

INTRODUCTION

At the Seventh Commonwealth Education Conference held at Accra in March 1977, Ministers of Education and their senior officials expressed concern about the rising cost of paper which, they feared, could threaten the ability of Commonwealth developing countries to maintain their supplies of textbooks. Hopes were expressed that ways could be found by which these countries could become more self-reliant in meeting their paper requirements, either by utilizing hitherto untapped raw materials for local paper production or by making increased use of recycled waste paper. Accordingly the Commonwealth Secretariat was asked to keep in touch with innovations and experiments in paper and book production technology throughout the world, and to communicate whatever information it obtained to Commonwealth governments.

In carrying out this assignment the Commonwealth Secretariat commissioned PIRA (the Research Association for the Paper and Board, Printing and Packaging Industries) to prepare this study of the literature published on the subject. It is in three sections. The first gives an indication of trends in paper prices which, after a long period of stability, multiplied approximately threefold between 1971 and 1977 but which show signs of rising less steeply for the next few years (see also Table 2 on page 29 and Graph 1 on page 33). The second section outlines the supply and demand situation for paper and pulp, showing that there are no immediate signs of scarcity (though this position could change if the requirements of centrally planned economies rise more quickly than predicted). The third and largest section sets out guidelines on raw materials which can be used for pulp and paper manufacture in developing countries - particularly in tropical climates - and contains an annotated list of over forty commercial operations using these raw materials in various parts of the world. It also includes a summary of recent developments in paper recycling, and it ends with a list of over eighty references to publications from which further information can be obtained by any organization desirous of investigating further the use of non-traditional sources of raw materials in the manufacture of paper.

Though this study was initiated in response to a particular educational problem, Commonwealth developing countries will find its contents of much wider significance. Any opportunity they can take to produce paper from tropical hardwoods, bamboo, bagasse, straw, and other locally available raw materials, may lead to a reduction of imports and the saving of foreign exchange. The paper produced may not be of the right specifications for book production, but it could serve many other industrial and commercial purposes of equal importance.