

ADMINISTRATION OF THE COMMONWEALTH SCHOLARSHIP AND FELLOWSHIP PLAN

This report has been compiled according to the usual practice from information supplied by the Commonwealth Scholarship agencies. This section does not purport to reduce to a single composite statement the several observations of varying length and texture made by the agencies, but is rather a conspectus of some of the points raised by the reporting countries. The statements made by them on the working of the Plan are set out on the following pages and may perhaps be criticized on the grounds that they vary so little from those of previous years. It must however be borne in mind that, though it is generally possible for a country which regularly provides a substantial number of awards or award-holders to recall some aspect of the past year's operations which deserves special comment, there is often little of moment or at least little new to report in the work of many agencies, especially those in the smaller countries. It was all the more gratifying therefore to find the Turks and Caicos, with its population of only 7500 and a total of five graduates in the Islands, reporting on the acceptance this year of their one nominee for an award.

Views on the value of the Plan and suggestions for improving it are naturally based now on many years' experience and are unlikely to change radically. Once again this year many agencies in developing countries repeated their pleas for greater emphasis on awards at undergraduate level, especially in disciplines such as medicine and veterinary science, and on awards to support training for professional or technical qualifications. The general issue is well worth discussion but the pleas may well overlook the fact that

- (a) as to professional/technical training, many countries (especially the developed) offer awards outside the Plan; and
- (b) difficulties over courses in medicine and veterinary science relate as much to meeting the highly competitive requirements for entry to these courses as to obtaining awards to finance them.

But not all agencies, even in the developing Commonwealth, were in favour of an increase in undergraduate awards. Zambia, for example, said it preferred Commonwealth Scholarships to be restricted to postgraduate studies as in its own case there was provision for undergraduate study under other schemes. Brunei put forward the suggestion that the Plan might also embrace short term training for management and administration.

Not for the first time some awarding agencies drew attention to the need for application papers to be submitted correctly and for all the required supporting documents to accompany these papers. Canada made a special point about the need for each candidate to have two references from people under whom he or she had actually studied; academic assessments were indispensable to selectors.

From time to time awarding countries complain that too many applications arrive late and nominating countries that countries inviting nominations from them allow too little time for the process, and do not observe the agreement that "invitations to make nominations should be issued by awarding countries at least five months before the nomination date". New Zealand's statement that the problem of late nominations from certain areas had largely been resolved was therefore a welcome one.

There continues to be widespread agreement that the Plan is of great value and that its beneficiaries have returned to do useful and significant work in the community. Botswana mentioned the impact of Academic Staff awards on its university, thus making an exception to the general practice among agencies of commenting only on the "general" Commonwealth Scholarship awards.

In conclusion the editors would like to express their thanks to all the agencies who have provided them with the facts and figures which make up this report.