

P R E F A C E

This study has its origins in the Commonwealth Law Ministers' Meeting in Winnipeg in 1977. There, Law Ministers expressed concern at increasing delays over a broad front in the administration of justice. In their deliberations they canvassed a wide range of approaches, including legal advice and counselling which they saw as having the potential, if made available at an early stage, to resolve disputes before they reached court. The field of Family Law in particular offered potential for greater use to be made of special courts and procedures, including conciliation. As a consequence of the discussions, this study was commissioned by the Commonwealth Secretariat.

The author was chosen in the light of her wide experience in the field of Family Law. As Co-ordinator of the Family Court Project in Jamaica her work was largely instrumental in the establishment there of the Family Court System, which arose directly from the realisation of the limitations of the existing juvenile courts system which tended to treat the problem of juveniles in isolation from the family setting.

This study brings together the experience in a sample of Commonwealth jurisdictions selected to illustrate differing aspects of the Commonwealth experience.

We are most grateful to Mrs Cumper for undertaking this work, and to the many persons in the jurisdictions discussed who provided much of the material and responded so readily to requests for assistance.

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May 1984