at it, it was like a football field; there was no informality. I am sorry for saying this, Malcolm, but John Howard was hard of hearing. He is the nicest man but he found it difficult to hear. His great terror in this meeting was that someone sitting on the other side of the room speaking in his quiet manner, he couldn’t have a clue what he was talking about. Now there, you are absolutely right, *[informality]* has gone. Malcolm Fraser who prepared an article for us for Commonwealth Day - and it is appearing in the Fairfax press today *[although it is]* vastly different to the draft we gave him, - is saying that heads of government have got to get back to the essence of the retreat: get back to pulling their weight at problems. You are absolutely right, it’s farcical really. I am sorry to say, even though I have helped set up.

TW: What is farcical was the simple fact that Sunday afternoon Terry Blair and *[inaudible]* were flying out, they were packed up and ready to go before it was over.

SO: But can I suggest that is also connected in part to the Secretary General and his responsibility to choreograph the retreat. That seems to have been very much Sonny Ramphal’s style. His agenda was to facilitate interaction with heads. Is that your recollection?

HC: Yes, Sonny was tireless of these things. We had treated the problems as well and he would be going from cabin to cabin talking to individual heads of government and putting forward drafts so when they came together the half-dozen leaders would be able to put their signatures to something; the others were virtually gone. You’ve got to really know where you are going. The problem at the moment and the crisis at the moment, if there is such a crisis, but the real problem is that international organisations are like people. The more

weight that's on them with administrative burdens, they get weighed down by it; and you need a special sort of leader to actually fight your way through that bureaucracy and get results that you need.

MH: Malcolm Hazell. I'm coming to this from probably a very different perspective to many others here, but my experience is from the Fraser days, Howard days, all sorts of other things; these need to reflect on something that's going through this discussion, and that is the changing nature of what I call the real leadership within the Commonwealth, both at a political level and at the organisational level. My own view - again as I say from an outsider - is that the leader, or standard of leadership in the Commonwealth Secretariat in the last, certainly in the last little while, has been second rate. We were very used to very strong figures like Sonny Ramphal, or our New Zealand colleague who had different styles of management, of course. I think it's become very fragmented and at the political level too. Of course, every politician has an ego and you have very, very strong leaders, some of whom were more successful than others; and they were anxious to speak for their own domestic constituencies to make certain that they were being seen to be effective. Now when you have a group of over 50 people it is extremely difficult to get what I'd call a decent outcome. So you have to syndicate it all or whatever, and I know for a fact that previous Prime Ministers would call some of their counterparts and air some views and say that "I'm thinking of saying this and whatever". The very value of the original form of the retreat, because of the size and because of the nature of it, and because of the way that the press, in the ABC countries especially reported it, I think the very nature of that has changed significantly and in my view to the detriment of it. The key thing in my view is the way the leadership has changed, both in the political and administrative level. Politicians and Australian Prime Ministers have changed, the Secretaries General have changed but I see a watering down of that leadership role in the current Commonwealth Secretariat in London, which I think is poor.

SO: Other comments from the floor?

DB: Dennis Blight. Is the financial contribution to the Commonwealth Secretariat - not the CFTC - voluntary and do members make it?

HC: Yes and no. I mean, yes, it's according to scale.

DB: A voluntary contribution according to scale and...

HC: Yes, lots of them don't make it.

DB: What proportion don't make it? What proportion is directly making that contribution?

HC: I think most of them, but some of the contributions are...

DB: Well, we need that fact on the table. For me, that's an important historical indicator for your research. If you don't pay your fees, you don't value the organisation. Having run the Commonwealth organisation with half the membership not paying their fees, I know that for a fact. If you don't pay your fees, you don't pay your taxes, you're not a citizen of the Commonwealth.

HC: I should say Dennis was CEO of the Commonwealth Agricultural Bureau International (CABI), which is based just outside of Oxford.

JS: Jon Sheppard. But, Hugh, isn't there a formula which is followed and within that formula there is a mechanism for people who are countries who don't pay their fees? If they, say, go something like three years into arrears, then they are banned from participating in the councils of the Commonwealth and it gets worse and worse. So there is a mechanism that's supposed to deal with that but the fees are so small that for the most part of 50 countries, 54 pay about 1% each of the budget.

- HC: I think you are right, but I would have to check on the details.
- JS: They tend to be the ones that don't pay it. They do get chased up and there are penalties if they don't pay.
- DB: I think we can establish the facts on that for your history, it's important to establish the fact on that because my recollection on the Commonwealth Agricultural Bureau - we dropped the 'Commonwealth', by the way - was that there are a viable six or ten that never paid their fees, such as Nigeria, and then the formula gave you the substantial contribution to make and it just hung on anyway. We had the same rules about representations on Councils, never followed up, and never insisted upon. Now if that is different in the Commonwealth, I'd be pleased to learn.
- SO: There is a question here. Please could you introduce yourself?
- CM: Colin Milner is my name. I just wanted to say from my own experience on Nauru when I was posted there, it was a hot question: exactly this point that John's making about being removed from the Councils of the Commonwealth, having a lower status as a Commonwealth member and it all has to do with the payment of fees at a time when they were going through severe budgetary difficulties. From recollection they went through a period of being quite a special member and then they were able to pay their fees and be able to participate in the talks, for example.
- SO: If I could interpose a question here? In addition to this aspect of money indicating commitment and a degree of entitlement of representation: how far was the earlier focus of heads in retreat then progressively diluted with the inclusion of foreign ministers? I know that the emphasis was very much on heads alone in the early stages. It was a much smaller Commonwealth and the retreat, as envisaged by Pierre Trudeau, was expressly for heads. Now by the mid-2000s, am I right in thinking, foreign ministers were, under exceptional circumstances, allowed to attend retreats. Surely that immediately started to dilute the unique aspects of the retreat, the occasion for developing political friendships between heads and social capital of 'trust'?
- HC: I am not sure about retreats but John might have more up to date information. Certainly the introduction of foreign ministers to the equation is a relatively recent thing. I think in the 1990s, it probably happened. It didn't happen in my day. There were no foreign ministers' meetings, they weren't involved and in fact there was a resistance to foreign ministers attending. I remember when Andrew Peacock came along with Malcolm Fraser to a Commonwealth heads of government meeting in New Delhi that there was a lot of resistance. Not only did one official not get to sit behind the Prime Minister in the executive sessions, but having a foreign minister around they regarded as interference. Now it has been escalated and I think you might find it happened in the Anyaoku years, when lots of changes happened. There are pluses and minuses to it, but the real problem is I think that foreign ministers tend to generate a lot of attention and they demand a lot of attention. They end up actually controlling the agenda with the communique, so it becomes a rubber-stamping activity on parliament.
- SO: So you mean officials stop their leaders going 'off-piste'? In terms of foreign policy, heads are corralled to a degree by their foreign minister and officials as minders?
- JS: As far as I knew the head of delegation attended the retreat and I think that applied even if he was a permanent secretary or whatever. It was one plus one in my day and ...
- HC: I think that's right-
- JS: ...as far as foreign ministers are concerned, I know one foreign minister who avoided CHOGM for the very reason that there was no role for him.

HC: I think John is right. It's a heads of government retreat but if the heads of government is not there, then whoever is in the delegation goes and that is a problem. That is a problem because it could end up being the head of the foreign ministry or something like that.

JS: And it has been.

SN: I am from Fiji, my name is Satendra Nandan and I have benefited greatly from the Commonwealth fellowship. I studied for two years in London and Leeds. I was also a member of the Fiji cabinet and of course the international elect chair of the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies. I studied language and literature, I studied the largest organisation of [inaudible] in the world with a dozen branches including one in America, one in Asia, one in Europe. I think the point that is being made, of course everyone is relevant and it will resonate to them, concerns political leadership and organisation difficulties. But my issue is the way you judge any of organisation is varied and unique as you mention, is how does it deal with a crisis? I want to give you an example of the crisis in Fiji in 1987 and where the Commonwealth failed. At [the] time Ramphal was Secretary General. I went and saw him and he just made the usual polite noises. He came to us, we had a cup of tea and I spoke even in the House of Commons briefings, not in the main chamber, but one of the rooms where people were attending thanks to the CPA. What it reflected to me, from 1987 to the present crisis in 2006, is that we were not able to handle such a major organisation like the Commonwealth for which we had tremendous respect for Her Majesty the Queen, as well as the members, 54 or 55 members, of the Commonwealth, in our operation you might say; but they were not able to deal with a small crisis in Fiji. The Queen was persuaded by the Commonwealth, I think, not to see Timoci Bavadra, who had taken his allegiance to the Queen, like most of us. As Prime Minister, he was not able to see (her); instead he went [to] Ratu Mara who had been ousted in a difficult election and Rabuka later, the man who had destroyed democracy. We come by Her Majesty, I believe through the Commonwealth. I may be wrong here, but when that happened I believe [it] was a shocking thing and that is why the Commonwealth have lost its power and its glory. We grew up as children in Fiji's schools thinking the Commonwealth was the biggest thing we ever had; its literature and English etc. were what we were striving for, so my feeling is that if the Commonwealth has lost its power, its glory, prestige, it is because [of] its failure to deal with the small crisis from Fiji, for South Africa and many other parts, which we have a division for.

HC: Look, I was one of the SG's principal advisors in 1987 and I'd had a posting in Fiji, as you know.

SN: I didn't know that, I wish I had known [laughter].

HC: ...and it was very complicated, very complex as to who did what in response to that. I won't go into it now, but I think you are right in actually pinpointing that this has been an ongoing failure of the Commonwealth and remains a failure, in my view, for all sorts of complicated reasons. But thank you for the point. I think it is a good one.

SO: John, I know that you have experience of living and working in Fiji. Would you like to add anything?

JS: Not at that time, sorry.

HC: Malcolm, who has got very close insights into the Palace, might have something to say about the role of the Queen in the Commonwealth. I don't want to put you on the spot Malcolm. You don't have to.

- MH: To be very honest with you, I don't think I can speak with authority on anything on that because any of my conversations have been mostly second hand, and with mostly Her Majesty herself, which certainly won't be repeated, but ...
- HC: But as a general comment?
- MH: ...but I do know, and I don't think I am saying anything here that everybody doesn't know, the Queen has an enormous regard for the Commonwealth. I have been at a number of meetings with her, receptions with her and sat in on meetings with her Prime Ministers, for example, and that it just so obvious. It is something that has been passed down to the Prince of Wales as opposed to some of the other members of the Royal family, where they should have the same emphasis in the role. So the Queen regards it extraordinarily seriously.
- SO: If I could follow up on that please? Taking our discussion back to the 1987 Fiji crisis: of course there was a governor general in Governor House at that particular time and so Fiji's relationship of Her Majesty was as part of the Commonwealth realms. Surely, her Commonwealth advisor in a way was the governor general, Rati Sir Penaia, rather than Marlborough House and the Secretary General. Therefore, it was a more complicated...
- HC: It was very complicated—
- SO: ...avenue of information. Therefore, the place of the Palace in this constitutional crisis was part of the complicated equation. Fiji was not just a crisis for the Commonwealth, but there was a direct challenge in the relationship of the Queen to the realm?
- DB: I think the point made, though, was that there is no complaint against Her Majesty. The question was who advised her and how was she persuaded, either by the governor general or by the Secretary General. My guess is it was who to throw in her path that persuaded her.
- HC: Well, yes and no. The Secretary General didn't actually go seeking a role to advise the Palace. He would have responded and did respond, and the Palace would have approached him. But he would certainly not have been taking the side of one leader against the other, like Rata Mara and Bavadra. I think that's probably an over simplification.
- SN: The point of the whole thing is that Bavadra was an elected Prime Minister of Fiji and surely the Commonwealth should have known a little better, even if it had a role to play in advising the people who were involved with the Australian men, the secretary of the Queen at that time. It was her advisor, William Heseltine.
- HC: I mean to say that Ramphal...
- SN: They were taking old allegiance to Her Majesty.
- HC: Exactly. To say that the Secretary General was taking the side of one political leader against the other? If you look back on the period of Ramphal...
- SN: No, it's not political leaders. I'm talking about the Prime Minister of a country being opposed by a canon—
- HC: Let me finish. Ramphal had a remarkably flexible view of changes of government in Commonwealth countries. [The analogy is one of a company]. He basically took the old view that whoever was in control of the board ran the country. So if Bavadra was the Prime Minister, he would be saying "This man has got to do. He's the current leader. He has got to be respected as the current leader and he was elected leader". Ramphal would have been saying that; whatever advice was sought from him, that's what he would have been saying. His memoirs are coming out very soon so we can check

SO: They are coming out very soon. It's going to be very interesting to see what he has to say.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to keep to time. Please may we express our thanks to Hugh, and then move onto the next session, discussing economics. Thank you very much indeed, Hugh. [*Applause*]

Session 2

SO: If I could invite Dr John Eyre to reflect on the Commonwealth, economics and development.

JE: Thank you, Sue, and thank you, everyone. Let me explain the basis for my remarks. I worked in the Economic Division of the Secretariat for three years from May 1997 until May 2000, so that's approximately 15 years ago. During that time I was also part of the team which edited, and therefore sat in on, all but the retreats of two CHOGMs, the one in Edinburgh and the one in Durban. I should also explain that the basis for my observations is narrow in a second sense: I have a background in the Australian Treasury which has no doubt formed my opinions about the Commonwealth Secretariat and its economic work. So let me sketch these remarks - my prepared remarks are brief - to provide a framework, I hope, for anyone to comment or diverge.

I think my term corresponded to that of Chief Anyaoku. I have the impression that he was settled in when I arrived in 1997 and I left when he left in May 2000, just after Don McKinnon marched in. Now the main activities in the economic and development sphere, I'll put in three simple categories. For a long time the Commonwealth had been convening an annual meeting of Finance Ministers of the Commonwealth countries immediately before the annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. These were sometimes held in the same place, sometimes in a different venue and they were a discussion of the agenda of the Fund and Bank from the Commonwealth perspective. They were often the occasion for a Commonwealth initiative of some kind or another, in which the major governments or the Secretariat had a hand in preparatory work.

The second stream of activities was technical assistance of two kinds; the provision of expert advisors was the main, most practical kind. There was a well-established Commonwealth product called the DRMS, which I believe is Debt Reporting and Monitoring System. So some computer software to help governments of developing countries have the whole picture of their debt obligations for the sake of better management but that was one of a number of lines of technical assistance in economic and development matters being run, funded I suppose by the budget of the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation, CFTC.

A third line of work, which I mention because I and my team were part of it, I would call commissioned reports on economic subjects distributed to economic ministers and officials in the hope that they might find them informative and useful. I would, I think, rank the value the economic activities of the time in the order that I've outlined them. The CFFM, for good or real, depending on whether or not or how you valued the Commonwealth perspective on the Fund bank issues or the Commonwealth initiatives in the financial sphere was probably the most influential and important in general. The technical co-operation varied greatly, I thought, in its value and effectiveness from one corner of the Secretariat to another, and the commissioned reports on economic subjects I tried to change, within my own limited sphere of responsibility, from being supply-pushed to being what had been asked for by senior people in developing country members. We had some success with that, but I was only there for three years.

Now the characteristics of the Commonwealth's work in economic and development areas: let me be simple again, by saying there was three characteristics. The first was a distinct scepticism from, or on behalf of, developing countries about the international financial and trading system. In the time I was there, which was in the aftermath of the Uruguay Round, a lot of this was about the obligations which developing countries had agreed to assume, in the WTO agreements but with varying degrees of knowledge, of just what they were taking on and what it would imply for them. In the small corner that was mine, there was also the interesting agenda of the European Community to revise the Lomé system of import preferences for developing countries, into something a little different; what became as I recall the Cotonou Agreement. That too was characterised by demands on small

administrations in small developing countries to understand what they were being asked to agree to. So that scepticism was generally well founded, whether or not the Commonwealth was able to orchestrate concerted efforts to do much about it.

The second characteristic which I must mention is the poor internal management of the Secretariat. Now let me be clear: my view of the Secretariat was that it was not a village, it was a number of villages under two roofs, two buildings, Marlborough House and the place across the road. I was surprised that so few people could be working in so many different and almost isolated groups on their various projects. This was in some ways a strength. There was some outstanding individuals or teams whose work was needed and wanted by some of the developing country members and was, I believed, of great value to them. Without wishing to imply that this is the only case or the outstanding case, I thought what the legal unit was doing with advice on international treaties, I think, particularly to do with money laundering at the time [was excellent]. Di Stafford was the head of that unit and because she was an Australian, I could understand when she explained what they were doing. I thought it made excellent sense and it was clearly a value, it filled a gap in the international system, whether or not the management of the Commonwealth Secretariat had entirely understood that there was a need for this and supported the unit in doing it. There were other groups in the Secretariat whose work I could not see the value of and I do know that the three divisions of the Secretariat which had roles in technical assistance or advising on economic subjects were not co-ordinated. They were, I thought disgracefully, uncoordinated and this could not have been hidden, nor a secret, from senior officials in the developing member countries. It was, I thought, an embarrassment of the Secretariat at the time.

Now thirdly, this individual or team enterprise in meeting demand from developing members was the flip side - and I think in the virtuous or commendable flip side - of a lack of system or strategy in the provision of technical system and economic advice. On influence, there are, I think, three positives that I know of and because of my limited experience I do want to make it clear that I am not denying the existence of other, perhaps more important, things that were happening. I can only talk about what I was able to see from my corner of Marlborough House. On small states: one of the three teams in the Economic Division worked steadily to try to persuade donors, the World Bank in particular, that small states had real economic needs because of their smallness and in many cases remoteness. That was while I was there a thankless task, with very little encouragement from what you could put international organisations. Donors it seemed to me at the time - the World Bank, the IMF - were not particularly sympathetic or helpful but the Commonwealth kept at it and made, I think, real progress. Around the end of that time, around 2000 and in a few years following, the World Bank got it and the World Bank now does research and advocacy for the economic needs of small states in a way which, I think, it probably would not have done or not have done until much later had it not been for the stubborn insistence of the Commonwealth Secretariat in making the arguments, putting out the reports, going to the meetings.

On the second bit of influence: there was a policy reassessment going on in the light of the Asian financial crisis that broke in 1997. So in the CFMMs [Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meetings] in particular, in later years, there was an obvious team for the Commonwealth, based on that scepticism that I mentioned earlier, to suggest that rapid liberalisation of financial sectors had not been a great idea and needed to be done much more carefully in a much more limited or thoughtfully sequenced way. My view is that the Commonwealth did not invent the main ideas about that. The Commonwealth followed rather than led intellectually in reinterpreting policy advice on the basis of the Asian financial crisis, but to follow intelligently on that, at the CFMMs and in written reports, was a valuable contribution.

Third, and again smallest in order of importance: in the Secretariat we encouraged the officials of the African Caribbean and Pacific group of countries to stand up for the interests in dealing with the European Union and the World Trade Organisation. Whether we could

give them powerful ammunition, I doubt, but that we gave them moral support and encouraged them to think that they had a respectable case, I think that's true.

So, may I offer my conclusions, personal and limited in the two ways I have mentioned: I thought at the time, and I still think, the Australian government really need not have funded the technical assistance shop in a competitive world where donors do have to look at value for money, testing the demand for the results from technical assistance work. It did not seem to me that much of the CFTC-funded work would pass the up-to-date test, and that's still my view, looking back on it. I think it was not quite valuable enough in general to have been worth funding. The ministerial meetings were occasionally worthwhile, those on economic subjects; and to be negative, they were only occasionally worthwhile. Some of them were very routine, in some of them there was a real issue or a real idea amongst Commonwealth members that made it worthwhile. Very mixed.

The technical assistance work for the economic advisory work of the Secretariat, was it needed as credentials for the Secretary General? In my mind, this was really rather doubtful. Perhaps in the time of Sonny Ramphal, there had been a real and active link between what CFTC was paying for, or what the economic advice was; and the good offices or diplomatic efforts or basis for credibility for diplomatic efforts of the Secretary General, I must say that at least in my own observation world I was there. Chief Anyaoku could have done what he did with or without the carrying on of the economic and development work. I do want to say one more thing; because I am here with a friendly group or what I hope and trust is a friendly group, these are thoughts that I have not gathered in since 15 years ago but I think I was worth mentioning. Whilst I was in the Commonwealth Secretariat, it did seem to me that there was a potential role in the handful of cases where there had been serious civil conflicts and some sort of emergency civil administration needed to be run up for a little while. It seemed to me that the Commonwealth had the political credibility to offer, to help temporarily with a bit of civil administration but as soon as I thought 'Yes, this is needed in a few cases and the Commonwealth Secretary General might be able to get this role agreed' the thought came to me unfortunately there was just not enough reliable quality in the economic and technical assistance work of the Secretariat to justify it being brought into that role of post-conflict administration, which we have seen since taken up by a medley, some agencies of the UN, Japan in particular, or by coalitions of the willing, the intervening countries, or by World Bank. [These agencies] improvised different ways, different cases, but not to my knowledge Commonwealth Secretariat. I point this out because it seems to me that if we want to say that because of an indulgent way in which some staffing decisions were made and some management decisions were taken, the price was not only the waste of a certain amount of the meeting time and the efforts of able people in developing countries and in the Secretariat, but there was also, I believe, a waste in the sense of a larger opportunity, a more important role which the Commonwealth disqualified itself from playing.

SO: John, thank you very much indeed. [*Applause*]

Are there particular questions from the floor?

JS: I want to pick up a point that you raised about you threw some doubt on the value of the CFTC. I think always those doubts exist and the problem of duplication as well, but as one thing in its favour - I just add this as a comment - I found that the Commonwealth and the CFTC in particular had the advantage of being able to react quickly and effectively to requests that were received for assistance in ways that most other multi-lateral organisations couldn't. CFTC could get an expert on the ground within a month of receiving the request whereas the UN, for instance, would take six months; and I think we should remember that the Commonwealth did do good work in that respect.

DB: Can I balance that somewhat? Dennis Blight. I suppose the question that I have always thought about the CFTC is what is unique to the Commonwealth about what it does. There might be a clue to this in your remarks about the legal advice because of the nature of the

legal systems in the Commonwealth countries based essentially under British heritage. I think the same applies potentially with the education heritage, the language we speak and maybe the language we write in as being uniquely part of the British colonial heritage. I can also give a couple of other examples where the opportunity was missed. My three months at the Commonwealth Secretariat - it was only three months - in the education department. The other place over the road from Albert House, was looking at establishing a Commonwealth Higher Education Management Service, which we did over a few dead bodies from within the CFTC, but I also offered the Commonwealth an opportunity to become a partner in the English language testing system, because the language testing is uniquely Commonwealth. It was a very modest contribution that they would have been required to make but they didn't have division or the risk-taking ability, or the ability to respond quickly to say "yes". As a consequence, they missed out on a massive bonus of being part of what is now billion-dollar industry. The third example I can't quite remember.

Anyway, my question is, are there other things that are uniquely Commonwealth? Election monitoring, for example, is an area where the Commonwealth has built some expertise and I've no doubt there are other areas like that. The Commonwealth Scholarship Scheme is not really...

HC: I think not. I don't think the Secretariat can claim much credit for that.

DB: No, it can't. I was a Commonwealth Scholarship commissioner for a couple of years and most of that funding came from DFID. It was nothing to do with the Commonwealth really, so I wouldn't give Commonwealth credit for that, except it was in its name. It was actually a bilateral scheme funded by the British government.

SO: John, do you want to comment on that? You are nodding. Would you like to add anything more?

JS: I don't think I need to, thank you. All those points are all well taken.

KJ: Kanti Jinna and I'm from Fiji. I was wanting to take you back to the Lomé Convention in the ACCP convention and how initially the assistance they were providing for the sugar cane industry in Fiji was a good idea, but later on it just seemed to have dwindled away where the real development needs to sustain the cane growing industry in Fiji. As a result, there was a gradual decline in the industry itself until the point where today it's now really dependent on the EU to provide any assistance at all, as far as sugar cane is concerned. I don't know what the decisions were but they certainly did not help Fiji on the long run, in terms of the Lomé Convention and the ACCP countries.

JE: May I comment [on] this? This is from the remaining small part of me which is an economist. I think you've touched on two real questions here, one which I think is for authorities and in Fiji business owners, trade unions and others in Fiji to consider, whether specialisation in sugar depending on the preferences is good or bad for economic development? Is it too lopsided, too dependent, is there too great a risk? Are all the resources of the country being well used that way? Those I regard as questions for Fijians, principally, but there is a second question which I think was one that the Commonwealth Secretariat did its small part in trying to advise on, which is how reliable, for how long are the special preferences that create an advantage for that export into this European market? So our focus was on trying to interpret the complicated evolution of EU agricultural protection to try at least to throw some light on that question. Is this a five year, a 10 year, a 15 year prospect and how likely is it to be overthrown, to be changed whatever the European Union commissioner is saying this year or the EU agrees on next year?

SO: Please could I put a question, John?

When I interviewed Peter Marshal (who of course was Deputy Secretary General Economics) always emphasised that Mrs Thatcher for all her public high friction with the

Commonwealth on Southern African issues, valued what the Commonwealth Secretariat was doing on economic issues in the 1980s. This is firmly Peter Marshall's 'take' and I've no reason to question it. I just wondered if you could compare the kind of relationship between the Economic Division and the British Government in your time at the Secretariat, and the value the British Government/No 10 might or might not have attached to your area of expertise and activities.

JE: One thing I can say, based on my experience, is that particular period in the Commonwealth Secretariat at the end of the 1990s coincided with a period in the British government when DFID, the development ministry, was riding high. It had a strong minister and support from the new Prime Minister, Clare Short and strong from the Prime Minister and Cabinet for what was being called "joined-up government". From the narrow corner where I worked Britain was at the centre of the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy and therefore quite willing to support brave or dissident voices. On financial issues, there was not quite the same attitude out of the UK Treasury as out of DFID on import restrictions or investment limitations, other aspects of the policy that affected developing countries. This goes back to something that John Sheppard mentioned on competing technical assistance. I believe it is true that very few other TA shops could match the Commonwealth for speed and flexibility, but probably the closest competitors were regional organisations, to the extent that there was a sympathetic developed country government happy to fund or offer experts.

SO: Thank you very much. Are there other questions? If you could just announce your name?

JD: I am Jumoka Debayo. I worked at the Commonwealth Secretariat in the Information section and am a maverick, because I do things which other people don't really. You are an expert and I'd like you to expand on your opinion on how you can salvage the Commonwealth as such at the moment because the Commonwealth is in dire straits. They are cutting down on the number of people who work there, the funds are cut: how do you talk to a layperson like me how to salvage this organisation which is very important? I want to hear from you; a, b, c, d? *[Laughter]*

HC: Well, that's a big ask! I am 15 years out of date. I have not kept up closely. My first suggestion is that ministers who have a common interest find [time to] meet each year, or each second year. The art for the rest of us, whether in the Secretariat or in governments of member countries, is to try to get the voice of those ministers who find meeting occasionally valuable to be the main voice. Dennis Blight mentioned education. I know through happenstance that while I was there, the education ministers were having good meetings they found them worthwhile. They were keen to come and it would have taken a funding problem, you know.

DB: Peter Williams was a highly professional person at the Secretariat.

HC: Unfortunately, I don't think I have a b, c, or d *[laughter]*. Hang on, there is a b, which is a good Information office that gets the positive stories out and about is crucial.

SO: As a former member of the information division would you care to comment on that?

JD: I am a maverick in that. Yes, I've always wanted to bring the awareness of the Commonwealth Secretariat through to the common people. My first encounter as such was in Canada in 1978 where we lobbied and we were able to get the art section within the Commonwealth Games in Edmonton, Alberta. With Rick Thrussell who was at the Commonwealth Foundation - a fabulous person, really lovely - we were able to come in there in 1978 for the Commonwealth. People were rather surprised that there was the arts because some Commonwealth countries could not participate in the Games but they came to the arts because then they felt they were part of the Commonwealth. Recently I put together an exhibition that links the Commonwealth relations and I had to be that links the Commonwealth relations. I had nearly every country of the Commonwealth represented by

beads - whether it is religion, tribal, anything that they can think of I put it together on my own sort of way. Even Her Majesty lent me her own personal dress, as you know, for the exhibition. I had it here in the museum in Canberra as well. This is the sort of thing I was doing because people became aware. I had workshops on the Commonwealth so people could see what the Commonwealth is all about and all that. I felt that we should do more about this because the common man wants to know about the Commonwealth. Before, if you remember we had the Games, in Africa [when] they were not Commonwealth then, we had the arts of the Commonwealth, Empire Day and things like that; and all the kids would march, especially in Nigeria! They marched in Central on Empire Day, and became what is now the Commonwealth but it is not celebrated as such, unless we in the Commonwealth, the bureaucrats we say, "Do something about it." Rick Thrusell was very good in supporting it. We trust him. He was marvellous in supporting it. That's what I wanted to say from a lay person talking.

S: Thank you very much. Are there other questions on this aspect of economics or indeed getting the image of the Commonwealth out to a wider audience? One last question here please.

MaH: My name is Maureen Hickman. I regularly access the Commonwealth Secretariat website. I am a journalist and I edit the Royal Commonwealth Society newsletter but basically my background is in journalism. At one time, about 18 months ago they employed a journalist to edit their newsletter, *Commonwealth News* and it was quite good for a while. They asked for comments. The last time I gave a comment was that they should concentrate more on getting out more information about the work of the Commonwealth and a lot less about the comings and goings and comments of the Secretary General; the opening and shutting of things. They have taken me off their mailing list! [*laughter*] I've noticed that they used to have a "Like" and "Don't like" tick and a comment after every story, and I was quite liberal with my comments for over seven years. They have now changed it to "Useful" and "Not useful. I can still access their website, of course.

After CHOGM I was very interested to read, about 10 days after CHOGM they had about 27 hits on the communique, about 14 found it useful and about 13 didn't find it useful and there was a lot of "No comments". So that not only says something about the communique but the Colombo CHOGM, I think. That's all I have to say. You were hoping for good communication but they are very, very poor.

TW: Maureen, you may recall a few years ago, I think you were present at a meeting and the Commonwealth Secretariat sent someone here who was doing a tour and came to talk about this issue. I was involved in that and I am pretty sure you were there, asking for suggestions about how best to sell the story. It became quite clear during the course of that evening that what this was really about was setting up a new website and it was a website that was going to mirror image what the World Bank does with its developing gateway. Now I had been involved with the Australian development gate and therefore the Commonwealth Secretariat asked me if I would be prepared to head the working group. I did because I was trying to stop them duplicating work being done by the World Bank and they did the same to me; they cut me out of the process. I was a member and all of a sudden the minutes stopped coming.

SO: Thank you very much for those two very important reflections on the Commonwealth Secretariat's ability to communicate to its wider audience.

MaH: Absolutely hopeless!

SO: Thank you very much, Maureen, and thank you, Terry.

I'd like to draw this part of our discussion to a close because I don't want to get too much behind time. Thank you very much indeed to John.

[Applause]

SO: Ladies and gentleman, please lets take a short break and we will reconvene then at twenty to four.

Session 3

SO: Thank you very much, ladies and gentleman, for coming to this third session. Jon Sheppard is going to be speaking on the Commonwealth in Global Politics. Jon, the floor is yours.

JS: Thank you. Quite a bit has already been said along the lines of what I was going to touch on, but I will perhaps repeat some of it. I was at the Commonwealth Secretariat from 1996 to 2002, about six and a half years. I was Director of the Political Affairs Division during that time. I started out with Chief Anyaoku and then for the last couple of years I was with Don McKinnon. The title of what I am supposed to talk about is 'the Commonwealth in Global Politics' and that struck me as an interesting description, because I am not sure if the Commonwealth has a role in global politics, with the emphasis on 'global'. The membership doesn't include any super powers. Of the G-8 countries there is Britain and Canada. Of the G-20 countries, you can add India, South Africa and Australia. Global issues as such tend to be covered by the United Nations when they made their way to a multi-lateral forum but when you look at global issues today, what is the Commonwealth doing? Does the Commonwealth have a role in the Ukraine? Does the Commonwealth have a role in relations between the super powers? No, of course not. What I thought the Commonwealth did do at the operational level would be more the regional level; in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. There the Commonwealth does play an active role and I think it plays an effective role. It does that in a number of ways. I think at least in my time it did provide a mechanism for effective action on various political fronts. I'd be sorry if that was no longer the case but I am beginning to get the impression that things have sunk a little bit and I know that as we've already heard, the Commonwealth does useful things in areas of economics and legal as well and in human rights, it has done something but maybe not quite as effective. Pera might comment on that bit for us.

So if it is effective, I ask myself how effective has the Commonwealth been? I think its great achievement was in South Africa and the fall of Apartheid. Now that was a global role and the Commonwealth did achieve quite a bit, much of it behind the scenes but interestingly it really hasn't received much credit for that. Also interestingly, even in South Africa, it hasn't received much credit, not from the South African government, that's for sure because in my day the South African government was very reluctant to acknowledge that the Commonwealth was responsible in any way for putting pressure that led to the collapse of the Apartheid regime. I suspect that might not have changed very much. The ANC, of course, considered that it did everything, and the Commonwealth didn't do anything; but it did and I think we have to give them a tick for that one.

Again, looking at my own experience I think the Commonwealth was successful in putting pressure on military regimes and one party regimes in developing countries and pressing them to replace that sort of regime with a democratically elected and, hopefully, multiparty system. The big success that I could point to there was Nigeria, partly influenced I suspect by the part that Chief Emeka Anyaoku was of course Nigerian and really wanted to do something for his country. I can't count the number of times I've tramped the streets of Nigeria, but I was there for three election observation missions and a number of good office visits.

Fiji was not such a good example, I'm afraid, and most of it came after my time so I am a little reluctant to speak about that. Though when under Don McKinnon, he did try very hard on Fiji. I think the Commonwealth has had a particularly strong influence in persuading countries, such as South Africa, the Caribbean and to some extent the Pacific, towards good governance and the installation of democratic institutions. We did a lot of that in various ways. I've mentioned Commonwealth observer groups. I led the Secretariat team on 13 of them which, I suspect, is some sort of record. I think the interesting thing is that those countries that we visited all wanted to get a positive mark, of course. They knew that the spotlight was on them through the observer groups and they generally - and I'll mention one exception - they generally tried to improve their act. They knew they were being

observed, not only in general by the international community, whatever that is, but by groups such as CMAG, the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group, which would report directly to the heads of government. The exception I want to mention is one that I had a lot of personal experience with and that was Zimbabwe. After I left the Commonwealth Secretariat, it was interesting as I ended up as Australian Ambassador to Zimbabwe, which I thought was very ironic seeing that I had written the report and the recommendations that led to Zimbabwe's suspension from the Commonwealth! They must have thought it was a difficult one for them as well as it took quite a while before they accepted me, but I'll never forget the look on the Zimbabwean London's High Commissioner's face when he saw me in Harare; quite a surprise, which I enjoyed very much. [Laughter] A horrible man.

As well, institution building was a very positive thing that was done by the Secretariat. For instance, building up a national electoral commission and this was done in a number of West African countries, to my own direct experience, very successfully but it was done really in a lot of African countries and in the Caribbean as well.

I was referred as well to the "good offices" role of the Secretary General. Now that can be effective or it can't be; it all depends very much on the Secretary General. I think from the way Hugh has spoken, Sonny Ramphal was probably more active than any of the other ones that I've had experience with. When the Secretary General gets engaged and is very active, he can have a positive role. In my experience, I would mention Bangladesh, as an example of that, but in other cases, as in Zimbabwe's one, no, nothing happened.

I'd like to say a word about the value of the Commonwealth to its membership. It's an interesting and not a uniform pattern. Amongst the ABC countries, I think the United Kingdom plays a very active and positive role and it exerts effective influence for its own interest as well, I might add, through the Commonwealth. Australia, Canada and India could make much better use of the Commonwealth if they wish to make the effort, but they don't and I think that's unfortunate. As far as I can see, the Australian role in the Commonwealth is declining even further; they don't seem to be all that interested. I think that's a pity but for developing countries, those people who don't pay very much, I think the Commonwealth represents good value for money, because they are not putting much money in, but they are getting results. An indicator of that is that they want to keep in good standing; nobody wants to be highlighted in CMAG or in communiqués or even in a negative report of an observer mission, and to the extent that they feel that's a bad thing, they will move in the direction that we would think is good to avoid it. As I said, I think the Commonwealth in contrast to within the ABC countries is highly valued and respected in places such as Africa, Caribbean and the Pacific. I think one of our audience here mentioned how the Commonwealth used to be looked on so favourably in Fiji. I don't know if that is still the case in Fiji but that was a good example of the fact that the Commonwealth counts in a lot of countries around the world. CHOGM, we have dealt with that, I think, but all the member countries, as far as I am aware, value participation in CHOGM and participation in the retreats. They want to use it for various reasons but it is a good occasion when the leadership of these countries can talk informally amongst themselves, and I think that's unusual. Hugh would know more about this. I've never been to a retreat; it didn't happen in my day but I could see what was happening in them and that was good.

Overall, then the Commonwealth in global politics: I think the Commonwealth does play a positive role on the international stage. I wouldn't say that it plays much of a role in the *big issues*, not since the fall of apartheid anyway, but it does play an effective role at the regional level. The Commonwealth is an odd organisation, as we all know. It is not quite a South Pacific Forum or a CARICOM, and it's not a United Nation so it fits in somewhere in between. It has 54 members, it's quite a large membership and I think the members in recent years have destroyed some of the homogeneity that used to exist in the Commonwealth. Hugh mentioned that as well. I think that's true and if they do take in countries that don't speak English and suppose that will help, my personal view is that they strayed. They lost the plot there. The numbers of membership isn't everything.

One final point I should have mentioned before: CMAG. I had a lot to do with CMAG in my years there and here is another little ironic note. When I went there first the chairman of CMAG was one Dr Stan Mudenge who was the Foreign Minister of Zimbabwe. Stan was the man who received my appointment as Ambassador of Australia some years later, so we did get on quite well. But what happens in CMAG and I see it's still happening, is that countries who wish to avoid the opprobrium of a CMAG condemnation, what do they do? They join it and of course as you said everything has to be decided by consensus so there can be no consensus. For instance, on Zimbabwe's appalling human right's record, as long as Zimbabwe was a member of CMAG, it didn't happen so that's a problem. Maybe it's a problem most multi-lateral organisations face so it's not unique to the Commonwealth. Maybe I should lay in my general comments there and am happy to talk further.

SO: Thank you very much indeed Jon. [Applause] Pera Wells, you have a question?

PW: Jon, you've just ended your comments by going to the human rights' situation in Zimbabwe. I am very interested in your thoughts about the extent to which the Commonwealth has become more difficult to manage as an international organisation because of the way the human rights agenda has changed from what it was originally concerned with, which was the promotion of human rights. You will recall that it was at the initiative of the government of Gambia that the Commonwealth set up a Human Rights Unit. It was followed up by the Melbourne CHOGM in 1981. Malcolm Fraser saw it happen but it took another four years in 1985 when the unit was first set up. They said it was for the promotion of human rights. This seems to have changed over the years and the recent CHOGM in Sri Lanka made it very clear that there is a lot of internal conflict in the Commonwealth as to what the emphasis should be in looking at human rights issues. Would you like to comment on that please?

JS: Well, you've gone back to an area a little bit before my time, but certainly when I was in the Commonwealth, there was resistance from the member states, and to be honest from people within the Commonwealth Secretariat, to having an effective Human Rights Unit. It was reduced to being little more than a distribution point for information about human rights. It never did anything, Pera, I'm sorry; and I think that the Secretariat wanted to keep it that way.

PW: For a point of clarification, I think in the former years we did do good things. For example, I've brought along with me a kit that was produced on the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and that if you would like to take as a point of information, really did an enormous amount to enable and equip Commonwealth governments to work with this convention. We played a very active role, for example, in the International Women's Conference in Nairobi which took place in 1986.

HC: Can I just put a point across? It was set up in my day and Pera was the first Director. There was a contest in the Secretariat as to where the Human Rights Unit should sit. It was really in those days between the Political Division and the Legal Division. Because the emphasis was on the promotion of human rights and the establishment of machinery within governments to set up credible and viable human rights instruments, I won the fight in between Jeremy Pope and myself. So it ended up in the Political Division and that is why Pera sat in that division. I think we did do valuable things in those days when they had a clearly defined role. I think since then and the role has become [inaudible]...it didn't go in the Legal Division because it slipped into the sort of enforceable...

JS: –but it was in the Legal Division [in my time].

HC: I know, and I had to check with history, I noticed it somewhere.

SO: Hugh, please if I could just pick upon that point? You said earlier that you felt there has been “an NGO take-over”: is that part of a problem then for supporting human rights? If there has been a rise in civil society organisations and a corresponding shift by elected

governments to feeling that *they* are their country's elected representatives and they should not be necessarily responsive to these grassroots activists who don't have a democratic mandate?

PW: If I may comment on that. I think Michael Kirby has played a very influential role in helping to enable the Commonwealth to see the whole question of human rights as integral to the core values which the Commonwealth is there to articulate as well. We haven't really talked about the Commonwealth professional associations and the people's movement in the Commonwealth, which has had a lot of people involved with a human rights agenda and that's true. By and large it has been very positive in terms of the actual essential values that were articulated from the beginning when they set up the Unit, and that was to deal with the issues of racial discrimination and general equality and basic freedoms.

SO: Pera, though, please if I could just ask: did the establishment of a Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, with its office in New Delhi, in fact absorb that particular role? It produces excellent reports which are an ancillary pressure on governments. How far do you think this then removed perhaps a sense of urgency within the Secretariat to have its own Human Rights Division? In institutional terms within the Secretariat, it has never been a division, it's a unit and correspondingly has limited finances directed to it. I have talked to Purna Sen about this, who feels very passionately about this.

PW: I'm afraid I'm not really able to comment in detail on that as that is after my time.

HC: What it does do, though, is point up this dilemma that the Commonwealth has. You say the huge rise in the voice and the volume of civil society, which has its very strong human rights components and advocates, in the Commonwealth has resulted in people like Richard Bourne and others who have helped to facilitate the establishment of this body in New Delhi, CHRI. CHRI is very influential and produces reports that push the Commonwealth to the brink of its promotional role as against its enforceable role. So in Perth, the Commonwealth was being asked to set up a commissioner for human rights and stepping back from it because they don't see the Commonwealth as an inter-governmental agency having a human rights watchdog role. So there is a dilemma that has got to be resolved.

PW: As a quick point of information: right from the beginning there was the setting up of the unit. I have a little report here and the idea of a commission[er] on human rights was considered. They also talked about a Commonwealth Advisory Committee on human rights. So those options were in conversation right from the beginning.

SO: I have a particular question. Jon, how is it there has been an Australian as head of Political Affairs Division for such a stretch of time? First Hugh, then Max Gaylard, yourself, and Matthew Neuhaus.

JS: Hugh would know better than I. The Australian government has nominated people from within its Foreign Ministry for that position and hasn't pressed for other positions, some of them higher within the organisation. I think it became more or less an understanding that Australia would provide a person for that position and that lasted right up until when my successor left. We don't have anyone in that job at the moment, which is a pity. *[laughter]*

HC: Pure merit *[laughter]*. Pure merit, that's why we've been there.

JS: I don't think it was an unsuccessful arrangement.

DB: Is that part of the problem of the Commonwealth; that there has to be a cross Commonwealth representation in the Secretariat, because that's not the best way to get the best people. The best way to get the best people is to open competition for the slot and they should be advertised publicly and a transparent selection process.

JS: We've never had that.

DB: With no quotas per country.

SO: But that's difficult for any multi-lateral organisation.

DB: I thought the Commonwealth was different. It seems not, it's not unique.

JS: As another point, a side-line to what you asked: I think Australia has been generally under-represented in the Commonwealth Secretariat. I don't think in my time we ever had more than three or four people.

HC: Yes, I think in this day in age you can't help but give a tick to all of those ideas, transparency, merit and all that sort of thing. Acknowledging that people tend to promote people like themselves in, or people like themselves in jobs.

DB: I was the fourth Australian to hit the Commonwealth Agricultural Bureau in a row. I was replaced by an Englishman.

JS: I was just going to add, we didn't just walk into the job. It was an open competition and I would hope that it was a merit selection process. I am sure it was.

HC: Can I just say something about the Ramphal days? When his way of selecting people was wandering around the Commonwealth, we were under construction and to keep our eye on people and that's probably why people like John Eyres was selected.

SO: Ramphal had a very dedicated policy of headhunting. Like Arnold Smith before him, he realised that the Secretariat was always going to be small for an international organisation and therefore, it had to recruit the best. As he believed it, this meant head hunting the best, appointing Moni Malhoutra who had previously run Mrs Gandhi's private office, going for Peter Marshall, his approach to Stuart Mole was of course on the basis of a particular recommendation. Vishnu Persaud, a brilliant Caribbean economist.

I have other questions please. Jon, you made reference to Fiji, most of which you said was outside your time. However, that isn't all and I wondered if you could just outline your observations on the early problems on Fiji in the McKinnon era?

JS: I'd like to be able to, but in that area I didn't really have much of a role. Don McKinnon, being a New Zealander, tended to deal with the South Pacific more of his own backyard as it were and dealt with it out of the Secretary General's office. He did make a number of visits but I honestly don't think much came of it at all.

SO: I just wondered Jon, because I know that you had lived in Suva in the late 70s, when you had been involved in setting up a very small Secretariat. Was this a pre-cursor for the South Pacific Forum?

JS: No, I was the Deputy Director of what was then called the South Pacific Bureau of Economic Corporation which really was the foreign secretariat. I was there for around three years; two years as Deputy Director and then I filled in when the Director died and I became the interim Director for a year and, yes, that was a very interesting time. Fiji was very democratic then. Ratu Mara was the leading politician of the South Pacific region.

SO: Can you comment on the Troika that tried to deal with the Zimbabwe issue in 2002-2003?

JS: The comment would be that I think they did the right thing. There was some element of whether John Howard exerted undue influence on his fellow Troika members but really what choice did they have? The elections in Zimbabwe in 2002 had been marked by violence and intimidation to an unprecedented degree. I was certainly there and saw it , and

can assure you that was the case. Zimbabwe had stepped outside the bounds of the Harare Principles, ironically, and they did not deserve to remain in the councils of the Commonwealth. They were viewed and the Troika decided just that - they were to be suspended. Events moved on, this was just after I had left, where they were going to be considered at CHOGM, whether that suspension should continue and at that point Zimbabwe decided to quite the Commonwealth.

SO: When I talked to Malcolm Fraser on Friday he underlined very much personal chemistry between heads as being a critical part of international diplomacy. His comments went completely contrary to Henry Kissinger's dictum that "just because you like the guy doesn't mean that you're necessary going to alter his concept of national interest". How much do you think that the personal chemistry between the Troika heads was part of the problem, in that the troika didn't see eye to eye? As well as a need to exert particular pressure on Robert Mugabe to abide by Harare Principles?

JS: The other two members of the Troika were both African and there's always been this comradeship, as it were, between the African heads of government, particularly when it comes to the leaders of the liberation struggle. Now Robert Mugabe is an acknowledged leader of a liberation struggle. He is the last one remaining in office. So Thabo Mbeki of course was at a disadvantage and the Nigerian president, Obasanjo, was also in a little bit of a disadvantage. He had come to power as a result of the democratisation of Nigeria that I've spoken about, so neither of those two was going to take a leading role against Mugabe. The only person who was really able to speak out strongly, I think, was John Howard. I think in the spirit of consensus, if one person felt strongly about something it was very unlikely that his colleagues would stand up in opposition to him. That's my understanding of how it all happened.

SO: Critical remarks have been made about the creation of the Chair in Office role, which of course evolved in your time. Could you reflect on that?

JS: I am not aware of critical remarks. Again, what was the problem?

SO: How far might it be seen to undermine the autonomy and initiative of the Secretary General?

JS: I don't think it eroded the authority of the Secretary General. I mean, that would depend very much on the working relationship of the Secretary General and the Chair. In the short time that I saw it happening it was fine; there weren't any issues.

DB: Is it a problem now, though? I presume the Chair is in Sri Lanka, is that right?

JS: India and Sri Lanka.

HC: Two things: one is I think Julia Guillard is chair in office of the Commonwealth. Because of all sorts of other reasons, which are nothing to do with her or her capacities, but the fact that she was totally pre-occupied with surviving in Australian politics probably means that she was of little use to the Commonwealth. I think she was an early [non]-starter for the Commonwealth in any event, but that's beside the point. The fact that she was so pre-occupied meant the Secretary General probably couldn't, or didn't get much help from her. The current situation where the current Sri Lankan government is tainted by the human rights record I think it might, when only half of the heads of government turned up to the meeting in any event might signal some sort of lack of confidence in the choice of venue and the next chair in office.

JS: It's a bit like the CMAG situation, isn't it? If you want to deflect attention you offer to hold CHOGM. In [Nigeria] they did it and Sri Lanka did it. Who do we get next?

SO: I don't think we can accuse Malta of doing that. They are to be the next hosts.

JS: No, they'll be okay.

SO: Please could I ask you a little more about the evolution of 'good offices' during your time as head of Political Affairs? Was there a clear framework of action? Was there a clear methodology or was it a much more a haphazard response to international events?

JS: I think it was a response to events and once again the success or otherwise of it depended entirely on the level of attention it received from the Secretary General.

SO: You are placing the emphasis then on very much the Secretary General and the Office of the Secretary General, rather than Political Affairs. Was there a system of writing summaries and trying to spot potential flash points across the Commonwealth?

JS: We didn't try to spot flash points in my time. They were fairly apparent and it was something handled very closely by the Secretary General. We did have an officer in Political Affairs Division who was devoted mainly to good offices activities but it was really a support role. It was arranging the despatch of a representative of the Secretary General. It wasn't telling the Secretary General that he should appoint somebody in a particular area, like Fiji or Bangladesh or Nigeria. The Secretary General, and I'm talking about Anyaoku, held this pretty close to his chest. As I said, it wasn't really something we did a lot of. It didn't happen too much and it happened sometimes; and Political Affairs division didn't even know about it.

SO: Under new management, under Don McKinnon, was there a sharp change of gear?

JS: No way, no. Unless it slowed down.

MH: Can I make an observation? In terms of the way the various political leaders treat their role in the Commonwealth, I think it is important to recognise that they have also got an eye to a domestic constituency. In many cases you will find, leaders either backing off or going in strong when they know they have got their own domestic constituency supporting them. Now, I think that explains a lot of the differences that you can see as between the 53/54 members when the legitimacy comes from the domestic constituency in many ways and prosecuting that on the international stage becomes particularly important. I know that the leaders that I was associated with, that's where it happened. In the case of Malcolm Fraser, he really did go out on a limb in some cases, and was renowned for that. I think John Howard tried to do that as well, but sometimes the domestic constituency is particularly vocal and therefore the role of the media. [This is] just modern day communications and politics; then within the nation state, as opposed to the average nation state, takes over.

SO: Tony Eggleton makes a comment in Malcolm Fraser's political memoirs saying that he encouraged Malcolm Fraser to push particularly a development agenda and to support human rights, precisely because he felt this would provide a platform for a liberal politician in the international sphere that would play well back home, rather than necessarily responding because of domestic interest.

HC: Malcolm Fraser also said that he pursued the development assistance agenda because it was something that he could do, because everything else he tried to do on foreign policy was objected to by the polity or the civil servants.

SO: There is no single narrative here. It can be a complicated picture.

Jon, you made one comment which Kris Srinivasan had also said: that the Commonwealth doesn't make any impact whatsoever on big issues. In other words, the Commonwealth is a little fish in international affairs; he said this to Matthew Neuhaus who felt very strongly that

in fact the Commonwealth's contribution to conflict mediation was a very important contribution to global affairs. Would you like to comment on that?

MH: I think I am on Kris Srinivasan's side. Did Matthew provide examples?

SO: Matthew was thinking particular on Zimbabwe. And on South Africa, yes.

MH: South Africa is the one example that proves the exception to the rule.

SO: I think Matthew felt that the Secretary General had also offered the possibility of mediation in the Sri Lankan civil war in the 1990s, so the role of good offices had a place as a disinterested mediating factor in other international disputes.

MH: It's a mechanism that exists and can be taken advantage of and perhaps hasn't been utilised as much as it could. Not necessarily because the Secretary General was unwilling to do so, but because he runs into the barrier of the government. After all, the Commonwealth is an association of governments and you can't do much with the government of Sri Lanka. And certainly not Zimbabwe, so you are not welcome. I know the Secretary General in my time tried in Sri Lanka but really it didn't happen because they didn't want a mediator.

SO: What would you feel was the Secretary General's contribution to conflict mediation in the Solomon Islands, or Papua New Guinea, in particular?

MH: Right: in the Solomon Islands, yes that's a good example of where things were done in a positive way. A couple of my colleagues in the Political Affairs Division were very much involved in that, though I must say the choice of Sitivena Rabuka as Secretary General's special representative to persuade a government to restore democracy seemed a little odd at the time, nice guy though!

HC: [laughter] He has repented!

MH: He's a reformed democrat, is he? Well to be honest, he was chosen for a reason but he was an ex-military man who had turned back to democracy to some extent. He was a Melanesian, of course. He could talk to the people in power in the Solomon Islands and he did. I was there with him for a time.

DB: The big problem you say with the Commonwealth - and I agree with you - is that it is a member country organisation and it is very hard unless it's overwhelmingly clear that everybody else agrees with you to take action against a member country. Is it possible for a Secretary General, who has got status and reputation in standing to do that in his or her own right? For example, if we had Kevin Rudd as Secretary General of the Commonwealth or Malcolm Fraser is a good example.

JS: He had a run at it, didn't he?

HC: But he would have been an interventionist...

JS: Of course he would, but, you see, you have actually put your finger on a good point that is relevant today as well and that is the status of the Secretary General. It was in my time and I think in yours, Hugh, that it was understood the Secretary General had to be a former minister of government because he needed to be able to pick up the phone and speak to colleagues on the same level. Now that isn't the case today.

SO: Robert Muldoon felt the Secretary General was just there to take minutes at heads' meetings. Arnold Smith was also told much the same, after the creation of the Secretariat.

HC: I'd like to hear from Michael Wilson, who was there with Arnold Smith. I don't know if Michael would like to say something.

MW: Arnold Smith was a prominent Canadian diplomat, as you know, and he had strong support of Canada in his appointment and generally in his operations. His concentration was on Africa. No one else gave a damn about colonies in anywhere else in the world so the British were polite but a little bit wary. They had a couple of people in the Secretariat who wanted to know almost everything more than they should have known, but Arnold Smith's concentration was on the decolonisation in Africa and so he concentrated on that. When he travelled and I travelled within him around the world, when we got to India and Pakistan and Sri Lanka, etc., they were polite but they weren't very attentive; and occasionally the odd minister would fall asleep when he was talking. So the concentration then was on Africa and on decolonisation in Africa; he had the strong support of Adu, who was a Ghanaian, and he was one of his two deputies; and he had a firm support of Canada government. So he concentrated on that and everything else he had to put up with. The Australians didn't like him, there was no question about that; Haslock when we would write annual reports had to come and counter the meetings because it was the way it happened; he would sit there and he would look sour and he would slap the report that we had spent four months writing on the table, as if to say "Oh, that's rubbish" and behaved accordingly.

The Singapore Prime Minister was convincing and interested and entertaining, but he liked to talk; and so there was a bit of talk from him but he didn't intend anything other than that.

SO: Arnold Smith's particular interest in Africa seems to have come out of the Pearson Commission and its international report which the Secretary General could build upon. I know Canada played a critical role in providing funding in the origins of the CFTC. So there seems to be, as you say, a symbiotic relationship between a Canadian Secretary General and a particularly developmental agenda within a second-tier Commonwealth country.

JS: The concentration on Africa continued in my time, partly because we had an African as a Secretary General, but also because the largest membership was in Africa and many of the major problems, particularly with regard to military governments in non-party states, were in Africa. So it was inevitable that there should be focus on that.

SO: Michael, please if I could go back to your point of the earlier time of Africa and, Jon, your remark about including non-Anglophone, non-former British colonies in the Commonwealth: obviously Mozambique is a prime example of this. I know that Arnold Smith was particularly interested in supporting Mozambique in independence. Were you involved at all or aware of his contacts with the Portuguese government after the Carnation Revolution in 1974?

MW: No, we didn't talk about that, so we concentrated on the British colonies affected in Africa.

SO: Arnold Smith's contact with General Spínola, then Mario Soares and Samora Machel of FRELIMO are very striking. It seems he was also instrumental in guiding developmental funds to Mozambique; the British Labour government were very supportive of this. Did you accompany him to Bangladesh when they were trying to make their bid for independence?

MW: No, I didn't

HC: It was David McDowell who was heavily involved in that.

MW: He had two terms and I was there in his first term.

DB: Mozambique became a member largely at the instigation of Nelson Mandela. He said it would be a good idea and that was that.

SO: Because of the struggle against first Rhodesian UDI and then also apartheid South Africa?

- JS: It was a key Front Line State for many years.
- HC: It was repeated in Mozambique.
- JS: But of course it didn't meet the other qualifications of membership of the Commonwealth and was ignored.
- SO: John, just in conclusion then: would you say that there were major strategic events which set the framework for your work and governed what you did? Or in fact was it precisely because the 1990s was such a time of change in the international system that it meant the Commonwealth itself was challenged as to how it could find a role? When I talked to Max Gaylard in the earlier witness seminar, he was quite emphatic that questions of the end of the Cold War, the Harare Declaration and the drive for good governance provided a post-apartheid role for the Secretariat. But in your view, how much by the later 90s was the Secretariat struggling to find a role, precisely because of shifts in international politics and the international system?
- JS: They were struggling to find a role. I am only speaking about the political area. Of course it was doing all sorts of other things as we've heard, on the economic side, on the technical assistant side, legal and so on, but on the political side we had more than our hands full dealing with crises that were coming up, particularly in Africa and it was an era of military regimes and coups. If there was one thing that we focused on, it was discouraging the military from seizing power in various parts of the world but mainly in Africa, and I think what was successfully done was to shine the spotlight on that this was a bad thing: that military governments were not renowned for their economic expertise, that countries stagnated under military governments, and that opening up the political system ought to be encouraged and was encouraged, certainly by the Commonwealth in those years. I think that a lot of positive things did happen.
- SO: Was the Commonwealth good at getting this good news story out then? We talked earlier about the need for information sharing. Yet for the Commonwealth, it could be said that part of its influence and role is that it operates below the radar, that in fact its lack of visibility has been part of its moral currency and part of its effectiveness. However, to validate it as an international organisation, surely it needs visibility.
- JS: The Commonwealth isn't good at blowing its own trumpet, and in getting its role known. I could give an example: back in 1997, there was a possibility of a military coup in Papua New Guinea. The Commonwealth Secretary General happened to be visiting Canberra and was asked by the Australian government to drop everything on his schedule and fly up to Port Moresby and talk to the military leaders there, which he did. I was with him at the time and there was some very tense discussions. I think that he was able to speak as a person who had experienced military rule in his own country; he laid it on the line that this was not a good idea and that military people should stick to their area of expertise. I think he was influential in preventing that situation from deteriorating and never have I seen him get any credit for that - not from the Australian government, that's for sure. Anyaoku could have made more of it if he'd wanted to. It was by the nature of his role and the nature of the man that he didn't. He didn't blow up his own particular role in that situation.
- SO: Thank you very much for answering my question very effectively. Are there other remarks, observations, or questions that anyone would like to put?
- DB: I just wonder, we have used the term Commonwealth fairly loosely in this discussion, which is quite right because it is a loose concept, but as a Commonwealth brand which means whenever you attach the word 'Commonwealth' to anything, it carries characteristics that each of us might have a different interpretation of: the role of the associations which have the Commonwealth name upon it - the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, journalists, lawyers and so on, who are non-government organisations which are a great strength to the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth is a government heading, and the

Commonwealth Secretariat. Yet they are all different elements of a much bigger picture, so we need to be careful that we don't take the strong points of one and say it applies to the lot.

SO: It seems that as an international association there are pillars of the Commonwealth: the inter-governmental side, there is semi-official Commonwealth of accredited organisations and associations, and the unofficial Commonwealth of other civil society organisations. At the moment, the inter-governmental side - in terms of heads' meetings (I'm thinking of the fall-out from the Sri Lanka CHOGM) and the Secretariat - is seriously challenged. There are clear failures of leadership, which have enormous implications going forward for the choice of the next Secretary General in 2016. That person will be faced with the imperative to reinvigorate and re-energise the Commonwealth brand. But because the Commonwealth is such a broad diverse and complex network, it will be a challenge to choose which aspect or topic area do they focus on?

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much indeed. Thank you very much indeed to Jon for your unique observations [applause], your interest, and the quality of the questions and contributions from the floor. If there are any additional remarks that you would like to send me, please do feel free to do so, and I can add these as an addendum to the transcript. I am keenly aware this is fragile and precious history which is in danger of being lost and this is why we are doing precisely this project. Thank you so very much indeed.

End of seminar.