

INTRODUCTION

The importance of science to national development has been recognized by all governments. This is evident from the worldwide trend towards developing relevant materials which are related to a child's environment.

In general, the materials developed during the past two decades have tended to stress student participation and learning by doing. Consequently, they require an adequate supply of equipment for effective implementation. Yet, to date, very little progress seems to have been made in school science teaching. One of the major reasons is the non-availability, inadequacy or non-utilization of equipment. Hence Commonwealth governments have requested that the Commonwealth Secretariat should promote and encourage co-operative activities aimed at alleviating this handicap.

In September 1975, the Secretariat published a book entitled The Production of School Science Equipment. Besides critically reviewing developments in the field of low-cost equipment, the book provides information on agencies and programmes concerned with the design and manufacture of science teaching aids in a wide range of countries. Also included are photographs of many types of equipment for use in countries where items from the major international suppliers are unobtainable or unsuitable.

This seminar - the first of a series of such meetings on the teaching of science - was organized to complement our publishing efforts in the field of science equipment. It did not concern itself with the methods of teaching science. Instead, it emphasized the means of making the knowledge of science available to as many school pupils as possible through the local production of science teaching equipment, keeping the cost as low as possible. For this reason, the seminar included practical laboratory sessions at which participants familiarized themselves with basic workshop techniques for the construction of some of the simple basic items of equipment which are at present imported into the various countries. Participants produced some equipment themselves.

Ways of identifying regional and Commonwealth co-operation was another objective of the meeting, and a number of recommendations were made. It is hoped that these recommendations will result in practical programmes and projects that will assist Commonwealth Caribbean countries in making their science education programmes more effective.

The Commonwealth Secretariat wishes to acknowledge its gratitude to the Government of The Bahamas for playing host to this seminar/workshop and to all those who contributed to the meeting and offered hospitality to the delegates. Special thanks are due to the Chairman, Miss Marjorie Davis, who steered the sessions so ably, to our consultants, to whom the success of the laboratory sessions was due, and to our resource person and the observers who also contributed effectively to the work of the seminar.