

COMMONWEALTH AND REGIONAL CO-OPERATION

Introduced by Mr B.F.C. Fong and Mr S. Mahendra

Mr Fong outlined the organization, functions, and activities of the Commonwealth Secretariat, and in particular of its Education Division. He hoped his brief account would give hints about further action that could be taken to develop technician education in the Commonwealth regions of Asia and the Pacific.

The Commonwealth Secretariat was set up by Commonwealth governments in 1965. The Commonwealth now has 36 members, and about one-quarter of the world population lives in these countries. There are large and small nations and, independently of size and population, every member is an equal partner in this Commonwealth of nations. Mr Fong quoted from the Secretary-General's Fifth Report to the Heads of Commonwealth Governments at the Jamaica Conference, 1975, which read as follows:

"If we are to make use of the Commonwealth, we must be clear about what it is and which tasks it is equipped to tackle. The Commonwealth is neither a substitute for nor an alternative to the United Nations system, to which all our members belong and in which all of them place faith. It cannot do the work of the various regional organizations, economic and political, whose growth has been so hopeful a feature of the international scene in recent years and in which many of our members play an active role. The Commonwealth is something else, no less valuable, but different. Our organization was not created to meet a specific need nor to remedy a particular defect in the world. It is an endeavour in partnership and friendship and mutual self-respect. In this vast range of political, economic and geographical interests, only one type of nation is missing. There is no super-power in the Commonwealth."

The Secretariat of the Commonwealth governments is in London, at Marlborough House, put at the disposal of the Commonwealth by the Head of the Commonwealth, Her Majesty the Queen of England. The Secretariat is responsible to Commonwealth governments collectively and its work includes promoting consultation and collecting and disseminating information for their use. It also organizes meetings and other activities and, perhaps more important, is responsible for putting into effect decisions for collective action. This is done in a number of ways, including periodical meetings of Ministers. First and foremost, heads of Governments meet every two years at a selected venue in a Commonwealth country; their next meeting is scheduled to take place in London in June 1977. This will happily coincide with the Jubilee celebration of Her Majesty the Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, and it is therefore a most apt venue.

In terms of organization, the head of the Commonwealth Secretariat is the Secretary-General, Mr Shridath Ramphal. His predecessor was Mr Arnold Smith, who had served for two terms of five years each and is now a Professor at Carleton University in Canada. The present Secretary-General is assisted by two deputies, one from India and the other from Australia, Mr Husain and Mr Ross Deane. Under them are two Assistant Secretaries-General, Mr Anyaoku from Nigeria who looks after most of the functional divisions and Mr Anthony Tasker who is the Managing Director of the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation.

The Secretariat is very small but has an effective organization, responsive to the needs of Commonwealth member governments. Staff number about 300 and work in various divisions known by their respective subject areas like law, health, finance, international affairs, economic affairs, youth and education; the latest is a division for food production and rural development.

In the agreed memorandum of Commonwealth governments, the staff of the Secretariat should be as widely representative of Commonwealth countries as possible. Efforts are therefore made to recruit staff members from all parts of the Commonwealth.

The type of work carried out by the Education Division includes the role of clearing house for information about educational developments, monitoring educational trends, organizing conferences and seminars to meet needs of member governments as expressed by Ministries of Education or by Ministers at Commonwealth Education Conferences. So far, there have been six conferences of education ministers. They take place roughly every three years; the last or Sixth was held in Jamaica in 1974, and the next will take place in Accra early in 1977. Planning for this conference has been going on for about a year and preparations are now being finalized. The Ministers will meet and hold discussions on a particular theme, and also review the educational work of the Secretariat. The theme chosen for next year's conference is "The Economics and Education". What best mileage can be got out of the very restricted budgetary allocations of Ministries of Education? New ideas have got to be found to cope with the problems, both quantitative and qualitative. With existing allocations, more and more Ministries are finding it difficult to provide the growing numbers of places in primary as well as secondary schools, so that bold actions in experimenting with alternatives to formal education will have to be taken. The Education Division is much involved in this, and has commissioned one or two persons to look into this area and identify what efforts have been made and can be further made to find alternatives to formal education. Other recent activities of the Division have been focussed on areas such as book development, especially book production, which needs to be encouraged in developing countries, that is to say the indigenous production of cheap textbooks in order to support curriculum innovation in these countries. A specialist conference was held in Wellington, New Zealand, in 1975 on learning and teaching materials, and nearly all Commonwealth countries were represented. This was followed by the first Commonwealth Educational Broadcasting Conference in Sydney in October, 1975. The Education Division has also been turning attention to areas such as educational administration and supervision; three regional seminars have been held, the first in Sierra Leone, the second in Guyana and the third in Kuala Lumpur. A regional training course in educational administration is being planned in Kenya for the African member countries, and two or three regional training courses for senior people in book production are at the planning stage; the first will take place in Guyana for the Caribbean member countries.

Other work has been concerned with modern educational technology. In April, 1976, a group of Commonwealth educationists was organized by the Education Division to visit India to study the Satellite Instruction Television Experiment, and a report has been produced.

The programme for 1976/1977 (the Secretariat's financial year extends from 1 July to 30 June) included several seminars. The first, held in the Cook Islands in September, dealt with Education and the Community: Partnership for Development. The second is the present seminar/workshop on Technical Education and Industry. The third seminar/workshop, for the Caribbean region, will be on the Production of Low Cost Science Teaching Equipment and will be held in the Bahamas in November, 1976. A fourth, on In-Service Teacher Training Programmes, also for the Caribbean region, is to be held in Barbados in April, 1977.

Problems of organizing regional training courses may need to be discussed; views on whether any such courses should be organized to meet pressing needs in the area of technician education will be welcome.

An interesting programme has been proposed called a Commonwealth Programme of Applied Studies in Education. It is hoped that the Commonwealth Ministers will endorse this at the Seventh Commonwealth Education Conference. In a nutshell, this is essentially a problem-solving enterprise. There have been wide consultations with Commonwealth governments and institutions on this. Some educational problems need to be tackled on an inter-disciplinary basis. If member governments face a particularly urgent educational problem, in the area perhaps of examinations or curriculum or staff training, then a task force may be formed to make an on-the-spot study of the problem, assembling data and then proposing solutions. This will involve not only experts and consultants but also the people on the spot. This programme is expected to be launched after the education ministers meet in Accra in 1977. In the Asia and Pacific regions, no doubt there are such problems. One of them perhaps is the problem of unemployed school leavers.

A number of studies of educational topics are produced in the Education Division's Education in the Commonwealth series. Every two years a kind of register containing the latest educational research reports is produced. Directories of educational institutions are also compiled and published. In association with the Association of Commonwealth Universities we have published a book on research strengths in the universities of Commonwealth developing countries. Thus, anyone who wants to know, say what particular facilities the University of Hong Kong has in any particular branch of academic research, will find it listed in that Directory. The facilities available in terms of staff, equipment, places available for other Commonwealth countries and so on are also listed. The Commonwealth Secretariat leaflet lists the publications available, and these include:

Special Education in the Developing Countries of the Commonwealth
Survey of Correspondence Institutions in the Commonwealth
Mathematics Teaching in Schools
Education in the Developing Countries of the Commonwealth -
Research Register 1971-1973
New Media in Education in the Commonwealth
Educating and Training Technicians

A quarterly CELC (Commonwealth Education Liaison Committee) newsletter is also published, in which Commonwealth educationists or interested people write of and are informed of educational developments in the Commonwealth. This Committee was set up in London to advise the Education Division on its work programmes, and comprises representatives of every Commonwealth High Commission in London. Meetings are held about once every three months, through which the staff of the Education Division are guided in the interim between Commonwealth Ministers' Conferences.

As the world becomes more easily reached, there is greater scope for Commonwealth and regional co-operation. There is greater inter-dependence between countries, particularly developing countries, and more pooling of resources; also regional and Commonwealth co-operation are necessary to take best advantage out of the different circumstances that prevail in each country situation. In that connection, a brief quotation from the Secretary-General's recent speech delivered on the occasion of an international symposium held in London on Science Policy for Development applies to technology policy in many member countries. This is what he says in connection with regional co-operation:

"The developing world is not homogeneous. It has eight countries only with a population of over 50 million, and 60 with a population of less than 5 million. The solution to the problem of the small countries lies inescapably in greater regional efforts in pooling their available resources of scientific personnel, institutions and funds for their mutual benefit. For them, regional co-operation has an important role to play in the implementation of science policy no less than in general development policy of which it is a part. The large developing countries who are fortunate to have the potential for mounting the required efforts in the science and technology field cannot fail to derive benefit from co-operating with other developing countries but they must also assume a clear obligation to support the efforts being undertaken by countries more deficient than themselves in scientific and technological personnel. The organization of co-operative effort in science and technology spanning the Third World is an exercise which is bound to occupy the attention of policy makers in science no less than in other fields of development."

Turning to the role of developed countries in this regard, he says:

"In the evolution of a science policy for development, there are important, indeed critical roles for the developed world also. They are roles which should be seen as helping to create an international environment propitious to the efforts of the developing countries themselves, as facilitating such efforts by adequate resource transfers, and as supplementing them by supportive work and by restraint on policies that could only frustrate and hinder development. They are roles which require, of course, that development be the substantive goal of the science policy of the industrial world. The redress of poverty must become an end attainable because of, and not despite, the science policy of the rich. It is not without significance that it was the principal resolution of the Seventh Special Session of the General Assembly, seeking to advance implementation of the New International Economic Order, that called for a United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development to be held in 1978/1979. That resolution also called for the developed countries to 'significantly expand their assistance to developing countries for direct support to their science and technology programmes, as well as increase substantially the proportions of their research and

development devoted to specific problems of primary interest to developing countries and in the creation of suitable indigenous technology in accordance with feasible targets to be agreed upon."

As Dr Chung himself pointed out, the gap between the developed and developing countries is too wide, and if this gap is not bridged through regional or Commonwealth or other international co-operation, then perhaps this, as he hinted, could lead to global violence.

In the area of co-operation either on a regional or on a pan-Commonwealth basis, machinery of some sort for exchanges of persons and information on technician education and training can be considered. For example, there could well be offers of places in technical institutions of Commonwealth countries in the region which other Commonwealth countries could take advantage of. How to get this type of information so that the opportunity is not lost? Of course, the Education Division can act as a clearing house, but an opportunity is given by this seminar for delegates to meet one another face to face, establish closer contacts and set up machinery to take advantage of training facilities that are already in existence in Commonwealth countries in the regions. There could also well be study visits of technician teacher trainers or planners so that they could acquaint themselves further with work done by other countries; or there could be consultations. This is an area which could be investigated so as to formulate some recommendations in that direction. Another area perhaps is the area of attachments of teaching personnel to industry, not in the candidate's own country but in another country, preferably a developing country so that the problems are not too different in terms of environment; or there could be special regional training courses mounted to meet specific needs of member countries. In this connection perhaps the Colombo Plan Staff College can be approached as it has excellent facilities to mount a special course - perhaps from one to three months - on curriculum design for technician education or any other aspect in which member countries feel they need further training for staff connected with the development of technician education.

The idea of having a standing conference of Commonwealth technical educators for the region so that representation from the various countries will have the opportunity to meet regularly to discuss common problems and to improve the systems of training deserves support.

The Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation - Mr Mahendra

The Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation is a multilateral development fund administered by the Commonwealth Secretariat, set up in 1971 and supported by all Commonwealth governments on a voluntary basis. The Fund is the Secretariat's main instrument for the provision of technical assistance. Its operations are conducted through three main programmes. First, there is the General Technical Assistance Programme, under which experts, advisory or operational, from all parts of the Commonwealth are made available in a wide range of inter-related fields of economic and social development, including, of course, technical education and training. Experts have so far been recruited from 21 Commonwealth countries, over 40% of them from developing countries. Secondly, there is the Export Market Development Programme, under which technical assistance is provided to countries wishing to develop exports of agricultural or manufactured products. This includes market research and trade promotion studies. Thirdly, there is the Education and Training Programme, under which awards are made to enable

students from Commonwealth developing countries to undertake study or training in other Commonwealth developing countries.

In considering Commonwealth and regional co-operation in developing technical education and training, the Secretariat, through the CFTC, has an important role. CFTC is not in the same league as the bigger international organizations; its resources are modest; but it enjoys wide support among member governments because it is essentially a programme of self-help in which the recipients are also donors. Other factors which have contributed to its popularity are the speed and flexibility of its operations.

The main thrust of the CFTC Education and Training Programme is aimed at the training of middle-level personnel from Commonwealth developing countries in other such countries, usually in the same region. The Programme supplements national programmes and other schemes of co-operation by providing awards to enable developing countries to share their education and training facilities and assist in each other's development. This in fact is a form of third country training. A wide range of education and training activities is supported under the Programme, the institutions concerned varying from universities to trade schools. They include training attachments, study visits and participation in seminars and workshops which are developmentally oriented and have a substantial training element. Support is not generally given to participation in conferences which are merely intended for an exchange of information.

Awards are made on the basis of requests by member governments, who decide their own priorities. Within this framework, programmes which will materially contribute to a country's economic and social development are favoured; for example programmes of agricultural development, including forestry and fisheries; education, including technical education and training, teacher training, educational planning and administration; industrial development, particularly small scale industries; transport and communications; development planning and statistics.

Each government has appointed or designated an official agency or an officer through whom the programme is administered - see the last page of the paper on the Education and Training Programme. Any requests coming from a country has to have the support of these agencies, and requests received directly from individuals will be referred back to the agency for clearance before it is processed. Appropriate forms for submission of requests are ET1 and ET3.

Sometimes expert advice outside the Secretariat has to be sought and it is fortunate that in the UK there are a large number of specialist institutions and bodies to consult. In implementing the Programme constant reference is made to the Directory of Education and Training Resources, published two years ago. It has two sections, the first devoted to university and the second to professional and technical institutions in developing countries at the post-secondary level. The Directory is in the process of being revised.

Though the main thrust of the Programme is to develop middle-level personnel and the operations are largely limited to training in developing countries, the terms of reference have been slightly relaxed at the Board of Representatives meeting which took place last week (27 September, 1976) in Hong Kong, one day before the Finance Ministers meeting. Among other matters, proposals were considered for extending the terms of reference

of the CFTC to permit a limited amount of training in developed countries. This was done largely because some member countries felt they were precluded from using the opportunities available under the Programme because of its limitation. As a result, the Board has now agreed to permit the CFTC to fund a limited amount of training in developed countries provided no satisfactory facilities are available in developing countries. It has set a ceiling of £100,000 annually, and this is subject to review as the Programme develops. It has also recommended certain guidelines for requests to be met under this Programme.

Firstly, awards should be made where assistance was not available under bilateral or multilateral programmes. Secondly, preference should be given to training programmes of not more than one year's duration. Thirdly, preference should be given to training attachments in fields identified by requesting governments as being of indisputable importance to national economic development, for example export market operations, industry, and management. Finally, awards for participants in seminars and workshops with a high training content should be preferred to awards for attendance at conferences that are simply for exchanges of views.

Although this extension has been permitted, only a fraction of the training to be supported in the future will be training in developed countries, and the main emphasis will continue to be training in developing countries.

Some examples of the type of assistance that has been provided under the Programme are given here. Starting with Hong Kong, for understandable reasons Hong Kong has made little use of opportunities available under CFTC's Programme so far. During the financial year 1975/1976, awards were made for officials of the Education Department to undertake two short study visits, one to Singapore to study the Centralized Workshop Scheme and the other to Malaysia and Singapore to study the work of the Federal Examinations Syndicate. Three officers of the Education Department were also supported for courses at the Regional English Centre in Singapore. Currently two statistical clerks of Hong's Census & Statistics Department are following a 10-month course at the International Education Statistical Centre in Calcutta. Hong Kong has been provided with services of two British experts to organize courses for instructors in tool and die making.

Hong Kong's education and training facilities have been barely used under the Education and Training Programme, apart from a study visit to Hong Kong, among other Commonwealth countries, by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Bahamas, to study the educational system. The only noteworthy CFTC sponsored training activity here was a 5-month technician training course at the Medical Rehabilitation Centre, for two trainees from the South Pacific, one from the New Hebrides, and the other from Western Samoa. We have had some feedback on the latter project. Subsequently, a World Rehabilitation Fund expert who visited Western Samoa recently wrote to CFTC to say how impressed he was by the excellent work the Samoan trainee was doing at the General Hospital, functioning as the technician in charge of the unit there.

In considering technical co-operation among developing countries, India has a very special place. The wide range of education and training facilities and expertise available in India has been and is being used extensively under the CFTC's Programme. A good example is the training of 24 technicians from Tanzania who have recently completed a specially arranged course at the Small Industry Extension Training Institute in Hyderabad

in preparation for small industry development in the Ujamaa villages that are a central feature of Tanzania's rural development.

In Africa, Nigeria plays a role similar to that played by India in the Asian region in providing facilities. Nigeria itself has not used the Fund to any appreciable degree. A number of regional institutions in Africa, such as the Mananga Agricultural Management Centre in Swaziland and the East African Telecommunications Training School in Kenya, and national institutions such as the Kenya Polytechnic in Nairobi, have been used for training nationals of other Commonwealth countries. A senior construction engineer from Sri Lanka recently began a two-year assignment with Malawi's Ministry of Works and Supplies. Mr Fong has already referred to the importance that our Secretary-General attaches to regional co-operation; this is an important element in the Secretariat's programmes, and wherever possible CFTC awards are made to enable students to train in their own region. Technical education staff from Bangladesh, Fiji, India, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Singapore and Sri Lanka have been granted awards to follow courses at the Colombo Plan Staff College for Technician Education in Singapore. The Staff College was also provided with the services of two experts, both from Britain, one short-term and the other long-term, to assist Dr Chandrakant in developing the programme of the College.

In the Pacific region, the University of the South Pacific is an important regional institution where students and trainees from other South Pacific islands follow courses on CFTC awards, and the short courses are particularly popular. Among those who followed the one-month course for training officers and instructors earlier this year were four trainees from the Gilbert Islands. The Vice-Chancellor of the USP is Dr James Maraj from Trinidad who was at one time Director of the Secretariat's Education Division and later Assistant Secretary-General. His services were provided initially for a two-year period through the CFTC. The Regional Telecommunications Training Centre in Fiji has been assisted by the Fund for traffic staff. National institutions such as the Derrick Technical Institute in Suva and the Honiara Technical Institute in the Solomon Islands have also been used for regional training with CFTC assistance. The South Pacific Commission has undertaken, also with CFTC assistance, the task of preparing a directory of training facilities in the South Pacific which will contain information on facilities available in institutions, government departments and industries, and should be a useful tool in promoting intra-regional training in that area.

In the Caribbean region, CFTC awards have been made for nominees of several countries to follow degree courses in engineering and agriculture at the University of the West Indies. The Mona campus of the University has a diploma course in radiography, which students from the Bahamas recently completed with CFTC awards. The East Caribbean Institute of Agriculture and Forestry in Trinidad, the Caribbean Meteorological Institute in Barbados and the Bahamas Hotel Training School in Nassau are other regional institutions to which Commonwealth Governments have sent students on CFTC fellowships. Advisers on technical education, one from Britain and the other from Canada, are at present serving two-year assignments in the Bahamas.

Practical training attachments have proved very valuable in familiarizing trainees with practices and techniques successfully developed in other Commonwealth countries. An example is the attachment of a trainee from the Sri Lanka Sugar Corporation to Guyana Distilleries Ltd. to study the distillation and blending of liquor.

The education and training facilities in Singapore are being increasingly used for the placement of trainees from other Commonwealth developing countries. The Singapore Port Authority has provided training for personnel from Ghana, the Cook Islands, Malaysia, Bangladesh and Mauritius through CFTC awards. An expert from Singapore has been recruited to help the newly formed Fiji Ports Authority. Malaysia's facilities are also being used under the programme. Malawi has sent students on technician courses to the Telecommunications Training Centre in Kuala Lumpur, and a trainee from Botswana is following a two-year diploma course in radiography at the School of Radiography.

Another aspect of the Education and Training Programme is the Academic Exchanges Programme jointly administered by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Association of Commonwealth Universities. Awards are provided for university staff for attachments or study visits to universities in developing countries, but a visit must last not more than three months and under this scheme the study visit of a senior lecturer from the University of Hong Kong was financed in 1976 to visit the University of Malaysia to develop links with colleagues working in the same area.

Two special programmes reflect the concern of Commonwealth Governments about developments in Southern Africa. The first is the special Commonwealth Programme for Rhodesian Africans; a trust fund has been set up to which Commonwealth governments contribute and scholarships are awarded to Africans from Rhodesia for courses in institutions in Africa and also in India. A similar programme has been launched for Namibians. The problem here is somewhat different in that the immediate need is for boys to have a secondary school education. Responding to this need the CFTC arranged in September, 1976 for 55 students to be air-lifted from Zambia to secondary schools in Ghana, Sierra Leone and The Gambia.

DISCUSSION

These statements were followed first by a short question and answer session in the course of which the following points were made: (i) examples of the break-up of regional arrangements, such as the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, were due to special sets of circumstances, were more than counter-balanced by examples of successful arrangements, and should not dishearten the seminar from promoting greater regional co-operation; (ii) fellowships were available through the CFTC for Commonwealth countries in the two regions to take advantage of the programmes of the Colombo Plan Staff College for Technician Education; (iii) there was a good case for funds to be made available for the exchange of teaching staff at all levels between technician institutions, on the lines of the academic exchange programme between university institutions administered by the Association of Commonwealth Universities; (iv) it was open to the seminar to make generalized or detailed recommendations for ways in which the CFTC and other international and regional organizations might provide financial assistance for co-operation within the framework of the topics of the seminar, which ranged broadly from, e.g. apprenticeship and sandwich courses to levy/grant systems and manpower planning.

The last point gave rise to further discussion and questioning, Mr Mahendra being asked for more detailed information about the history, objectives and procedures of the CFTC and the funds available to it. Most of this information was contained in a new CFTC booklet, "The First Five Years", copies of which had just become available and were distributed by

Mr Mahendra. It was noted that when the Fund was set up in 1971 the Commonwealth Secretariat had very little operational capability. In the light of their better understanding of the sort of assistance that might be available and the channels through which it should be requested delegates proceeded to consider to what extent the seminar's recommendations in this area might be detailed and specific.

In view of the very short time left to it, the seminar, on the suggestion of Mr Fong, set up a small working party to prepare a draft set of recommendations for consideration in plenary session on the next and final day. The working party was asked not to lose sight of the theme of the seminar - co-operation between technical education and industry - or of the seminar's Objective (c), the suggestion being made that the Secretariat might itself, or through consultants, prepare some sort of compendium of effective policies, programmes and activities in the various areas of co-operation between technical education and industry for the guidance of all concerned. Finally, the point was made that non-governmental organizations and institutions, not excluding the universities or autonomous polytechnics like the Hong Kong Polytechnic, were not under the CFTC's rules outside the ambit of the Fund's possible assistance provided that any requests in which they were involved were endorsed and transmitted in proper form by the government concerned.

The seminar in plenary session on the final day, Thursday the 7th October, duly received a draft from the working party and discussed it point by point. The amendments made to the draft were mainly verbal and designed to point them more specifically towards practical action by the various authorities to which they were directed. The Secretariat was authorized to undertake any final editing that might be considered necessary. Subject to these amendments and any further verbal improvements, the draft was approved as the seminar's formal Recommendations for Commonwealth and Regional Co-operation.