

Progress in the Colombo Plan

IN October 1953 the Consultative Committee of the Colombo Plan for Co-operative Economic Development in South and Southeast Asia held its Fifth Meeting in New Delhi under the chairmanship of the leader of the Indian Delegation, Mr. C. D. Deshmukh, Indian Minister of Finance. The Minister of Fisheries, Mr. James Sinclair, headed the Canadian Delegation. On the invitation of the Government of Canada, extended by Mr. Sinclair, the Committee decided to hold its next meeting in Ottawa. This meeting will take place probably in the Autumn of 1954.

The Consultative Committee was set up, following the meeting of the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers at Colombo in January 1950, to provide a framework within which an international co-operative effort could be promoted to assist countries of South and Southeast Asia in raising their living standards. The previous meetings of the Committee were held at Sydney in May 1950, London in September of the same year, Colombo in February 1951 and Karachi in March 1952.

Communiqué

In addition to delegations from India and Canada, the New Delhi meeting was attended by representatives from Australia, Burma, Cambodia, Ceylon, Indonesia, Laos, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, Malaya, Singapore, the United States, and Viet Nam. This was the first time that Indonesia had been represented as a full member of the Colombo Plan. Thailand, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE), were represented by observers, while the Director of the Bureau for Technical Co-operation attended on behalf of the Co-operative Technical Assistance Scheme of the Colombo Plan. The Progress Report, prepared by the Consultative Committee in its New Delhi meeting, was tabled in the House of Commons on December 15. The following is the substance of the communiqué issued at the end of the meeting.

The main purpose of the Session was to review progress under the Colombo Plan during 1952-53, including the achievements of countries in South and Southeast Asia in their development programmes.

A Progress Report, upon which preliminary work had been done by officials of the participating Governments in New Delhi from September 28 to October 8, was unanimously adopted by the Committee at its final meeting today. It is expected that it will be possible to issue this report in the capitals of the various member countries by December 15, 1953.

The Committee recognized the desirability of stimulating increased understanding of, and interest in, the Colombo Plan and its aims and objectives. It accepted the proposal for the setting up of a small information unit in Colombo. This unit will collect information relating to the Colombo Plan and arrange for the exchange and distribution of this information to all member Governments. It will also serve as a central pool of information which will be available to the Press and to the public.

The report approved by the Committee at its present meeting examines the progress achieved, the problems encountered and the tasks which lie ahead