



House of Commons – House of Lords

**Council for Education in
the
Commonwealth**

**Annual Report
of the Honorary Secretary
on Activities in 2006/07**

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Baroness Chalker of Wallasey PC
Joint Parliamentary Chairpersons: Tim Boswell MP • Simon Hughes MP

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Valerie Davey (to June 2010)

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Kees Maxey (to June 2008)

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Peter Jeffreys, Membership Secretary (to June 2007)

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Martin Kenyon (to June 2007)

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Dr. Alba de Souza (to June 2007)

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Co-opted Member

Mark Robinson (to June 2007)

Professor Lalage Bown (to June 2007)

Introduction

The year has been characterised by two main conferences. The first was the 16th. Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers which took place in Cape Town, South Africa in December 2006 – and to which a delegation of four CEC members went with several others wearing different Commonwealth hats. The second conference was CEC’s own entitled “Supporting Commonwealth Education Effectively” and was held partly at Marlborough House and partly at the Royal Foundation of St. Katharine’s in east London in March 2007.

In addition to these two special events, the regular activities of the Council continued. They included the Gladwyn Lecture, the Annual Conference and a number of other meetings, two major pieces of research, several issues of the Commonwealth Education Newsletter, the development of the Council’s website, the continuing work of Knowledge Aid for Sierra Leone and the continued advocacy with the Government.

The 16th. Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers

The Conference theme was: “Access to Education for the Good of All”.

There were four streams of meetings under this heading – the Ministerial meeting itself with the well established civil society forum (the ‘Stakeholder Forum’), the Youth Forum (taken up from the Edinburgh conference) and the new Teacher’s Forum. In addition there was a trade fair and exhibition for educational publishers and a wide range of providers of other educational material. CEC along with some other Commonwealth bodies was able to show its material because of the generosity of the exhibition organiser, Nexus Strategic Partnerships (NSP) in making available a stand to us. NSP regularly produces a substantial volume entitled Commonwealth Education Partnerships: the 2007 volume, which appeared during the Conference, contains articles on the work and role of CEC by Peter Williams and a summary of international student mobility in the Commonwealth by Kees Maxey .

The Council directly contributed to the discussions by sending a letter to all of the Commonwealth Education Ministers with the following points:

- The Commonwealth should see educational development in holistic terms – i.e. education at all levels, primary, secondary, tertiary, adult education, literacy, etc. all making important contributions;

- A stakeholder group should be established on education about the Commonwealth and its values in order to promote the tolerance, respect and democracy on which the Commonwealth is built;
- The development of school and college partnerships ('twinning') across national boundaries should be strongly encouraged as an exciting way to promote Commonwealth relationships as well as to build up educational systems themselves.

In addition, two pieces of research conducted under the auspices of the CEC were flagged up. A study funded by the Commonwealth Secretariat on "Attaining and maintaining universal primary education in Commonwealth Africa – learning from experience" was presented to Ministers by one of its authors, Professor Wainana, from Kenya. A second study, "International Student Mobility in the Commonwealth – 2006 update" was made available at the conference. These two studies are discussed in greater detail below.

The representative of Malaysia offered to host the 17th. CCEM in his country in 2009 and the Council has started to plan for this meeting, which will mark 50 years of Commonwealth educational co-operation since the first Commonwealth education Conference in Oxford in 1959.

'Supporting Commonwealth Education Effectively'

Following the report presented by the Executive Chairperson, Valerie Davey, at the last AGM entitled "Celebration and Challenge", it was agreed that a conference should be held to plan the future direction of the Council over the next few years. That conference took place in March and benefited greatly from the contributions, among others, of Lord Thomson of Monifieth (a founding member of CEC), Marks Collins of the Commonwealth Foundation, two of our Parliamentary Chairpersons (Tim Boswell MP and Sally Keeble MP), Stuart Mole of the Royal Commonwealth Society, Ann Keeling Director in charge of education from the Commonwealth Secretariat. An initial summing up by the Executive Chairperson was as follows:

In the light of our interests, resources and capabilities, we should

1. Keep the biennial CHOGM and the triennial CCEM as our main constituencies for influencing educational policy and focus our activities on making our contributions too substantive to be ignored;
2. Strengthen our connections with Parliament, government, High Commissions and Commonwealth Secretariat as our main channels of influence;

3. Bolster efforts to revive understanding of and enthusiasm for the Commonwealth in the British public at all levels.

To do this, CEC will need to involve larger proportions of the membership in its activities, not necessarily in formal or long term roles, but more likely in occasional, limited tasks. A scoping study of the interests of our members and a mapping study of their geographical locations could be initial steps for this purpose.

The conclusions the conference came to are still being formulated.

Research

As reported last year, the Council was contracted by the Commonwealth Secretariat to research the experience of five Commonwealth African countries (Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania and Zambia) all of which had attained or nearly attained universal primary education (UPE), but all of which had fallen back from this level. In three countries, local researchers were engaged to give greater depth to the study. A paper (which is available on the Council's website) was presented to the CCEM in Cape Town, and it is intended that a more detailed study will be published by the Commonwealth Secretariat. The research team was led by Professor Lalage Bown with the assistance of four Board members.

The chief explanatory factor found in all five cases was a failure to make the economy grow as fast as the population. The reasons for that failure were several and varied from country to country. The overall effects were that education lost out in priority vis à vis other sectors and primary education lost out in priority vis à vis other educational levels. Declining government support necessitated measures that reduced its quality. It also transferred costs to families. That forced many poorer parents to withdraw their children from school.

The main lesson from the study was that achieving and sustaining universal *enrolment* requires that primary schooling must be free in terms of tuition, learning materials, uniforms and other costs. Otherwise, the poor tend to abstain and, in particular, withhold their daughters from school.

The latest up-date on international student mobility in the Commonwealth was completed by Kees Maxey in time for the CCEM. The increase in international student mobility continues, but with some new providers coming onto the scene, such as Malaysia (from the Commonwealth) and China. This report was printed by the Commonwealth Secretariat and copies are available for any CEC members free of charge.

Two CEC members attended a joint Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth of Learning conference in Garissa, Kenya in June 2006 entitled “Flexible Education; Reaching Nomadic Populations in Africa”. Kees Maxey presented a survey on the provision of education to pastoralists in the countries of the Horn of Africa on behalf of the Pastoral and Environmental Network in the Horn of Africa. Alba de Souza, in addition to preparing an introductory paper to the conference, wrote the official conference report..

CEC was represented by Gertrude Schotte at a meeting organised by the Commonwealth Foundation in the Seychelles on “Preparing for Change: Adaptive Strategies for Climate Change and Disaster Management in the Commonwealth”. The purpose was not to adduce yet more evidence of the global changes taking place. It was “to promote awareness, preparedness and adaptation so that when ecological changes do occur, as we believe they will, we will be better prepared to take action and save lives and livelihoods”. With education as a part of one of the four main themes, Gertrude’s paper on “Post Disaster and Education Maintenance: A Practical Perspective” was very relevant being based on the personal experience of two disasters in Montserrat – a category 5 hurricane in 1989 and the ongoing volcanic crisis. Her paper also included a number of songs and poems relating to the issue and is on the CEC website.

Policy issues

Much of the research provides a base for CEC’s important advocacy activities. A delegation led by Lady Chalker along with Simon Hughes MP, our Executive Chairperson and two other Governing Board members met the Secretary of State for International Development, Hilary Benn. The delegation emphasised the importance of all levels of education, including higher education, to development. It also stressed the importance of using the £8.5 billion which had been promised for African education over ten years to provide quality and relevant education and not just to increase numbers in schools. The innovative use of the internet in Sierra Leone was described as well as the basic conclusions from the UPE study described above.

Council members had two meetings with the Department for Education and Skills. A joint delegation from CEC and UKFIET met two senior officials at the end of August 2006 to discuss the publication by the Department of an updated implementation for its International Education Strategy. The

delegation was told that the old strategy was now obsolete and that a new strategy was being developed. However no visible progress is evident – and a question by one of our parliamentary chairpersons has produced no information.

The second meeting, with Bill Rammell, the Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education was more useful. This was held shortly before the CCEM and the Minister agreed to speak at the People's Forum where he made a well received speech in support of school contacts across the Commonwealth. He also worked to get this aspect into the communiqué of the CCEM. In addition the Council emphasised the importance of international links between British and Commonwealth Universities and other institutions of Higher Education. In particular it was suggested there should be recognition for academic staff who contributed to the setting up of these links.

Meetings

As part of the Council's public education programme, it arranges lectures and conferences. Its Annual Conference, held along with its AGM, was held at the end of June 2006 with the theme of "State, Philanthropy and Profit in Education Today" and a key note address by Lord Holme of Cheltenham. In his presentation, Lord Holme gave a clear and down to earth analysis of the reasons why corporate profit making institutions make contributions to activities which are not directly part of their purpose. He said: "This is where the new alignment of corporate responsibility comes in. Instead of treating corporate support as an extension of philanthropy, the company should be asking itself more profound questions about the extent, and for that matter the limits, of its corporate citizenship. As a wealthy and well-organised member of the community: whether that community be local, the area around its plant or operations; national, the foreign countries which act as host to multi-nationals; or international, the global society in which the company is an active participant; what duty does the company have to its neighbours?" He developed this theme and in particular, the concern that business and industry has for education in terms of how it contributes to providing an educated work force for itself. Other speakers included David Peck, the Archbishop of Canterbury's Secretary for International Development.

At the beginning of September, Sara Harrity, the Director of BookAid International spoke about "Creating Literate Environments: the Role of Li-

braries”. The importance of knowledge – and so of books and libraries where much of this knowledge resides – to development is often neglected. The major work of BookAid is to develop and strengthen the network of libraries in under-developed countries in Africa and to stock them with relevant books.

In November, the Council had the privilege of having Denise Lievesley, until quite recently the Founding Director of the UNESCO Institute of Statistics in Montreal, Canada give the annual Gladwyn Lecture to a large audience. Her title was: “Measuring What Matters: Statistics and Empowerment for Developing Countries” She explained how statistics need to inform national and international governance, strengthening the capacity of states to govern effectively, accepting responsibility for their own people and, as a collective, for the well-being of the planet. UNESCO strives to ensure that data are relevant to policy without distortion, locally, nationally and internationally. It is concerned with accurate definitions and ensuring the quality of measures obtained within states. It seeks to build on the work of richer countries and multi-lateral organizations, protecting the interests of poorer sectors of society, meeting the needs of both cutting and trailing edge countries. It aims to offer authoritative, independent data that are nationally owned, enable sound aid decisions and the accountability of the international community. The Lecture was followed by a reception kindly hosted by the UK Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in the course of which Ann Keeling from the Commonwealth Secretariat launched the Commonwealth Education Briefing Notes series produced by the Commonwealth Consortium for Education.

At the beginning of June 2007, at a well attended meeting with several High Commissions represented, Bill Rammell, the leader of UK’s official delegation to the CCEM reviewed this important Commonwealth conference.

CEC, as a member of the Commonwealth Consortium for Education, joined with Link Community Development in a conference held in Cape Town just before the CCEM on “The Power of Partnerships: the Strength of Friends”. This was an interesting and well attended, both by South Africans as well as a number of delegates to the CCEM itself. It had as its major objective to review school and college partnerships in the Commonwealth, examining their actual and potential contribution to the achievement of Commonwealth goals for

- Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in education
- Promoting mutual respect, understanding and friendships among Commonwealth peoples.

Knowledge Aid for Sierra Leone

The CEC continues to support Knowledge Aid for Sierra Leone (KASL) through the work of its KASL Support Group. Representatives of the Group visited Freetown from 30 January to 9 February 2007 for meetings with local management to review achievements in KASL Phase 1 and to discuss plans for Phase 2. The main conclusions were as follows.

In the pilot project of phase 1, valuable experience had been gained, It demonstrated that Professor Eldred Jones's vision of giving Sierra Leoneans the benefits of the computer and internet revolutions was achievable even in a country as disadvantaged as Sierra Leone; useful teaching materials continued to be downloaded from the net, customised to meet local needs and distributed in CD and printed form to secondary schools throughout the country. The level of interest of teachers and students remained high.

But the cost of computers and Internet access had not yet reached the point where every school can be turned into an information and communications technology (ICT) learning centre and some of those that were established had resource problems they could not surmount. CDs were not being used in the way that had been envisaged.

It was agreed that a change of emphasis had become necessary to increase the number of people who could use the resources of the Net. Downloading and customising of teaching materials for the benefit of schools across Sierra Leone would continue and be expanded as resources allowed. But there would be a new and complementary emphasis on teaching computer and Internet access skills at KASL- managed ICT learning centres. Initially, teaching resources will be concentrated on a few ICT learning centres that can be given high-speed Internet access. Two models will be tested: one will be a fixed centre in which learners come to the computers and the other a mobile centre in which computers are taken to the learners.

An outline action plan is being developed and carried through to establish in 2007-08 the first fixed centre in central Freetown over the next six months, using capital funds provided by the UK Support Group. The initial assessment is that it will have the capacity to provide 6,000 21-hour courses a year, enabling 6,000 learners a year to acquire the skills necessary to

use the Internet. This assessment is subject to practical testing after the first teacher has been appointed and the first learners have attended.

When this first fixed centre has been successfully launched, using existing reserves, the Group will seek financial support for the first mobile centre.

External Relations

CEC continues with its active membership of the Commonwealth Consortium for Education, with Peter Williams as its Honorary Secretary. Peter Williams and several members of the Council (Casmir Chanda, Dennis Chisman, Kees Maxey and Steve Packer) were among the authors of the Consortium's Commonwealth education briefing notes which can be found on the CEC website; and CEC appears along with other organisations and programmes in the Consortium's useful new *Commonwealth Education Directory 2007*. The British Council is an important supporter of the CEC, not just in hosting of the Council's AGM and Annual Conference but also because of common interest in education. The Association of Commonwealth Universities has provided, along with the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, meeting places for our Governing Board and for a number of its committees. The Royal Commonwealth Society is an important partner both through its arrangement for preferential and attractive membership rates for the Commonwealth Club and also through our joint commitment to the Commonwealth. Our association with the University of London Institute of Education allows members of the CEC to join its reference library at no charge. As a corporate member of the UK Forum for International Education and Training, we have been involved in its meetings and its biennial Oxford Conferences on Education and Development.

Our most important partner is the Commonwealth Secretariat which often provides us with rooms in which to meet. Its Social Transformation Programmes Division with Ann Keeling at its head and the Education Section under Henry Kaluba have offered us hospitality and we have benefited from receiving its "Commonwealth Collaborative Partnership" Newsletter. The Council has found the relationship very helpful and productive.

CEC has also been a regular participant in the bi-annual consultative meetings with Civil Society called by the Secretariat and the Commonwealth Foundation.

These relationships are of the essence of the CEC – and they bring great value to CEC's work.

Publications and Website

The “Commonwealth Education News” continues to be an important form of communication within the Council. It not only gives detailed reports of the meetings of the Council, including the contributions to the Annual Conference, it also gives news of other Commonwealth education events, as well as the Commonwealth Education Calendar provided by the Consortium for Commonwealth Education. Two issues have been published this year, the first edited by Lalage Bown and the second by Rosemary Preston.

The revamped website (www.cecomm.org.uk) has grown in content considerably during the year. In addition to the Newsletter, some research papers (including at least one from the Commonwealth Secretariat), information about CEC meetings, submissions to both British and Commonwealth bodies (such as the CCEM) have been put up on the website as a service both to members and to others concerned with education in the Commonwealth. It is hoped to extend it even further so that members who are not in London can play a greater part in the work and activities of the Council. David Gray continues to give valuable technical assistance *gratis*.

Organisation and Membership

Our Patrons and Joint Parliamentary Chairpersons, along with their staff, have responded positively to the demands we have made on them. We are very grateful to all of them.

The CEC has no paid staff of its own – it buys in administrative support from the League for the Exchange of Commonwealth Teachers which supplies us with a base and with circulation facilities for the Governing Board meetings and materials sent to all members (e.g. the Newsletter). LECT staff have been very helpful to us. Other than that, CEC is a self-help organisation and all members of the Board and of its committees have contributed to its work and what it is.

The Board had three meetings in the year and has three committees which report to it - the Finance and General Purposes Committee, the Policy, Strategy and Public Affairs Committee and the Programmes, Projects and Communications Committee. The last of these, the PPC, was chaired this year by John Oxenham, who succeeded Lalage Bown both in this position and as Joint Deputy Chairperson of CEC, after Lalage stood down from these positions at the last Annual Conference. On that occasion warm tribute was paid to her many contributions to the Council’s work, and later on, in March, Board members organised a celebratory dinner in

honour of her 80th birthday. The Board leaves the detailed work to its committees and deals itself with broader policy matters. The Board invited observers from two more organisations – the Commonwealth Foundation and the Royal Commonwealth Society. The Board is very grateful to the observers to its meetings who make some very valuable contributions to the Council's work both at its meetings and in other more material ways.

The finances of the Council, administered by Prof. Richard Mawditt, are stabilising, as can be seen in the accounts presented along with this report. The discipline which has been introduced has been of great benefit in supporting the work of the Council.

Peter Jeffreys has made great progress with the membership. Our relationship with the Charities Aid Foundation seems to be working out, and this means that we now have a reliable and accurate membership list. The number of mail returns from membership distributions is down to only two or three. A recent membership campaign has resulted in a total of 138 with 15 corporate members.

Conclusion

It is with great sadness that we record the death of Bill Bonney Rust – an elected member of our Governing Board. Although one of the oldest members of the Council he contributed with youthful energy, continually coming up with new ideas and suggestions for the work of the Council, and reminding us in particular opportunities for Commonwealth co-operation in the Further Education sector. We will certainly miss him.

The end of the year is a time when new people join the Board and others leave. Trevor Bottomley has decided not to stand for re-election after a continuous membership of the Board and the previous Executive Committee for over 25 years. During the time he was Honorary Secretary of CEC, apart from his wisdom and efficiency, he was responsible for registering the Council as a charity with the Charity Commission; he later served as Deputy Executive Chair. Peter Jeffreys will also not be standing – having risen to the challenge of putting our membership in order. We are grateful for their contributions to the work of the CEC.