

chief justices. Vice-chancellors meet periodically under the auspices of the Association of Commonwealth Universities; the heads of the national radio and television organizations must meet under the Commonwealth Broadcasting Conference; athletes meet in the quadrennial Commonwealth Games; publishers come together at meetings of the Commonwealth Press Union.

Encouraged by the Commonwealth Foundation, a charitable trust established by heads of government in 1965 at the same time as the Secretariat, and co-operating closely with it, there are a growing number of non-governmental Commonwealth professional associations — in such fields as law, medicine, nursing, surveying, architecture, mining and publishing. Altogether there are hundreds of non-governmental Commonwealth organizations.

Commonwealth meetings have become increasingly action-oriented in recent years. This has been particularly so since the Secretariat has been armed with the multilateral Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC) established by heads of government when they met in Singapore in January 1971. The CFTC has made it possible for the Secretariat to respond quickly to high-priority needs identified not only by governments of individual developing countries but by meetings of responsible representatives of several or all Commonwealth members.

Meetings of Commonwealth ministers, for example, do not limit themselves to identifying and exchanging experience and views on key common problems (though the usefulness of this should not be underestimated), but increasingly they set in motion co-operative action to help resolve them — meetings of specialists, the organization of joint research, the training of experts to clear bottlenecks, and often programs of co-operative action on a regional or wider scale, where, as is frequently the case, this seems the most economical and constructive course of action.

Thus the last two meetings of law ministers have not only discussed such topics as ways of reducing the delays and costs of litigation, or improving international co-operation on extradition, or law-of-the-sea issues, or ways of dealing with the increasingly sophisticated international movement of funds for criminal purposes; they also asked the Secretariat to organize a meeting of appropriate officials on reforming legislation on patents, trade marks, and industrial designs in relation to problems of economic development and to do the same regarding prob-

lems faced by the smaller and poorer countries in preparing and publishing law reports. They initiated a Secretariat program to cope with the shortage of legislative draftsmen, which has involved the organization of four regional training courses for professionally-qualified officials in East and West Africa, Asia and the Caribbean, and the placing of trainee draftsmen on attachment in various government legislative departments. Co-operation among law-reform agencies is being stepped up.

At the request of health ministers, the Secretariat has, *inter alia*, organized and financed regional secretariats or bureaux to promote co-operation and rationalization in postgraduate specialist and para-medical training where this helps avoid duplication of costly facilities.

On the initiation of the ministerial series of education conferences, not only has the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan been established, providing annual prestige awards for over 1,000 postgraduate and senior scholars to study in other member countries (this is in addition to the tens of thousands of technical assistance training awards a year), but there has been organized a series of specialist conferences, seminars and workshops on topics ranging from teacher training, curriculum development and education in rural areas, to school inspection, the new mathematics, and a series of training courses for text-book preparation and publishing in developing countries.

Development assistance

It was the fellow feeling engendered by Commonwealth association that first got the richer members involved in the business of assistance for international development. The Colombo Plan was the creation of a meeting of Commonwealth foreign ministers in Ceylon in 1950. Since then it has been extended to non-Commonwealth countries — the Commonwealth has never sought to put a wall around its members or to limit their contacts as some international associations have tried to do. When African countries acquired independence and became Commonwealth members, a rather similar "Special Commonwealth Aid to Africa Program" was developed. Both are essentially plans for harmonizing bilateral programs.

The much more recently established Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation is different — fully multilateral, with voluntary contributions from all Commonwealth countries and wider collective control. It is, in effect, an operating

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