

OPENING CEREMONY

The ceremony was introduced by Mr N. Puna, Secretary of Education who thanked Dr Cookey, as representative of the Commonwealth Secretary-General, for supporting the idea of the meeting and for including both the Education Division and the Commonwealth Youth Programme in it. He also thanked the Cook Islands Government for agreeing to host the meeting. In outlining the aims of the Seminar/Workshop, Mr Puna stressed the importance of a regional sharing of ideas for creating a closer partnership between the community and education in the pursuit of development targets. He hoped that the meeting would agree to certain basic principles for future action, but noted that no set pattern could apply to all the different situations which exist in the different islands.

On behalf of the Cook Islands Government, the Minister of Education, the Honourable Dr Joseph Williams, thanked Dr Cookey for holding the Seminar in Rarotonga. He noted the objectives of the Seminar/Workshop and was prompted to ask himself three questions - What is Education? What is Community Development? How can the two be united effectively to bring happiness and prosperity to the people? In considering these questions he had concluded that the delegates to the meeting were embarking on a heroic venture which, if successful, would make a great contribution to development in the Pacific Region.

The official opening ceremony was performed by the Premier of the Cook Islands, the Honourable Sir Albert Henry. He opened his address with a Biblical quotation "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom". He expressed the view that when young people gaining an education did not live by this quotation then they were likely to grow into "smart alecs".

On behalf of the Cook Islands' Government, the Premier extended a warm welcome to Dr Cookey, delegates, observers, the New Zealand representative and other invited guests.

Education, the Premier said, was not an easy subject to talk about. Education, however, was never-ending. It began when a person was born and ended when he died. Simply put, education meant talking about things, doing things and going without things. He posed the question of what an educated person was like.

One of the two major objectives of the Cook Islands Government, as set out in the Cook Islands Party manifesto, was increasing the knowledge of all the people of the Cook Islands. The Government was dedicated to education and community development.

The Premier mentioned that when he was young, educational opportunities for most people were very limited. In the Cook Islands today, education was available from the age of 4 years (pre-school) up to fifth form secondary level. Beyond that, though, only relatively few had access to higher learning. The problem was to find room in the community for the majority who do not go further. He hoped that the Seminar might show how this could be done. If answers to this problem could be formulated then they would be of great benefit to succeeding generations in the Pacific region.

ADDRESS AT THE OPENING CEREMONY BY DR. S.J. COOKEY

Director, Education Division, Commonwealth Secretariat

Sir Albert Henry, Lady Henry, Honourable Ministers, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I am conscious of the honour and privilege accorded me by being invited to respond to the excellent speeches of the Honourable Premier and Honourable Minister of Health and Education. I should like to thank them for their speeches but before doing so, may I be permitted to speak briefly about how this Seminar/Workshop came to be planned. In doing this I shall say something about the Commonwealth Secretariat.

First of all, I should like to say a few words about the Commonwealth. I shall not dwell long on this because I cannot think of any person present who does not know about the Commonwealth. To quote from the Declaration of Commonwealth Principles, unanimously adopted in 1971 at the Heads of Government Meeting in Singapore, "The Commonwealth of Nations is a voluntary association of sovereign states, each responsible for its own policies, consulting and co-operating in the common interests of their peoples and in the promotion of international understanding and world peace".

Today the Commonwealth comprises thirty six independent member countries and their dependencies, as well as self-governing states associated with member countries. The combined population is over 902 million, nearly one-quarter of the world's population. The combined area covered by the Commonwealth is over ten million square miles, nearly one-fifth of the world's land area. Though there are variations in the size of population, from India with its 604 million to Nauru with 7,000 people, there is no country that is considered primus inter pares; there is no country which claims to be leader. As Pandit Nehru once said, the very strength of the Commonwealth lies in its flexibility and complete freedom.

The raison d'etre of the Commonwealth is consultation and co-operation. Consultation is carried out both bilaterally and through Commonwealth meetings. A meeting may take the form of a seminar/workshop which is usually regional and which looks into special problems with a view to finding solutions, or it may be a specialist conference which is usually Pan-Commonwealth and examines selected areas of education with a view to identifying possible ways of Commonwealth co-operation. As far as education is concerned, the most important meeting is the Commonwealth Education Conference, which is a triennial conference of Commonwealth Ministers of Education and their advisers.

The most important of all Commonwealth conferences is the Heads of Government Meeting. This Meeting reviews every aspect of Commonwealth co-operation and covers all the activities of the Commonwealth Secretariat. It is at this level that general policy decisions are taken.

Discussions at all Commonwealth meetings are frank and informal; usually no votes are taken, and decisions are arrived at by consensus.

Commonwealth co-operation is bilateral as well as multilateral. Programmes of co-operation could be developed directly between one country and another. One important example of bilateral co-operation is the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan. This Plan enables one country to offer postgraduate awards tenable in its universities to students from another country. This Plan has its origin in the First Commonwealth Education Conference which took place at Oxford in 1959. So effective has it proved that at the Sixth Commonwealth Education Conference in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1974, Commonwealth Ministers of Education unanimously agreed not only that the Plan should be continued but that it should be extended, and many countries were encouraged to become awarding countries.

Many forms of multilateral co-operation have developed over the last few years. At the 1971 Heads of Government Meeting in Singapore, the Heads of Government gave approval for a Fund to be established to provide technical assistance to Commonwealth countries. This decision gave rise to what is now known as the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation. Later in my speech I shall give a brief description of working of the Fund.

The Commonwealth Secretariat

Until the Commonwealth Secretariat was established in 1965, meetings were arranged through the initiative of individual Commonwealth countries. There was no organization to service Commonwealth meetings on a regular basis and Commonwealth countries which hosted the meetings usually provided secretarial and other services.

The Commonwealth Secretariat was established in 1965 by Commonwealth Heads of Government as the main agency for multilateral communication between Commonwealth countries. The Head of the Secretariat is the Secretary-General, and the present holder of the post is Mr. Shridath Ramphal, who was appointed by the Heads of Government Meeting in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1975, in succession to the first Secretary-General, Mr. Arnold Smith of Canada. Mr. Ramphal, who at the time of his appointment was the Foreign Minister of Guyana, South America, assumed office in July 1975.

The Commonwealth Secretariat now has many Divisions, each specialising in certain areas of Commonwealth co-operation. Thus there are Divisions dealing with areas like International Affairs, Economic Affairs, Education, Youth, Health, Law, Science and Technology, Food Production and Rural Development and Information.

Having spoken briefly about the Commonwealth Secretariat I should now like to expand on the work of three of the Divisions of the Secretariat, beginning with the Education Division. The main work of the Education Division is to explore areas and methods of Commonwealth co-operation in the field of Education. It does this by keeping educational development under review, collecting and disseminating information on educational matters, and conducting research into selected educational problems. The Division is also responsible for planning and organizing the Commonwealth Education Conference and other educational meetings. More and more emphasis is now being placed on the development of practical projects to help Commonwealth countries, especially the developing countries, in their efforts to make education relevant and effective. As a result of regional seminars conducted over the past three years we have now developed courses for training personnel engaged in educational administration and supervision as well as those engaged in local production of materials for learning and teaching, especially

textbooks, to support curriculum renewal projects. It is hoped to start the first training course on educational administration and supervision in January 1977 at the University of Nairobi, and a course for book development in July 1977 at the University of Guyana. We hope to be able to establish in the near future other training centres for the Pacific and Asia regions. I am glad to observe that although we have not yet established centres for courses for this part of the world, various Commonwealth countries in the Pacific have taken part in some of the seminars that have led to these courses. I should like to mention also that from the 28 September this year a two week seminar/workshop will start in Hong Kong for Asia and the Pacific to examine the problems of the training and employment of technicians. I plan to call on the Vice-Chancellor of the University of the South Pacific to discuss the possibility of our starting training courses at U.S.P. for the Pacific Region.

The Youth Division began in the Education Division in 1970. During the next three years four seminars were held to examine the problems of youth in the various regions. At the conclusion of these seminars a conference of ministers responsible for youth affairs was held in 1973, and it was at this conference that the Commonwealth Youth Programme was inaugurated. The main task of the Commonwealth Youth Programme is to seek solutions to problems facing young people in all member countries, particularly in relation to training and employment.

To help the programme to do its work thoroughly three regional centres have been established, in Guyana, Zambia and India. The purpose of these centres is to provide information, training programmes for youth leaders, and technical assistance for national training programmes. Bursaries and fellowships for youth studies are also provided, and youth service awards are made available for young people who have made significant contribution to their society.

The Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC) was established in 1971, as already mentioned. It is a voluntary scheme subscribed to by all governments, and administered by the Commonwealth Secretariat. The purpose of the Fund is to provide technical assistance when requested and this is usually done through offering advice to Governments and the provision of experts and training facilities. Travel grants are also provided to enable personnel from one developing country to travel to another developing country to gain experience in relevant fields. The largest contributors to the Fund are Canada, Britain, Nigeria, Australia and New Zealand. But quite a number of other Commonwealth countries now contribute to the Fund. Incentive for developing countries to contribute is provided by the Canadian scheme whereby Canada contributes a sum equal to double the amount contributed by any developing country. Britain, on the other hand, has also boosted the activities of the Fund by agreeing to pay up to thirty percent of the Fund's expenses. The CFTC also supports programme activities of the other Divisions of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

I have selected these three Divisions for mention because this Seminar could not have taken place without the co-operation of all three. The Conference was planned in London by a small Committee of the Education and Youth Divisions, and the funds which have enabled us to meet the expenses of delegates from Commonwealth countries have come from the CFTC and the Commonwealth Youth Programme. The Fund is therefore a very important arm of the Commonwealth Secretariat, which enables it to give practical help to developing countries, when needed.

... I should now like to come to the Seminar itself. Since previous speakers have already referred to the objectives of the Seminar, I do not intend to dwell long on them. I should, however, like to emphasize a few aspects of the objectives which we hope to concentrate upon during the next two weeks. The first objective of this meeting is to try to find ways of linking education and community activities more closely together in an effective partnership for national development, and to examine ways of implementing this policy. The tendency in many countries has been to regard education and life in the community as things quite apart and communication between the school and the community, where it exists, is often only incidental. This question of a closer relation between education and the community implies the need for relevance in education so that when pupils leave school they will be able to integrate easily and naturally with the rest of society. Relevance touches on things like curriculum renewal and the need to be aware of the opportunities and limitations of the society around.

Another aspect of our objectives is to try and identify the causes of unemployment and suggest possible solutions for governments whose school leavers cannot find employment in their locality and are therefore forced to emigrate from rural areas or leave the country entirely. The problems of unemployment are particularly urgent at this time when inflation has led to a vast pool of unemployment in both the developed and developing countries of the world. The pattern of education which many countries inherited has tended to direct education to a narrow employment field, and schools have not been able to encourage their pupils to think of employment within the community.

During discussions that will take place in this Seminar we hope to be able to identify methods of self-help which could lead school leavers towards self-employment and other activities within their community.

One thing which we hope this Seminar will emphasize is the need not only for the community to concern itself with the education of their children through the construction of school buildings and participation in school management but also to encourage them to come into the school to communicate their experiences and skills, especially on the cultural side, so that the pupils for their part could be more aware of the kind of life they would lead after their period of formal education.

Finally, we hope that any proposals and projects that may emerge from this meeting will lead to national, regional and Commonwealth co-operation. As I have said earlier on, the purpose of the Commonwealth Secretariat is to encourage co-operation among Commonwealth countries in order to solve their various problems.

Some may wonder why we have chosen the Cook Islands as a venue for this Seminar/Workshop. Our being here today is the result of a casual mention to Mr. Ngereteina Puna, the Secretary of Education, of the possibility of conducting such a seminar in the Pacific region. He immediately expressed interest, and offered to persuade his Government to play host. One or two other countries also showed interest and various possibilities were discussed carefully by the working party in London which planned this Seminar. The working party agreed unanimously that the Cook Islands would be a very good venue because the situation there would be similar to what exists in most of the countries that would participate. It was decided, therefore, that rather than hold the meeting in an urban area we should take advantage of the offer of the Cook Islands, especially as the Government is keenly interested in the involvement of the community in the education of their children. I had the good

fortune of seeing something of the implementation of this Government policy during my visit to Rarotonga in October 1975. According to an article written by Mr. Puna in the Ministry of Health NEWSLETTER of April 1975, "The Education Department is very much aware that in the past there has always tended to be a gap between the school and community and we are anxious that there is no gap... The community is the school, and the roads its corridors." The possible ways of implementing this policy, to which I am sure all the participants of this Seminar will subscribe, is the reason for our being here today. We hope that we shall be able to formulate activities and projects which each country will implement as a result of the Seminar.

It now remains for me to thank all those who have helped to make this meeting possible. I should like to thank the various Commonwealth governments in this region for their enthusiastic support for the Seminar. Every country invited is represented here and, in fact, so great is the interest in this subject in the region that the South Pacific Commission requested us to invite a few non-Commonwealth countries. This we happily did but only one of the three countries invited, American Samoa, is here with us today.

I should like to thank those organizations and countries which have sent observers. It is the practice of the Commonwealth Secretariat to establish contacts with other international organizations to ensure that there is no unnecessary duplication of efforts. For educational meetings we usually invite organizations like UNESCO, the World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Professions, ILO (where appropriate) and L'Agence de Coopération Culturelle et Technique, which is an organization similar to the Commonwealth Secretariat, operating from Paris for French speaking countries. We also invite regional organizations. Since the Seminar is taking place in the Pacific, we invited the South Pacific Commission, and we are happy to see that this organization is represented by Dr. Frank Mahoney. Mr. Geoffrey Bamford is here in a dual capacity. First as a regional representative of ILO and secondly as a consultant. The representative of New Zealand, Mr. Turoa Royal will be arriving on the 12 September. We are also happy to welcome Mr. Neville Pearson as an observer from the University of the South Pacific.

Our thanks are also due to the consultants who have kindly accepted our invitation not only to attend this Seminar but also to write lead papers for us. I have already mentioned Mr. Bamford. He has provided one of our lead papers dealing with the changes necessary in agriculture and industry in order to provide a wider field of employment for school leavers. Dr. Alec Dickson who is known all over the world for his keen interest in the problems of youth and his practical approach to possible solution of those problems, is here with us. He has written a paper outlining some of the problems of education and unemployment, with particular reference to the Pacific, including some recommendations for action. Finally, I should like to thank our third consultant, Mr. Ngereteina Puna, who has very kindly provided our third paper dealing with community participation. We are fortunate to have all three consultants present and I have no doubt that their presence at the Seminar will stimulate discussion and lead to practical results.

I have already mentioned the Working Party in London. This Working Party comprised Dr. Alec Dickson, Mr. Patnaik, who was only recently Director of the Youth Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat, and myself. Miss Sue Burke of the Youth Division, who is with us today, also attended many of its meetings. I should like to seize this opportunity to thank

Mr. Alec Dickson, Mr. Patnaik and Miss Sue Burke for their work.

However, no matter how much work was done in London, the planning for this Seminar would have been almost impossible without the participation of Cook Islands personnel. Mr. Puna set up a Working Party headed by Tere Tangaroa. They have done an excellent job. On my arrival I was very pleased to see that there was hardly anything left to be done by way of preparation. I should like to thank the local team most sincerely.

Finally, I should like to thank the Honourable Premier, Sir Albert Henry and the Government of the Cook Islands for so kindly and generously agreeing to host this Conference. I have already sampled the overwhelming hospitality of the people of this country and I have no doubt that my colleagues at the Conference will experience this during their stay here. We were all impressed by the very warm welcome accorded us at the airport. I have no doubt whatever that we are going to enjoy the famed hospitality of the people of these friendly islands.

I should like to give special thanks to the Minister of Education for speaking at the Opening Ceremony and drawing our attention to the need for relevance in education in the community. Both he and Pastor George Porter have dwelt upon the objectives of the Seminar and have reminded us of their importance. We have no doubt that with the help of the Ministry of Education and other Ministries and other Christian communities within the regions we shall be able to achieve those ends.

I have already mentioned Mr. Puna and the paper he has written for us. I should like to thank him particularly because of the enthusiasm he has shown for this Seminar. I know how busy he usually is but he has been able to devote plenty of time and effort to its preparation and I should like to thank him most sincerely for helping to make this Seminar possible.

The Premier is always a very busy man, and yet he has regarded it as an important part of his work to come to the formal opening of the Seminar. We thank him for his excellent opening address and for his warm welcome to all participants. We sincerely hope that the result of our deliberations here will justify the importance which he has attached to the meeting. In a situation like this it is difficult to single out for mention the name of every person who has helped. I should therefore like to thank everybody who had contributed in any way to the preparation of this Seminar, the first on education that the Commonwealth Secretariat has had in the South Pacific.