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EDITORIAL

BRITISH COMMONWEALTH

Seeing the Queen recently on television delivering her Christmas message and hearing her talking about her so beloved British Commonwealth makes you realise how far removed these people are from reality.

When, out of the old British Empire, they created the British Commonwealth, it was never meant to be, in the eyes of the British, a community of countries with equal rights. Although the name had changed, the British still considered the countries of the Commonwealth as the

servants with the British at the top as the masters. The name British Commonwealth gave the people and especially the politicians in Great Britain the feeling that they could still hold onto something resembling the old Empire.

But the British Commonwealth was already moribund when it was renamed so and it has died a hundred times since. Nobody believes in it anymore except the Queen and a large number of politicians with their heads in the clouds. In reality the countries of the Commonwealth have drifted so far apart, economically and politically, that nothing holds them together anymore. In fact, it is easier today

to deal with countries outside the Commonwealth than with countries within.

Try to set up some business deal in Gambia or just obtain a simple entry visa for Ghana and you will find that these are sheer impossibilities and yet both these countries, just like New Zealand, belong to the British Commonwealth. To illustrate the point take the various visa costs applicable to enter India for example: New Zealanders pay NZ\$7.50 for a visa, (the Swiss NZ\$15.00) but the British pay NZ\$52.00 whilst the Finns and the Danes get it for free. New Zealanders who want to settle in the UK must pay a hefty fee of NZ\$150.00 whilst the French, for centuries Great Britain's arch rivals, can now enter and work in the UK at will without any formalities at all.

It is easier for the Swiss to travel to any Commonwealth country than for New Zealanders, or even the British themselves, to circulate within their own so called community of nations. It is ridiculous that rather than promote trade and facilitate relationships amongst its own community, the countries of the British Commonwealth have, over the years, erected more and more barriers against one another to the point of almost curtailing any normal communications between themselves. A further stupidity is when heads of states of two of these countries meet, each proclaims that the people he represents are the greatest friends of the other country and vice-versa. These heads of states must either be completely double-faced or they are totally unaware of what is happening in reality. They may just about be the only two people who are allowed to visit one another's country without a visa. For the rest of us every bureaucratic chicanery is thrown at us, from endless form filling to exorbitant visa fees to try to discourage anyone from visiting the other country. How on earth can you be friends with people you have never seen, who hide behind bureaucratic

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