

Introduction

1. This report summarizes the discussion on comparative techniques of government which formed part of the agenda for the meeting of Senior Commonwealth Officials in Ottawa from 16 to 19 October 1972. It also includes material taken from the papers circulated by six member governments.
2. The meeting considered a number of topics of common interest to the participants. It sought to identify the problems which it would be useful to discuss on future occasions. The following two chapters summarize the substances of the discussion on the five topics to which the most time was devoted. The concluding chapter covers two further areas of interest to which the main discussions were related, and suggests which aspects of the subject might appear on future agendas.
3. The section on financial procedures deals briefly with a topic on which senior officials have asked for further information; that on senior personnel policy takes points from different parts of the principal discussions, because this topic, although intended for consideration, was never formally taken.

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4. The institutions which provide a common pattern of administrative procedures throughout the Commonwealth do not by themselves provide an adequate framework in which internal political problems can be discussed on a pan-Commonwealth basis. The Commonwealth contains so many different internal political styles. Accordingly any discussion of specific political problems has to be related to the particular contexts in which those problems occur.
5. But Principal Permanent officials in Commonwealth countries play roles which each recognizes in the other. There are a number of situations which seem familiar when they are translated into the terms which have been developed within the Commonwealth idiom. The principal patterns of administration developed in the Commonwealth provide administrations with a common terminology as well as mutual understanding of each other's conventions. High-ranking civil servants can easily appreciate the judgement required in different situations to handle the machinery of government.