

## COMMONWEALTH CO-OPERATION IN THE MANUFACTURE, SUPPLY AND USE OF SCHOOL SCIENCE EQUIPMENT

One of the functions of the Commonwealth Secretariat is to encourage and promote co-operation among member countries in the field of education. Four main ways in which this is done are: organizing conferences, seminars and workshops; carrying out research; collecting and disseminating information; and organizing and supporting training courses.

It was pointed out that in performing its tasks the Commonwealth Secretariat works closely with international agencies like UNESCO and the World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession (WCOTP), regional organizations like CARICOM, and national organizations like the British Council, thus avoiding unnecessary duplication of effort. Also, the Commonwealth Secretariat tries to keep in touch with teachers' organizations and professional teachers' associations, particularly in their task of fostering educational development not only on a national basis but also among Commonwealth countries.

The meeting discussed recent and current activities in the educational programme of the Commonwealth Secretariat. It noted that the recent publication, The Production of School Science Equipment: A Review of Developments has been well received by member countries. Participants were informed that a follow-up booklet which looks at four different approaches to the solution of the equipment problem would shortly be published. Though participants showed appreciation for the information on the publishing role of the Secretariat, many of them complained that generally the publications do not reach them.

Participants showed keen interest also in the following opportunities for Commonwealth Secretariat help: bursaries for trainee technicians at production centres already in existence in the Commonwealth; travel grants for persons working in science education centres and who have interest in design, production, distribution and use of low-cost science equipment; fellowships for teachers to undertake postgraduate studies in science education.

The discussions led to a number of requests in which the Commonwealth Secretariat was asked to:

- (a) Circulate information on developments in the field of school science equipment.
- (b) Compile a directory of commercial kits and literature about their use.
- (c) Encourage the free flow of samples of low-cost science equipment among Commonwealth countries.
- (d) Investigate the design of basic equipment which can be used widely, especially where there is no supply of electricity.

- (e) Encourage regional co-operation through standardization, production and distribution of locally-produced science equipment.
- (f) Assist with programmes of in-service training of teachers and with the running of national or regional science workshops.
- (g) Organize, at the earliest opportunity, a Commonwealth conference on school science teaching. Possible themes suggested for the specialist conference were "How Science and Mathematics Teaching can be Co-ordinated at the School Level", and "Communication in Science Education".

Participants also asked the Commonwealth Secretariat to review its system of disseminating information, to ensure that it got into the hands of those who needed it. Participants would like the Commonwealth Secretariat to provide information on:

- (a) Setting up and running resource centres;
- (b) Commonwealth countries; up-to-date facts in as many fields as possible e.g. history, politics, culture and economics.

Many participants expressed appreciation of the work of the Commonwealth Secretariat. The meeting hoped the Commonwealth Secretariat would assist territories, as much as possible in implementing projects that might result from the present Seminar/Workshop.