INTRODUCTION

This report discusses resources for school science education in those Commonwealth countries which encircle the Caribbean Sea. There is also mention of the Bahamas, a Commonwealth country which has educational links with the University of the West Indies. With the exception of Belize and Guyana on the American continent, all the countries are island groups.

Included, therefore, are something under 20 countries which were once British possessions although nearly all are now independent states. While it has not been possible to obtain detailed information about conditions and practices in every country, a number of generalisations are valid. The histories of the countries have much in common, and there is considerable regional cohesiveness. Certain regional educational bodies (to be described later) link science-educators in common activities.

With the possible exception of Trinidad and Tobago, all the countries are developing ones. With its fairly good petroleum resources, Trinidad and Tobago ranks high in GNP per capita in the Commonwealth and in the Western Hemisphere, but recognises that its pool of skilled manpower does not match its financial resources. Regionally, a distinction is made between the more developed countries (Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, and Guyana - the four with the largest populations) and the less developed countries. There is no evidence, however, that science education practice, worldwide, is in any significant way related to the degree of development of countries. Consequently, although this report, in its details, has a bias towards the more developed countries, it would be wrong to conclude that conditions in the less developed countries are less acceptable: the converse is often true.

With very rare exceptions, the sciences taught in most schools are biological sciences, chemistry, physics and integrated or general science. In this survey, it was not possible to obtain information on resources for all the sciences taught. Consequently, the emphasis is on physics and integrated science, subjects whose resource demands encompass the resources for nearly all science; and subjects which anyway are associated with most problems, worldwide.

Throughout this report, a number of acronyms and abbreviations are used. A translation of these is given in the glossary at the end of this survey.