

Conference Proceedings

Preliminaries

15. Following the opening ceremony on the first morning of the Conference a brief business session was held at which the Hon. Stelios Catsellis was elected Conference Chairman and Vice-Chairpersons were appointed (see page 3). The timetable and other working arrangements were reviewed in the light of a report received from officials and were approved. The Conference then moved on to discuss matters of substance.

Resources for Education and their Cost-Effective Use

16. The lively interest shown in this topic by the Conference was a measure of its relevance to member countries where constraints upon educational budgets have become increasingly tight. These constraints have arisen, particularly in developing countries, from pressures of increased population and higher school participation rates resulting in increased enrolment at all levels, from demands for more and better qualified teachers and other educational improvements and from high rates of inflation. However, developed countries have not altogether been spared. Like developing countries, they too have had to come to terms with rising costs in such areas as teachers' salaries, school buildings, equipment and services.

17. To assist discussion, delegates were supplied with working papers by Prof. Peter Williams and by Prof. Sanya Onabamiro. Prof. Onabamiro also delivered a lead speech to introduce the plenary discussion on the first day of the Conference. Country papers, summarised in an overview paper and amplified orally by Ministers of Education in the course of three plenary sessions, provided a detailed account of how resources for education are provided and used around the Commonwealth, and highlighted a number of interesting and cost-effective innovations. The Commonwealth Secretariat prepared a working paper which distilled from the foregoing documentation the main issues relating to educational resources and their cost-effective use with the object of guiding discussion in the two working groups which were formed to examine this agenda item in the course of two afternoon sessions. One of the groups under the chairmanship of the Minister of Education of Sri Lanka looked at how the cost-effective use of educational resources might be improved; the other under the chairmanship of the Minister of Education for Nova Scotia, Canada, tackled the question of how additional resources might be raised. The groups prepared reports (Appendix A) which were received and adopted with minor amendments by the Conference on the last afternoon.

18. The Conference considered a range of solutions to the problem of providing sufficient resources for education. These included how to find additional resources, how to purchase goods and services for education more cheaply, how to reduce provision without damaging education, how to improve efficiency in the use of physical facilities and teachers, and how new systems and technologies might help.

19. Delegates revealed some of the initiatives taken in member countries to increase resources for education. Most of the examples cited involved the provision of additional resources from parental and community involvement. It was recognised that further increases will have to come largely from other sources. These included such means as lotteries, educational taxes, transferring costs to non-government bodies, encouraging the generation of income by institutions either through the hire of their premises and facilities or the sale of products and services incidental to the curriculum and by attracting development aid.

20. On the issue of improving the cost-effectiveness of existing resources, delegates spoke of the significant reduction in unit building costs achieved by standardised design, and of the benefits of a similar approach to school furniture and the bulk purchase of educational materials. Reduced unit costs had been achieved in many ways. Examples were the use of teacher aides to take over the non-professional aspects of teachers' work, more intensive use of buildings and equipment, reduction in boarding institutions, and an increase in pupil-teacher ratios using such means as enlarged classes, self-instructional materials, and distance education. Ministers noted that the cost of teacher education was being reduced by incorporating on-the-job experience in the training period. Programmes of in-service education were also making teachers better at their jobs. Action of this kind, together with similar help for head teachers and others in positions of administrative responsibility, could prove highly cost-effective.

21. It was evident from the discussion both in plenary and working groups that the solutions that were simpler to implement were widely used. It was the more complex solutions such as the application of new technologies, the restructuring of systems of education, and those requiring the co-operation of central government, local government and community groups that were slow to be implemented. Because of this and because in some cases, governments and the public needed convincing of the effectiveness and efficiency of the solutions, Conference recommendations arising out of Working Group Reports A and B (see pages 25-33) called upon Commonwealth governments and the Secretariat to undertake action that would inform member countries of the range of tested innovations. Recommendations put forward by the two Working Groups and later endorsed by the Conference, also called upon the Secretariat to harness Commonwealth co-operation to assist in the implementation of solutions that some countries might be unable to carry through unaided. The need for such action was urgent. For without additional resources, or help in making existing resources more cost-effective, education in most member countries faced a bleak and worsening future.

Education and Youth Unemployment

22. The Conference considered the role of education in combatting youth unemployment in the light of the working paper by Dr. Kenneth King of Edinburgh University and a lead speech by Professor Karmel, Vice-Chancellor

of the Australian National University. The majority of Ministers present participated in the plenary discussion, to which Dr. King also contributed on Tuesday morning. Working Groups C and D convened on the afternoons of Tuesday and Wednesday under the chairmanship of the Ministers from the Bahamas and Papua New Guinea respectively and then reported back to the plenary session on the final day when their recommendations were endorsed.

23. Education was not seen as the prime mover in generating employment. The high levels of unemployment in most Commonwealth countries reflected the world recession and, as the country paper from Zimbabwe argued, "unless the recession ends and there is an up-turn in economic activity, there is little that education can do to ensure youth employment". Nor was training for employment in the modern sector the sole objective of education. Its broader aims included the transmission of culture, preparation of the citizens of the future for their social roles, and development of the capacity for self-fulfilment. Its narrower aims, of preparing people for work, needed to encompass at least four kinds of work: in paid employment within the modern sector; in the traditional sector, often in farming; in self-employment; in a co-operative or some other semi-formal grouping.

24. The variety of educational ends, of educational systems and of types of unemployment in Commonwealth countries meant that there was no single solution to problems of unemployment or of relating education to employment. If there was a common theme it was one of mismatches or contradictions. One contradiction was between the aspirations of young people or their parents and the reality of the types of work available. Closely related, in many countries of the South, was a public demand for jobs in the towns alongside a need for labour in the country. In some, too, a shortage of skilled staff and consequent reliance on expatriate personnel existed alongside unemployment and under-employment. Again, the resolution of these contradictions demanded social and economic change more generally, which would require raising the quality of life in the countryside as much as changes in education. There were, however, opportunities to relate education more closely to work, and to do so through schools, through post-secondary institutions and in the out-of-school and non-formal sector. The bringing together of school and work could help counter attitudes inherited from colonial times that the learned should not do manual work and that workers did not need to learn.

25. In considering how schools could help lead their students towards a variety of occupations, it was necessary to distinguish between countries where few children went beyond the primary stage of schooling and those where most of the age group went on to secondary school. In the former case, a curriculum was needed which would lead both to secondary education for the minority and to life in the community for the majority who would leave at - or before - completing the primary cycle. A broad basic education, including literacy and numeracy, social awareness, some understanding of science, a capacity to benefit from and initiate change and a set of manual skills would form the basis for both groups of children. At secondary level, some countries had developed two sets of schools, one more academic and one more practical; while other countries strove to ensure that practical and pre-vocational subjects were included in the secondary education of all children.

26. In primary and secondary schools there were difficulties in developing a vocational curriculum. If the curriculum were closely related to particular jobs, it would be too narrow for many students, or for the versatility and adaptability which schools should foster. Vocational

training at school level would also increase unit costs where it demanded specialist equipment or staff. The development and improvement of science teaching, which could form a basis for subsequent technical education, should often take priority over changes towards a more vocational curriculum. Indeed, the problems many countries faced in recruiting enough science teachers were widely seen as more urgent than moves towards vocational training at secondary level.

27. There was, however, a need to explore ways of introducing a pre-vocational element into schools and to learn from the varied and extensive experience of doing this within Commonwealth countries. Experiments had been carried out with work-experience programmes, with attempts to use community resources and knowledge especially of the rural sector, and with the involvement of representatives of both productive and service industries in schools. An analysis of such experience could identify the advantages and disadvantages of alternative ways of relating education to work.

28. Changes to schooling had important implications for the education of girls. In many countries girls faced more educational barriers than boys even though the benefits derived from girls' education were at least as great. Among others, these included a decline in fertility rates associated with attendance at school. In planning opportunities for pre-vocational or vocational training for girls it was important to see that these widened, rather than narrowed, occupational choice for them.

29. At the tertiary level there was varied experience of relating the work of educational institutions to employment. This included work-experience programmes, notably in the industrialised countries; sandwich courses; and short crash courses. While programmes at this level could be more tightly geared to particular jobs than at school level, there were economies and educational advantages if it was possible to develop common core programmes in, for example, technical subjects. An exchange of experience on such programmes would be valuable. In view of the closer link between tertiary vocational training and employment there was a case for employers, along with education authorities, to meet some of the costs of training.

30. There was important experience of job creation and of vocational training outside the formal educational sector. Non-government organisations had significant achievements in job creation and the collection and exchange of information about them would be valuable. Projects of non-formal education, and projects using non-traditional techniques, including the use of mass media, had developed methods of training and retraining adults in both the modern and the traditional sectors. But, as such programmes were diverse and scattered, cross-national studies of their methods, successes and failures were needed in order to generalise from their experience.

31. Thus, while the relationship between education and employment was complex and varied, there were ways in which they could usefully relate to each other, and ways in which that relationship could be developed further. Certainly there was considerable experience within the Commonwealth, which could usefully be exchanged, of schemes to bring education and work together.

32. The Conference also discussed issues of co-ordination between schools and colleges on the one hand and employers, trade unions, and the voluntary sector on the other. In some cases such co-ordination was achieved

at a national level by the creation of a single ministry concerned with education, youth and training. In others, inter-ministerial committees were charged with ensuring co-ordination of education and training. Problems of co-ordination, however, existed at local as well as national level. If schools and colleges were to bring their activities closer to the world of work, they needed to forge local links of the same kind - links which might bring benefit both to education and to employment.

Student Mobility and the Commonwealth Higher Education Programme

33. Some of the liveliest debates at the Conference took place when Ministers discussed issues of Commonwealth student mobility and co-operation in higher education, matters which impinged directly on Commonwealth relationships. The Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr. Ramphal, had paid special attention to these concerns in the course of his address at the opening ceremony. Alluding to the fact that it was the 25th anniversary of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan, he renewed his plea to member countries that they should endeavour to reach the target of 1,500 awards. He went on to appeal to Commonwealth countries to take positive concerted action to maintain liberal access for Commonwealth students to higher education institutions elsewhere in the Commonwealth. He saw educational interchange as a sort of "Stalingrad" in the campaign for world order. "If the principle of internationalism in education falters now," he said, "then nothing is safe from self-centred destructive nationalism."

34. The discussion in plenary session fell into three parts. Issues of Commonwealth student mobility claimed particular attention and a spirited exchange of views ended with the approval of a joint statement. Ministers then reviewed the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan, and, at a special pledging session, promises of sufficient scholarships were made to raise the total to over 1,650. Third, Ministers considered other steps which might be taken to promote the development of higher education in member countries. The Minister of Education of Barbados, Hon. Billie Miller, took the chair for discussion of the first two of these items and the Minister of Education of Uganda, Hon. Dr. Ojok was in the chair for the third.

35. Sir Roy Marshall, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hull and Chairman of the Commonwealth Standing Committee on Student Mobility, introduced the discussion. He referred to the work of the Standing Committee set up in the period since the Colombo Conference and to the three reports which they had issued, the last of which had been completed two months previously. He drew attention to a range of proposals which the Secretariat had submitted for expanding and diversifying education interchange, and identified as particularly worthy of support the proposals for work on higher education linkages, for sustaining and promoting higher education centres in the developing countries of the Commonwealth, and for exploiting opportunities offered by distance education and the new technologies. He urged Ministers to provide sufficient resources to underpin the work of the Commonwealth Higher Education Unit, newly created in accordance with the expressed wishes of Commonwealth Heads of Government.

36. The main part of Sir Roy's address was directed to issues of student mobility. He drew attention to the dramatic decline in the number of Commonwealth students in some receiving countries, particularly Britain,

and to the stagnation in the total volume of intra-Commonwealth student flows at a time when increasing numbers of Commonwealth students appeared to be going to the United States. Policy developments in Canada and Australia would be of particular moment, and he hoped these countries would pursue liberal policies. Generally within the Commonwealth tuition fees for overseas students should be set at less than full-cost levels. It was important that all Commonwealth countries - both more and less developed, senders as well as receivers - should monitor developments and should elaborate a coherent overseas student policy.

Commonwealth Student Mobility

37. The majority of Ministers present participated in the discussion. Great appreciation was expressed to Sir Roy Marshall for his opening address and for the work that he and his colleagues on the Standing Committee had done to illuminate trends and identify possible courses of action to deal with what was seen as an unsatisfactory situation.

38. The debate focused on the issue of high fees and the consequent impediment to access to higher education and training opportunities abroad. Ministers from Commonwealth developing countries strongly deplored the restrictions that had arisen. These were hampering efforts at human resource development and consequently social and economic progress in their countries. The situation was particularly acute for smaller states, many of them island countries, which had traditionally depended on access to study opportunities abroad, and which would continue to look abroad by reason of their small size in relation to the scale of demand needed to sustain viable universities and colleges. Despite their relative poverty, many poorer Commonwealth countries were accepting students from abroad, and in a few notable cases like India were applying low and non-discriminatory fees. Many Ministers emphasised that even though their countries were poor, they attached great importance to Commonwealth student interchange. As part of their contribution they would gladly welcome students from more developed Commonwealth countries to their higher education institutions. Ministers from a number of less developed member countries expressed their intention of making available additional scholarships, open to students from both more developed and less developed Commonwealth countries as an earnest of their own readiness to contribute positively to Commonwealth educational exchange.

39. Apart from the tangible harm to the development programmes of member countries, Ministers also emphasised the importance of educational access in the context of fostering close personal and inter-country contacts. Charging high fees and imposing other obstacles to higher education access ran counter to cherished ideals of Commonwealth solidarity, particularly where the treatment accorded to Commonwealth countries was even less favourable than that to certain non-member countries. The Commonwealth association itself was damaged by the introduction of restrictions on access. The warm relations that existed in the Commonwealth were in part based on shared experiences of Commonwealth leaders as one-time fellow students abroad. The decline of such opportunities would bode ill for ties between future generations of Commonwealth leaders and could even spill over into attenuation of commercial and trading links.

40. The leading host countries to Commonwealth students reported their own situations. In Australia a Task Force was currently assessing the somewhat different recommendations in respect of overseas students made by the Goldring and Jackson Committees. In response to this information the Conference requested the Secretary-General to write on its behalf to the Australian Prime Minister expressing its earnest hope that liberal access policies would be pursued and asking for Commonwealth anxieties to be taken into account. Britain would be keeping trends in overseas student numbers under review and was planning special studies. Following the withdrawal of the subsidy to overseas students in the United Kingdom, Britain's policy was one of making targetted awards for identified categories of students from abroad. New awards schemes had been launched and existing ones expanded. Fee levels for overseas students in Britain were now primarily the responsibility of education institutions rather than of Government: institutions had been given greater discretion to determine their own level of fees and a greater variety of fee levels might result from a more competitive environment. In any case the level of British charges was claimed already to compare quite favourably with charges elsewhere in the English-speaking industrialised world.

41. It was stated on behalf of Canada that official scholarship support for Commonwealth countries had greatly increased in recent years. The introduction of differential fees for students from abroad, and the widening of such differentials in several Provinces, should not be seen as discriminatory in intent: it arose from deterioration of the budgetary position. India reaffirmed her commitment to charging low and non-discriminatory fees to other countries, and offered to increase the number of scholarships she offered. The Conference received this with appreciation and also the news that New Zealand's newly elected Labour Government had committed itself under its election manifesto to abolish the overseas student charge there.

42. Winding up this part of the discussion, the Secretary-General emphasised the importance of the issue and the need to take positive steps to arrest the trend towards the adoption of more restrictive policies. High fee regimes were not typical in the world as a whole - given that France, Germany and the U.S.S.R. operated without them - just as they were by no means universal in the Commonwealth. He therefore urged the Conference to give some tangible expression to the strong feelings they had voiced. The Conference then invited him to prepare a statement on student mobility for its consideration and approval. A statement was drafted and circulated and then discussed by Ministers. After a number of suggested amendments had been agreed, the statement was approved. In subscribing to this statement, Britain in particular made clear her stance on the issue of full-cost fees. The text is included in this report on pages 22-24.

43. In the statement Ministers emphasised the importance of the freest flow of students between Commonwealth countries, and expressed both their appreciation of the Standing Committee's work and, overwhelmingly, their endorsement of its recommendations. They recorded their sense of disappointment and unease over the trends in Commonwealth student interchange and official policies thereon and viewed with alarm the situation where several member countries appeared to be initiating or actively considering policies of high fees for students from abroad. Ministers therefore declared:

- (a) Their belief in the value of Commonwealth student mobility and their determination to foster it.

- (b) Their recognition of the responsibility of Commonwealth governments to formulate policies contributing to that end.
- (c) Their intention to use their best endeavours to raise the level of intra-Commonwealth exchanges above 1983/84 levels.
- (d) Their desire to widen the network of Commonwealth educational exchange, drawing in more countries and in particular promoting South-South linkages.
- (e) The belief of the overwhelming majority of them that fees or equivalent charges levied on students from other Commonwealth countries should be less than full-cost.
- (f) The importance of not introducing discrimination against Commonwealth countries in the matter of fees for students from abroad.
- (g) Their commitment to the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan.
- (h) The essential importance of consultation in this area and their pledge to consult one another whenever major adjustments to policies affecting students from other Commonwealth countries were contemplated.
- (i) Their intention to meet in late 1985 to review progress and to consider what practical and collaborative measures might be taken to further Commonwealth student exchange.
- (j) Their concern that the Commonwealth Higher Education Unit should have the necessary resources to support Commonwealth endeavours in this field.

The Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan

44. This was the twenty-fifth anniversary of the launching of the CSFP, and the Conference recognised the immense contribution the Plan had made to the cause of Commonwealth education interchange. In the interval since the Eighth Commonwealth Education Conference in 1980, a review team chaired by Mr. W. Renwick, Director-General of Education in New Zealand, had conducted the second Ten-Year Review of the Plan, and the Conference had the Report before it. In introducing this report Mr. Renwick said the Review Committee had found the CSFP to be a success and thought it should continue as a distinctive scheme of Commonwealth co-operation within the context of the Commonwealth Higher Education Programme. To reflect changing circumstances, the basis of the scheme could usefully be developed in three particular ways:

- (a) The pursuit of the high quality of academic study and research in universities should be complemented by efforts to promote the highest standards of technical and professional performance through study in non-university settings. The framework of the Plan already provided for this possibility but take-up had been limited in practice.
- (b) Due attention should be paid to the expressed development needs of nominating countries, and procedures should be introduced to enable these requirements to be made known to awarding countries.

(c) Thought should be given to using a portion of CSFP awards to strengthen higher education institutions and research centres in Commonwealth developing countries. A programme of this kind would introduce the idea of institutional support through CSFP instead of confining it to the relationship between an awarding country and individual recipients. This would accord well with the ideas advanced in the second report of the Commonwealth Standing Committee on Student Mobility for centres of advanced study and research in Commonwealth developing countries.

45. The Conference expressed its appreciation of the report of the Review Committee, and endorsed proposals which had been put to it by the meeting of officials held on Sunday 22 July. The principle that CSFP awards should be tenable at non-university institutions was reaffirmed. In accordance with the Review Committee's suggestions, the Conference approved the adoption of a proforma to allow nominating countries wishing to do so to state their national needs when putting forward nominations for awards. The Secretariat and the Association of Commonwealth Universities were requested to undertake a study of the take-up of awards with a view to effecting improvements. It was agreed that tracer studies of former CSFP award-holders would serve many useful purposes including that of contributing to the formulation of policies to ensure that award holders returned home after completion of their studies. An offer of resources from Canada to assist with this work was received with appreciation. No special allocation of CSFP awards for third country training was recommended, but the extension of third country training awards was supported as a general principle and it was noted that such awards were already available under many bilateral programmes. Attention was also paid to administrative issues. Countries were urged to follow the procedures laid down in the Administrative Handbook, and the Conference also endorsed the conclusions of a small working group of officials which had convened under the chairmanship of Mr. Edgar Temple, Assistant Secretary-General of the Association of Commonwealth Universities in relation to revisions of the Handbook (see pages 42-44). It was noted that Mr. Temple would be retiring in 1985 and appreciation was expressed of the contribution he had made to the development of CSFP since its inception.

46. The Conference also addressed the issue of the scale of the Plan which for many years had operated at a level of about 1,000 awards. The Commonwealth Secretary-General had written to member countries earlier in the year urging them to mark the 25th anniversary of the Plan by joining together to pledge sufficient additional awards to reach the 1,500 target set at previous Commonwealth Education Conferences. In so doing he noted that Britain had already in 1983 announced a major increase of 150 additional awards in her contribution to the Plan, an action which the Conference noted with appreciation.

47. There was a strong positive response to the Secretary-General's appeal. Outstanding among the offers made in Nicosia was one from Canada to raise the number of her awards from 300 to 500, an act of generosity which the Conference warmly applauded. Other additional pledges came from The Bahamas (2), Cyprus (3), Ghana (50% increase), Guyana (2), India (25), Kenya (3), Malta (2), Nigeria (7), Papua New Guinea (2), Sierra Leone (1), Sri Lanka (5), Trinidad and Tobago (3), Zimbabwe (5). Five of these countries, The Bahamas, Guyana, Kenya, Papua New Guinea and Zimbabwe, would be participating for the first time. Several other countries promised increases in awards and undertook to notify details to the Secretariat soon after the conclusion of the Conference.

48. Great satisfaction was expressed by the Conference at the quantitative outcome of the pledging exercise. Taking into account Britain's 1983 pledges, this seemed likely to take the total to over 1,650 awards by 1985. The increase in the number of participating countries was also welcomed as giving greater substance to the concept of CSFP as a truly pan-Commonwealth scheme.

Development of Higher Education in Member Countries

49. The Conference discussed action proposals which had been elaborated by the Commonwealth Secretariat in response to those parts of the report of the Standing Committee on Student Mobility (especially the second report dated 1983) which addressed the development of higher education.

50. The first set of proposals concerned activities in the field of distance education in relation to higher education. Considerable interest in these proposals was voiced from delegations from Africa, Asia, Britain, the Caribbean and the Pacific, in all of which there was either existing experience from which to draw or plans for new developments. The Secretariat's specific proposals included the holding of a meeting in Britain in early 1985 at which specialists in distance teaching for higher education would be convened to examine possibilities for Commonwealth co-operation in this field. In 1985/86 there were plans to organise a workshop for writers and editors from universities in one of the Commonwealth regions. Possibilities of studies of the cost, effects and efficiency of distance teaching in higher education were also canvassed, as also the scope for using distance teaching programmes as an adjunct to study abroad programmes. The proposals were endorsed with the proviso that it was necessary to broaden the context of operation to include higher technical and vocational education and non-formal education activities and not allow this programme to be focused purely on universities.

51. A second area of activity proposed by the Secretariat was staff development for higher education. This was a priority in many countries and should be the focus for many of the scholarship awards available for study abroad. Programmes of staff development in Commonwealth higher education were already extensive and varied. It was proposed that a study of provision for staff development in higher education should be conducted and that a consultative meeting should be held to review the findings and guide the Secretariat as to where Commonwealth initiatives could prove most fruitful. The proposals were adopted by the Conference.

52. There was also considerable interest in the third area of activity, namely institutional links. The Secretariat proposed that a study should be conducted of the nature and scale of links between higher education institutions in different countries of the Commonwealth and of the conditions under which they prove most fruitful. Delegations from many countries expressed interest in the study and stated they had found inter-institutional links to be valuable to all the partners concerned. The proposals in the Secretariat paper were adopted.

53. The Secretariat's proposals on technical education and training addressed themselves to three main themes. The first was the need to incorporate a technical and vocational education component in scholarship schemes and other programmes of Commonwealth education co-operation. The value of this was endorsed by Ministers. The second issue was the proposals to create the Commonwealth Industrial Training and Experience

Programme. Many delegations supported this and the proposal was further discussed as a referral to the Conference by the Commonwealth Employment Ministers (see page 18). The third was to encourage networks of technical education institutions in the Commonwealth. Already there was a Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa and the model might prove useful in other regions. Delegates from the Caribbean expressed interest in this idea and in Commonwealth assistance in pursuing it. A welcome was also given to Secretariat proposals for supporting the conduct of a survey of technical education and vocational training provision in the South Pacific.

54. Finally, there was discussion of the Commonwealth Higher Education Unit and the proposal by the Commonwealth Standing Committee on Student Mobility that further resources should be found for it. It was explained to the Conference that the decision to establish the Unit had been taken by Heads of Government at their meeting in New Delhi in November 1983. A vacancy in the Education Programme had been utilised to fill the post of Head of the Unit. The manifold tasks that the Secretariat was expected to undertake in higher education, if the broad needs and particular recommendations of the Standing Committee on Student Mobility were to be addressed, could not be met out of existing resources without adversely affecting other programmes and priorities which Commonwealth Education Ministers might have. The Conference was therefore being asked to approve the necessary resources to staff the Higher Education Unit at the level required. Ministers endorsed the decision of the Secretariat to allocate up to a third of its time to higher education matters. They confirmed that these were of great concern at the present time. However financial constraints had to be recognised, and it was not easy for governments to contemplate the establishment of permanent additional posts. The suggestion made was that some of the proposed work of the Higher Education Unit might be formulated as specific projects with a set term for completion, which might then more easily attract co-operative funding from member governments.

The Commonwealth Secretariat's Future Work Programme in Education 1984-87

Secretariat Proposals

55. The Conference had before it a paper prepared by the Commonwealth Secretariat setting out the role and functions of the Education Programme and outlining proposals for its work for the 1984-1987 period. The main functions of the Education Programme were described in this paper as involving the convening and servicing of Conferences of Commonwealth Education Ministers and of other conferences and seminars and working groups; promoting Commonwealth interchange in education through flows of students, teachers, books, equipment etc.; undertaking studies and surveys into matters of importance to the educational development of member countries and disseminating the findings; offering "brokerage" and information services to member states; mobilising support for Commonwealth institutions and programmes; and offering direct operational services to member countries.

56. The Secretariat's paper referred to the formation of the Human Resource Development Group, of which the Education Programme is a part, and the readiness to assume an operational role where required. In seeking advice on the desirable shape of the Programme over the next three years the Secretariat pointed out that for 1984-85 many commitments

had necessarily been entered into already, reflecting the fact the budget year had started on 1 July. Moreover, there was always a carry-over of some previous projects and commissioned studies which had unavoidably been delayed in their execution. However, room had been left within the 1984-85 programme for action to be undertaken on several of the main themes of the Conference, and the programme was much more open for 1985-86 and 1986-87. Advice was sought on the priorities to be accorded to continuation of work on old themes such as books and publishing, non-formal education, distance teaching, management and administration, teacher education etc.; whether to concentrate on addressing new issues such as those arising in the context of the current Conference - resources for education and their cost-effective use, education and youth unemployment, student mobility and the Commonwealth Higher Education Programme; or to select entirely new issues emerging into the limelight to claim the attention of education policy makers. Resources were limited and so choices would have to be made and it was important not to duplicate what others were doing.

Role of the Education Programme

57. In general the Conference endorsed recent developments in the Education Programme, including its incorporation into the Human Resource Development Group, with the prospects for co-ordination of educational development with that in other sectors that were thereby opened up. The operational role was also welcomed, particularly by smaller states, though it was recognised that careful planning would be necessary to avoid overstraining the resources of the Education Programme.

58. In general the Conference thought it important that the Commonwealth Secretariat should concentrate on those issues and activities where it had a comparative advantage and where there were particular needs which were not being met by other agencies. It was important to avoid duplication of what others were doing. It also seemed desirable to give a practical emphasis to the work undertaken by the Education Programme, and the needs of practitioners should be borne in mind in the convening of meetings or the commissioning of studies. Similarly the Education Programme's Newsletter could usefully address itself to issues of practice.

59. It was recognised that a number of important organisational changes had recently been made in the Education Programme and that in consequence it had not been possible to put more than outline proposals to the Conference on this occasion. Nevertheless if the Conference was to play its proper role in helping the Education Programme to prioritise its work commitments, it would be necessary in future to provide more information both on the financial implications of alternative courses of action and on the staff time commitments to different programmes and projects. Only in this way could Ministers give a useful steer to the process of policy formulation. Similarly, it would be useful to know what commitments were being carried forward from previous years' programmes in order to understand the degree of freedom available in planning new activities for the future.

Programme Content

60. In terms of the issues to be addressed a number of priorities were identified. It was generally agreed that student mobility and the

Commonwealth Higher Education Programme should assume a leading role, and the proposal of the Secretariat to devote approximately a third of the available resources to this was welcomed. A number of delegations stressed the importance of including higher technical and vocational education within the activities at this level, and it was noted that the Secretariat had specifically incorporated some initiatives in this area in its proposals for implementation of the recommendations of the Commonwealth Standing Committee on Student Mobility. These proposals had been circulated in a Conference Working Paper.

61. It was noted that within the broad higher education theme it would be possible to pursue some of the other concerns of the Conference, such as resources and their cost-effective use and education and youth unemployment. The issue of strategies for higher education provision to be pursued by small states was also of particular importance for the Commonwealth, and many delegates stressed the need for education in small states to be a prominent feature of the Programme.

62. Resources for education and their cost-effective use was also thought to be a priority concern at the present time. A number of delegations urged that work be carried forward in this area.

63. In terms of new items to be addressed, there was some particular support for attention to be paid to redesigning examinations to serve the curriculum and criterion-referenced testing; also for work on second chance institutions, linkages between formal and non-formal education, and the potential role of distance teaching in that context.

Resources

64. In pursuing these concerns the Education Programme might well find its resources under strain. Among the ways of relieving such pressures would be for the Secretariat to undertake more of a co-ordinating and catalytic role, relying where possible on commissioned studies by leading experts, asking member countries to provide information rather than using Programme staff to collect it themselves, and using the device of experts meetings where appropriate. The use of the experts meeting and the regional workshop was generally preferred to the large specialist conference of the kind that had frequently been called in the past. A plea was made that conferences, meetings and workshops already announced should not be postponed or cancelled except in the most dire emergency, since a great deal of preparatory work in both the Secretariat and member countries went into these meetings. Another device that was suggested to deal with resource constraints was for the Secretariat to consider converting some of its work priorities into projects of limited duration which might then be co-financed with the help of one or more member countries. Countries might be readier to contemplate work on an important theme if they were not thereby creating permanent staff posts whose recurrent burden would have to be carried well into the future. It was also possible that for some of these activities countries might be willing to second staff to the Secretariat for a limited period.

65. These various proposals were welcomed by the Commonwealth Secretariat. It was confirmed on behalf of the Education Programme that a start could be made on incorporating these priorities into the 1984-85 current work schedule, and that the programme for the following two years would reflect the concerns and priorities expressed by Ministers.

Referrals and Submissions

66. Two matters had been referred to the Conference by other gatherings of Commonwealth Ministers as follows:

(a) The Seventh Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting in Ottawa in October 1983 had recommended that health education should be incorporated into the curricula of schools and teacher training institutions, though not necessarily as a separate subject. Ministers of Education accepted its importance and indicated their willingness to give the matter deeper consideration on some future occasion when curriculum issues were more central to their agenda.

(b) The Third Meeting of Commonwealth Employment and Labour Ministers held in Geneva in June 1984 had passed over the issue of establishing a Commonwealth Industrial Training and Experience Programme (CITEP) to Education Ministers for comment. The Conference supported the general purposes of CITEP but expressed some concern about the financial implications. They suggested that when the proposed interdisciplinary group met to consider the question, it would have to consider how far CITEP would be funded as a new programme and to what extent it would have to be incorporated in Commonwealth Higher Education Programme activities.

67. The Conference also received written submissions from the following organisations:

(a) Association of Commonwealth Universities.

(b) Australian Union of Students (on behalf of the Conference of Commonwealth Student Organisations which it hosted in Melbourne in August 1983).

(c) Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa.

(d) Commonwealth Engineers Council.

(e) Council for Education in the Commonwealth.

(f) United Kingdom Council for Overseas Student Affairs.

(g) United World Colleges.

68. Delegates were invited from the Chair to make observations on the submissions received, but in the absence of these the submissions were generally noted without comment. The submission from CAPA about release of foreign currency for payment of CAPA dues was raised orally from the floor, but the Conference did not accept the recommendation in the submission that Ministers should become collectively involved in action to secure the payment of CAPA dues.