

ADMINISTRATION OF THE COMMONWEALTH SCHOLARSHIP AND FELLOWSHIP PLAN

Sincere thanks are due to those countries submitting contributions to the Sixteenth Annual Report of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan. It is unfortunate that not every country has done so, as this Report is to serve as the latest report on the Plan to appear before the Seventh Commonwealth Education Conference in Ghana in 1977. As some countries have not submitted completed questionnaires it has not been possible to complete all the statistical tables.

The usual appendices and tables have been compiled, the emoluments of each set of Commonwealth Scholarships again being given in full, according to the latest information received.

The comments made in the report touch on a variety of points, often not new ones but no less important for that. Some countries look forward to the time when they would themselves institute Commonwealth Scholarships and thus become awarding countries. Several countries refer to what they detect as a total insistence by awarding countries on awards being at the postgraduate level. It does not seem sufficiently widely realized that countries which do not have universities or which having universities do not have particular facilities for undergraduate study can nominate candidates for first degree study.

Reference is again made to the frequently over specialized nature of doctoral studies, and the fact that, if a research plan is not carefully prepared so as to be of relevance to the candidate's possible future career at home, such studies can lead a scholar to point to the unavailability of "suitable" employment in his home country. It is however clear that overall the benefits of the Plan are widely recognized and appreciated and that almost all scholars return to be most useful members of their home community.

There seems to be a widespread belief among potential candidates and others that a nomination by the candidate's own country secures an award. This is of course not true. The agreed system for nominations under the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan involves a "sending" agency nominating a list of candidates to the number requested with the expectation that an awarding country will select up to half of the nominees. The decision as to the exact number selected must necessarily be affected also by the extent to which the sending country's quota of awards has already been committed by extensions to existing awards. The final choice of an individual must also depend on a receiving university expressing willingness to accept the candidate considered.

A small but useful insertion in this series of Annual Reports resulted from a recommendation of the Sixth Commonwealth Education Conference held in 1974 in Jamaica. In the Fifteenth Report, the next to appear after the Jamaica Conference, there was included (as Appendix V, Table 5) a count of Commonwealth Scholarships taken up in each year of the past quinquennium. A comparable, updated table appears in the present Report and will henceforth become a regular feature.

There were surprising discrepancies between the number of nominations said by some nominating countries to have been submitted and the number of nominations said by some awarding countries to have been received. Consequently not every country will agree with what it sees in Appendix V, Table 3.

A matter known to the compilers of this Report from their many contacts, though but infrequently the subject of any formal acknowledgement, is that potential candidates are greatly helped in making their applications (and countries in judging those applications) by the wide availability throughout the Commonwealth of the annual Commonwealth Universities Yearbook published by the Association of Commonwealth Universities. Following the recommendations of the third Commonwealth Education Conference in 1964, the Yearbook has since then contained summaries of University entrance requirements and detailed statements about first and higher degrees awarded by all Commonwealth Universities.

The appearance of this Report gives an opportunity to mention the implementation of a potentially significant recommendation of the Sixth Commonwealth Education Conference. A Register of the Research Strengths of Universities in the Developing Countries of the Commonwealth, with a publication date of May 1976, has been prepared and published by the Association of Commonwealth Universities. The main aim of the new publication is to provide, for the first time, brief information about the research areas in which universities in developing countries of the Commonwealth have said they can offer strong facilities to, and would welcome, academic staff and graduate students from other Commonwealth developing countries who wish to undertake advanced study or research. But it will also give universities in other parts of the world - and government departments, foundations and international organizations - a factual statement of what the universities in the developing countries themselves believe they can offer in the way of strong research facilities.

Prepared by the A.C.U. in association with the Commonwealth Secretariat, the book thus implements a recommendation of the Jamaica Conference in time to allow its contents to be appraised and its impact to be assessed before being considered at the Seventh Conference.

In the 150 pages of the Register are more than 1,300 entries submitted by 68 universities in 18 countries or areas (Bangladesh, Botswana, Ghana, Hong Kong, India, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, South Pacific, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, West Indies, Zambia).