

Conferences of Commonwealth Judges and Jurists

SOME 95 prominent members of the Canadian legal profession attended the Third Commonwealth and Empire Law Conference held at Sydney, Australia, from August 25 to September 5, 1965. This non-governmental conference provided an opportunity for Commonwealth lawyers to exchange views on legal questions of mutual concern. Foremost among the matters discussed were proposals for a Commonwealth Court to replace the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, uniform recognition and enforcement of legislation within the Commonwealth, domestic law matters such as crime and punishment, laws relating to motor vehicles, family law, and other matters of particular interest to the legal profession, including methods of law reform and the role and responsibility of lawyers in the modern world.

Law Ministers and Chief Justices Meet

Following the Conference, Law Ministers and Chief Justices of the Commonwealth nations met for two days in Canberra. Mr. Justice Martland of the Supreme Court of Canada represented the Chief Justice of Canada and Mr. Justice Hall, also of the Supreme Court of Canada, represented the Canadian Minister of Justice. The Law Ministers and the Chief Justices suggested the possibility that a Legal Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat might be established to seek a means of achieving greater co-operation within the Commonwealth in the legal sphere by improving availability of legal material. This matter had been discussed at the Commonwealth and Empire Law Conference, where speakers referred to the desirability of the Secretariat encouraging legal conferences, promoting the exchange of legal ideas and the interchange of lawyers and judges, and perhaps operating an advisory service as a central point of reference for Commonwealth laws. The Law Ministers also suggested that older Commonwealth countries should assist newer ones in legal education. The question of fugitive offenders figured prominently in the matters discussed by the Law Ministers, who saw merit in identification of the principles involved and possible conclusion of a convention or bilateral agreements between Commonwealth countries on extradition of offenders from one to another. The main topic of discussion at the Chief Justices' Conference was the suggestion for creation of a Commonwealth Court of Appeal. For a variety of reasons, the proposal was considered, in present circumstances, to be impracticable.