

Conference Arrangements

Background

The first contribution towards planning the Eighth Commonwealth Education Conference was made on the final day of the Seventh Conference when a group of delegates met to review the success of the arrangements for that conference while they were fresh in delegates' minds. Then, at its meeting on 20 October 1977, the Commonwealth Education Liaison Committee appointed a special sub-committee to carry out a more detailed review.

The sub-committee, comprising representatives of Australia, the Bahamas, Barbados, Botswana, Britain, Canada, Fiji, Malawi, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Tanzania and the Association of Commonwealth Universities, met on 2 March 1978. Its main recommendation was that the next Education Conference should follow the same broad general pattern as the last.

More formal preparations for the Eighth Conference began when, at its meeting on 18 April 1979, the CELC appointed a working party made up of representatives of those countries which had hosted previous Commonwealth Education Conference, a representative of Sri Lanka - the host country for the 1980 Conference - and a representative of one of the newly independent member states, with other CELC members being free to attend if they wished. The working party met on three occasions: 2 May 1979, 4 June 1979 and 11 September 1979. Those who attended one or more of the sessions were Miss S. O'Connor (Australia), Mr J. A. Hunte (Barbados), Mr. L. E. Dawes and Mr. W. A. Dodd (Britain), Mr. M. J. Hellyer (Canada), Major J. B. Takala, Mr. D. V. Jogia and Mr. P. K. Mishra (Fiji), Mr. I. K. Davies (Ghana), Mr. J. M. Gugnani (India), Miss N. Segre (Jamaica), Mrs. P. Ibrahim, Mr. M. Zaidel and Mr. A. H. Harun (Malaysia), Mr. S. O. E. Omene (Nigeria), Mr. Y. L. M. Zawahir (Sri Lanka), Sir Hugh Springer and Mr. E. E. Temple (Association of Commonwealth Universities), and Mr. S. Mahendra (Commonwealth Foundation). A further input to planning was made by Senior Education Officials from 27 member states who met at Marlborough House on 16-17 July 1979 following the IBE Conference in Geneva.

The working party submitted reports for consideration by the CELC at its meetings on 18 June and 31 October 1979, and the following proposals were adopted:

(a) Acting on the invitation of the Government of Sri Lanka, the Conference would be held in the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall, Colombo, Sri Lanka from Tuesday 5 August to Wednesday 13 August 1980. It would be in two parts, with Ministers attending the second part.

(b) The objectives of the Conference would remain the same as for the Seventh Commonwealth Education Conference, namely:

(i) To review present schemes of Commonwealth co-operation in education, and to recommend ways by which these may be developed and made more effective.

(ii) To focus attention on major educational trends and problems, and identify means by which further Commonwealth co-operation might benefit member countries.

(iii) To consider any other proposals for the advancement of these aims and make recommendations concerning them.

(c) A Steering Committee composed of heads of delegation would meet at the beginning of each part of the Conference in order to plan the proceedings. It would also meet on the last day of the Conference to recommend priorities for future co-operation in education, and at other times if required. Its composition would differ in the two parts of the Conference. In addition, a Conference Bureau would meet at appropriate times to administer the day-to-day arrangements and exchange information on the progress of the deliberations of the committees. On the final day, a small committee would meet to review the Conference and make preliminary suggestions for the structure of the next one.

(d) In the first part of the Conference, officials would review the work being undertaken by the Commonwealth Secretariat in the field of education and make recommendations for consideration by Ministers. Eight sector committees would be formed to deal with different aspects of the programme. In addition, the Chief Professional Officers would meet on two occasions. Discussions would be based on a working paper prepared by the Commonwealth Secretariat supplemented by reports and commissioned studies prepared since the previous Conference and by country papers made available by member states.

(e) The theme of the second part of the Conference would be "Education and the Development of Human Resources". It would be considered in committees which would relate the theme to first and second cycle institutions, tertiary institutions, and non-formal education. Lead papers would be prepared for each of these committees. Also in the second part of the Conference the report of the Meeting of Officials would be examined by Ministers in the light of the second week's discussions, with recommendations for priorities for action being proposed by the Steering Committee for consideration and adoption by a plenary meeting. In addition, a closed session restricted to Ministers and the Commonwealth Secretary-General would be arranged.

Acting on these proposals, the Commonwealth Secretariat commissioned the following lead papers on the Conference theme, *Education and the Development of Human Resources*: "The Role of First and Second Cycle Institutions" - Dr. M. K. Bacchus (Professor, Sociology of Education, Department of Educational Foundations, University of Alberta); "The Role of Tertiary Institutions" - Dr. Keith Legg (Director, Hong Kong Polytechnic); "The Role of Non-Formal Education" - Dr. Manzoor Ahmed, (UNICEF Representative, Addis Ababa); and "The Role of Universities" - Prof. Asavia Wandira (Vice-Chancellor, Makerere University). These papers, slightly abridged, appear on pages 59 to 110 of this Report.

All four lead paper writers subsequently attended the Conference where they participated in the discussions on the Conference theme. In all, the Conference was attended by 179 delegates from 31 member states,

and 13 observers. (See Appendix D.)

The Conference Itself

The Meeting of Officials, which formed the first part of the Conference, lasted from 5-8 August 1980 and was chaired by Mr. Eric J. de Silva, the Secretary for Education of Sri Lanka. The main tasks of the meeting were: (a) to review the activities undertaken by the Education Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat since the Seventh Commonwealth Education Conference held at Accra in 1977; (b) to consider suggestions for future activities including those appearing in the Working Paper presented by the Commonwealth Secretariat and in supporting documents, and (c) to prepare a report containing proposals and recommendations for consideration by the full Conference in the period 11-13 August 1980.

In order to cover the 16 subject areas identified in the Commonwealth Secretariat's working paper on Commonwealth Co-operation in Education, four sector committees met on the first two days and four more on the next two days. Chief Professional Officers also met on two occasions. The allocation of subjects was as follows:

Chief Professional Officers' Committee (Chairman, Mr. E. Rawlins, Barbados): The Collection and Dissemination of Information; Island Developing and Other Specially Disadvantaged States; the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation.

Sector Committee 1 (Chairman, Mr. W. L. Renwick, New Zealand): Science and Mathematics Education; Technical and Vocational Education and Training.

Sector Committee 2 (Chairman, Mr. Kazi F. Rahman, Bangladesh): Non-Formal Education.

Sector Committee 3 (Chairman, Dr. J. Mwanza, Zambia): Higher Education, the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan; Overseas Students' Fees.

Sector Committee 4 (Chairman, Mr. L. T. Bowen, Guyana): Commonwealth Book Development Programme; Educational Media; Low-cost Teaching Equipment.

Sector Committee 5 (Chairman, Dato Rahman Arshad, Malaysia): Educational Administration and Supervision; Curriculum and Examinations.

Sector Committee 6 (Chairman, Dr. J. M. Mitchell, United Kingdom): Teacher Education; Universal Primary Education.

Sector Committee 7 (Chairman, Mr. J. Carter, Canada): Teaching About the Commonwealth.

Sector Committee 8 (Chairman, Miss J. S. Attah, Nigeria): Special Education; the Education of Women and Girls.

In addition, Sector Committee 3 set up a working party to report on the day-to-day operation of the CSFP to which all countries were invited to send a representative. Those who attended were Dr. A. T. Johns (Chairman) of New Zealand, Prof. D. W. George and Mr. F. Grotowski of Australia, Miss D. Roeser of Canada, Dr. David Kimble of Malawi, Dr. F. S. C. P. Kalpage and Mr. N. Samarasundera of Sri Lanka, Prof. G. R. V. Mmati of Tanzania, Mr. E. E. Temple of the United Kingdom, and Mr. A. Christodoulou of the Association of Commonwealth Universities. The working party's report appears as Appendix B on pages 119 to 121.

The reports of these committees were put together to form the *Report of the Meeting of Officials* for consideration by Ministers during the second week of the Conference, during which time some amendments were made to them.

The second part of the Conference, with the Ministers present, was formally opened on Monday 11 August 1980 at an impressive ceremony which began with the lighting of the traditional oil lamp of Sri Lanka followed by addresses by the Hon. Ranil Wickremasinghe, Minister of Education and Minister of Youth Affairs and Employment of Sri Lanka, the Hon. R. Premadasa, Prime Minister, and H. E. Mr. S. S. Ramphal, Commonwealth Secretary-General. It ended with the inaugural address by H. E. Mr. J. R. Jayewardene, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and a vote of thanks given by the Hon. Dr. D. Mutumbuka, Minister of Education and Culture of Zimbabwe. The addresses by Mr. Ramphal and Mr. Jayewardene are printed in a slightly abridged form in this report. At the first plenary session which followed the opening ceremony, the Hon. Ranil Wickremasinghe was elected Chairman of the Conference, and three committees were formed to consider the Conference theme, "Education and the Development of Human Resources". The committee dealing with the role of first and second cycle institutions was chaired by the Hon. Wal Fife (Australia) with the Hon. L. R. Tull (Barbados) as alternate chairman; that dealing with the role of tertiary institutions by the Hon. J. J. Kamotho (Kenya) with the Hon. S. Sikivou (Fiji) as alternate; and that dealing with the role of non-formal education was chaired by the Hon. B. Shankaranand (India) with the Hon. Mrs. T. Siwale (Tanzania) as alternate. These committees met on 11 and 12 August.

Also on 11 and 12 August, a sub-committee of the Steering Committee, composed of Sir Roy Marshall (Chairman), the chairmen of all but one of the sector committees and of the committee of Chief Professional Officers, met to consider priorities for programme action by the Secretariat over the next triennium arising out of the recommendations of the Conference.

The final day of the Conference began with a meeting of the Steering Committee of Ministers which received the proposals of the sub-committee on programme priorities and prepared a report based on them (Appendix A) for consideration by the Conference. This meeting was followed by a closed meeting of Ministers and by a meeting of a special committee set up by the Conference under the chairmanship of Mr. W. A. Dodd (Britain) to review the structure, procedures and arrangements of the Conference as a first step towards preparing for the next one.

The Conference ended with a plenary session at which the Conference Report consisting of the reports of the sector committees, the theme committees and the Ministerial Steering Committee on programme priorities was adopted. This was followed by an address by Sir Roy Marshall, Chairman of the Commonwealth Education Liaison Committee, summing up its main achievements (see page 55). Expressions of appreciation of the work undertaken by all who had been involved in planning and running the Conference - especially to the Government of Sri Lanka for its excellent resources, facilities and staff - were given by the Canadian, Nigerian and Indian Ministers of Education, and the Commonwealth Secretary-General. The Conference Chairman likewise thanked delegates for their kindness and consideration and brought the Conference to a close.