

CLOSING CEREMONY

1. SUMMARY OF THE ADDRESS BY THE CHAIRMAN, MR. N. PUNA

The Chairman of the Seminar/Workshop, Mr. Puna, Secretary for Education in the Cook Islands, opened the proceedings by thanking all those who had attended the meeting for their support and co-operation. He said it had been "a fattening seminar" in terms of professional development, and in terms of physical growth! Both, he felt, were evidence of a successful two weeks during which he had the privilege of being Chairman of the meeting.

He thanked participants for their patience and lack of complaint about his impudence, his efficiency and his style of working and expressed his appreciation to Dr. Cookey for his moral and professional support. He also expressed gratitude to the Vice-Chairman for her help and for sharing some of the experiences at the Seminar with Cook Islands' parents in her regular Sunday broadcast.

Mr. Puna congratulated the Women's Federation for the excellent arrangements they had made in caring for the Seminar and went on to commend the schools and school committees, youth groups and the National Youth Organization for treating the guests so well. They had showed that traditional Cook Islands' hospitality lived on. He added that the local organizing committee had made excellent preparations in these and other arrangements.

He thanked the Report Secretary and her assistants for sifting "the pearls from the artificial pearls and rubbish" which had been exchanged during the meeting, and the typists and staff at the Curriculum Centre for their tremendous assistance.

Finally he recalled that during the Opening Ceremony, he had talked of happiness as the underlying theme of the meeting. This, he felt, had been achieved in the practice of the meeting.

2. TEXT OF THE ADDRESS BY DR. S.J. COOKEY

Your Excellency Chief Justice Donne and Mrs. Donne, The Honourable Premier Sir Albert Henry and Lady Henry, Honourable Ministers, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen: When we gathered here on 8 September for the formal opening of this Seminar/Workshop we thought two weeks as a long time to discuss a seminar topic. As we meet today for the formal closing ceremony it seems as if we started a few days ago, so quickly has time flown.

I do not intend to give a lengthy summary of the work of the Seminar nor shall I attempt to give a summary of the report; it would be better for the whole report to be read to appreciate the importance of the recommendations that have come from the meeting. I intend to draw attention to certain discussions that took place.

In many ways this has been a very important seminar. It is important from the point of view of the topic discussed. As has already been pointed out, this is the first time that the Commonwealth Secretariat has held a seminar anywhere on the subject of education and the community. It is also the first time that the Commonwealth Youth Programme and the Education Division have organized a joint seminar.

The Commonwealth Secretariat is very glad to note the spontaneous interest shown in the seminar from the start. Participation has been almost complete, embracing all but one of the Commonwealth countries and territories in the region. We are also happy to note the enthusiasm with which participants faced their work.

Although participants have come from various backgrounds and various experiences, they have worked with a heart warming sense of belonging, exploring various ways of tackling the problems posed by the need to make education relevant to national goals and aspirations. We have indeed been a very happy group, a group which worked throughout in a most determined but friendly way, and have come out with some very good conclusions and recommendations.

I should now like to mention some of the important topics that were discussed.

(a) The need for a national policy on education. It is generally agreed that unless governments have clear educational aims and objectives it would be difficult for the community to participate in realizing those objectives. This has led to the recommendation that all governments should try to formulate their educational aims and objectives, and to have these made known to the entire country, using all available means of communication. If this were done, it would be easier for those responsible for implementing social, educational, and economic programmes to gain the support of parents and the rest of the community.

(b) Related to this is a need for parental and community support for projects. There should be a constant dialogue between education activities and the rest of society, and it is hoped that each country will design some machinery to establish this liaison between the school and the community so that both sides will work together towards achieving programme objectives.

(c) A very important aspect of education that was discussed was a need to ensure that education is geared to meet the needs of the community and to support the policies for national economic and social development. To achieve this it was felt that action should be taken along the following lines:

(i) To renew the school curricula. Educational systems in many countries are patterned upon Western models which, though they might be good for the countries for which they were designed, are

not always suitable for other countries that adopt them. There is, therefore, a need for the reorientation of national education systems, and one of the best ways of doing this is to renew the curriculum and make sure that what is taught and done in schools reflects the policies of the government.

(ii) Curriculum changes require support facilities for producing suitable textbooks and teaching materials. One difficulty in the way of changing the curriculum, particularly in developing countries, is getting suitable textbooks. In many countries there is an over reliance on imported textbooks, a situation that forces schools to base their teaching entirely on the contents of those of books.

(iii) It is also important to review the examinations system of a country. Many countries still structure their schools to meet the requirements of foreign examinations. This is a very important issue which has already resulted in a Commonwealth seminar, and I shall not do much more than call attention to it.

(iv) There is need also to re-examine the structure of the educational system. Classification by types or levels of education has resulted in many countries in an element of discrimination. Stigma is often attached to schools dealing, for example, with vocational, agricultural or technical education. Some parents think that the only education that matters is the grammar school type. Countries may wish to consider whether it is wise to continue to refer to some schools as grammar or high schools and to others as vocational, technical or agricultural schools. Knowledge is not divisible. Could not all these subjects be taught under one roof, allowing for flexibility within the school so that what subjects a child pursues would depend upon his ability? There will no longer be a superficial discrimination between a school doing academic work and that doing practical or vocational work. Some countries, like Britain, are trying to achieve this, but, as we all know, it has not been easy going.

(v) All delegates agreed that the time has come for education to shift its emphasis from the preparation of pupils for paid jobs to their preparation for service and self-employment. The phrase used frequently during this seminar was "education for self-reliance". With the present world population explosion the time is fast approaching when even highly educated people will find it difficult to get employment. It was strongly recommended that this practical approach to education should be seriously considered by every Government. The idea of service to the community should be inculcated in every pupil through community service of various kinds.

Some of our discussions and recommendations have been directed to Governments and others to the Commonwealth Secretariat and other international organizations. I sincerely hope that all Governments and organizations concerned will study, and implement as many of them as possible. I would specially plead for government support for the practical projects that have emerged from this Seminar.

From all indications this Seminar has been successful, and I should now like to thank all who have helped make it so. I wish to mention specially the excellent work that our Chairman has put in to make the Seminar a

success and also the contribution made by the women by their active participation in the proceedings.

Once again, it gives me much pleasure to thank you Sir Albert for coming to declare the Seminar closed, and the Government and people of the Cook Islands for their wonderful hospitality.

3. SUMMARY OF THE ADDRESS BY THE HON. SIR ALBERT HENRY, PREMIER OF THE COOK ISLANDS

In closing the Seminar/Workshop Sir Albert began his address by asking the question "What is man?". It was a question, he said, asked through the ages and one on which the author of Psalm 8 had speculated that man has the power to rule all living things on this earth.

The Premier thought that perhaps the psalmist was stunned at the realization that he had power, adding that whenever men had realized their own power they had tended to disrupt the world. He confessed to feeling stunned himself by what he had heard of the meeting. It was, he felt, very much concerned with the misuse of power. Education, for instance, could be both dangerous and a blessing. Yet he felt reassured that new approaches to education, as assessed at the Seminar, were moving in the right direction. In future, education would not only be concerned with reading and writing, not only with how to exploit fellow man, not only with developing leaders, but with educating people to serve.

He wished participants good luck in their endeavours to introduce this idea, and asked for God's blessing in such a concept. He said that in the Cook Islands every effort was made to educate children and adults to serve mankind, since this was seen as the biggest task of all for education.

Sir Albert thanked the Commonwealth Secretary-General for thinking of the Cook Islands in arranging the Seminar and was especially glad it had taken place there since this brought its benefits to a great number of Cook Islanders. He was gratified, too, that this Commonwealth initiative had been taken in the Pacific Region, since it supported the Pacific people's commitment not only to forge their own way in the world but also to lead in this new field of education. It demonstrated, he suggested, that there was a spirit of awareness in the region.

Finally Sir Albert thanked His Excellency Chief Justice Donne for his interest, Pastor Porter as Chairman of the Religious Advisory Council for performing the closing religious ceremony and the Leader of the Opposition for showing his support for the Seminar's outcome by being present.

Sir Albert, expressing the hope that the work of the Seminar would live on, closed the proceedings using the traditional word, "KIAORANA".