

opment of the area. The Commonwealth countries were themselves embarking on a great co-operative venture but it was recognized from the start that the needs of the area are far greater than the Commonwealth alone can meet, and that Commonwealth efforts would have to be co-ordinated with the efforts of other countries and agencies already at work or likely to be at work in the area.

This wider co-operation has, up to a point, been accomplished. The United States, which since 1950 has itself operated economic assistance programmes in South and South-East Asia, has been a full member of the Consultative Committee since 1951. As was stated above, both the International Bank and the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (which has done valuable statistical work on South and South-East Asia and assisted in other ways) have been regularly represented at its meetings.

In taking their joint initiative in Colombo, the Commonwealth countries also contemplated that all countries in South and South-East Asia should be invited to participate on equal terms in whatever plan was devised. Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia and Thailand were represented by observers at the London meetings. By 1952, Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Nepal and Viet-Nam had become full members and Indonesia participated as a full member at the 1953 meetings in New Delhi. Thailand had sent observers to three meetings by 1953 and the Philippines had been represented in this way at two meetings.

The Nature of the Plan Itself

The Colombo Plan is not only or even primarily an aid programme. It is the sum of the development programmes of the Asian countries which are members of the Plan, and of the aid programmes of the other member countries; in short, it is, as its full title states, a co-operative plan. Furthermore, the major burden of economic development is borne by the Asian countries themselves. They have themselves embarked on programmes of economic development and are working very hard to improve their own conditions; this is the essential basis on which the Plan rests.

At the same time they know, as do we, that they cannot achieve their objective without help from their friends — help that is urgently needed now which will be needed for the next few years at least. The pump needs to be primed. Certain economic goals such as higher national production, greater capital availability, an increased flow of foreign investment and freer trade, which it is hoped will be a secondary result of the first years' efforts to raise the living standards of the people of South and South-East Asia, will have to be realized before the countries of the area can consider themselves economically self-reliant.

The Colombo Plan, considered in both its capital assistance and technical co-operation aspects, has no permanent machinery or secretariat and no central headquarters. Special machinery exists for the handling of technical co-operation but co-ordination and orderly development in the capital field is achieved through bilateral negotiations, supplemented by consultation with others where necessary, and through the annual meetings of the Consultative Committee. There has thus grown up a flexible, pragmatic procedure which spreads among a great many governments and agencies on a continuing basis — and, once each year, on the host government and on the delegates to the Consultative Com-