

The Work of the Consultative Committee

The Consultative Committee meets once a year to review progress and future prospects and to prepare an annual report. It is, as its name implies, a "consultative" body: no collective policy decisions binding member governments are taken. The Plan was framed to cover the six-year period June 1951 to June 1957. After the meeting in London in 1950, when the Plan was drawn up, there was a meeting in Colombo in 1951. This meeting was mainly concerned with setting up the Council for Technical Co-operation. In 1952, when the Plan had been operating for about a year, it was time to have a meeting to review progress. This meeting was held in Karachi. Another meeting to review progress after two years' operations was held in New Delhi in October 1953. This year's meeting will review the situation after three years' operations.

In Ottawa, as in Karachi and New Delhi, the Ministers will review progress and future prospects, agree upon the annual report and discuss common problems. These meetings will consider both technical co-operation and capital assistance, with the main emphasis on the latter since the former is primarily in the hands of the Council for Technical Co-operation, which has already met in Colombo and will not be meeting in Ottawa.

Technical Co-operation

Colombo Plan technical aid, like capital assistance, is given bilaterally on a country-to-country basis. But the Bureau for Technical Co-operation at Colombo processes requests for such aid and endeavours to find the required assistance in other Colombo Plan countries. The members of the Council for Technical Co-operation to which the Bureau is responsible, are drawn from the permanent representatives of Colombo Plan countries in Ceylon. The Director of the Bureau is an official specially seconded to the post from one of the Colombo Plan countries. The present Director is an Australian. The Colombo Plan technical assistance programme is regarded as supplementary to the work being done by the United Nations Technical Assistance Administration and by Specialized Agencies of the United Nations, such as the WHO and FAO.

The Information Unit

The Colombo Plan now has an Information Unit in Colombo. The Information Officer, like the Director of the Bureau for Technical Co-operation, is an official specially seconded from one of the Colombo Plan countries. The present Information Officer is an Indian. The Unit assists member governments to publicize what is being done under the Colombo Plan, and is beginning to supplement their work with information material of its own.

A Meeting Ground for Asia and the West

The Colombo Plan has brought an increasingly large number of westerners and Asians together and enabled them to learn more of each others' ways of thinking and working. The annual meetings of the Consultative Committee are one example of this. The various technical co-operation schemes also bring about this desirable result. We give Asians material assistance and technical know-how, but, in doing so, we always try to remember that Asians