

## COMMONWEALTH CO-OPERATION IN THE PRODUCTION AND USE OF SCIENCE TEACHING EQUIPMENT

One of the functions of the Commonwealth Secretariat is to encourage and promote co-operation among member countries in the field of education. At the seminar it was noted that 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 also pointed out that in performing its tasks the Commonwealth Secretariat works closely with international agencies such as UNESCO and the World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession (WCOTP), regional organizations such as the Science Education Programme for Africa (SEPA), and national organizations such as the British Council, thus avoiding duplication of effort. In addition, the Commonwealth Secretariat tries to keep in touch with teachers' associations, particularly in their task of fostering educational development not only on a national basis but also among Commonwealth countries.

Attention was drawn to the varied nature of the meetings which the Education Division organizes on behalf of the Commonwealth Secretariat. It was explained that Commonwealth Conferences, the seventh of which was held in Accra in March 1977, take place once every three years. Their recommendations give guidance and authority to what the Education Division does. The present seminar/workshop is an example of a meeting which has a training component, an element which governments find particularly useful. A third type of meeting is the Specialist Conference, one of which is normally held in the period between triennial ministerial conferences. These are organized to focus attention on a specialist subject of concern to governments. Participants at the seminar welcomed the news that science and mathematics education and technical education might form the topic for the next Commonwealth Specialist Conference.

It was noted that the Commonwealth Secretariat has recently launched a programme of regional training courses. Two regional courses have been held this year, one in Africa on educational administration and supervision, and one in the Caribbean on book production. These courses are examples of what the Commonwealth Secretariat hopes will be further regional courses if the demand for them continues.

The need to strengthen understanding in Commonwealth countries about what the Commonwealth Secretariat is, what it does, and what it can offer to member countries was emphasized, and note taken of the strong support which Commonwealth Heads of Government, at their recent meeting in London, gave to the Secretariat in its plans to stimulate, in every possible way, the knowledge and understanding necessary for effective co-operation between member countries.

The problems associated with communication between the Commonwealth member countries received much attention. Participants complained that the

Secretariat's publications seldom reached them. They requested that the Secretariat's system of disseminating information should be reviewed to ensure that the information was sent to all institutions, organizations, and individuals in need of it. They suggested further that if it were feasible, the Commonwealth Secretariat should establish an Africa Regional Office to handle matters relating to the Secretariat's educational projects in the region.

Regarding the need for Commonwealth regional co-operation in science education, it was observed that regional co-operation already existed to a certain extent among many African States through SEPA and through national science teachers' associations in some of the countries represented at the seminar/workshop. Participants expressed appreciation for the role the Commonwealth Secretariat was playing both through its publishing efforts and in its regional activities. They broadly endorsed, in the context of the needs of the Africa region, the recommendations of the Bahamas 1976 seminar on the same theme. In particular they requested the Secretariat to hold, in the near future, a review seminar/workshop. This would enable and encourage member states to assess their progress in the development and mass production of school science teaching equipment.