

Commonwealth Day Celebration

It was an honor to represent the Cayman Islands at this year's Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's program on 11th March 2013, Commonwealth Day.

Representatives were chosen from across the Commonwealth to be present in the day's preceding activities. Countries represented included: Bermuda, Canada, the Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Guyana, Malta, New Zealand, St. Helena and Trinidad and Tobago. The day was quite packed. We started with a tour of the Houses of Parliament; talks with the CPA staff- the Secretary General, Dr. William F. Shija; Clerk of Journals, Mr. Liam Lawrence Smyth; Member of Parliament, the Right Honorable Sir Alan Haselhurst; Malta High Commissioner, H.E. Mr. J. Zammit Tabona.

The speakers drew a clearer picture of what their job descriptions entailed. Mr. Liam Smyth introduced us to this year's theme: Opportunity through Enterprise. I found this theme quite interesting, as it is quite relevant in today's economy. The aim of the Commonwealth throughout this year is to increase the amount of social entrepreneurship, sustainable enterprise and to support innovation throughout the member countries.

The Right Honorable Sir Alan Haselhurst answered the question of what an 'MP' (Members of Parliament) does. He drew many parallels between the Members of Parliament and the Cayman Islands' Legislative Assembly. He told us of the issues he faces while trying to make his parish the best it can be for its citizens and he also informed us of how rewarding it was to be in a position where he was able to change the matters that concerned the people of his parish.

The speakers at Westminster House were followed by the Commonwealth Day Celebration at Westminster Abbey in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen; His Royal Highness, the Duke of Edinburgh; Their Royal Highnesses, the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall; and Her Royal Highness, the Countess of Wessex. The service at Westminster Abbey is a multi-faith service that represents the faiths found in the Commonwealth, from the Christian churches to the Jain and Buddhist communities. It was quite a special moment to be surrounded by people from across the globe brought together for one cause- the Commonwealth. The speakers for this event were some of the biggest supporters of sustainable enterprise and innovation.

I believe the most memorable speakers were: Ricken Patel, John Agard and Sir Richard Branson. Patel spoke about innovation and social entrepreneurship in the 21st century and how it is worthwhile to invest in such opportunities. Agard read his poem '*From Over the Mountain Came News*' and Sir Richard Branson spoke about sustainable enterprise within the Commonwealth. The entire service was beautifully- filled with dancing, music and influential leaders from all over the world.

All of these experiences paled in comparison to meeting Her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth II and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh at Marlborough House later that night. Some of the representatives were invited to Marlborough House Reception to meet Queen Elizabeth II. We were staged in small half-circles so when she came into the room it was not overwhelming. No one thought that Queen Elizabeth would be at Marlborough House as she was not present in the Abbey. She surprised us all by showing up and actually speaking to each representative!

Overall, it was an amazing experience where I met so many young people from the Commonwealth Countries and got to learn more about their cultures and beliefs, learned all about the political structure of England and met Queen Elizabeth II.

Nickola O'Sullivan



This photo was supposed to be taken outside of the Houses of Parliament but unfortunately it started snowing moments before we left. Front row from left to right: Mr. Andrew Imalch, Director of Communications & Research; the Right Honorable Sir. Alan Haselhurst, MP; Dr. William F. Shija, Secretary General and Mr. Liam Lawrence Smyth, Clerk of Journals



In this Photo: Her Royal Highness Queen Elizabeth II; Kamallesh Sharma, the latest Secretary General of the CPA. Delegates from left to right: Falkland Islands, Bermuda, Cayman Islands - Nickola O'Sullivan and Jersey.