

## **Introduction**

I am delighted to be given the opportunity to deliver this year's Hugh Gaitskell Memorial Lecture, and it is a pleasure to be with you all in the beautiful and historic city of Nottingham. My lecture will concentrate on celebrating diversity in our societies, as well as on exploring the tremendous possibilities for weaving these threads of diversity into a vibrant and dynamic tapestry of citizenship. When it comes to diversity and the prospects of building unity in diversity I think I can safely say that there is no organisation that better exemplifies this than the modern Commonwealth. I am privileged to serve as Secretary General. However my acceptance of your kind invitation to deliver this lecture is not based purely on the opportunity to talk about the Commonwealth, although I enjoy doing so as I travel throughout our 54 member countries! The motive for my being here has to do with a genuine concern over controversies related to globalisation and the rise of civil conflict in many parts of the world. Conflict and social upheaval are nothing new in human society, but at the dawn of the 21st century there has been a worrying increase in this phenomenon within countries and between countries.

Hugh Gaitskell was of course fortunate to live and make his political contribution in an era that witnessed the twilight of empire. I say fortunate because this was a time of change and liberation in which bridges were being built across historical divides of social class, race and nationalities. It was therefore a time of great hope and promise, especially following the devastation of the Second World War. Gaitskell's own contribution to the politics of that era was in many ways based on enlightened values that was broader than his own social class and even the dominant ideology of the Labour Party. It is therefore not very surprising that Gaitskell was both inspiring and controversial in the Labour Party and in British politics generally.

In the present era we face a world of irony and paradox. Never before has there been such a high and rising scale of wealth creation, yet the gap between the rich and poor has never been wider and continues to increase. Similarly, at a time when the flow of information and the ease of communication have advanced beyond our wildest imagination, understanding between different cultures has tended to be on the decline, leading to tension and conflict. My own involvement with disrupted societies such as Fiji " and Sierra Leone, to name just two, has convinced me that while economic factors are often at the heart of the cause of conflict, issues of culture and cultural diversity are also prominent causal factors. Differences in beliefs, values, customs and traditions tend to buttress the more evident economic disparities that lead to conflicts between religious, ethnic and racial groups in different parts of the world. In the face of trends towards a world culture fuelled by globalisation, it would appear that the need for cultural assertiveness is also on the increase.

## **A Thesis on Citizenship**

Against this background there is a three-fold thesis that I wish to argue for in this lecture. It is my contention that in the present era, this thesis constitutes an agenda for good citizenship in those countries that belong to the family of nations that is the Commonwealth. I should emphasise that my thesis is not about the usual concern with civic duties, although this has always been an important aspect of social development for our citizens. Neither am I dealing here with the political prescriptions of the state as in the old socialist regimes. The main thrust of my thesis is as follows:

First, there needs to be increased recognition and respect for the cultural heritage of all the different groups that have a stake in our societies. This is essentially about what each group regards as its key defining features over the years, what it sees as the things to be proud of in its history and the factors that have shaped its current identity in a modern world. It is largely something that has to come from the group I itself, not from what others perceive or deduce about the group. It is not about political correctness or ideological rigour. It is simply about who we are, what we have been over the years and how we have become what we are now.

Second, there needs to be greater understanding and appreciation of the ways in which these threads of cultural heritage have become woven into the complex mosaic of beliefs, attitudes,

Third, we need to actively promote the notion of good citizenship as a dynamic and constantly negotiated reality in a multicultural society. This recognises that good citizenship cannot simply be about a fixed set of finite prescriptions decreed by state officials or other bodies. At its heart, good citizenship must be about dynamic sets of values, beliefs, attitudes, habits, procedures and practices that the generality of citizens subscribe to and aspire towards. These will include core sets that are widely shared, lightly contested and even somewhat sacrosanct; as well as more ephemeral sets that are more heavily contested and subject to change and continuous negotiation over time.

The three major dimensions of heritage, multiculturalism and citizenship that I have highlighted have tremendous implications for citizenship education in all of our societies. The rest of the Commonwealth should therefore take a keen interest in the latest move by the British Government to make citizenship education a compulsory part of the school curriculum. More importantly Commonwealth countries should use a more collaborative approach towards dealing with citizenship education. I hope I can convince you that it is in the long-term interest of all our countries to exchange ideas and experiences in this area, since the majority of citizens in the Commonwealth are historically and contemporarily co-inhabitants of each other's countries. Acts of the past such as economic exploitation, religious proselytisation, slavery, establishment of penal colonies, movement of skilled labour, exploration and colonisation itself, all helped to ensure that most Commonwealth countries started nationhood as diversified and multicultural societies. This has been intensified by modern trends in tourism, commerce, student mobility, economic migration, transport, emigration/immigration, industrialisation and globalisation. It is something of an irony that the most intensive manifestations of cultural diversity in the Commonwealth are to be found in the small states like Seychelles and Mauritius. For various reasons, the tiny Cayman Islands with a population of 40 thousand boasts no less than 180 nationalities amongst its citizens!

### **Heritage Issues**

Heritage is about group identity and is at the heart of culture. It helps us understand ourselves in relation to others in terms of similarities and differences. It is what enables us to discern and appreciate the various strands of the rainbow nation of South Africa. It is the life story of each group and includes chapters of interaction with others. So when we talk of Caribbean heritage for instance, this would include the chapters of slavery and plantation life that in fact constitute the embryo of such a heritage. I imagine that such a heritage would encompass forms of religion, language, ethics, morality, food, fashion, music, poetry and other art forms that peculiarly define what it is to be Caribbean. A key issue that arises is whether there is enough homogeneity for us to talk of a 'Caribbean' culture over and above a Jamaican, Guyanese, Barbadian, St Lucian, etc, culture. Is there a sum that is greater than the parts? If so, we need to understand how each national culture has contributed to what we would call a Caribbean culture. We need also to understand that for each national culture and for the Caribbean culture as a whole, there are roots going back to other cultures. There is the African heritage evidenced by the traditions, beliefs and practices that plantation slaves brought with them; there is the European heritage from the settlers, pirates, plantation owners and governing classes in the early days; there is the Asian heritage from the Indian, Chinese and Arab workers and merchants brought into the region; there is also in some cases the indigenous heritage of the Amerindians; and finally, one cannot ignore the vast US influence in the region, especially over the past 50 years. Elements of all these will form part of the cultural heritage of each country and of the Caribbean generally. Much the same holds for other Commonwealth countries and regions. Heritage is therefore not about purity as is sometimes implied in everyday use of the term. It is about what has come through and endured in the messy kaleidoscope of a group's historical travels over the centuries. It is about diversity of roots and multiple encounters with others along the way.

If we accept the sense in which I have talked about heritage here, then it is clear that cultural heritage will separate people as well as link people in many ways. We may find that it is impossible for any group to define itself in isolation from other groups, even though purists may wish to go down that route. The challenge for us then becomes whether we choose to emphasise those things that separate us or those things that link us. In other words, heritage can be a double-edged sword. It can be used to justify forms of discrimination and injustice in society, or it can be used to link groups in a stable and dynamic society. In my own country, New Zealand, over the last 30 years we have been grappling with the issue of how one should express oneself as a New Zealand citizen. This is a complex issue that involves a deep understanding of the country's history and culture, and a willingness to engage in a process of self-reflection and dialogue. The challenge is to find a way to express our identity as a New Zealand citizen that is both inclusive and respectful of the diverse backgrounds and experiences of all our people. This is a task that requires a deep understanding of the country's history and culture, and a willingness to engage in a process of self-reflection and dialogue. The challenge is to find a way to express our identity as a New Zealand citizen that is both inclusive and respectful of the diverse backgrounds and experiences of all our people.

## A recipe for Multiculturalism:

***The mosaic pattern of multiculturalism is one in which people with different cultural moorings live side by side in an integrated and dynamic type of stability"***

*- Amitav Ghosh*

I like the term moorings - a fixed point around which we float or drift up or down, usually maintaining the same relationship with others. The moorings referred to here are much the same as the cultural heritage I have tried to outline so far. The question that arises for us is this. If the different groups in society are each anchored to their own cultural moorings or rooted in their own cultural heritage, then how do we achieve the type of dynamic and integrated stability that results in true multiculturalism? I should say here that for me multiculturalism goes well beyond peaceful co-existence and is certainly not about separate lives that tantamount to cultural apartheid. Integration implies meaningful links and connections as well as true interdependency amongst different groups. Dynamism implies a fluid process of change and renewal driven by a constant give and take amongst groups.

With your indulgence, I would like to suggest a recipe for achieving the type of dynamic and integrated stability that is at the heart of multiculturalism. This recipe is really a simple one that I would label T -L-C (no not THAT TLC)! What I have in mind is *Tolerance, Liberation and Celebration*. I believe that the great majority of us have to walk this path and need to be guided through it if we are to become good citizens. We can only achieve so much by preaching about good citizenship. If we are serious about citizenship education then we must pursue the T -L-C path. Fortunately, all the evidence suggests that there is a very strong correlation between education and progress along the T -L-C path. We should therefore give strong attention to the design and implementation of appropriate programmes for citizenship education in schools as well as in the wider society.

In dealing with different cultures, it can sound patronising to talk of tolerance. It sounds like we are advocating that people simply put up with other, in order to avoid conflict. This can generate strong criticism from those who are impatient with the apparent sense of hypocrisy and snobbishness that tolerance seems to imply. This was recently evident at 0' the Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in Halifax, Canada (14CCEM). I am told that at the drafting stage of the communiqué, a sentence on promoting tolerance and mutual respect amongst the diverse cultures of the Commonwealth was hotly contested. Several senior officials present in the drafting committee insisted that the intention should be not simply to tolerate cultural diversity, but to celebrate it! This in fact is what was reflected in the final version of the Communiqué. Few would argue that celebration is much better than tolerance, but we should not be too hasty to dismiss the notion of tolerance. A simple definition of tolerance given by education sociologist W. Paul Vogt, in his book *"Tolerance and Education"* is *"putting up with something we do not like, often in order to get along with others"*. Hints of snobbishness and hypocrisy could easily be read into this definition of tolerance. Yet Vogt argues persuasively in his book that the route to creating an environment in which diversity is welcomed is through the successful teaching of tolerance. Hugh Gaitskell himself was reportedly often willing to compromise on many issues. I imagine that this was partly because he instinctively knew much about tolerance in the sense I have talked about. Like most other leaders who have tried to unify a political party in the face of strong ideological diversity Gaitskell must have wished for more successful adult education in the area of tolerance. I do not wish to suggest that Gaitskell was some kind of a model for tolerance, liberation and celebration. Like most people he had his passions, which were often rooted in a sense of heritage. In the 1962 party conference, his objection to EEC membership was couched in the emotional language of heritage as reflected in "a thousand years of history". The point here is that even for a political giant like Gaitskell, who manifestly believed in equality (not just equality of opportunity), there can be setbacks to tolerance due to an obsession with heritage. We should therefore be rather careful about taking tolerance for granted, or mistaking complacency for

our culture, we may quite inadvertently also be keeping alive those forces that divide us and stoke the flames of conflict.

It is worth noting at this juncture that the omission of some of the other stories that have shaped our collective past can also keep us apart. Sir Philip Sherlock, a noted Jamaican historian and intellectual, was one of the first academics to re-tell the history of that region from the perspective of that region. While he never denied that events in the so-called 'New World' constituted part of European history, he equally insisted that West Indian history was as valid and as important, and needed to be told too. This perspective allows all Caribbean peoples to feel part of their evolving culture and to be proud of the future and potential bequeathed to them by their ancestors, whatever role they played. Perhaps this is one of the stabilising factors in that region; we have certainly seen what sorts of confrontations have erupted in nearby North and South America over this very issue of cultural disenfranchisement. Similarly, Professor Anna Rutherford, the Australian academic and lifelong advocate of Commonwealth language and literature studies, who died last week, helped the world to better appreciate alternate (but equally valuable) styles of creative writing from throughout our Commonwealth. Visionaries like Sherlock and Rutherford, and of course the events and authors they celebrated and exposed to the wider world, have taught us that tolerance must be rooted in mutual respect, validation and understanding.

Tolerance also represents the most basic level of positive relationship amongst different individuals and different groups. It is the first step in being "civilised" towards each other and the last safeguard against descending into barbarism. It is therefore a major part of the foundations of good citizenship and a just society. Despite this it would be naive to assume that all groups in society are necessarily in favour of tolerance. There will always be bias, stereotyping and prejudice, as long as cultural diversity is a given fact of life. Some may argue that these are negative tendencies that should be dealt with firmly through courageous resistance. Others may argue that the way to deal with these tendencies is through altruism and self-sacrifice to benefit others. I would say that these are laudable arguments, but not in line with social reality.

Most of us in the course of a lifetime will not have the opportunity or the inclination to mount sustained resistance to prejudice and discrimination. Most of us will also not be in a position to pursue altruism and self-sacrifice in a major way. As Vogt suggests, we cannot all be Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Ghandi, Mother Theresa, and other such extraordinary personalities. At best we can expect that most of us will be in a position to show tolerance for others and intolerance of prejudice. If we can make this transition then we are well on the way to being liberated from prejudice, fear and discrimination. With a liberated mind we can participate fully in celebrating cultural diversity and the choice that it affords us. All of this strengthens my conviction that tolerance is one of the key constituents of a good citizenship education. Details of how to develop and incorporate tolerance into citizenship education programmes need to be shared between Commonwealth countries through exchange of good practices. A Commonwealth country like South Africa offers us a living laboratory in which we can observe the progress of efforts to promote tolerance and build citizenship in an intensely multicultural society. It is after all a society that was poisoned for decades by apartheid, and the war of liberation had itself sown the seeds of a bitter legacy that continues to stalk the rainbow nation.

Let me now turn to liberation as part of my T-L-C recipe. One of the strongest indicators of our failure to deal with cultural diversity and build good citizenship is the mushrooming of liberation movements in the world. Most of these movements also have a strong separatist agenda, but why should liberation be so much associated with separation? Liberation has always been about the struggle for economic control, political independence, social emancipation and cultural self-determination. However these need not result in the type of separateness that reflects irreconcilable bitterness and lack of tolerance. This is most appropriately demonstrated in the transition from empire to the modern Commonwealth. For many countries, political independence came at the end of a period of hard and bitter struggle, including violent campaigns. However all of these countries have shunned the route of separateness through their membership of the Commonwealth. This is one of the unique features of the modern Commonwealth as a voluntary organisation of nations that share certain values and ideals. The Commonwealth also operates on the key principle of consensus, based on equality and mutual respect. Certainly there is great diversity in the Commonwealth, but it is precisely this diversity that provides the organisation with its dynamism and rich sense of heritage that has kept it strong over the years.

independence was now inevitable, Ghandi is reputed to have said to the then Viceroy "*Excellency, I hope that you will not let all of this come between us as men!*" It is my contention then that liberation, as part of the T -L-C recipe, empowers people to engage in an open and honest way with others from different backgrounds. It is through this type of constructive engagement that a national culture and elements of good citizenship become defined and negotiated in a multicultural society.

Individuals and groups that are tolerant and liberated in the senses I have tried to outline in this lecture are in an ideal position to welcome and celebrate diversity in society. However this does not happen automatically, and we need to help cultivate this sense of celebration of our diversity. In this country, a sense of celebration manifests itself in many different ways all the time, so we need to be alert in promoting it wherever and whenever it can be found. It is in the enjoyment and passionate following of cricket matches between England and other Commonwealth countries, knowing that team rivalries are rooted in a heritage of past conflicts and disagreements that are far removed from sports.

Celebration can also be seen in the mixed crowds at the annual Notting Hill Carnival, in the ascendancy of Caribbean and African music in British society, in the thriving popularity of Asian cuisine and restaurants, in the prowess of Britain's sports heroes from the ethnic minorities, and in the vibrancy of the popular media of films, TV, radio and newspapers that capture the nation's diversity. Much the same can be seen in other Commonwealth countries as an indication that diversity has to be strongly celebrated in a multicultural society for there to be peace, progress and stability. There is no guarantee that these things will fall into place, but governments do have an obligation to support and promote tolerance, liberation and celebration in a society that takes pride in being multicultural. Just this week, the new National Museum of Australia was opened in Canberra. I understand that it cost over eighty million dollars and that it has been designed to celebrate the centenary of Australia's transition from a colony to a nation (the Australian Federation). Through a wide variety of exhibits, including priceless aboriginal artefacts, the new museum tells the story of Australia in terms of the land, the nation and its peoples. This is an example of a vital resource that can help to promote tolerance, that can liberate the mind and that definitely invites individuals and groups to celebrate the diversity of multicultural Australia. One issue we will all come around to better understanding (and once again I use an example from the South Pacific) is the tremendous spirituality the indigenous people ascribe to the land: the Australian Aboriginals, the New Zealand Maoris, the Melanesians of Fiji and many others, no one propounding peaceful coexistence can ignore it or believe that it is merely a historical artefact.

### **Towards Good Citizenship:**

In conclusion of my thesis, I would argue that we have a two-dimensional matrix for good citizenship in the modern Commonwealth. Along one axis we have the dynamic forces of heritage, multiculturalism and citizenship. Depending on how it is used, heritage can be a force that builds walls to divide us, or a force that builds bridges to unite us. This in turn helps to determine whether multiculturalism in the society is manifested by an integrated and dynamic stability or by a perpetual hotbed of friction and conflict. It is the nature, use and interaction of these first two forces (heritage and multiculturalism) that invariably determine the status of the third force (citizenship) in our societies. Along the second axis of my two-dimensional matrix we have the paths or channels of tolerance, liberation and celebration. The forces of heritage, multiculturalism and citizenship need to be guided through this T -L-C path if we are to end up with promoting good citizenship in Commonwealth countries.

In closing this lecture I wish to turn briefly to the issue of actualising the thesis I have tried to argue so far. Education in its broadest sense will have to be at the heart of implementation. It will involve teaching tolerance at an early age in order to promote liberation and encourage celebration, not forgetting that most moral learning is caught not taught. It will involve learning from the past in terms of the heritage of different groups, in order to understand the diversity of the present and build the stability of the future. It will not always be smooth sailing. Often such efforts will encounter those who remember the past too well to appreciate the changing reality of the present or to envision a radically different future. Similarly, there will be many who will not welcome diversity or celebrate multiculturalism. If these changes pose an apparent threat to their

citizenship that is currently being revised. Our Education Department has recently initiated a pan-Commonwealth project on Heritage, Multiculturalism and Citizenship that has received some seed money from the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). I am also aware that the Commonwealth Foundation is heavily involved in promoting citizenship education for adults and civil society organisations in the Commonwealth. In a similar vein, the Commonwealth Institute here in Britain is playing a key role in promoting citizenship education at the school level. The British Council also has a strong interest and very interesting programmes in this area. Evidently we need to build networks that link all these initiatives into a more effective and efficient pan-Commonwealth effort to promote and strengthen citizenship education. I hope that the various parties involved will work towards this end. Finally our greatest impact will be on the young and the next generation of Commonwealth citizens. Schools and resources such as museums will therefore be critical for successful citizenship education. This involves design of curriculum, development of teaching/learning resources, training of teachers, and most importantly the right school leadership. Nottingham University is developing a strong reputation for excellence in school leadership training. I therefore hope that our Education Department in the Secretariat will actively collaborate with Nottingham and other universities to develop a network of Commonwealth institutions that can help to produce the cadre of school leaders who can successfully implement bold and exciting programmes of citizenship education.

Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for your attention.