

ADMINISTRATION OF THE COMMONWEALTH SCHOLARSHIP AND FELLOWSHIP PLAN

A record total of 1,050 Scholars were holding awards under the Plan during the first term of the academic year in 13 Commonwealth countries. In addition 18 senior awards were taken up in five awarding countries as well as 24 Senior Medical Fellowships and 47 Medical Fellowships under the scheme of medical awards instituted by Britain.

The continued interest in and expansion of the Plan is shown by the increase during the period under Report in the total number of applications for Scholarships on the corresponding figures given in previous Reports, and by the hope expressed by certain countries that with the development of recently founded universities they will eventually be able to institute their own awards and thus take part in the Plan as awarding countries. The Canadian Government has approved an increase in the number of Canadian Commonwealth Scholarships from 250 to 300 as foreshadowed by the Canadian delegation to the Fourth Commonwealth Education Conference held in Lagos in 1968. Britain is to make available 50 of its Scholarships to complement, at a more junior level, its new scheme of Academic Staff Fellowships. Australia is making available a certain number of its awards for competition between some of the smaller Commonwealth countries not previously included in the allocation of its awards.

Although the majority of Scholars were reading for a higher degree, an awareness on the part of awarding countries of the need expressed by certain nominating countries, both in this and in previous Reports, for more awards at undergraduate level is evinced by the fact that 13 per cent of the total number of Scholars representing 37 countries were reading for a first degree or diploma, compared with 11.5 per cent representing 32 countries during the preceding reporting period. Little change, however, is shown in the general pattern of distribution of Scholars by age, sex and subject which has emerged during previous years. It is now possible to compare statistical information showing the extent to which women participate in the various stages of the selection procedure for Scholarships. Women constituted 11.4 per cent (10.4 per cent during 1967-68) of the total number of applicants, 13.6 per cent (11.6 per cent) of nominees and 10.2 per cent (10.2 per cent) of the number holding awards during the reporting period, but only 11.3 per cent (15.1 per cent) of the number taking up awards.

Late submission of nominations as well as delays in making offers of awards present a threat to the efficient working of the Plan and the practical realisation of its purpose. The former causes problems for awarding countries since it is extremely difficult to find places for successful candidates at suitable institutions which have already filled their complement of students for the relevant academic session. The latter causes frustration and despondency among better candidates, who, because of the uncertainty of the outcome of their applications, withdraw in order to accept offers of other means of furthering their academic careers. In both cases valuable awards are not used; and it is hoped that every effort will be made in future to obviate these delays.