

INTRODUCTION

For two decades at least, during which time 26 member States of the Commonwealth have achieved independence, various agencies have attempted, under the general heading of "book development", to encourage and help countries to produce the books they needed to foster their educational aims and policies. But in these countries local production of books has never matched the pace at which the educational systems have developed and the curricula been re-orientated to meet changing aspirations, especially where priority has been given to the use of national or local languages as media of instruction.

The rightful place of books in education (of general and popular reading material, and books for new literates and for children, as well as textbooks at all levels) has never seriously been questioned. But books of local origin are also essential to a nation's social, economic and democratic growth, and some concerted and planned effort is required if indigenous book industries are to be generated, a situation which major book producers of the world too have seen as an inevitable and essential factor in the strengthening of international ties and co-operation.

The development or re-orientation of the educational curricula of a nation can usually be devised by means of existing expertise, and administered through existing channels. But the preparation, production, publication, promotion and distribution of the books required to make the curricula effective call for a structure or chain of operations which it has taken even the most highly developed countries years to establish, not always with full success. It is not simply a question of finance, machinery and organisation. A book industry needs also the immediate acquisition of new skills and the application of new judgments in many fields and at many different levels.

Problems such as these were discussed at successive Commonwealth Education Conferences, until that which met in Lagos in 1968 suggested that positive recommendations for a Commonwealth Book Development Programme be prepared by the Commonwealth Secretariat. These were put forward at the Heads of Government Meeting in Singapore in January 1971 which endorsed them and transmitted them to the Fifth Commonwealth Education Conference which was to meet in Canberra the following month.

The first major step after Canberra was the appointment to the Secretariat in 1972 of a full-time officer with special responsibilities in the field of the development of indigenous book industries and the training of personnel for those industries. The second was the Seminar of which this is the final report. In some ways this Seminar was unique - discussion in depth of practical proposals for the creation or

strengthening of each facet of the industry in terms of local situations was combined with a genuine element of training for the participants, while bringing in contact with each other personnel with similar functions but of widely varying experience and from differing local conditions. It would be fair to say that every participant came with something of value to offer, and that all departed with the feeling that something positive had been achieved.

The Seminar could not have been held without the generous financial provision made by the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation which met the travel and subsistence expenses of participants and by the Commonwealth Foundation which met the travel expenses of two consultants. One must record deep appreciation of the generosity of the Government of India in playing host to the Seminar; the Seminar arrangements were excellent, as was the co-operation of all the officials who assisted. Thanks are also due to our lead speakers, consultants, participants and observers whose contribution helped enormously to make the Seminar successful.