

ADMINISTRATION OF THE COMMONWEALTH
SCHOLARSHIP AND FELLOWSHIP PLAN

The compilers of this Twentieth Annual Report are grateful to the majority of countries participating in the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan for submitting contributions as requested. It is regrettable however that some countries which are known to use and to benefit substantially from the Plan have not sent in any statement. It is hoped that with the support of all Scholarship agencies the Twenty-first Annual Report for the year ending 31 March 1981, on which work is already in progress, will be published in good time and in complete form.

It is most satisfactory that in general there has been little criticism about the operation of the Plan and that an expansion of its activities would be enthusiastically received. In the present Report the pithiest comment of all is the contribution of Gibraltar: "The Agency is pleased with the way the awards are administered". Though most agencies accept the fact that awards are essentially for postgraduate study, pleas have been put forward by some for provision to be made for training for professional and technical qualifications and also for greater readiness to grant undergraduate awards, for which only limited provision exists at present.

Participating countries often refer to the welcome contribution Commonwealth Scholars have made and continue to make in various spheres on their return from study abroad. Some agencies in expressing their appreciation of the benefit derived from the Plan were concerned that they could not yet tangibly offer anything in return. It is appreciated that even when a country has developed a good postgraduate school there still may be financial or other difficulties in instituting an award for a Commonwealth Scholar under the Plan. No country is immune from such difficulties. However it would be gratifying to report in a future year a marked increase in the number of countries awarding Commonwealth Scholarships of their own even though, for example, the awards were to be made for a period of study connected with higher degrees of the candidates' home universities.

It is however no encouragement to an awarding country if, in a particular year, there is little or no response to its offer of awards. It is nevertheless to be hoped that countries will not be deterred by this from continuing to make Commonwealth Scholarships available. Much depends on an awarding country establishing a name for taking decisions in good time on the nominations it receives as well as for effective arrangements both for the study and the administration of the awards of those selected.

Other countries, with well established and well administered sets of awards, are still experiencing difficulties stemming from incomplete documentation or late submission of nominations. Selection committees cannot take proper decisions on the basis of incomplete papers; in the absence of full and authentic evidence a first rate candidate may appear inadequate.

Reference has been made above to the benefit accruing to many sending countries from the periods of study their candidates spend overseas, but one should not by any means overlook the stimulus, both academic and social, which the awarding countries often gain from the presence in them of scholars of high ability from a wide range of other countries and cultures.