Voice File Name: COHP Dorienne Rowan-Campbell

Key

SO: Sue Onslow

DRC: Dorienne Rowan-Campbell

SO: Sue Onslow talking to Dorienne Rowan-Campbell in Jamaica on Tuesday, 20 January 2015. Dorienne, thank you very much indeed for agreeing to take part in this oral history project. I wonder if you could begin, please, by reflecting in a general way on how you viewed the Commonwealth before you came to Marlborough House as the first Director of Women in Development at the Commonwealth Secretariat.

DRC: That's really quite easy, because unlike maybe a lot of people who hadn't thought about the Commonwealth, I had. I'd been fascinated with the idea of 'Commonwealth', because I'd been involved in its literature. It started when I was about 11 or 12 and I began to read Jamaican and West Indian literature and then I strayed further afield. So by the time I was about 14-15, I was reading material from other Commonwealth countries: because you were reading about a type of colonial experience that resonated with you, because it was so very like what you'd grown up with. When I went to university, I was very lucky because I had one professor who specialised in Commonwealth literature and so I did Commonwealth literature with him. So, from a very early age, I was exploring the idea of how imperialism had touched numbers of colonial lives, but I'd been thinking about it from the point of view of literature and from the point of view of the experiences that those people had lived through and finding it fascinating.

SO: You seem to be describing 'an acculturation', rather than being socialised into the Commonwealth as others from different backgrounds had experienced?

DRC: Yes and it was interesting because I remember seeing the Queen when she had her first visit her and then at her Coronation. My grandfather and grandmother were invited guests to, whatever it was they were invited to [DRC: Post coronation function for commonwealth persons. They met the Queen.], because I remember seeing my grandmother in the dress that was made, which was a deep blue with gold, long dress and one shouldered, and it was some special Commonwealth event that they'd been invited to. They were visiting London. So it was those sorts of things that build up. I must say that I didn't have a particular passion for royalty. I was interested, because I'm interested in history and I'm interested in literature; but I remember when I was working in media in Canada, Prince Charles had his first solo visit and I stood with a group of very naughty Quebecois journalists and I said to them, 'Watch, you will notice that every time anybody meets royalty, their head goes to one side or the other side. They never keep their head straight.' So we were having a count, six to one side, two to the other.

[Laughter]

SO: I've never thought of that, but you're absolutely right!

DRC: They said, 'How did you know?' I said, 'Because I watch,' because, for instance, my mother was ill at Independence and my father was the resident magistrate in Spanish Town; so he had to go formally to meet Princess Margaret and he took me along as consort. So I counted then too. I also found that I really liked Prince Charles. I felt very sorry for him, because he looked very shy. It was his first solo and we were there laughing at everybody's hoopla from a distance, but then he came over to me and he said, 'A woman in the press gallery?' So I said, 'Yes, it's not very easy.' He said, 'Do you find it frustrating?' and there was a gasp from all the Tory hatted ladies.

SO: But that's a very interesting question for you.

DRC: It was and I said to him, 'Yes.' It was very difficult and at first when my application went in, it was turned down and it was my whole floor that said, 'She is a practising journalist and you will let her in.' There were about four women members of the press gallery at that time and I was working for the Mexican News Agency in Canada. So he said, 'You're a Jamaican in Canada, working for

the Mexican News Agency?' So we had this discussion, but it was interesting that his first question was about being a woman in a very male dominated trade.

SO: That was very perceptive of him.

DRC: Well, that's why I always have felt that there was so much more to him than the popular press wanted. I think he believed in things and I think he followed through on his beliefs, whether people laughed or not, and I respect that. Of course, when he stopped talking to me, some old ladies came up and they said, 'My dear, you should have curtsied.' I said, 'Oh, I never curtsey to strange men.'

SO: *[Laughter]* Dorienne, how did you move from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, CBC, then to working for the Commonwealth?

DRC: Well, it was a kind of zig-zag motion. In the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation I'd been working a lot on innovation and I had been very, very active in working on improving the situation of women within the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. At that time most corporations were very prejudiced and there was a lot of male bias. Just an example, if you were appointed as a station manager in the north and you were a woman, your way got paid, but not your family and you got no family allowance; but if you were a man, the whole family's way was paid and you got a family allowance. So we worked to change things like that.

SO: Excuse me, you're talking about the late 1970s? That there was this level and type of inequality?

DRC: Yes, and we had the launching pad of Mexico in 1975 and then the ‘Decade for Women’. So I was very involved in women's issues. I was one of the people who for the women's groups in CBC went across the country to do an examination of working situation, and then the Women of Canada made their voice heard to the President saying, ‘The way we are portrayed is disgraceful. It's historically incorrect and we think it's time the portrayal of women in CBC improved.’ So the President called me and another person and said, 'We're going to have a three day conference. I'd like you to prepare it.' So we had a three-day conference where we looked at the psychological implications, and the cultural implications; and I actually did a study on the news. I looked at the news for two months. We recorded it and we did an analysis of how issues that were important issues which needed to be covered, for both men and women, but from particularly the

women's perspective was important information, whether it was there or it wasn't, cross-checked with the newspapers and how they covered and then looked at how the women were visually treated. So it wasn't just content analysis, it was visual content analysis, and it turned out to be one of the first kind of visual content analyses on women at all. When we were finished, although I had a lot of arguments with the President, he then appointment me as Coordinator of the Portrayal of Women. My task was to get that message out, that change was necessary, to the production management across the country. It was interesting at that time. CBC was the world's largest broadcaster. It broadcast fully in English and French. It broadcast in the north, in northern languages, and it had a world service, a small one…

SO: You're talking about First Nation languages?

DRC: Yes and Inuit, and it was both radio and television. So CNN and Al Jazeera and BBC World have far out-stripped it, but at that time it was the world's largest broadcaster. So I was working on that.

SO: How then did you come to be appointed to ComSec? Do you know much about the politics of your appointment?

DRC: Well, actually, yes I do. One of the things was that, I guess a thing was circularised to governments and the status of Women of Canada and they said, 'Well, who could we nominate?' and this person said, 'Dorienne.' Somebody said, 'But she's not an economist' and they said, 'But you don't need an economist, you need someone like Dorienne.' So they said to me, 'Listen, you've got to get a CV to us tonight.' So I did and they sent it off, and I didn't think very much about it; and then I heard I'd been shortlisted and I was flown to London for the interview. It was a very interesting interview.

SO: In what way?

DRC: Well, there were people on the panel who clearly did not want a woman. They didn't want anybody appointed. So I'd be asked a question and I'd say, 'Well, to answer that question, I need to put it in context' and one of the people who was there said, 'Well, just hurry up, hurry up.' Actually Emeka said, 'She's been asked here and she has told you she needs to put that answer in context, and she will.' So it was quite interesting, because there was someone from ODA [UK Official

Development Assistance], there were people representing a High Commission or two and there were ComSec people; but the Assistant Secretary General, to whom I would eventually report, clearly was not keen on having me and I don't think he was keen on having anybody.

SO: Did you find out how much the creation of this particular position had come from the input of the Canadian Government, a Canadian Premier? Or was it the initiative of the Secretary General?

DRC: Well, it was interesting. They had done a study. Elizabeth Reid had done a study and had made recommendations, so it had been raised at an earlier Heads of Government meeting and then at the Heads of Government meeting prior to…somewhat towards the end, I gather, Michael Manley says, 'My wife will kill me if I don't ask questions about Women and Development', which is how it got onto the agenda. It was then decided that they should hire somebody, I think, ‘to get these people off our backs. We'll hire somebody and they won't have very much to do, but we'll have done the right thing.’ That's my feeling. So I thought, ‘Right. That's okay, if that's how you read it. That's fine.’ Subversion is a fine thing.

SO: It certainly is. Any office is political. You've already indicated that the Assistant Secretary General, to whom you would have to report as your Director, was resistant.

DRC: He was extremely resistant and he would keep not inviting me to meetings. Well, as I'd been there maybe two months, I knew all the secretaries. It was interesting, because I was not in Marlborough House. I was up the road, around the corner, and I thought, ‘Is this good? Is this bad?’ Then I realised that if you want to have real subversion, you needed to be out from under the view of the public. So people could feel comfortable to wander into my offices, because we shared a floor in Metro House with the CYP [Commonwealth Youth Programme]. So people could be coming to visit the CYP, but they would come to me and they would say, 'You know there's a problem with so and so' and then finally I would get, 'They are having a meeting about so and so at ten o'clock' and I would turn up.

SO: Well, excellent staff work while you were being deeply subversive! You've mentioned in your autobiography and your memoir of this time, of being

determined to focus 'on policy rather than project.' Inevitably there's a fight about money in any organisation.

DRC: There is.

SO: How did you address this question of going for policy rather than project(s), and how did you deal with the money question?

DRC: Well, you know, one of the really good things in a sense about a lot of the work that's done in the Commonwealth Secretariat is that it's not as project biased as a lot of other activities in a lot of development agencies. A lot of them are very consultant driven and they're studies for governments, which related directly to policy. There was a thing called Commission Studies, which was very useful and I decided that what I had to do was, 1) To use what were project funds to do work that enhanced the capacity of the national machinery for women, to deal at the policy rather than the project level. So the first workshop we did was about gaining entry; it was about how do you persuade the people to whom you will report that this is important? How do you infiltrate over all policy with this perspective? What are the skills you need? We had people who had management skills who came with us to these workshops. That's the first set of workshops that we did. It was about gaining the skills to really enter the policy arena, because until that time globally the women's bureaus that I saw were all project-focussed… they would have six women and ten goats, but the agriculture policy was not being impacted. So we had to try and break that mould, to get people to think broader.

SO: These were civil servants?

DRC: All civil servants, because they set up units within whatever ministry.

SO: Did you invite applications?

DRC: *[Talking over]* To the workshops?

SO: Yes.

DRC: We simply said, 'We are going to have this workshop.' We'd send it out to all the Head of the Bureaus. There were some just for Heads of Bureaus, because it

was those skills, and then we had others. So people self-identified in many ways and so that first set of workshops was really about re-thinking what your job is.

SO: Were these specifically regional workshops as well?

DRC: They were regional.

SO: To build networks as well?

DRC: Networks, very much so. The other thing that we did was to try to create experts, because experts are created and there weren't enough women who were created experts. So, for instance, when we were getting ready for Nairobi World Conference on Women…people had to complete the UN questionnaire. For 1985 in Kenya we got people from the region; we took them out of their country. Maybe somebody from Kenya might go to Zimbabwe to help Zimbabwe, and then someone from Zimbabwe might go to Tanzania; and so those people began to be seen as people with expert capacity. Somebody said to me that the first consultancy job she ever had was a job that I gave her at the Commonwealth Secretariat and it steamrolled after that, because unless you're seen as having a skill, and never do it in your own country, you always have to have something international. It began to work.

SO: Is there also that you identified the need to take people, to a degree, out of their comfort zone?

DRC: Very much so, because you don't learn otherwise. And you don't challenge yourself.

SO: Particularly in the politicised culture of administration in a Kenyan environment. You made reference yesterday to having to unpack and then pack up different understandings of dynamics…

DRC: Yes, depending where you came from, who you were, what tribe you were with, the responses would be different, depending on who was in the room. So it was always very exhausting, but it actually worked because there's still a number of people now who started off doing work like that with us. Sarah Longwe is one. A lot of our consultants are people who really went on to become really, really significant in work on women on gender and it's a wonderful feeling.

SO: You're smiling with pleasure as you're telling me this.

DRC: It is good. It really is good.

SO: Did you focus particularly on Zimbabwe as the newest independent state in the Commonwealth?

DRC: They focussed on me. The first time that I went there, I think I became family and so I would get a lot of phone calls says, 'We need help on so and so, what would you advise? Could you come and just be here? We're not asking you to come for long, can you come?''

SO: Were these women Ministers phoning you, or were they actually male Ministers approaching you?

DRC: No, a woman. Women Ministers. I think they just trusted me: the Permanent Secretary, both of them, and the Deputy Permanent Secretary, with three of them, they would always say, 'Look, we need help on this. Can you help? Can you come? Can you do this?' and I would do it. You see, I feel it's very important that when you see a training need you fill it and you do it immediately. So we could very gently do a little training on something and they needed that, because they had never been in that position before. Angelina Makwavarara was the Permanent Secretary, but she had been a matron of a hospital. So she had management skills for running the hospital, but not necessarily the skills that would help her understand the sorts of offers that were coming from countries... and lots of countries. Well, they all want you to do a lot of projects and we were looking at, if you do a project like that, what does it do to your capacity to influence the wider policy? So it was those sorts of questions, because I think that between 1975 and 1985 more money was wasted on women's projects, because they were very small projects. Yes, sometimes those are important, but we had governments and those governments weren't being held to account, because there was never a really focussed attempt to look at policy. Canada was one of the countries that tended to really look at policy. Australia also. New Zealand at first to a lesser extent, and then to a greater extent; and Britain was far, far behind at that time. It was interesting.

SO: That is interesting. Is that because ODA prided itself that it was the premier bilateral developmental agency that Britain was giving to other multi-lateral organisations at the time?

DRC: It could have been, but it could have been that I just found that in Britain there were still… it didn't matter how many women you had struggling to do things, it still wasn't mainstream. They still weren't…

SO: Even with the British Prime Minister, was a woman?

DRC: Particularly.

SO: I'm just identifying the paradox there.

DRC: Exactly. Well, it was interesting because I got a lot of support from people in Britain. The very first formal talk that I was asked to give was by the informal Commonwealth, because it was by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the nurses [the Commonwealth Nurses Federation]. They asked me to look at the whole question or what is this situation? What am I doing and I said to them, 'We have to go back to the 1860s.' They looked quite startled. I said, 'Because in Britain, that was a time when there was an explosion in childbirth.' Yes, you had the Industrial Revolution, but it was the first time that childhood and childbirth became an industry, because you had so many people hired to look at children because women had so many children in that period that suddenly you had a different categorisation of care giving for children. A lot of it starts there with that dominance, because they've now forgotten that women are in the fields. I have a sketch from an 1880s Illustrated Magazine…there showing what women did in the fields and so on. You tended to forget that and you tended to focus on their domestic role and on their child rearing role. So there was a total reorientation and then if you think about the artistic and literary orientation at that time, it was that soft focussed woman.

SO: Yes, rather than a woman as a unit of the political economy?

DRC: Exactly, it was a kind of soft focussed woman.

SO: The 'nurturing female' trope?

DRC: Exactly. They were quite startled that that was where I started and ‘Here we are today. That's why…’

SO: The majority of Commonwealth members were 'late developers' in terms of their economies. So to go back to an earlier period of British industrialisation, you could make that direct analogy?

DRC: And I said, ‘And then what happened was that perspective got exported.’ If you think about Stuart Hall's wife, Catherine, who wrote a very interesting book, which was how women's money was used by their husbands to further their colonial money gathering, because, of course, women didn't own their own money and property. So the accumulation of male wealth a lot of the time came from women. They married them. It's a very interesting work that's she'd done. So it was things like that that we started to talk about and then we'd say, ‘Now here we are, we need to go forward.’

SO: Dorienne, I have so many questions coming out of that. I would like to ask you about Zimbabwe particularly - given the economic tumult in the country post 2000, and the aspect of women and land. Was that also part of your work in the post-1980 era, to discuss this issue?

DRC: It was part of the discussion every single time, because I thought that that was critical and I talked about it in the Women's Ministry. There were two things: there was a legal reform which was going on, because if you realise it, chiefs were still left with a great deal of power and the Chiefs were very traditional. So my questions were, ‘The chiefs have got this. Where do you stand as women and how are the rights that you want to accumulate protected? What do you need to do in terms of legal reform and in terms of awareness on rights?’ So we talked about those sorts of issues. The other thing was the question of the ownership of land, the rights to land and how do you reconcile tribal ownership in a traditional society where women didn't have those rights…

SO: Tribal ownership, or tribal allocation of land?

DRC: Well, tribal allocation, but then where women didn't have kind of individual rights or group rights necessarily, but maybe use usufructuary rights and how do we move past that. In fact, I had many discussions with Robert Mugabe himself about that and he'd say, ‘It's too early to move on land reform.’

SO: Why did Mugabe say that? Did he give an explanation of why?

DRC: Yes, he said that he felt that the whites in the country needed to feel that they were part of the whole process and that later on you could adjust. I thought that was a mature [way of looking at it], but it certainly didn't turn out that way.

SO: Not indeed.

DRC: In fact, Zimbabwe's one of my heartbreaks. I feel guilty. I know I didn't do it purposely…but I felt guilty.

SO: I tell my students that if you're looking at Zimbabwe and the question of land, you mustn't make a teleological connection of the Lancaster House settlement in 1980 to the events of 2000 and the messy fast track land reform.

DRC: No, and so I thought there was a rational reason of making everybody feel as if the new Zimbabwe was theirs.

SO: Yes and everybody had a stake in the state.

DRC: Exactly and that you could negotiate, but there certainly wasn't any negotiations. That for me was a heartbreak. Because there was the opportunity to negotiate.

SO: Were you aware of the violence in Matabeleland in Zimbabwe in 1982 to 1985/86?

DRC: Yes, but it was very silent.

SO: In what way was it 'silent?'

DRC: Well, you didn't hear about it, you know. It was reported in the press, but the Commonwealth didn't talk about it. I would talk about it and say, 'What are you going to do about this? How do you bring these people together?' but it was not a subject that the government wanted to talk about. It was not a subject that the Ministry wanted to talk about. It was something that I could talk about with other

friends within Zimbabwe that I had made and there wasn't GOZ or Ministry appreciation of the issue and not even a voiced concern…

SO: Were you raising it within the Secretariat, saying, 'This is something that the Commonwealth should act on?'

DRC: I talked about it with the Legal Division at one point, with Jeremy [Pope]. I said, 'I'm disturbed by this, but what do we as Commonwealth do?' There are many things that happen inside a country that you're told; for instance, I was distraught when I saw what was happening in Brixton [the Brixton riots] and I was told that as Commonwealth you can't raise your voice about this at all in Britain because you don't have that stand…**I**t was something quite similar, so you really didn't know. I was never very sure…I was never assured, should I say, of what the role of the Commonwealth ought to be. There are things that I think you ought to talk out on and I spoke out. I would tell the Ministry what I thought. I said, 'You know, this is a very serious situation, because all the things that you're working towards will be despoiled eventually.'

SO: Dorienne, about twenty minutes ago you shifted seamlessly from saying 'I' to 'we.' How did you build your team?

DRC: Well, I like teams. I think teams work best. So at first I only had one person. We were a team and she was very funny. She was Chinese from Malaysia, from Penang, and one day I came back to the office and she handed me this note it said, 'DIME Miriam Dell' from New Zealand called for an appointment. It was Dame Miriam Dell.

This colleague was very helpful, because she helped me understand the Secretariat, how it worked, what was done, who did what and she also had this calculator in her brain. So finally she became our admin officer and she could tell you within a ha'penny how much money you had, what was left to be spent. She was also quite good at finding out what other people had and what they were not going to spend, so that we had a number of activities. I'd say, 'Well, I can do this in two weeks.'

SO: Oh, so you had projects ready to go?

DRC: *We* had activities ready to go, yes.

SO: That must have been enormously frustrating for your more, slow footed, male colleagues?

DRC: I don't know if it was enormously frustrating. They wondered how we kept grabbing all this money.

SO: So this was operating at Director level?

DRC: Emeka would have a meeting half way through [the financial year] and find out where we were. Then he'd say, ‘Oh, well, you're not going to be able to spend that this year.’ ‘Yes but I can. This country has said they want to do this. It'll cost so much. I've got it all here.’

SO: Was there any, shall we say, tidying up of the budget lines without actually assessing whether projects or programmes were appropriate to be cut at a particular point, or not?

DRC: I was quite stunned actually at my first meeting. They didn't seem to do anything. They didn't seem to do any planning. You gave a list of things that you were going to do within this year and there wasn't really a good rationale, I didn't feel. Yes, you might have been having a Minsters' meeting, so something was preparation for a Ministers' meeting, but quite often I didn’t see it.

SO: You mentioned yesterday there was one particular occasion when one of your activities was cut, with little or no warning.

DRC: It was, absolutely cut. I had put it in and it was work on Violence Against Women and I was simply informed that it was cut, because it wasn't seen as important. I think that that is the most important work that we did in the Commonwealth Secretariat, because we shifted the orientation of the UN from peace in the home, peace in the country, peace in the world.

SO: You make it sound a little like Miss Congeniality and the mantra of ‘World Peace.’

DRC: It was 'World Peace!' If you look at 1975: the Peace Agenda was focussed through peace in the family and women in that role and then on up to policy and

international levels. Not saying the family is not important but for us it was to become a critical development on human rights issues. The work that we did was taken on by the UN and the consultants we hired were taken on by the UN also. So I think we really made a contribution there, but it wasn't seen as being important. Then Anne Hercus who was then the Minister of Social Welfare, Police and Women's Affairs 1984-87 for New Zealand came by to visit us and she said, 'How are you getting on?' I said, 'Well, we just lost the little bit of money we had for commissioned studies on Violence Against Women' and she said, 'Don't worry about it' and by the time she left Emeka's office, it was back.

SO: The power of a formidable woman.

DRC: Yes it was. I had real country support from countries in the Commonwealth. It was heart-warming the level of support that I had from my Ministers and Permanent Secretaries.

SO: Were you seen as a Canadian? A Jamaican? I'm just wondering whether others perceived you as coming from any particular national background. I know in your biography you mention very much about the Commonwealth being your family and that it was 'so comfortable,' because you didn't have to decide which was which.

DRC: You see, I kind of looked like people in most jurisdictions. When you're working with women…Okay, you go to Kenya and they think you're coastal, so by the time they've opened up and you're not, it's fine. I'm in Tanzania and they know I come from Zanzibar. I'm in Ethiopia, and they know I'm a new prostitute.

SO: Oh, really?

DRC: Yes. So it was interesting and in India, they know I'm Indian, there was no question about it. And Bangladesh also.

SO: I'm always amused by what I can see others perceiving and pigeon-holing me.

DRC: The first time that I went to India actually, which was before I went to the Secretariat. I landed in the middle of the night, or the morning, in Mumbai and the guy said to me, 'Canadian passport, but you're Indian.' I said, 'No I'm not Indian.

My great grandparents…' He said, 'But you're Indian.' I said, 'No I'm not.' I was very surprised that everybody in Bangladesh thought I was Bangladeshi and when I went back to India thought I was Indian. But it's nice, because it means they talk to you and by the time they've talked to you, you've opened dialogue, that's really what's important, because it was that dialogue in the Commonwealth, that shared understanding of the dialogue that we had, that we could laugh about. How the schools were run or those of us who went to boarding school would all laugh about what it was like at boarding school. It's that common element that binds you together, which I've never found in non-Commonwealth countries to the same extent.

SO: Dorienne, please could I just ask you, how much work or liaising did your Women and Development Programme have with CFTC, and the Technical Assistants Group?

DRC: A lot. Mike Faber was very supportive. He was very supportive also because, he asked the question about would I put quotas and penalties in place for things for CFTC? And I said, 'No. No, I didn't really think that was the way to go. I think what you had to do is influence the way that people thought. It was more and more, 'You must have six women standing on one foot to do some…' so no. He looked very relieved. I think Elizabeth Reid had suggested that there should be quotas. You really want to influence the system and it's systemic change that you're looking for. It's not window dressing.

SO: Yes, that there should be no tokenism.

DRC: No. It takes longer, but that's where it anchors and if you can build capacity of people in the countries to do that type of work, then you have to leave it with the country, but at least you'll know that may be you've got ten people who have critical skills to be able to push on their own. Then we'd have the oversight from Heads of Government who'd ask questions about what was done and what was not done.

SO: So your programme had to prepare a bi-annual contribution to go to Heads of Government?

DRC: Yes, in a sense. The first time…I don't think Heads of Government had much idea about what we were going to do. They had a Director and they had ‘a Senior Documentalist.’

SO: What was that?

DRC: I have no idea. I didn't worry about it in the least, because I knew I wasn't running a library. If they wanted to call it ‘Senior Documentalist’, that's fine, I just changed the terms of reference. So the position was a Senior Documentalist. Now the Commonwealth did one really very useful thing: they asked me to go to Copenhagen and to represent them. So Patsy Robertson and I went and it gave me an opportunity to introduce myself to Commonwealth countries and to their delegations and to say, what do you want this position to do? What do you want? What are you priorities for action from the Commonwealth?

SO: What was the occasion?

DRC: That was the 1980 Women's Conference in Copenhagen. So it was a mid-decade conference. So I had consultations with all the regions where we had get-togethers and we talked and I said, 'What's your vision? What do you think?' and nobody said, ‘We want a Senior Documentalist to write us letters.’ So I thought, I don't know what that is, but maybe Elizabeth Reid thought that that's what we needed. It was certainly not what I thought.

SO: But it did not matter. You had a slot at the Heads of Government Meeting.

DRC: We had a slot, exactly, and I got a New Zealander who was as much of an anarchist as I was. So we smiled and she was a great Senior Documentalist.

SO: I think you should be called a ‘syndicalist!’ They believe in direct action.

DRC: Yes, so Mary was wonderful, because she was a Senior Documentalist. Yes, we did collect information because we wanted to be able to share information in the Commonwealth Secretariat to make certain that people had information. We didn't do a kind of newsletter called ‘Linked In’ until much later and we'd just get it out to the Bureau so they would know what we were doing. The more important things, I found, were that there were real gaps in information. So that was important in terms of…it wasn't a documentalist; it was making certain they knew

what was happening. So one way that we did that was to develop a calendar and it was a calendar for Action on Women's Issues. The other thing that I realised very early on was that women needed some key points if they were going to try to influence policy or the policy papers that went to the UN or went to other meetings. So we did this Calendar for Commonwealth Action; it would say, on 15 June 19-whatever there's going to be a meeting on forestry. Now these are the issues that you can raise. These issues relate to women, the policy issues.

SO: These were briefing books?

DRC: Yes, I'll get one and show you, and so because people didn't know far enough in advance which meetings came up, they would be asked by Foreign Affairs two days before, 'Have you got anything to say?' So we felt they needed prior preparation, so we did those. I guess that was a documentalist function, but it was useful, because it was a practical handbook and you'd say these are the sorts of issues you can raise. These are the questions. You might need to get this type of data; it was also hand-holding from a distance, because a lot of people had never been exposed to that. it was usually, 'Can we get funding from USAID for a project for women to get more silkworms so that this group can do…' you know, that kind of thing and get new looms - which is very hands off, but it didn't go back to the policies.

SO: Did you regard this as capacity building? Empowering women civil servants to ensure that the gender aspect of their particular responsibilities got brought to the fore?

DRC: It gets into everything. So that was what we tried to do and that was one way of doing that. In preparation for Nairobi in 1985 we began to understand that. Nairobi was the end of the decade conference and then after that came Beijing. So we were going to be evaluating everything that had happened, but we realised that things like the convention on the elimination on all forms of discrimination against women, we needed to put it in plain language and give examples. So we did some kits so that they could understand and they could share in the Commonwealth. And we did a book on violence against women, called Breaking the Silence.

SO: Dorienne, how much did you feel a sense of frustration, though, that the Commonwealth Secretariat and indeed the Commonwealth was fixated more on process than progress?

DRC: You just ignore it. Just ignore it. You did what you could when you could and you keep going. It was interesting; it was Moni Malhoutra who said to me, 'I've never been to a UN meeting where, when you go to pick up your documentation, they say, ‘Hi, Commonwealth', because they knew us.

SO: You had a USP?

DRC: He said, 'You know, the Women and Development has a presence.' Well, I thought that was what the Secretary General had told us, because I thought the most useful thing [Ramphal] said, and he said a lot of useful things; but to me was that ‘the Commonwealth could not negotiate for the world, but it could help the world to negotiate.’ I still think that that's a very, very important role and one that we've forgotten. I would say that I've been embarrassed at our lack of helping anybody to negotiate. It's as if there's no vision of that vast potential of being able to reach across the table and say, ‘Hello brother, hello sister. We have this similar background. We know what you mean, but could we think of this in a different way?’ It's not there.

SO: How committed was Sonny Ramphal as Secretary General to the particular area of your work? He has been given credit for the creation of this post, because he identified that there was a need to focus on gendered aspects. Is that a fair recollection of what actually happened?

DRC: It's not my recollection. I think he went along with current thinking, but I never ever got the feeling that he'd got up to bat for it particularly. I did once tell him that my job was to do and his job was to back me up in my doing, and to say the right things when I told him to say it.

SO: And did he?

DRC: Sometimes. We had an argument once because he wanted to say certain things at the Women's Meeting in Zimbabwe and I said, 'SG, they do not want to hear that. They want to know this, this, this, this, this' and he didn't listen to me and so

his speech was not as well received as Robert Mugabe's because Mugabe said all the things that they wanted to hear.

SO: Yes. Please could I ask you about Canada? As one of the 'ABC' countries, Canadian governments were one of the three principal financial contributors to the Secretariat and had a particular role in leading CFTC. Did you use that Canadian dimension?

DRC: It was greatly supportive. It really was, because I had real, what we would call in Jamaica, 'backative' from the status of women in Canada. They were there behind me and beside me the whole way. I could appeal to them. I could talk to them. I could bat ideas around with them. I found that the CFTC, after Mike Faber went…he was a Canadian and he was very supportive and he wasn't at all challenged by having lots of women. When I first went there there was Carolyn McAskie who has since gone on to the Canadian foreign service. Carolyn was one of the people who helped me sort out the Secretariat as to what they thought was important and what they didn't think was important, and what they normally did. Patsy Robertson also. You know, a lot of people there are your sounding boards and they'd been there before me, they knew the organisation and they could help you ring the changes that had to be made.

SO: I'm was just thinking, of the particular role of Media and Information Division: the importance of getting attention on the work you were doing.

DRC: That actually was fortune, it was kind of serendipitous. I'd done a lot of work on innovation in media and I'd done all this work on women and ITN. The women there asked me to come and talk and I did and, of course, there were BBC and there were other people there. So they all met me and then the phones started to ring. I think that I was on the World Service about every other week on a whole range of programmes and Anna Rayburn did about an hour programme on what we were doing. I got a lot of media coverage and a lot of the World Service was doing out to the people who we wanted to talk to and the Caribbean Service interviewed me too. So having been a journalist was a very good thing, and they'd pay me and I'd say, 'You shouldn't. I'm no longer your journalist' but it was good because it went into our entertainment budget. So we were able to put up people coming from overseas to come into meetings that they wouldn't have been able to come to, because some women got an opportunity to travel, say to the UN in New York, and I would say, 'If you can route yourself through London,

you can stay with me. Can you take two days so that we have a little time to develop some of these ideas that you've raised?' and that worked very well. So I had a hotel and I had this rotation. The team in the office knew everybody, so they had a face to the changes they were trying to make and they invested in that.

SO: Because you provided solidarity?

DRC: Yes, but they really invested in that.

SO: Did you also use the platform of the UN? I'm aware the Commonwealth had by then acquired Observer status, and they were opening up a small states office there.

DRC: Not yet. They hadn't, they were in New York. We met, because we were women, in Vienna, but what happened was that in Vienna we had a Commonwealth caucus, which is not allowed in New York. But we had one and we would have a meeting. The preparatory meetings for the conferences were highly fraught. There was a real North/South divide. There was a real US 'Us and Them.' So having Australia, Canada and New Zealand and Britain in that camp and virtually the rest in G77 meant that we were a crossroads and we could sit down together and strategize about what was it we agreed on together. The messages could go back and forth.

SO: I've heard it said that the G77 might find that the Commonwealth position was not to their liking, because it was more moderate, it was more consensual and that the G77 felt that there was a degree of selling out from rather than opting for more extreme position. That there was a fear their negotiating platform would be…

DRC: *[Talking over]* Would be weakened?

SO: Yes.

DRC: Well, it was interesting, because when we were preparing for Nairobi and I said to the Commonwealth, 'We need an officials' meeting. Other people have officials' meetings, we need one. We need an officials' meeting because it is capitals that make decisions about what you can and cannot move on a conference and so we

need this to agree what are the key elements of a Commonwealth platform, so that we can proceed and support each other and understand each other's standing on it.' We then brought two Kenyans to London and they were attached to us in terms of preparing, helping to prepare documentation, understanding how the UN system worked and they worked with us. Then they went back to be part of the Kenyan team for the World meeting and then Kenya said they would like us to come with a team to the meeting. They gave us an office, they gave us secretaries, they gave us a car, they gave us a driver and that's the first time that's ever happened. They expected that we were going to make this conference work for them and then I was invited to their briefings. If there was a problem, they would come to me and they'd say, 'Can you help?' and we would have a kind of Commonwealth focus and we'd actually done…We'd got people there two days before from some of the island states and some of the smaller states who had very small delegations and we'd used Lucille Mair [a Jamaican who was SG for the Copenhagen World Conference] and one or two other people to do a training programme so that the Small States understood what does the first committee do and the second committee and how do you structure [the meeting]. Then we had staff. I had taken, I think probably five or six of us to Kenya, but we had people who would help people write resolutions. So it was a hand-holding exercise, particularly in support of small states. Because you know, you're only one person, you can't be in every committee, so how do you prioritise? Is there something you need to say? How do you say it? How do you get it in when you're not there?

So we'd done some training on that and then they could come to us for help. We were there to do that for them and one of the other nice things was that the Dutch…you know there was this whole myth of their national machinery. We had done two books, one was called *Ladies in Limbo.* The second, *Ladies in Limbo Revisited.* It was based on the Caribbean experience of national machinery and they were ladies in limbo, because they weren't owned by anybody and the Permanent Secretaries didn't seem to know what they were supposed to do. We had the Permanent Secretaries at the meeting as well, and their perception and the perceptions of the Bureau, which was to bring them together and we did *Ladies in Limbo*. We did the *Ladies in Limbo* '80, '81 and the other one afterwards, but the Netherlands paid for copies of Commonwealth publications to go to everybody who came to Nairobi. They said, ‘This is an excellent document;’ and they paid for it and they did the printing. They all went to Nairobi as documents for people attending the UN Conference, so there were thousands.

SO: So there was really cross-fertilisation of ideas and support?

DRC: Yes, and I got invited to OECD meetings.

SO: How did you manage that?

DRC: Well, I'm Canadian, aren't I? It was interesting. They would invite me to come and talk about something, but I could go as an observer. Yes they were very supportive and it really came through the Netherlands and Canada, who gave a lot of support to that. So we had quite a good profile. I have been disappointed to see that that that profile hasn't been continued, because working in partnership is so much stronger than trying to do something just on your own.

SO: Yes, you shout with a louder voice. What about your interaction with the Commonwealth Foundation?

DRC: They were also very supportive. Not just the women there, but within Britain we recognised that if you wanted some kind of academic recognition then you probably needed to start in Britain, because so many people went to Britain for further studies. So I worked very closely with the Institute of Development Studies at Sussex.

SO: When Mike Faber was Director there?

DRC: Yes, but it was really Kate Young who was the one that I worked most with, and then we worked also with Caroline Moser at the Development and Planning Unit (DPU) at London University. Caroline subsequently went to the World Bank, but they were the big thinkers on Women and Development and gender issues in Britain. So we found a partnership with them. I would go and lecture on policies at DPU and also at IDS. At IDS, we pulled together a course called Women, Men and Development and the Commonwealth Foundation gave some scholarships, or supported Commonwealth people to come to that programme. They also supported one trainee, as it were, one intern from a region that wanted to have gender studies. We had somebody from the Pacific, we had somebody from East Africa, we had somebody from the Caribbean and the one from the Caribbean actually was really instrumental in helping to develop Gender Development Studies, as they now exist at UWI [University of the West Indies].

SO: Dorienne, would you say that this was an era which saw the gradual rise of civil society within the Commonwealth?

DRC: I would think so, very much so, because before I think it was more the civil society who were involved in Commonwealth were more at the entertainment level, where you would have a dinner or you'd have a tea and celebrate it. This was very much more activist, because the support I had from the Nurses Association, from the Commonwealth Parliamentary, from all those groups. They would come and visit and then there were things like Countrywomen of the World…Oh, 'Dime' Miriam Dell was an Associated Countrywomen of the World Chairperson. So those civil society organisations would very much come and talk to us about what they saw as needs, opportunities, where the linkages could be. Yes, I found that civil society were so interesting and supportive and then there was the 300 Group in Britain.

SO: I'm just struck by the energy with which you're talking, and your emphasis on the networking and the capacity building in the 1980s. Yet, academic international relations specialists describe the 1990s as the decade of the rise of civil society, and its role opening up the international community. You're identifying this process as very much in play in an earlier decade.

DRC: We had to do it, because the only way that you can bring change about for people who are marginalised is that way. I get really irritated every time I hear, 'We're going to empower.' You cannot empower. You create conditions so that people can do their own empowering, but you can't legislate and say, 'Now you're empowered, okay.' It doesn't work that way and so it's a long-term process that you've got to set those stepping stones. You've got to make people want it and you've got to make it seem, at least, in part accessible.

SO: Do you think this is a different process of diplomacy? If you're looking to energize from the grass roots up, you're talking about systemic change, and you're talking again about networks. For the Commonwealth, its trump card are its networks.

DRC: It is, and so we built on that. The support was really wonderful and there was always somebody to moan to when the Commonwealth Secretariat got too much, with something totally stupid going on.

SO: Dorienne, what was your relationship like with what are generally deemed to be the powerhouses within the Secretariat: the Office of the Secretary General and Political Affairs Division?

DRC: The Office of the Secretary General, I didn't have that much to do with. I did use access when I needed it. My title was Director of Women and Development and Advisor to the Secretary General. I played that card when I needed to. 'Don't move on this unless you ask me, because this is something that I know about and you don't', but generally speaking I went about doing my own thing. I didn't really need the Secretary General and once Professor Mochin had left and Moni Malhoutra came into play, Moni was the best thing that ever happened. He's articulate, he has a brilliant mind, he's visionary and he gives you enough rope to hang yourself.

SO: Oh, yes. It would seem as well that he didn't take any prisoners, in that he didn't suffer fools at all.

DRC: No, he's wonderful, but on the other hand, he did teach me one thing. He said, 'Never let the best be the end of you.' That was always a good reminder. I tell myself that sometimes. I was very nervous when he came on, because I just avoided bullshit and did what I wanted to do. Moni's a manager so I couldn't very well do that, but it was the time that the whole Nestle boycott was on: the boycott of milk powder and the amount of children who were dying in developing countries from adulterated milk power in bad water and all that, and then again the lack of breastfeeding. So the Nurses Association had been anxious about this and the Legal Division. And Medical. It was called Medical, you understand, not Health when Ken was there. The Medical Division, so it tells you where the orientation was. They had been in charge of a process of addressing this in developing countries and when I came and I heard it around the meeting table, I said, 'Well, as women are the ones who breastfeed and a lot of the issues revolve around them I think the Women and Development should be included.' So I began to be included and we decided that we were going to have a big meeting in Zimbabwe. Now we were meeting with UNICEF and WHO, ComSec, those three. It wasn't moving forward as fast as I thought: they were going to invite the lawyers and the doctors, and I said, 'No, women are the agents, they have to be there. Not only that, we need to invite those civil society organisations that are working on the issue' and then I said, 'We need trade, people do trade regulation. So we need the NGOs who are involved.' It was about six different groups of

influential players and quite often it's Foreign Affairs or whoever say, ‘This can come in, or not come in’ and so on. So we had a much bigger thing. We had a meeting and Moni Malhoutra was not satisfied at how the Medical Division and the Legal Division were handling it. He said, 'I'm putting Dorienne in charge. She will be the person to lead.' Their mouths fell open. They were very displeased, but I did and we had this huge meeting in Zimbabwe and at the end of the day everybody went home with a draft; so we needed a legal document, which they could refer to in the country. I had sent people around to talk, we'd reviewed the laws. Nigeria had a law, which said that if you didn't breastfeed you'd be locked up. I couldn't believe it! I couldn't believe it!

SO: ***[Laughter]*** **I'm laughing in sheer disbelief.**

DRC: Can you imagine a woman who's given birth, and cannot breastfeed is going to be locked up with her baby in jail? This was the answer to it, right, okay! So it was quite interesting. We had a number of lawyers who had worked on this and they had come out with a draft; and it was reviewed, but we had this cross-sectoral group and I said, ‘We need to set the tone right at the beginning that this is not a talk-shop. It’s about action.’ Do you remember the Johannesburg Market Theatre?

SO: **Yes, I do.**

DRC: Well, they had been training people in Zimbabwe. So we asked if they could kick it off by doing a play about breastfeeding and so they worked with the Ministry for Women to do that - except the pipeline between Mozambique and Zimbabwe was blown up and we had no gas. It was nice: we were on the university campus and we were virtually isolated, because people had to be there. We were all living there and what was wonderful was that they people who were supposed to do the play couldn't come; and do you know, the Women's Ministry took the parts, and they came and they did it.

SO: **Oh, that's wonderful.**

DRC: It was wonderful: because they had all these situations that they worked out about why a woman couldn’t breastfeed, and how they couldn't breastfeed; and all the myths about breastfeeding and the husband doesn't want doesn't want his

wife to, because her breasts are going to fall! People roared with laughter, they applauded and the whole conference was different.

SO: Yes, it would have been!

DRC: And we got a lot of work done…

SO: Excuse me Dorienne, how much do you think it was because women work in a different way, when as part of a group?

DRC: We do, and we did it. And you see, Terurai was there: Joyce Mujuru. There she was, the Minister. I think she even took a little spot in the play. They were so funny. They had to read a lot of what they were doing, because they weren't trained, but it worked. They said, 'Sorry they can't come, because there's no transport. There's no gas.' I thought that was just wonderful. Nobody could go into town and get drunk and not come back. We had lots of beers on campus, but…

SO: But as you say, you had them isolated there. There was no lure of shopping opportunities.

DRC: They could go swimming and it was a nice campus, as we know in Zimbabwe. So we walked up and down. We had a wonderful time.

SO: It sounds very much a girls' boarding school *experience.*

DRC: It was very funny…

SO: Dorienne, how much do you think having the Queen, a woman, that gender aspect to the Head of the Commonwealth, helped your work in any way?

DRC: Well, the very first time that I was introduced to the Queen, Sonny Ramphal said, 'And now I'd like to introduce you to our newest Director and it's quite a different direction.' So she looked at the two men on either side of me and I'm grinning from ear to ear, because I can see that she has not a clue. She said, 'Women and Development?' I said, 'Yes, Women of the Commonwealth want to be a lot more like the Head of the Commonwealth: visible in public life.' So I got this big grin and she hadn't thought about it. She hadn't. She hasn't had to think about it as being a woman in that sense…

SO: But you've remarked that she did listen when you put a particular woman's point of view?

DRC: Yes, and I didn't do it directly. I did it through her staff. She did listen. I find that she listens to the Commonwealth.

SO: You've commented about the secretaries that…

DRC: The secretaries are the ones who really make these conferences run and make them successful; and they're never invited to the cocktail party or whatever, and they were. I was really very pleased, because that's important. That's recognition of the work that you do. It's behind the scenes, but without it, nothing gets done.

SO: It is critical, yes. The other remark you made about the Queen listening, was when you commented [that] hearing 'Rule Britannia' being played by the band on-board the Royal Yacht *Britannia* was outdated. And the message got back.

DRC: Yes it did, because…it was interesting. It wasn't only me. There was a kind of stillness that came over the crowd when it was played in Nassau (in 1985), because I don't remember it being played on the Britannia in Australia at Melbourne.

SO: Dorienne, how long did you work at the Secretariat?

DRC: I went 1980 until 1987. I hadn't intended to stay that long. I thought maybe three years and then realised I couldn't do it in three; so I thought five and then the Ministers said, 'No, no, we need you to stay on because we want to have a Ministers Meeting; and we want these things anchored at Heads of Government who want a plan of action. It's passed at Heads of Government, then you can go.' Much good that did.

SO: Did your team stay?

DRC: They stayed when I left immediately and then they were unhappy about certain aspects of continuing development. They stayed at the Secretariat, most of them…well, two of them didn't. The point is they had the skills. We did training

manuals. For instance, after we'd done these regional training manuals about gaining entry on the issue and about managing women's affairs and general issues and policy interaction, we did manuals. So I said to the team that we had, 'You know, you need to go through some of these exercises so you know what we do. So if anybody asks you, you know. It's not me doing it. We are doing it. So you need to know.' So part of the training was to go through some of the things that we did, explain why we had this, why it went in this order and then some of the exercises we could do, we'd share and we'd do it and they went through it. So I think they were a well-trained team and well equipped to go on. Two of them, Nidhi and Joanna, are working as consultants and Nidhi has started an organisation called Networked Intelligence for Development and actually I'm one of the consultants that work with them. So it's very nice going back. She tells everybody, 'She was my first boss.'

SO: That is nice. One question I should have asked you before I asked you about the end of your time at the Secretariat: did you ever do any work with Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank, on women and microfinancing?

DRC: No, we didn't work with BRAC, because Yunus hadn't really started up at quite such an extent. Let me tell you that the word 'informal sector' was a bad word with our economists. So one of the things that we did was to hold an expert group meeting. The Commonwealth had various ways of doing things. You could have expert groups meetings, you could have commissioned studies and you could have workshops. That's why I'm saying that it wasn't project oriented in that sense, except through CFTC when a government said, 'We want to do this on tourism and so we want somebody to do so and so,' which is a little different. So we had a number of expert group meetings. There were two areas that we really focussed on: one was the whole issue of violence, and the other was informal sector and work for women. So we had done a whole thing on the informal sector and report on it and we did work on cost benefit analysis. How can you use cost benefit analysis? What's the methodology? Can you develop a methodology you can simplify enough so that at policy level people can apply it? These are the sorts of tools that people need if you're going to convince economists.

SO: You don't want a theoretical economist, you need the applied economist. The Mike Fabers of this world.

DRC: Exactly, so we did work on things like that. Interestingly, de Soto wrote *The Other Path*, the Commonwealth got a call from the World Bank saying that he'd written this book on the informal sector in Latin America, but they had been invited to some of the workshops that we'd done on the informal sector and could we send them our background data. Do you know, Judith May Parker had shipped everything that we'd done to dead files.

SO: Oh.

DRC: And you know that dead files go under Carlton House Terrace and nobody can file them. So we weren't able to…I wasn't there. The World Bank phoned me to say did I have copies.

SO: Do you think they were pulped?

DRC: No, they'd leave them there, but they wouldn't know where to find them. They just shove them in a box somewhere. They didn't sort them.

SO: I'm sorry: that sounds like something out of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

DRC: Well, I think she was a raider from the lost ark. She was very angry with me, you see. First of all, she was older than me and she walked about slower than me and she thought that she ought to have been Director and then when she wasn't appointed, but Noor Farida was, she was pissed in the extreme. So it was interesting that the two things that really I felt she wanted to ship off to dead files. So all the economic work that we'd done…and that was important you see, because I had just structured the report on Structural Adjustment and women, I'd just got that set up and I left. I made suggestions as to who should be on that. The work that we did on…and it was good work, because we followed up the work that we had done on informal sector, what worried me was that we had worked for women. Do you know when you go through Zimbabwe, you see all those women selling crochet things to each other, and they're not really making money. They're getting by. So I had had a problem with the whole handicraft industry and the AMCs [the Alternative Marketing Organisations]; we'd done work on that. So we chose the poorest countries in the Commonwealth and we had a meeting of Bangladesh, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Botswana, India, Ghana, I forget the other countries, and we had it at CYP in Chandigar. The only problem was, a lot of the people hadn't had their yellow fever vaccinations, even though you told

them what they needed. Even though you told them, they hadn't had their yellow fever shots and so they had to go into quarantine, so they missed part of it, but it was a live-in situation and we had taken documents. So they had to think. They had to work. We had a library there. We did all sorts of learning activities. CYP in Zambia, right, and the real issue was looking at real work for women. We had field trips as well. In India there was a whole thing of the castes and the structure that they'd put in place for those villages to improve them and the types of work that they had; we had Public Works with us, the Ministry of Labour, all the people who had direct responsibility for job creation…and whatever Ministries created work, to get them to think about work for women. The term was, it's not 'income generating.' We're talking about not income generating, we're talking 'work to change that.' So we had those workshops. So that built on the informal sector, because the informal sector was one part. All that work was packaged along with informal sector and some of the things and that's what was lost, because it was put into Carlton House Terrace.

SO: So it was a wealth of institutional knowledge.

DRC: Exactly, and it was breaking ground because changing the ideas from 'income generation' to…only now we use the term 'wealth creation,' which is not quite the same thing as simply getting work that's remunerated at good rates. It's a case of opening up how public works hires, how fruitful work is done, all those sorts of things, which put a different orientation on it. They were good workshops. When I got to Zambia I found that they were a little disorganised and we didn't have the transport and things that we needed, but my really subversive group was a group…do you remember a report that the World Bank did which said Africa had the worst civil services in the world?

SO: Yes, I do.

DRC: Well, it was the most wonderful report ever. I said to Canada, 'You know Management for Change? Couldn't you fund us to do some work there?' So CIDA's Management for Change programme, we partnered with ESAMI [Eastern and Southern Africa Management Institute] in Tanzania, and its partner in Cameroon. What we did was we got women from Permanent Secretary to Director level and they came for about an eight/ten-day workshop, but we did a training of trainers first and a partnering hands-on with the staff of ESAMI, so that they could take on-board what we'd done. We also worked with the British Civil

Service College. They were a part of the team. We got people from ECA, ESAMI, all those, to come to London and they worked with the people from the British Civil Service College. They went through part of what Pauline had radically brought into play there, which shocked them all. Then we developed this programme with the Indian Institute of Management and Amedabad, with ASAMI, with the British Civil Service College and it was for senior women managers in African civil services. Then we ran one in the Caribbean as well. We just didn't do one in the Pacific. I could never write the whole manual, because a lot of it was about subversion - how do you take the situation in which you work and yet turn it to the advantage of other women. So the Tanzanians said, no problem, because you're all supposed to have a women's group as part of the party, so we had lots of women's group meetings as part of the party and we never talked about politics. We talked about what was going on in our organisation and which jobs were coming up and so there was a lot of that. Then we had management experts who the women could choose: ‘Look, where's your weakness? What is it that you think you need to learn about?’ Then we dealt with the personal, where we had a number of exercises about ‘Who are you? And if you don't know who you are and if you haven’t anchored yourself, you cannot reach out to other women.’ So it was interesting. You should have seen how the Caribbean was upset when we did the first exercise, because we said to women, 'Okay, close your eyes. There. Two of us here, you'll be safe. Just walk' and we talked as they walked, and at the end of it one woman said to me, 'You know what I realised? I've been walking all my life and I've never had a destination.' One woman from Nigeria said to me, when we did an exercise where you are there and all the various aspects of the self are around you, all what influences the self; your family, your children and a dialogue goes on and she simply started to weep. She came and said, 'Dorienne, I'm leaving my husband' and she did. She went out and she left her husband and she came to London and she said, 'I had to confront myself there and I had never done it before. Why was I taking this abuse from this man?’

It was so funny: they fill out this thing that Indira, Parik who still works, she's now the Chancellor or Vice Chancellor of Flame University in Puna or near Puna and she had developed this tool called a role matrix. When you filled it out - it was quite extensive - she could read it and analyse what your organisation was like, where you were, where your strengths were, where your weaknesses were and they said, 'This is like a crystal ball, but I think we need to have a role matrix now.' So they had these long discussions about sex and sexuality and what it had done

and most of the time we weren't allowed to be there, but it was okay. It was just really interesting and the Arusha Group call themselves, what was it? Not the Arusha 'posse', but whatever, but they formed as a group. They stayed in touch with each other, so all the people from Nigeria and Swaziland and so on stayed in touch. When I went to Zambia, I said to one of them, 'I'm having problems, because…' 'Oh, so and so's in Transport. Hang on let me just phone.' I had no more problems. They said, 'Leave it with us, Dorienne. We'll do it.' So the Arusha Group and they've still stayed together until…you know, because one of them then went back and told KK that they needed to take advantage of what we offered in Nairobi which was to do policy training. The Ministers said…we had a meeting. We had a Women Ministers' meeting, a one day meeting, prior to the World Conference and they said we needed to do more policy training. So we were developing various vehicles, but one of the things that we did was we'd send a team to work in a country to help them develop the policies and do workshops. So, we get an invitation from Zambia, from UNIP, and they want us to train all the Ministries, all the parastatals, the NGOs and the Women's Groups.

SO: Dorienne, please can we stop there as this has been a very long interview. But please could I do a second interview with you tomorrow?

Interview Two

Key

SO: Sue Onslow

DRC: Dorienne Rowan-Campbell

SO: Sue Onslow taking to Dorienne Rowan-Campbell, part two. Dorienne, if you could please reflect on the Commonwealth dimension to your work after leaving the Secretariat in the late '80s?

DRC: Okay, I need to go back a little bit, because during the time of the Secretariat we developed a really special network of women. There were two aspects of that. One was the creation of a body of experts who were recognised as experts, maybe not in their own country, but in neighbouring countries or in other parts of the Commonwealth. So we had a cadre of people who could do work on various aspects of Women and Development and gender issues. So these were a

network of people that I could call on, that I could recommend and at times could recommend me. So I had that network and the other was the Officials and Ministers Network. We had a kind of different relationship with our Ministers. When we were going to have the second Ministers Meeting in Zimbabwe, they had asked us to develop policy training so that Permanent Secretaries in all the Ministries and Senior Civil Servants understood what was expected of any focal point in the government for women's affairs and would start to lend support; and we had done what we call ‘extension services.’ We'd take a team into the country and work with them, when that was requested. So we met a lot of senior civil servants, male and female, and that was also a different type of network.

There were a number of Heads of Government who were very open and friendly to the issue and there was a continuing relationship with them. The Ministers, because they'd asked for this policy training, I suggested to Mr Malhoutra that we have a workshop at the Ministers Meeting and he said, 'Well, Ministers… you don't put Ministers in workshops' and I said, 'Well, of course, we're not going to put the Ministers in workshops. We're going to ask the Ministers to come into the workshop and pretend that they are their Permanent Secretaries or Senior Advisors and ask them to react to the materials we've developed and give us guidance on what we think needs to be done.' Well, of course, we knew perfectly well that it was one way of getting them to understand what the issues were, but we weren't saying that. We were saying, ‘Look, you asked us to do this. Does this work? Do there have to be changes? What do you want us to do?’ Then they didn't want to leave and go back into the conference room. They had a wonderful time: they had all the hand-outs on macro-economic strategies and where are the points of intervention and the arguments that could be made, etc. etc. So it was a very friendly relationship, not at all a formal relationship with a lot of the Ministers. So it meant that I would meet them in various other fora and it was a continuing relationship. One Prime Minister from Samoa, I used to write to him about West Indian literature, because he'd only heard of Naipaul. On my very first visit to Samoa, I said, 'Naipaul? No, no, you need to read…because Naipaul only gives you one aspect of what it is to be Caribbean or an islander' and so I would tell him about other writers and other books. He would talk about writers in the Pacific, so we had this very interesting [dialogue]. So it wasn't all just about women. It was about understanding each other's environment, 1) because we're islanders and 2) because we'd come out of a Commonwealth experience. So it really opened up a great deal.

SO: Dorienne, you left the Secretariat in 1987?

DRC: Yes.

SO: By the end of the 1980s, the international system and international relations were starting to change increasingly rapidly. In what way do you think this was beneficial to the type of association that the Commonwealth represents; and in other ways, how far was it detrimental to your type of work?

DRC: I think that it should have been beneficial, because it opens up and opportunity for dialogue at several different levels, but to be able to have that dialogue you have to have a vision. I found, unfortunately, that that vision started to die in the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth is, was, should be, was very much anchored in what evaluations of what it has done, but is not really enough forward thinking about the opportunities, because of what is happening in a very fractured world. What role could the Commonwealth play? Sometimes it's said, but not done. So I felt that the Commonwealth as always could be healing.

SO: In part it seems that this change within the Commonwealth was associated with new challenges, but it had also become very much larger. The international system was changing, particularly with the end of the Cold War; and from being a dialogue about economic development in a certain way, the discussion now became economic liberalisation, deregulation and…

DRC: But at the same time human rights really flagged, which means that there is an entry point for all sorts of issues and particularly issues concerning women, because when we tried to push that dimension about equality, about respect. But it wasn't seen. We did a lot of…I don't know what you call the reports. Do you remember that there was a big report on agriculture in Africa? The Commonwealth had a meeting to help African countries respond to that meeting, so we did a, what they might have said, report. So it was done with Ingrid Palmer and my team. It said, 'They said so and so and so and so, but they might have said…and then it would have included, and we'd do it and then we'd do the next thing and we'd…' So we wrote our commentary on the reports to share with women about where we were totally left out in that discussion, because we were.

80% of domestic food production, almost, and no mention really made of women, very little made of smallholders, or anything like that.

SO: In addition to the rising rights discourse and, as you say, women's issues are indelibly associated with that, there also the restructuring of the Secretariat in the 19990s. It was facing the High Level Appraisal Group's recommendations of reconfiguration. Was that something that affected you in your ability to network back into the Secretariat?

DRC: I still had friends in the Secretariat, so that didn't really affect me. What frustrated me was what I saw as a lack of action on a lot of areas where there could have been action and it doesn't matter whether you call something transformation or jumping through a hoop, it can still do things.

SO: Was it a question of recruitment of personnel? Was it diminishing resources? Was it the lack of focus and attention from the Secretary General?

DRC: I think a lot of lack of focus of the Secretary General, and lack of direction by the Secretary General. A more generalised and dissipated kind of approach.

SO: Promotion of good governance and democratisation, rather than supporting grass roots systemic change?

DRC: And about what can you do. If you're looking at structural change, where are the points of entry and what can we as Commonwealth do in a small way, but yet in a substantive way to model change, to share. I just didn't feel the Secretariat did a lot of that. It did a lot of useful work on trade, but even then it would go to that point and then the last little anchor points weren't there, because a publication's not enough. It has to go beyond that.

I think the other thing is that one of the things that I learnt from the Commonwealth and from Commonwealth Heads of Government and from Ministers Meetings was the utility of having an immediate report in your hand, because it inspired different levels of action. It gave you a tool to re-enter, because re-entry is really [key]. Every workshop we did we looked at re-entry, the strategies for re-entry and that's a critical tool for re-entry. If you actually have something in your hand, 'This is what we did over these five days. This is how I

can use it. This is how I'm committed to use it. Sometimes I felt that the work that the Commonwealth did…good publications to this point and then how do you help people really anchor that and use that? It's no good if it's a publication that's just on a shelf.

SO: That seems to suggest that there's both a lack of interest in a particular strategy, but also the tactics to achieve.

DRC: I think so. I think that that's been very much the situation and I think that's why we're kind of in limbo.

SO: Dorienne, how much do you feel that the Commonwealth lost its particular identity with the end of apartheid in South Africa?

DRC: There was no big issue.

SO: Then, once the communality in opposing racial injustice in Namibia and then South Africa, had ended, did the Commonwealth as an association become more problematic?

DRC: Well, I wouldn't have seen it that way, because I think that there are always things that you can rally around, but you have to strategize about it in a different way. You have to sell it in a different way. You have to market it in a different way so that it will be sold. I don't feel that the Commonwealth has marketed itself for a long time. It's an approach to the club. 'We don't have to change the menu', as it were, because everybody's accustomed to coming here to dine, so they'll keep doing it. That's how I felt anyway and I would get so frustrated, because I'd say, 'Oh my God, look at this opportunity and we've not said anything! We've not done anything.' When I worked a lot in Bangladesh and because I had worked in the Commonwealth and because they knew me because of trips to Bangladesh when I was at the Commonwealth Secretariat, I really got fantastic treatment. It just opened doors at all levels, from Heads of Government to the various Ministers for Women's Affairs in both political parties and they'd say, 'Do you remember when she came?' and I'd worked a lot with civil society there. When I went to live there it was lovely. I really enjoyed it, because they were friends and there were ex-Commonwealth, because one director had been in agriculture and so we would get together in Bangladesh. I did not get together with Professor Murshid who, I have a feeling, had died; but I really would never have sought him out.

SO: Well, considering how much of an improvement you felt his successor Moni Malhoutra to be, that isn't altogether surprising.

DRC: Yes, exactly, and in India, yes. I still am close to Moni. He actually came to Jamaica and spent three weeks with us and I visit them when I'm in India, but also the senior civil servants who, some are now starting to retire and people in the police because we did a lot of work on violence. I arrived in Delhi once to meet the Head of UNICEF there and all my clothes were in my suitcase which was missing, so I phoned the person that I had worked with and she was Secretary of the Ministry. I said, 'I don't have any clothes. I know this is an early call in the morning, what do you think I should do?' and she said, 'Oh, okay, how long have you got? I know where we can get clothes' and off we went. So it's at the human level, it's at the policy level and there are always people that you can say, 'Look, I was at this meeting and what's you're take on this? Who else would I talk to?' and interestingly, Ministers of Women's Affairs seemed to talk to each other, may be a bit more, so that when I got to work in Indonesia…Indonesia knew about me from Ministers that they'd met at some Pacific meeting and they said, 'Oh, they told us that they we'll enjoy working with you.'

SO: Well, as you say, having that endorsement from another direction, was enormously valuable for opening doors for you, creating a sense of goodwill that is vital with your work.

When Don McKinnon became Secretary General in 2000, did you notice a re-energising of the structure and ethos of the Secretariat, or the place of the Commonwealth in international relations?

DRC: No, I felt that there was a more relaxed atmosphere, but not one that was really moving anything forward in any direction. I wouldn't say it was de-energised. It was probably more laid back, but its external image wasn't really changing that much.

SO: Dorienne, does it not come back though to financial resources and the grubby reality of money: if the financial support to the Secretariat as the beating heart of the Commonwealth was lacking, and members don't pay their dues…?

DRC: Yes, that is a very…but then you need to have a reason sometimes for wanting to pay your dues. Are we giving value back? That was my question. You can't just keep doing the same things. I would have thought that, yes there could be…at one point in the Secretariat they had a number of divisions working together well, all our divisions were small, except Economics. We pooled together and we were the Human Resource Development Group; and I headed that for two years. Now, you could actually have pooled together something like a Human Resource Development Group with one Director and maybe two Assistant Directors and done much the same work as a plethora of smaller [units?]. You need your admin staff and you need your officers, but you still need a thinking head and you need two senior people. I would have seen that working in the kind of programmatic of the Commonwealth. You'd still have your IAD, your International Affairs Group, you still always need a group of people in information and PR, etc. but I felt that it would be quite possible to pool things together in different ways. I found that the Human Resource Development Group worked pretty well.

SO: The media environment in the 1990s also went through…

DRC: *Oh, yes,* it *w*ent through an absolute sea change, yes.

SO: Do you feel that, to a degree, the Commonwealth was caught flat-footed by the shift to a 24/7 news culture, by the expansion of IT facilities, and the growth of the internet?

DRC: One of the things that frustrated me and Jean Fryer, who was a wonderful anarchist in the Secretariat. She was in admin, and she had been pushing and pushing and pushing in admin to say 'We've got to have computers. We need to do this and everybody has one.' They do their own work and do you know that we couldn't even get 'ComSec' as the [domain name] because somebody had already taken it as a name, something like that. I don't know: they didn't tie little old ladies in the basement like the banks seemed to do. You know there was a time when you would go into the bank and then you had to write something, then you had to pass the slip to somebody who seemed to pass the slip to somebody else, who passed the slip to somebody else; and then I always thought that they ran downstairs in to the basement where they had a host of little old ladies tied with chains who looked through large ledgers. Well, the Commonwealth Secretariat, in terms of its administration, was very much like that. It was not

forward thinking and it was not forward thinking about ‘How can we make the best use of the resources that we have?’ Its institutional culture was medieval.

SO: Resistant, reactionary, defensive…

DRC: It gets caught flat-footed. I think that's part of it, because that's part of that thinking, you know, and then they thought of computers as not being an individual asset, but computers as, well ‘We're going to train all of these women and they'll do the word processing so that we had a pool of word processors.’ Well, that would be all right for big reports, but I got people in my division trained and then bought one of those memory typewriters and I would travel with it. Do you remember the book *Brothers*? Well, this is it. ‘This is the culture. We're printers and we don't want anything that's going to upset us.’ That's very much how I found the Commonwealth administration looked at IT: not as an opportunity and sometimes hiring fewer people is a good idea. I was part of the discussions about rotation of staff and the point that you don't want people who are there for 500 years, because essentially what it should function as is people who learn a lot more about the Commonwealth and have some commitment and go back and live it.

SO: So had it slid into a sclerotic habit of thinking that it was a mini United Nations? Were people thinking, ‘This is a comfortable diplomatic posting’?

DRC: I think there was a fair amount of that. There was a fair amount of that, for some people.

SO: So if you have that sedentary aspect that comes with the social environment.

DRC: Well, I mean, it's like having discussions about where people are going to live and what living allowance they're going to have. It was interesting, because they had asked me to go to Copenhagen to the mid-decade meeting and then I came back to London and debriefed. I said that actually what I wanted to do was to look for accommodation. They said, 'Oh we can't pay it in advance.' I said, 'Well, if I find something that's useful, I think it might be worth your paying it in advance, because then I won't have to stay in a hotel for three months.' Well, they'd never thought of that and I did find something in Montague Square and it was within the

allowance and all they had to do [was rent it]. That was July, and I came in September.

SO: They had to be innovative and, as you say, think laterally rather than saying, 'Our office processes don't allow this type of autonomous financial behaviour.'

DRC: I said to them, 'Look at what you save. It'll be free. I'll be able to move right in.' When I came, I moved right in.

SO: It's said that the Secretariat now is a shadow of its former self compared to when you were there. Its staff is now about 200.

DRC: I think that's quite true.

SO: Both in terms of scale of personnel, in range of units, divisions, offices, in terms of resources.

DRC: I think in terms of leadership and I can say it, I'm not there.

SO: How much is it also a question that an association like the Commonwealth is defined by its leader in a particular and peculiar degree? Sonny Ramphal has described his era of the Commonwealth as being particularly Secretary General centric. In other words, he was…

DRC: *[Talking over]* Larger than life…

SO: Yes, that he embodied the Commonwealth.

DRC: Yes. That's sometimes not a bad thing, if that individual uses the position to enlarge the organisation, which he did, because just being part of the various commissions was important inside the Commonwealth reflects a large role. I felt that it was important that I was invited to OECD meetings, because it said we recognise the Commonwealth as not being a small office in London, but a tool which can help us reach more people and understand this. I think it's become a kind of sinecure for various people.

SO: The criticism which has been levelled at the Commonwealth is that it is not good at geopolitics, but instead tries to act as a giant official pressure group for the promotion of certain causes. You said that it seems progressively to have lost a focus and a strategy. So what is your view, then, of the future for the Commonwealth?

DRC: Well, I keep hoping that we're going to get someone who really understands the potential of historical situations that have touched people's lives and made them cross boundaries; and therefore, because of that understanding, can look at our current world situation and see where there are opportunities for bridge building. Because I think the Commonwealth is a wonderful bridge and we're not using it as a bridge; we're using it as a barrier. We need to be less product oriented and more process oriented, I think in many ways.

SO: So there's a paradoxical process in that the Commonwealth is try to get a USP and a brand identification, but in fact it's looking at things the wrong way? That it should be seeing itself as a facilitator?

DRC: I think the Commonwealth is very much a facilitator. There are certain things that can be branded, but to get to the brand you have to go through the process, and I think there's a leap being made where not going through a process. We're just trying to slap a label on and people have to buy into a brand. They have to see that they have an interest in that brand and they need someone of people to persuade them of the value of that brand; and that's where I think the leadership is falling down.

SO: Is it also, though, a function of the particular vintage of the association? The Commonwealth is facing its 66th birthday, but was its optimum utility in the era immediately post-independence for states? In other words, for these new states with key charismatic nationalist leaders, civil servants, Ministers, all of whom were relatively new to the game of international politics. So the Commonwealth at that point could be an extraordinary enabler in international politics for this particular group of leaders and their advisers?

DRC: A support structure. Yes, it was.

SO: And now the international situation's changed, and those states are more mature, so there's less of a need for the Commonwealth?

DRC: I would say that that's true, but I would also say that the same thing is happening at the UN, because I don't think the UN is really…well, it's interesting, I found it so much more productive working in the Commonwealth than I did working with UN agencies. What you could get done was vastly easier to do.

SO: Did you sit back and think, 'Why is this?'

DRC: Yes, I did and it was because there was more of an immediacy to it, there was more informality to it, there was more partnership. You may be an expert, but you're also a partner in whatever it is that… and quite often the UN doesn't come across that way. They send in somebody to do something in a different way.

SO: Indeed. As does the World Bank.

DRC: Oh, well, the World Bank! The only time that I'd really taken any work at the World Bank I've said to them, 'I need to be able to write a minority report', because I don't believe a lot of what they [do]…I get very distressed, because I hear so many economists sounding as though they were the World Bank and I think, 'But you belong in that community of people. You understand this country. You have to be able to point out that things are different.' It's like corruption. You'd listen to what Harvard Business School had to say about corruption and then I'd look at Nigeria and if you want to understand corruption, you have to be able to see a number of things. You have to be able to see that if you come from one tribe, the expectation is that as you prosper, you carry a responsibility for other members of that tribe. So what you obviously call 'corruption' is not what that society internally sees as corruption.

It's a set of responsibilities. It's a problem, because you would find that if you're working in a Ministry. I was telling you about Kenya. If you're working in a Ministry, the office boy and the driver might know more about what is happening from the Permanent Secretary than some of the officers, because they came from the same ethnic group. So the flow of information is different and it changes. Now you also need to understand that. So if you want to look at how people manage and we were working in a lot of change management situations, you need to respect that for what it is and work it through, before you label it.

The other thing was that I found that, yes, the civil services had problems, but if you didn't have paper or paper clips, maybe you might have a problem too, so what are the skills that those people needed, not the traditional skills of the civil service, but innovation, ability to think in a different way; and so management training needed to be different. There are all these things that I think the Commonwealth can always see in a different way and do and provide and maybe we're not… well, I don't think we're doing it. We're still hiring…it's not that having Ministers' Meetings is a bad thing. No, it's just maybe we need to do it in different ways and sometimes now, because governments have got more elaborate, maybe we also are there to foster internal dialogue. Instead of having the right kind of cross-sectoral discussions, within government, the focus is not always there. There are those pipes. There are a lot of things that I think could be done differently, that aren't and that haven't been.

SO: You made reference yesterday to the emergence of a particular rights based discourse, and that women's rights are embedded within this. Yet, to what extent is the elasticity of this question of rights a problem? Justiciable rights, or inherent rights? Yet governments, in their own defensive determination to maintain a degree of influence and control and convinced that <u>they</u> have a mandate from the electorate, are going to be resistant to pressures from unelected groups within their countries, but also particularly from outside. Hence, anything that is associated with a diminution of that power and influence can be seen as a hostile force. On this line of reasoning, the Commonwealth, in supporting particularly civil society, can then become…

DRC: A real hostile organisation.

SO: Yes.

DRC: Well, let me give you an example: we had a meeting in Ottawa in May. It was a meeting of International Consultants Organisation, and we were talking about the end of the MDGs and what next. This young man who came from the Gambia was talking and he was talking about the change, and that 'From the MDGs we're going to this, this, this, this, this.' He said that equality was going to be one of the lynchpins of this whole whatever. Rights and equality: they're watch-words of this new development dimension. Then somebody asked a question which had to do

with external pressures, and he said that Africa doesn't like gays. It was the money that had gone from Nigeria and from Uganda after they made their statements about homosexuality and he didn't think that was acceptable, because it's an African norm and there mustn't be any influence and there must be no pressure on traditional culture. I listened and I thought about it. Then we had lunch and I called him over, I said, 'Young man, come and sit right here. Now I'm old enough to be your grandmother and I just want you to re-visit your statement of today. First of all, you talked about equality and rights and then you make a statement like that. Do you know that when I started working on issues of women and gender, we were told that we couldn't do any work in this field because it interfered with Africa's traditional values. And therefore women really should be left exactly where they were because they were fine, because this is what Africa believed? You just told us that the Secretary General put particular stock on, etc. etc. and you are telling me that you believe that human beings, whoever they are and however they are created should not have any rights because traditional values say…so it's alright to kill them?' I said, 'Well, let me tell you, you re-think that statement, because if I hear that you have repeated that statement anywhere, I'm writing direct to the Secretary General and you will be out of a job.' This lady said to me, 'I'm glad you took it up.' I said, 'I'm black and I'm a woman and I'm older than he is.'

SO: Three trump cards.

DRC: And I said, 'And I'm telling you this, because you really need to re-think that if you're working in development. If you really think it's okay to kill people because of sexual orientation.' Maybe Boko Haram has taken him away. I was just amazed. I said, 'I lived through exactly that discussion and do you see where we are now?'

SO: In terms of Women and Development now, Dorienne, where do you feel the Commonwealth would be most useful in putting its energies now? I realise that is an enormous question, but in terms of what you've identified as the problems, together with your hopes, aspirations and frustration that this resource is not being used, where do you think it should be used - given limited resources, financial as well as human?

DRC: You see, right now we have UN Women and yet I find that UN Women, despite working with groups of other women who work on other issues, UN Women tends

to be dealing with the top of the pack. They're not digging down, and in the Commonwealth having so many poor countries, I think that that's where we ought to be working. We ought to be helping countries try to reach those women and men in an equitable fashion, who are at the bottom of the pile, because I really don't see a lot of work in that area, except in looking at refugees and food aid and things like that. But in terms of policies and helping governments look at their own internal policies and what they might do, I think that that's where the real need is that's where the Commonwealth could do a lot, not going to work with those women themselves, because I think they're strongest networking at the policy level and equipping people to re-vision how they might try to reach those people and because also we have had, in the Commonwealth, very strong partnerships with civil society, and civil society has learnt so many of those lessons. So if we could bring those together and share, I think that would be where I would start. If I suddenly had got the job now, that is where I would start. I did, of course, tell Emeka that I would come back as Secretary General and he went pale. Very pale.

SO: ***[Laughter]*** **Do you feel the next SG should be a woman? Or the Commonwealth heads should select the best candidate for the job?**

DRC: It depends who it is. The best candidate, it would be nice if there were a woman there, but not just because they're a woman. We've had too many people there just because they're a woman and we don't want that. We want quality.

SO: A top candidate who happens to be a woman.

DRC: We want somebody who's thinking and somebody who sees the opportunities. I just think we've made so many opportunities pass by. Tony says to me, 'I'm listening and there's no word on the Commonwealth about this. Where are they?'

SO: Is that part of a media environment of which the Commonwealth is a victim, because it is not an 'easy sell?'

DRC: It could be.

SO: It's work on development is a slower sine wave of change, and is not an immediate headline grabbing news story. As it is 'slow burn,' incremental

and at grass roots level, I'm afraid that doesn't sell newspapers, driven by the bottom line and aware that 'bad news' sells.

DRC: That's true. Well, then maybe what they should be doing is spending a lot of time on YouTube and Facebook.

SO: They're certainly trying to get smarter about social media.

DRC: That's true, but you see for an organised media strategy are they going to have free rein or are you going to have to clear every word? And that's part of the ComSec…how do you manage social media in a controlled environment?

SO: I do know that the recently retired Director of Information found that the control from the SG's office hugely frustrating, as well as the culture of leadership that believed the role of the Secretary General was to take instruction from Heads rather than to act as an independent enabler.

DRC: And to suggest to Heads that this may be an issue that we might want to look at. What do you think about it? I think that's what's wonderful about the Commonwealth is the ability to say, 'Listen, these are issues that are coming up. Are there things that we can do about it? Yes, we have differences, but let's think about it and let's see where the fault lines are.'

SO: How far do you see the problems as associated to the increased size of the Commonwealth, yet the length of the heads' meetings has dramatically contracted, and the attention and devotion to the Commonwealth by Heads has diminished, seen in the pattern of sending deputies of deputies.

DRC: Well, I have a real problem with Canada and I probably won't be let back in because I really complained to my MP that this was disgraceful. My ex-husband wrote a very strong article about it.

SO: About Stephen Harper's decision to stay away from Sri Lanka and…

DRC: *[Talking over]* And also to cut the funds. Yes, but he's cutting it from everywhere. So the comment was when he was doing some things with China and what about human rights there? They were the same problems. Well, it's the same people who are strutting the streets of Paris. Yes, it was a horrible happening, but some

of the people who were strutting and talking about freedom of the press generally did not support a plurality of voices in other situations, and the Harper Gov't challenged press freedom in Canada.

SO: So do you think the Commonwealth is going to 'unravel like a jersey, leaving only Prince Charles at the top?' Or is it going to just continue to wither, afflicted by inertia, antipathy, apathy? What do you see as the future for the Commonwealth? Is it going to split between old Commonwealth and new Commonwealth?

DRC: I'm hoping that with a new SG, maybe there will be some re-energising and re-thinking and re-offering, because you have to offer people things. You have to reflect a vision of themselves, which says, 'You can do something about this or together we can,' and it may be far, far smaller things that are done, but meaningful things. If I were there, that is where I would look and I would spend a lot of time on the media. A major strategy on the media, an absolutely major strategy on the media. Re-educating, opening up opportunities for dialogue, that's what perhaps you could get some funds from the Commonwealth Foundation to do. We don't have a stable of journalists now that you can call very easily and say I have this story about the Commonwealth. Our Commonwealth Day doesn't mean very much, because I don't think anything happens here, but then we have a government in Jamaica which doesn't think about Commonwealth Day. Commonwealth Day happens in Canada. I had one wonderful number of days with students from all across Canada who came to do their mock CHOGM, and so they'd asked me to give the opening address and to stay with them and work with them. There is a real passion and excitement. There could be here too, but the problem has been that, I think a lot of the people who espouse Commonwealth were old and I don't think enough young people have been engaged. CYP touched people, who saw a role for themselves.

SO: I picked up an email on the way over here saying that the 2015 focus of the Commonwealth is 'the Young Commonwealth.'

DRC: Well, that's what they need to do, but they also can't do the young Commonwealth unless they really have a major IT and media thrust. They really need to think about that and maybe one of the ways to reach the young Commonwealth is through IT. We're doing a lot of agri-hacks now, so maybe we need a Commonwealth hack. Maybe we need apps that people can use and

games that people can use about the Commonwealth on their cell phones. Something that puts new information out, but in a fun way and you could have some competition to do something like that.

SO: Dorienne, I'm going to stop there. Thank you very much indeed for two long and detailed interviews.