

CLOSING CEREMONY

Address

by Dr. James A. Maraj
Commonwealth Assistant Secretary-General

As this conference comes to an end, it is perhaps a time for commendation and congratulation. In some ways it is also a time for reflection and for evaluation. Less than two weeks ago, Mr. Minister, when this conference was opened by your colleague, I indicated that it was essentially of an exploratory nature, that we did not expect to move mountains or to make any substantial progress in this difficult area of human relationships. I suppose, at this stage, it would be fair to ask what we have achieved.

In so far as the seminar goes, and in so far as reports can reflect the content and nature of the discussions, then my colleagues and I have attempted to put together a draft report which we circulated this morning and which I trust does justice to the deliberations. In a larger sense, however, I am confident that the participants in the meeting have experienced a certain degree of personal and professional growth. They have, too, developed some clearer insights into what the various dimensions of pluralism might be and I believe that they perhaps now appreciate all the more some of the complexities of government and the difficulties of development strategies. I feel too, Sir, that there has been enhanced international understanding. More than that, we have emerged with an action programme in which there are some half dozen specific projects which the Commonwealth Secretariat has been asked to undertake.

Mr. Minister, at this stage I must note that under the Commonwealth Youth Programme, through which this particular seminar was mounted, there is provision for the support of programmes at national level. I should like to extend to your Ministry the opportunity to develop in your own community a few projects orientated towards the further development of this society, which people might undertake, cutting across the divides of culture, or of race, or of language. If your Ministry would accept this offer and put before us two or three projects within the next few weeks the Commonwealth Secretariat would be happy to respond positively.

Mr. Minister, it is now my pleasure to thank the Government and people of this country, your own Ministry and you personally, Sir, for the tremendous interest which you have shown in our work and for allowing us to experience at first hand the full range of Mauritian hospitality. To your Parliamentary Secretary also, I should like to express a personal word of thanks; Mr. Padayachy, your Permanent Secretary, Mr. Pyneeandee and the staff of the Youth Service, as well as all the liaison officers, have been more than generous with their time. I would have done less than justice, Mr. Minister, if I did not say a word of thanks to the University which, as I said before, has at considerable inconvenience accommodated us for this meeting.

It is always a difficult task, when exercises of this kind come to an end, to identify all the people who have contributed to its success. If I were to give you their names this would perhaps occupy another hour, so I will not, but we feel much in their debt and, in so far as we have succeeded, it is very largely due to the efforts of those who have remained unseen and sometimes unsung.

Mr. Chairman, the lead speakers to this seminar made a most significant contribution to it and I would like on behalf of the Secretariat to thank very warmly Prof. Braithwaite and Mr. Napier on the pluralism issues and Mr. Jagatsingh and Mr. McRobie for their specific contributions in the development field.

Mr. Minister, one of the prime outcomes of this meeting was a recognition that no development strategy will work unless it takes into account the nature of the society for which it is intended, the mixes in that society, and indeed the vicissitudes of that society. Young people who are anxious to see reform might wish to take this into account and to recognise the need to move from the area of critique to the area of creativity. It is all too easy to be critical. This does not require any special talent. In the final analysis it is what has been achieved at the end of the day that really matters. I have heard it said that the ultimate purpose of education is service to one's people. Indeed, the really well educated are those whose service to their fellow men is accompanied by a deep and abiding humility.

Mr. Minister, you are well known here both for your devoted service to your community and your extreme humility. We are pleased to have you with us and I now invite you to bring our meeting to a formal close.