

BACKGROUND AND ARRANGEMENTS

1. The Working Group whose report is now presented was constituted to consider a Commonwealth Industrial Training and Experience Programme, mainly on the initiative of the Seventh Commonwealth Education Conference held in Accra in March 1977. Recommendations made by other conferences and meetings of bodies whose concern was not primarily with education also contributed to decisions about its composition and terms of reference. The recommendation of the Accra Conference (as summarized on page 6 of its report) was that "proposals for a Commonwealth Exchange Scheme for Industrial Training and Experience be worked out in detail and commended to member governments". (The suggested title was changed after consideration within the Commonwealth Secretariat).
2. The idea of Commonwealth co-operation in industrial training has a long history. Successive Commonwealth Education Conferences, and a Commonwealth Conference on the Education and Training of Technicians held at Huddersfield in 1966, noted the inadequacy of facilities for practical training to complement formal courses of education at technician and degree level, and urged various solutions involving co-operation between Commonwealth countries. The Fifth (Canberra) Conference, 1971, called for every effort by developing countries to utilize and extend local training facilities for practical training and experience in their own industries, and for the help of developed countries in providing such experience where local facilities did not exist. It also recommended that "the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC) should be used to help provide industrial experience for trainees from one developing country in another developing country where more appropriate experience may be available". The Sixth (Kingston) Conference, 1974, made no recommendations in this area. By the time the Seventh (Accra) Conference took place, additional influences were being brought to bear.
3. In July 1976 a seminar was held under Canadian and British auspices at the University of Regina, Saskatchewan, at which the Commonwealth Secretary-General gave the opening address and representatives of Commonwealth developing countries participated. The seminar saw the need for a much wider range of international opportunities to be opened to students, particularly engineering students, to complement their courses of formal education. While it was accepted that complementary training and experience should where possible be obtained in a student's or trainee's own country, it was also recognized that the training capacity in a developing country was often inadequate or non-existent.
4. The seminar endorsed the view expressed by the Secretary-General that Commonwealth co-operation in industrial training is an important component of Commonwealth industrial co-operation generally, and an important medium for the transfer of technology. British and Canadian bilateral programmes for the movement and placement of trainees were noted, as were those of UN Agencies and non-governmental networks such as the International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience (IAESTE). Without prejudice to these programmes, the participants felt that their countries' ever-growing and diversifying training needs were substantial

enough to require a more general opening-up of traffic, and that a Commonwealth-wide network should be established on a multilateral basis. The following resolution was passed:

Regional and Commonwealth Networks - It is the strong consensus of this conference that representatives of those Commonwealth countries which have not yet established national arrangements for co-ordination and informal clearing-house facilities with respect to international co-operative work activities for post-secondary students, now proceed to develop such arrangements as are appropriate to their own national needs. It is noted with appreciation that the good offices of the Commonwealth Secretariat and the representatives of already existing national co-ordinating bodies have been kindly offered on a continuing basis.

5. Other Commonwealth meetings pointed in the same direction. The Ninth Biennial Meeting of the Commonwealth Science Council in December 1976 recommended a Commonwealth programme of job-specific industrial training for technicians and for science and engineering graduates. Its conclusions were based on a survey conducted on the initiative of the Eighth Meeting to study the feasibility of such a programme. The Ninth Meeting commended its proposed programme to the Seventh Commonwealth Education Conference by means of a paper presented to that Conference setting out the CSC's proposals in some detail.

6. The Commonwealth Experts' Group (the McIntyre Group) in its final report "Towards a New International Economic Order", and the Commonwealth Team of Industrial Specialists in a progress report, also contributed to the thinking that led to the constitution of the Working Group. Both stressed the need for the transfer of new technologies and of entrepreneurial and other management skills to developing countries, and for the interchange of knowledge and experience between such countries as a means of achieving this.

7. Following the Accra Conference and in recognition of the potential importance of a Commonwealth Programme that would fulfil the many-sided needs identified by these authorities, the Commonwealth Secretary-General set up an inter-divisional committee which, between May and December 1977, gave preliminary consideration to a Commonwealth Programme and planned the meeting of the Working Group. Arrangements were made for the Group to meet in Marlborough House between 31 January and 3 February 1978, and the following terms of reference were prepared:

The working group is entrusted with the responsibility of making recommendations to the Commonwealth Secretary-General, for consideration by Commonwealth Governments, on the feasibility and modus operandi of a Commonwealth industrial training and experience programme. In carrying out this task the Working Group will consider, inter alia:

- (a) the detailed proceedings and reports of the Commonwealth conferences and meetings related to this subject including those referred to above;
- (b) existing provisions under bilateral, international and other arrangements to meet the need for increased opportunities for practical training and experience in industry;

(c) methods of financing a Commonwealth programme, including such items as administration, accommodation and transportation;

(d) the national and Commonwealth machinery and facilities required for the implementation of the programme.

8. The meeting of the Working Group opened on the morning of 31 January 1978 with an address by Mr. A.G. Tasker, Commonwealth Assistant Secretary-General and Managing Director of the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation. The ensuing discussions continued until 3 February, with Mr. E.C. Anyaoku, Commonwealth Deputy Secretary-General being present at the concluding session.