

HOUSE OF LORDS NOVEMBER 18 2009

Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Scheme

Lord Luce asked Her Majesty's Government why they propose to end the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Scheme relating to the whole Commonwealth.

The noble Lord said: I thank the noble Lord, Lord Bach, for replying to this debate and noble Lords who are contributing to it. Looking round the Room, I can see noble Lords of great distinction. I was going to describe them as heavyweights, metaphorically, but a very powerful team in any event. I am sure that the Minister will see the importance that we attach to this subject. I declare an interest as a former Foreign and Commonwealth Office Minister of State and a former vice-chancellor of the University of Buckingham.

The purpose of the debate is to test the commitment of Her Majesty's Government to the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Scheme, particularly in the light of the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's Statement in another place on 13 March when he announced that Foreign and Commonwealth Office support for the Commonwealth scholarships of the eight developed countries of the Commonwealth will be terminated and that Chevening scholarships would be very substantially reduced.

As many will know, the Commonwealth scholarships are financed mainly by the Department for International Development which is financing about £17 million a year for developing countries and, until very recently, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office was financing £2 million for the eight developed countries of the Commonwealth. The scheme was launched in 1959, so next year is its 50th anniversary. There have been no less than 26,000 awards by Commonwealth countries since 1959, of which Britain has provided 17,000. It is worth noting that 1,000 United Kingdom students have benefited from the scheme in other Commonwealth countries. It has now been supplemented by a 12-week fellowship programme for professional people in the public sector, and there is also a distance learning element.

The distinctive features of this scheme are that, first, it gives long-term links for the United Kingdom with leaders in all walks of life in the Commonwealth. Secondly, it is important in helping to weld the Commonwealth together. Thirdly, it has a high reputation for excellence, with a rigorous selection procedure. The two key points are academic merit, which is very important for any scholarship scheme, and identifying, where possible, leadership potential. On balance, the schemes have been 60 per cent for taught Masters and 40 per cent for doctorates, although I know the desire is to increase the number of doctorates.

If we look at the list of the alumni, there is a remarkable record of leadership right across the board, including top judges, vice-chancellors and deputy prime ministers. In Canada, for example, the governor of the Bank of Canada and the present Clerk of the Privy Council and Secretary to the Cabinet are alumni. The list goes on and on and is a very impressive indication of the calibre of the scheme.

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A survey published yesterday shows that 70 per cent of all those who are awarded these scholarships maintain vigorous links with their country of origin. There is therefore a very important link between the country, the host and the recipient country. Last night I had the pleasure of meeting a number of serving scholars gathered in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. They are very impressive people of great calibre from Africa, Asia and all over the Commonwealth.

How has this gone wrong, if I may put it that way? If we go back a year, the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting took place in Uganda. The Prime Minister took a formidable team of Ministers with him and placed great importance on the Commonwealth during that meeting. On 18 December, the noble Lord, Lord Malloch-Brown, the Minister in charge of the Commonwealth for Her Majesty's Government, wrote me a letter. He said:

“The Commonwealth today is as important to the UK as ever. It has a unique role to play and is well placed to take action and move the debate forward on issues of global importance, such as climate change, development, education and trade”.

The Minister continued:

“You mention the Foreign and Commonwealth Office contribution to the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan. I am pleased to tell you that we have decided to maintain our commitment for 2008/09 at the same amount as this year (£2.05 million)”.

Subsequently, we were told—and I am glad—that a little extra money would go to the developing countries scheme through the Department for International Development. Then the bombshell came on 13 March in the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's Statement. When one looks at that Statement, not by any stretch of the imagination can one regard it as his finest moment. He announced a switching of £10 million from the Commonwealth scholarship scheme to support new priority programmes on climate change—first, by ending the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's scheme for developed countries altogether and, secondly, by reducing substantially the Chevening scholarship scheme while saying that it could pick up some of the developed countries of the Commonwealth's scholarships.

The Foreign Secretary said that there had been a reduced focus on quality in the Commonwealth scheme and that we needed to create relationships with potential international leaders. However, it was subsequently revealed that there had been no proper review of the scholarship scheme, no proper analysis and no co-ordination or consultation with other departments— or, indeed, with the outside world, the universities and other Commonwealth countries. In other words, the situation rapidly seemed to become an unholy muddle. It gave a damaging signal on the eve of the 50th anniversary of the scheme, and before the launch next year of the Commonwealth scholarship endowment scheme, that Her Majesty's Government were not fully committed to the scheme or to the value of the Commonwealth, of which this scheme is a litmus test.

In the following months, it became evident that not only was the Chevening scheme being cut substantially, but the Marshall scheme was being cut in real terms. Indeed, in August, the Higher

Education Funding Council for England, but not for Wales or Scotland, announced plans to end the overseas research student award scheme and to pull out, by 2011, £15 million a year of support for a large number of overseas students.

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By then, a serious message had been given that Her Majesty's Government no longer attached importance to international scholarships. There have been widespread protests in Parliament in recent months. From Canada, the Speaker of the Senate, Mr Kinsella, wrote to a number of noble Lords pointing out that Canada was to lose the 1,500 scholarships that it had under the scheme. On 14 July, former Secretary-Generals and former Prime Ministers of the Commonwealth wrote a robust letter condemning the ending of this aspect of the scheme.

At the end of September, the Foreign Secretary owed the Secretary of State for Innovation Universities and Skills, Mr Denham, a drink because he realised how much damage had been done by the Foreign Secretary's decision and announced that he had agreed to contribute £400,000 per annum for two years to partially restore the Commonwealth scholarships for developed countries, provided that the funding was matched by university participation and partnership. To indicate the importance that they attach to these scholarships, 70 universities have agreed to take part. So the scheme has been partially restored and will offer about half the number of scholarships that we had hitherto.

I end by asking the Minister four key questions. First, on behalf of Her Majesty's Government, will he reaffirm their commitment to the importance of the Commonwealth? Secondly, to give substance to that commitment, will the Minister give assurances that the comprehensive scholarship scheme of the Commonwealth will continue for the foreseeable future; will the Government take the opportunity of the 50th anniversary of the scheme to give it renewed vigour; and will they pledge to donate in 2009 to the new Commonwealth-wide endowment scheme?

Thirdly, will he reiterate Her Majesty's Government's recent commitment to the importance of British universities competing internationally as centres of excellence? To help to do that, will the Government agree on the need to fuel the expansion of postgraduate research, in which 40 per cent of all students are international? This requires a coherent and consistent financial commitment by the Government to international scholarships, working in partnership with universities and the private sector. It is an ideal opportunity for the Government to demonstrate that they will revive faith and commitment in the scholarship schemes.

Finally, to give coherence to all of this, will the Minister confirm that Her Majesty's Government are now pulling the strands together across departments and with universities? I understand that a working party has been established. It would be helpful if the Minister could say what its terms of reference are and whether that is its purpose. I look forward to hearing what he says.

Lord Anderson of Swansea: It is always a privilege to follow the noble Lord, Lord Luce, who is much admired in this House and in the Commonwealth. I wholly adopt the various points that he made, particularly in respect of a government contribution to the proposed endowment

scheme. Although I adopt all that he has said, that would never stop anyone adding a few additional reflections.

The first of them is: what does the decision in March tell one about this country's commitment to the Commonwealth generally? When I joined the Diplomatic Service in 1960, there was a separate Commonwealth Relations Office. Indeed, a close friend with whom I shared a flat enjoyed said that he was the last PPS of the PUS of the CRO, which confused many people at the time. Since then, due to many other factors, the weight of the Commonwealth in our foreign policy formulation has diminished, and there are a number of pointers that the Commonwealth is today perhaps considered as an afterthought, not as a substantial resource for us and an important tool in our international relations.

I know of no other precedent for separating the Commonwealth in this way. I have served on the executive of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association for a large number of years. It would be quite inconceivable for the CPA or any other Commonwealth institution to separate the Commonwealth in this way. Relatively small sums were saved; it breached a principle; and the roll call of the alumni, as the noble Lord, Lord Luce, said, is most impressive, hence the welcome increase in DfID funding which followed the upsurge of concern about the decision.

My second reflection is: what does the decision tell us about this joined-up Government? We know that the first decision in March was that the scholarships should be abandoned for the developed countries. The second decision, taken in September, was a partial restoration of the scholarships, due to the initiative of another department. Surely, that better solution could have evolved from interdepartmental discussion and debate before the first decision. Was no civil servant or Minister prepared to think creatively before that decision and consult on a co-funding basis with universities, which, as is clear from their response, value the scheme?

My third and final reflection is this: it is clear that there is a case for learning lessons, looking at a longer-term funding solution and in the round at scholarship schemes. I know that my noble friend Lord Montgomery was ready to make a contribution about the Chevening scholarships in Latin America, but I make it on his behalf as he is not able to be here now. As the noble Lord, Lord Luce, said, there is a clear need for a fresh commitment from the Government to the international scholarship scheme, a need to look at the range of scholarships and to look at the departmental responsibility for the scholarships in the round, because this exercise shows, if nothing else, the way in which several government departments have been involved. Let there be much greater integration within Whitehall in this most important field. I congratulate yet again the noble Lord.

5.15 pm

Lord McNally: I echo the tribute to the noble Lord, Lord Luce, for bringing this matter before us. I shall try to be helpful to the Minister because I know that he is a decent man. I hope that by the end of my remarks I will have made a suggestion that will help him forward because, even by now, he must have realised that he has drawn the short straw today. If he has not, he should look again at the list of speakers and perhaps remember the wise advice of Denis Healey that when you are in a hole, stop digging.

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As has been pointed out, this decision shows no sign whatever of joined-up government. When you see an alphabet soup of departments—DIUS, FCO, DfID—you wonder where the decision is coming from. One has to look only at the Statement by the Foreign Secretary on 13 March:

“As we reviewed our schemes we found a number of weaknesses. The purpose of scholarship schemes has not always been clear”’.—[*Official Report*, Commons, 13/3/08; col. 23WS.]

Yet on the Downing Street website now it states that the Government regard the Commonwealth scheme as good and well run. So an element of confusion is compounded by the fact that there was no consultation with external bodies, including the universities, and no meaningful impact assessment before this decision was taken.

I worry sometimes about what I call “bean counter” foreign policy making, where these hard realists take decisions to write off whole countries and areas of policy because the real concentration now has got to be on China or whatever is top of the pops at the moment. I believe that foreign policy is part heart, guts and instinct as well as bean-counter calculations. For example, I have been wholly committed to European membership for 40 years, but I have also always thought that one of the great gifts we can take into the European adventure is the wonders of the Commonwealth connection. I wonder about the thinking that suggests that we are going to focus on picking leaders. About 30 years ago, the noble Lord, Lord Hunt of Wirral and I were on a group that modestly called itself the Atlantic Association of Young Political Leaders. I sometimes think that picking political leaders is a dangerous game; perhaps you are picking the teachers of political leaders.

I worry that we see this contact purely in terms of development. That is a mistake as well. It is massively to our interests that we have scholars and students from developed Commonwealth countries. I want to see young New Zealanders, Australians, Canadians, Bahamians or whatever on that list and coming into our system—not only for their benefit, but because it gives immeasurable benefit to British students to have that contact with a wide range of Commonwealth students.

I hope that the Minister will think very hard about this. As has been indicated, there has been some rowing back but, looking forward, we would like to see a positive approach to the 50th anniversary of the Commonwealth scholarship programme and a long-term commitment to funding.

I did say that I was going to be helpful. In the recent report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life on a survey of public attitudes, the key priority for improvement from Ministers, as identified by the public, was owning up to mistakes. So tonight the Minister has a wonderful chance to be in total empathy with public opinion by owning up to what has clearly been a very bad mistake.

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Lord Wright of Richmond: I start with an apology. When I put my name down to speak in this

short debate, I fully expected that it would have concluded by six o'clock. In view of the change in timing, I fear that I may have to leave for an unalterable commitment by 6.15. If that happens, I hope that the Minister and your Lordships will forgive me.

I propose to speak briefly. I am grateful to the noble Lord, Lord Luce, for drawing attention to a problem that appears to reflect a shocking lack of co-ordination between departments. I presume—although I hope that the Minister will confirm this—that the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's regrettable decision announced on 13 March was driven solely by financial pressures on the inadequate diplomatic service budget, rather than reflecting any lack of commitment to commonwealth scholarships or, indeed, the Commonwealth. As a former head of the Diplomatic Service, I confess to a feeling of shame regarding my own department that it fell to two other departments—the Department for International Development and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills—to rescue it from an act of sheer diplomatic folly. It must surely have been realised in advance of Mr Miliband's announcement that one effect of turning these scholarships over to DfID would be to reverse the long-established principle that they should be available for citizens of all member countries, not only to the poorest.

I was made acutely aware of the importance that at least one of our Commonwealth friends and allies attached to these scholarships when I attended an Anglo-Canadian seminar in Cambridge a few weeks ago. Attention was drawn to the large number of distinguished and influential Canadians who have benefited from these scholarships in the past and the importance which Canada, as one of our Commonwealth friends who would have been affected by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary's Statement, continued to attach to the Commonwealth scheme. It was acknowledged that there had been some rethinking of the Foreign Secretary's decision as a result of another department's initiative. Was there any consultation with our diplomatic posts abroad or, indeed, with other Commonwealth Governments, before the Foreign Secretary announced his decision? If not, why not?

5.22 pm

Lord Wilson of Tillyorn: I first declare an interest as chancellor of the University of Aberdeen—a non-financial interest, I may say. There is so much expertise among noble Lords here that I thought that perhaps in the short time available to me I should concentrate on just two specific areas. One is Hong Kong—and I shall explain why in a moment—and the other Scotland, because of my position at Aberdeen.

Hong Kong is, of course, no longer a member of the Commonwealth, but it is a very interesting historical example. From the start of the scheme in 1959 until 1997, when Hong Kong was no longer a member of the Commonwealth, 400 scholars from Hong Kong came to the UK. About 100 went elsewhere in the world; interestingly, about 120 went to Hong Kong from elsewhere, showing that one aspect of this Commonwealth scholarship scheme was the two-way flow, which is very useful indeed.

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What would be the historical lesson from that? Those who came on the scholarships, to the UK and elsewhere in the Commonwealth, helped to cement over a long period of time relationships between Hong Kong and the Commonwealth, which remain strong now. That has been for the

benefit of Hong Kong, then and now, in helping to create Hong Kong as the international city which is its very essence.

Furthermore, I argue that it would be of benefit to mainland China, of which Hong Kong is now a part, if the better-informed leaders in China realised the value of those historical Commonwealth connections. Incidentally, they are very strong in the universities. Finally, it is of great historical and continuing significance in the relationship with the United Kingdom. Therefore, there is the historical example of Hong Kong, where there have been numerous scholarships and they have been wholly beneficial to those three different parties.

I turn briefly to Scotland. At the moment, there are 66 scholars in Scotland, 12 of them in Aberdeen, and they have also benefited from distance learning, as referred to by my noble friend Lord Luce. That has been a major part of the scheme. Most of the scholars in Scotland have been from the academic world—as the noble Lord, Lord McNally, said, they have been the teachers of the future leaders—but there has also been a considerable number of future leaders. The Deputy Prime Minister to whom my noble friend Lord Luce referred, is, I think, the Deputy Prime Minister of New Zealand, or was until some two weeks ago. That is a very good example of a political leader, and there have been other political leaders from around the Commonwealth whose names it would be wrong to list. Of the 66 scholars who are currently on this scheme in Scotland, only one is from the developed Commonwealth.

That brings me to the general point to which other noble Lords have referred. It is a good thing that the Department for International Development is continuing the scheme for the underdeveloped, or developing, Commonwealth. It is good in a way that the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills has picked up the dropped ball from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and is continuing for a short period a scheme for those coming from the developed Commonwealth. However, like other noble Lords, it seems to me enormously important that there should continue to be Commonwealth scholars from the developed Commonwealth as well as from the developing Commonwealth, and that we should, as the Foreign Secretary said in that Statement in March, try to identify future leaders. That will be valuable to their countries and to us. However, even though the scheme for the developed Commonwealth has been reprieved for a short time, I cannot believe that you can run a decent scholarship scheme if it lasts for only a year or two. It just does not work like that.

Like other noble Lords, I finish by saying that I hope that, in replying, the Minister will assure us all that there will be continuity in this scheme, as well as some joined-up government, so that, wherever it comes from, there will be continuing funding.

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Lord Hannay of Chiswick: Like other noble Lords in this short debate—and I pay tribute to my noble friend Lord Luce for having made it possible—I consider the Government's original decision to exclude from the future scope of the Commonwealth scholarship scheme citizens from countries which used to be called the "old Commonwealth" to have been short-sighted and contrary to the interests of our own country, as well as being deeply offensive to, and resented by, the Governments of the countries concerned. I only hope that the Minister will find better arguments to justify the Government's action than his colleagues have hitherto been able to

muster. The Foreign Secretary's justification of the decision as a switch to expenditure on climate change, although laudable in itself, was as clear a case of apples and oranges as I have ever heard.

I should like to cast my net rather wider than the Commonwealth scholarship scheme and look also at the impact on the Marshall scholarship scheme for US citizens. That has been the object of similar damaging attempts at cheese-paring, to which this latter scheme has been subjected. The 2009-10 funding for Marshall scholarships is being held at the same figure as for 2008-09. That means a substantial reduction in real terms and a reduction in the number of Marshall scholarships which the Government are funding, thus continuing a process of reduction in that figure over several years. If there is no increase in this figure in future years, even more serious damage will be inflicted. I hope that the Minister will not try to mask these reductions in government-funded places by lumping them together with scholarships funded by the private sector, as was attempted in replies to Questions in the House some months ago.

Quite apart from the singular lack of generosity epitomised by these cuts in a scholarship scheme designed as a way of thanking the US people for the Marshall Plan, the timing of these cuts is pretty breathtakingly obtuse. After eight years of considerable strain in the transatlantic relationship and a lamentable rise in feelings of anti-Americanism in this country, a new president has been elected in the United States who is committed to repairing the damage caused by his predecessor and to reaching out to America's friends and allies, among whom, I imagine, this country figures. We choose that moment to reduce, in real terms, the financing for a scheme designed to achieve precisely those objectives. I really do not envy the Prime Minister or the Foreign Secretary having to defend those cuts when first meeting President Obama or his as yet unnamed Secretary of State. It could prove singularly embarrassing to do so.

The case for protecting, indeed expanding, the Marshall scholarship scheme, goes far beyond questions of generosity on our part; it goes to the heart of what is now often called a nation's "soft power"—the influence it exerts in the world and its capacity to summon up support and backing in the future even when its relative position in the world pecking order may be reduced. Few schemes offer better value for money in that respect than the Marshall scheme and, indeed, the Commonwealth and Chevening schemes, all considered by various speakers. It will be interesting to see how many members of President Obama's new Administration will turn out to be former Marshall scholars—quite a few, I suspect. We may not be able to say the same thing in 15 or 20 years' time if this process of reduction continues; and we shall be the poorer for it.

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I think that it is well understood how the Foreign and Commonwealth Office got into this pickle. A tight spending round is being applied to a department with a relatively small budget, almost entirely consisting of sharp-end personnel costs, and with only a very few, very small expenditure programmes such as these scholarship schemes. Leviathans like DfID or the Ministry of Defence could protect valuable schemes such as these without turning a hair. However, the Foreign Office cannot, and it feels compelled to squeeze some of its own best valuable assets. It is surely high time for the Government to recognise that it is against our national interest to have created this quandary and to find some way of extricating themselves from it, as they seem to have begun to do by getting some funding for the old Commonwealth

scholarships from the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills. I hope very much that the Minister will be able to tell us how that process of extrication from this lamentable decision is going to be carried on in future years.

5.32 pm

Baroness Finlay of Llandaff: Like other noble Lords, I warmly congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Luce, on having secured the debate. I want simply to tell the human story of Commonwealth scholarships, perhaps in a much more humble way than others have cited. I am not talking about great political leaders or deputy Prime Ministers; I want to talk about the five students in my department at Cardiff University, who have been Commonwealth scholars since 2006. That cohort entered and competitively gained scholarships—three from India and two from Pakistan. They were all highly motivated. One lad had to drop out because his father was desperately ill and he could not combine study with caring for him. That scholarship has been awarded to another student.

The others have done astoundingly well. I shall name them because I think that they deserve it. They are Dr Jeba and Dr Barathi from India and Dr Rozilla Khan from Pakistan. They all passed phase one of their courses in the top third. Two—Dr Jeba and Dr Barathi—were in the top 10 per cent. Dr Jeba went on, in phase two, to be the top student out of the whole of the world cohort that we have on our course and won the Cicely Saunders medal. She is now undertaking her MSc, as is Dr Khan. Dr Barathi will start next year. They all started with moderate communication skills. One of them, Dr John, had communication skills that would not pass our criteria. However, they have all improved so much that we are training them up as facilitators. These are medical readers in their own parts of their own country.

Dr Kahn is a gynaecologist, who looks after thousands of women every year dying from cancer of the cervix, with terrible pain and haemorrhaging and those with carcinoma of the ovary, who die with intestinal obstruction. She describes her own practice as having radically altered and is actively teaching others while she is studying. There is a real ripple-on-the-pond effect from these scholarships.

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The other two, Dr Jeba and Dr Barathi, will certainly be major leaders in the academic discipline of palliative medicine as it develops across India. They are already affecting clinical practice enormously.

Is this expensive? It costs £8,776 to educate each one of those right through to MSc level. I do not think that that is a huge expenditure, but the impact of that money is absolutely phenomenal. These students have enriched our course and taught the other students what it is like to work in an area in which healthcare is desperately under-resourced, where they are hitting old-fashioned attitudes and need to change how things happen in their society.

I simply make the plea that the distance-learning courses to which the noble Lord, Lord Luce, referred and the medical courses that I asked the Minister about when we debated this matter after a Question in May are somehow allowed to continue. They represent true humanitarian aid, which affect how people live and how their families can live when faced with devastating

disease in areas of the country, irrespective of the economic growth, which medically are way behind and drastically under-resourced. These are terribly important scholarships.

5.36 pm

Lord Rees of Ludlow: I declare an interest as a professor at Cambridge, a university proud and privileged to have hosted generations of outstanding students from the Commonwealth. It was certainly disconcerting to learn in March that the FCO was culling its fellowship and scholarship scheme. In the summer, HEFCE announced that the ORS award scheme was being phased out—a real loss of opportunity for all outstanding students from outside the EU. We all welcomed the palliative action of the recent DIUS scheme, but there are surely concerns about the zigzag, unco-ordinated policies and the signal sent by a department that is still called the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Academically, the UK is in a position of strength and opportunity. No other country apart from the United States has so many universities high in the global league tables, but we are losing ground by not exploiting our competitive advantage. Back in the 1960s, advanced study at a British university was a prime ambition for most Commonwealth students, but now it is to the United States that the very best students generally aspire, whether they are from Australia or India. Obviously, given the scale and quality of American higher education, this is unsurprising, but we should surely ensure that we do not slip below number two.

We attract large numbers of students from the Commonwealth, as we do from the rest of the world. Most of them pay high fees to come here—higher, of course, than EU students. But our focus in this debate is on a small but crucial fraction of the students, the really top students for whom universities are competing and whom United States universities are enticing with generous grants. Those very best graduate students are academic assets. There is an international market for them. They are offered generous packages by leading private universities in the United States. None of our UK universities has endowments to match Harvard, Stanford and the like; in consequence, privately funded full-cost studentships fall far short of the number that the UK needs to compete. That is why prestigious publicly funded scholarships are so important; they are an investment in our universities and a down-payment that gains us influence in the long term. That is surely why we should build on the Commonwealth scholarships. We send all too few signals that we value the Commonwealth, but here is one that it is very much in our interests to stabilise and strengthen.

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5.40 pm

Baroness Deech: I welcome the opportunity to add my voice to the chorus of those who seek to strengthen our academic ties with a group of countries of exceptional closeness to us and to maintain our competitiveness in the global academic market. Not only do we want to compete but our own academic institutions are greatly enriched by Commonwealth students and vice versa. I declare an interest—or, rather, an expertise—as a former trustee of the Rhodes scholarships, many of whose scholars are from the old or developed Commonwealth. In my youth, I was one of those who benefited from a graduate scholarship given to me by a university in the United States.

Scholarships are not, in my view, a significant tool of foreign policy, as they have been described; they are tools of academic and personal excellence. It was often joked that education at prestigious British universities did not seem to have had the expected beneficial effects on leaders of some countries in turmoil in the past in Africa and Asia. But the quality of the scholars from the developed Commonwealth is evident in the list of names that we have seen of those who have held scholarships in the past and in the contribution that they have made to the UK and to their own countries.

International students have given us so much: they have invigorated our higher educational institutions and they have sparked off competition to attract them. International scholarships equate with prestige. Our international scholars have turned British universities into international institutions. Our overseas graduates are at the forefront of efforts in conservation, in law, in science, in politics and in business. Just by being here they represent international friendship and a lesson in fruitful diversity.

In my view, there should be an overall review of the scholarships for graduate foreign students involving the universities, all the government departments with an interest and the Higher Education Funding Council. We must also keep scientific research programmes going. These are heavily reliant on international students, especially when so many British students are abandoning pure science at A-level and beyond. Australia, for example, has increased the number of its awards and is now seen as an excellent place for Asian students, in direct competition with us. Other students will, of course, go to the United States.

Oxford, Cambridge and Imperial College will make great efforts to find and fund graduate doctoral students and they have the muscle to do so. Other universities, if they do not get Commonwealth scholarships, will fall further behind in this competition. That will threaten the Government's policy of driving up the quality of all our higher education institutions and making university education a norm for half of our school leavers, with a future beckoning beyond the BA. In my view, the Government should confirm their commitment to the Commonwealth.

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Let me put in a word for my own discipline, law. There are special ties with the developed Commonwealth countries through their legal systems. We share a system of common law and human rights that makes joint academic study especially appropriate. We know that there are vice-chancellors of distinguished universities in this country who have come through Commonwealth scholarships. We know of judges, former MPs, people of influence in the Wellcome Trust, which gives out funding to other universities, and—I am sure she will not mind being named—Germaine Greer, the iconic feminist who is well on her way to being a national treasure.

I suggest that Commonwealth scholarships are a legacy that will outlast much more expensive expenditure, for example on the Olympics, for a tiny fraction of the price. To use the Government's favourite word, Commonwealth scholarships are a genuine investment, the return on which we will see for decades to come.

5.45 pm

Lord Sutherland of Houndwood: I also record gratitude to the noble Lord, Lord Luce, for providing the opportunity for me to speak on these important matters that are sometimes unconsidered. The Government occasionally, although not often, seem a little timid and do not actually take credit where it is due. They can have immense influence in this area and on the university system, but not by withdrawing funds. They can influence the climate within which all British universities operate, the climate of saying that it is important to have overseas students and to have future leaders in our midst. The Government set the climate of opinion. At the moment, they are setting it in an important direction, which puts scholarship funds towards poorer students in this country. That is quite right—but if, at the same time, they withdraw funding from overseas students, the message becomes distorted.

The input of government money allows universities to spend sums that they might otherwise have to commit in ways that are wide and various in their impact. I want to crystallise and to particularise. This is a tale of three men who were scholarship students in this country—Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Archbishop Ndungane, his successor as Archbishop of Cape Town, and Barney Pityana. I declare an interest because I had the privilege of teaching the latter two. I did not teach them very much, but formally I was their teacher. They were able to come to the UK in the darkest times of apartheid in South Africa because there were people in this country who were prepared to put money into creating scholarships.

If the Government had given a different message, who knows what the position might have been. Two of those people might not have been alive today. A very strong message can be sent from government. All three were overseas students who studied at King's College London. I do not know about choosing future leaders; all three were clergymen who studied theology. I am not sure that that is topical, but there you are. All three are key figures in post-apartheid South Africa, and all three have had a massive influence in the development of that country since the creation of a presidency under Mandela and free open elections.

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There is no need to rehearse the great contributions which Desmond Tutu has made, but his aides told me when I once visited him of his personal bravery by standing as chancellor of the University of the Western Cape between, on the one side, discontented and protesting students in the early hours of the morning, and on the other side, the armed militia and policemen who were intent on stopping the protest. His personal courage is often not recognised in the way that it should be, because we concentrate on his wider contributions.

His successor, Archbishop Ndungane again had to flee South Africa with his family and was able to study in this country because scholarships were available; the climate was right. Eventually, he was able to return to his own country to become in the late 1980s principal of a theological college, Bishop of the Orange Free State—not a sinecure by any means in the late 1980s and early 1990s—and, finally, he was Desmond Tutu's successor. Archbishop Ndungane, when he more recently visited this country, was asked by a student, "You were on Devil's Island. Did you see Mandela's tomb?". He answered, "I think I built it". That was the position he was in; he had to get out, he came here with his family and the rest is good news.

Barney Pitsoana is perhaps less well known. Desmond Tutu was asked to take on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Barney also had to flee with his family. We used to get strange guttural South African voices asking for his address in London. “We are friends of Barney”, they would say; we took that with a pinch of whatever. Barney was talent-spotted by the then very enlightened vice-chancellor of Cape Town University, and was taken back to South Africa, where he became an assistant principal. Then he was in a position to chair the Human Rights Commission there, which was thought to be a poisoned chalice. But he carried it out in a way that I suppose his great mentor, Desmond Tutu, did, creating reconciliation, a sense of what was true and an attachment to human rights.

Bringing these people here is not simply an enhancement of the experience of UK students, although it is that. It is not simply a means of advertising the qualities of UK higher education, although it is that. And it is not simply a way of enhancing UK direct influence, which we have heard much about. It is a way in which, albeit indirectly, this country made a contribution to the future of South Africa. These three went back and held key appointments at a time when it could all have gone wrong. They have helped create a country which will have a huge influence in that troubled continent, a country based on truth, reconciliation, decency, human rights and democracy. The climate of opinion that brings folks like that here is in part the background to the very specific question that has been raised by my noble friend Lord Luce.

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Lord Bew: Like other noble Lords who have spoken, I thank my noble friend Lord Luce for the work he has carried out in bringing forward this issue. I begin by declaring an interest. As a practising academic, like the noble Baroness, Lady Finlay, and the noble Lord, Lord Sutherland, I have experience of some of the students who have come to this country as a result of the schemes which the FCO is planning to prune. I also speak as an honorary fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge, which has a tradition of attracting Commonwealth students, which is probably as marked as any Cambridge college. Everyone knows that these students are among the very best that we will ever have the good fortune to teach. It was therefore rather shocking for me to contemplate, earlier this year, the FCO’s suggestion that there would, for example, no longer be any scholarships for PhD students from the developed Commonwealth countries. It was a simple, brutal shock to the system.

There are issues here of intellectual competitiveness. We cannot afford to be complacent about the UK’s place in the world higher educational rankings. It is in our interests not only to attract graduate students in large numbers, which we already do, but to attract the already high achievers. To do that, our country has to make an investment of its own. Such an investment builds up a benign, reciprocal interest with scholarly institutions around the world.

It is clear, however, that the Government are now more focused on leadership, and they have good reason for that focus. When my noble friend Lord Hannay raised the issue of the Marshall scholarships, the noble Lord, Lord Brooke of Sutton Mandeville, asked a very pertinent question. He observed that a quarter of a century ago, two dozen heads of state around the world had been educated in this country. I remind noble Lords that the noble Lord spoke as a former education Minister, and therefore with some authority. He asked what the figure was today. The answer can be found in the Library of the House in October 2007. Essentially, we do not know—we cannot

give a figure in the way that we once could. I suspect that like other noble Lords, I regard that as a rather sombre and worrying conclusion.

For that reason, I welcome one aspect of the Foreign Secretary's Written Statement of 13 March this year, which said:

“We will maintain a much closer relationship with those scholars who do come, making sure that right from the start of the selection process we begin to build links with them ... while they are here”.

The Statement said that we would maintain connections with them through a,

“web-based alumni networking system”.—[*Official Report*, Commons, 13/3/08; col. 23WS.]

That is all well and good, but something in me fears that it is a fig leaf. If you are reducing resources, it can be a fig leaf simply to say that you will work harder to maintain contact with those who actually come.

I have a similarly uneasy feeling about the decision to transfer £10 million to what are considered to be more priority programmes on climate change intended to engage China and India. There is a sense—it may not be so and I hope that it is not—that we may be exchanging a real current benefit for a highly attractive will o' the wisp. We can say that while fully respecting the fact that one of the Foreign Secretary's achievements has been to focus, with greater intensity, British foreign policy on China and India. There is a sense, too, of rash decision-making, designed to achieve an already preordained end. One can see this when, for example, one looks at the way in which the FCO has failed to produce hard evidence of any valid comparison of the past records of the Chevening and FCO-funded Commonwealth scholarships.

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In conclusion, I share the unease about the lack of serious consultation with the higher education sector on this issue. I do not want to add to the Minister's torture by touching again on the lack of joined-up government but I want to ask a different question concerning consultation with the higher education sector. There is now some sense that the Government know that a mistake was made and that there will be further consultation on these matters. I hope that the Minister can say something about that this evening.

5.55 pm

Baroness Sharp of Guildford: I join others in thanking the noble Lord, Lord Luce, for bringing this important issue to the Committee's attention. This morning, I was talking to a group of people from the Industry and Parliament Trust about the work of the House of Lords, and I instanced the importance of our role in holding the Government to account. I think that this debate is a good one, as it illustrates how the House of Lords does hold the Government to account. As the noble Lord, Lord Bew, said, we have perhaps been torturing the Minister and he has many questions to answer.

The issue before us is the withdrawal of approximately £10 million of funding from two schemes for graduate students—specifically the Commonwealth scholarship scheme, which is now to be restricted to those from developing countries, and the Chevening scholarship programme, which has been funding graduate students from around the world. These decisions, taken last March, have been compounded by the decision taken in August by the Higher Education Funding Council to withdraw funding from the Overseas Research Students Awards Scheme. As the noble Lord, Lord Rees, mentioned, all these schemes fund graduate research students in this country. The quality is very high and our universities depend on these overseas students. The fact that we are withdrawing these scholarships does nothing for the quality of our research.

In addition, as the noble Lord, Lord Bew, has just emphasised, these decisions were taken without consultation with the universities, in spite of the compact back in 1999 that students on the Chevening scholarships would get a 20 per cent reduction in their overseas student fees in return for increased government funding for the scheme. In response to government urging, many universities have been expanding their intake of overseas students, developing new bursary schemes, often in conjunction with private partners. At a time when this Government have been urging the universities to reach out overseas and bring more overseas students here to Britain, what message do these cuts from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office send to our partners? It is hardly an encouraging one.

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Many noble Lords have criticised the lack of joined-up thinking that we have seen. It is to be welcomed that the DIUS, late in the day, has stepped in to make good some of the deficit, but it is a small amount in relation to the total that has been withdrawn: £400,000 over two years is very little compared with the £10 million that has been withdrawn.

In answer to the question why the FCO cut funding to Commonwealth students, in its Statement on 18 March the FCO implied that the scheme was not well managed. However, there is considerable evidence to show that this scheme was not the one that was investigated by the FCO—the FCO had actually reviewed the Chevening scheme. Independent consultants had looked at the Commonwealth scheme and had given it a very good bill of health. On top of that are rumours that one reason that it was criticised and withdrawn was that it was selecting students on the basis of academic excellence. Again, that sends completely the wrong message.

In terms of effectiveness, it might have been useful to review what former students are doing now. Again, round this table we have managed to put together a considerable list of former students' achievements. I pick up one point made by the noble Lord, Lord Wilson, which is the Hong Kong experience of the two-way flow.

The Deputy Chairman of Committees (Lord Colwyn): We should stop for the Division in the House unless the noble Baroness is about to wind up her remarks.

Baroness Sharp of Guildford: I shall take one minute. It is the two-way flow. Some noble Lords have stressed that we are no longer necessarily top of the league. Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Hong Kong and Singapore all provide excellent universities, and the exchange is important. All in all, this appears to be typical Treasury chicanery. It has gone to the FCO, it has

looked round and asked, “What schemes do you really need to do? Do you really need to fund this?” It has picked on it and it has been withdrawn. There is no particular rhyme or reason behind the cuts. It is another example where this Government, so profligate in some areas, are spoiling the ship for a ha’porth of tar.

The Deputy Chairman of Committees: There is a Division in the House. The Committee will adjourn for 10 minutes.

[The Sitting was suspended for a Division in the House from 6.00 to 6.09 pm.]

Lord Howell of Guildford: The Minister and I seem to be the epilogue to this immensely powerful 60-minute drama that we have just heard. Like others, I am immensely personally happy that the noble Lord, Lord Luce, secured this very important debate. In fact, it would be an impertinence for me to try to sum up all the hugely distinguished, authoritative and learned contributions that we have just heard over the past hour or so on this situation.

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What is the situation? We know that the blunt statement from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office back in March was to the effect that it would be the end of FCO contributions to the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan and that about 100 scholars would be affected. The statement went on to explain that there would be a release of £10 million for other policy goals. I must say that when I read that those other policy goals were going to be principally on climate change, my heart sank at the sheer lack of understanding behind such a statement. Everyone knows that international scholarship, political leadership and scientific momentum are the practical gateway—practical, as the noble Lord, Lord Bew, emphasised—to a successful environmental policy and to energy security and making any progress at all towards effective fighting of global warming.

That is by the way. The deeper worry that I have in all this is the one that has been articulated by several of your Lordships, which is that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office today in its collective mind does not understand the significance of the Commonwealth network, which now contains seven or eight of the leading hi-tech dynamic nations of the 21st century, or the enormous attraction of the Commonwealth to many newcomers, countries outside the Commonwealth. Today I had a delegation of Japanese senior mayors of great cities whose number one question was, “How can we observe and get closer to the activities of the Commonwealth?”. We are looking here not at nostalgia or a past relationship but forward realistically to the network of the 21st century.

The Deputy Chairman of Committees: I apologise for cutting the noble Lord off in mid-speech but there is a Division in the House. The Committee will adjourn for another 10 minutes.

[The Committee was suspended for a Division in the House from 6.12 to 6.20 pm.]

Lord Howell of Guildford: For those who are bewildered by the script, this is the second half of my epilogue comment on the superb one-hour debate we have just heard on this central issue. I was coming to the point of saying how worried some of us are that the Commonwealth is not

grasped and understood in its full significance as an ideal network for promoting the interests of this country and our contribution to the world in the 21st century. It is not a question of looking back nostalgically at the Commonwealth but of understanding how the modern world really works, and the Commonwealth network is more relevant than many of the institutions we inherited in the 20th century.

Can the Minister reaffirm recognition of the immense value and importance of international scholarship schemes running, as one noble Lord said, between countries and through countries in a latticework of exchanges, bringing immense power, common understanding and common values to a very large part of the world? Can he reaffirm that education is near the heart of the Commonwealth agenda? Those are government words uttered in good faith which now need to be supported by a stronger line on this issue. Can he reaffirm—or perhaps I should say affirm—that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office understands the place of a strengthened Commonwealth in our nation's future and our national interest?

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I have spoken for only a few minutes but I have to say frankly that, in the impression of many people, some of them giving voice to it today, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has lost the plot over this issue. It did not understand that the structure and architecture of the modern world requires a strengthened Commonwealth with Britain as part of it; not necessarily as the centre, as in the past, but certainly as a leading player in this remarkable network which history has placed in our laps and, by good fortune and chance, has preserved for the future. Can the decision be reopened at the first opportunity so that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has the chance to regain grasp of the changes in the modern world and how the Commonwealth fits into them? If we can have reassurance on those points we will feel that this debate has not only been brilliant and informed but also worth while.

6.23 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Justice (Lord Bach): I start by thanking the noble Lord, Lord Luce, for raising what is undoubtedly an important topic and for the way in which he has done so. I welcome the opportunity to reiterate the Government's commitment to the Commonwealth and their continuing support for the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan. The distinguished cast of speakers today has spoken with deep passion about the importance of this country's connections with the Commonwealth and the role that scholarships play in helping to build relationships between its member countries. All I would ask the noble Lord, Lord Howell, is whether it has only been 60 minutes. It seems rather longer to me.

I start, as I think I must, by reminding noble Lords of the context of the announcement by my right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary in March that the FCO would stop funding scholarships for developed Commonwealth countries. A year ago, the FCO went through a process to establish a new strategic framework in place of 10 international strategic priorities in place when the new ministerial team took office in the summer. The Foreign Secretary announced the outcome on 23 January. Essentially, the new strategic framework has three elements, reflecting the FCO's three core roles: advancing the UK's international policy goals,

providing services internationally to UK citizens and businesses, and delivering both through a global network.

The Foreign Secretary also announced that he would put more of the FCO's overall resources into the four new policy priorities on which his department would focus. This reprioritisation of resources included a reduction of the overall FCO budget for scholarships and fellowships, and a refocusing of that budget, which is a limited budget, in line with the FCO's policy priorities. As has been said during the debate, the FCO is using its scholarships to build a global network of future leaders who will be friends to this country, particularly in countries which are in political transition or are major emerging markets. I should remind the Committee that they include a number of Commonwealth countries.

Top of the 15 countries for the FCO's Chevening scholarships this year is China—I gently chide the noble Lord, Lord McNally, who said that it was top of the pops little more than for the moment; I think that it will be top of the pops for a while yet. China is followed by India, Indonesia, Brazil, Russia, Egypt, Nigeria, Pakistan, Iraq, Turkey, Mexico, Malaysia, Iran, South Africa—about which we heard—and Hong Kong. There are more than 100 Chevening scholars from China this year, helped by large co-sponsorship from Hutchison Whampoa in Hong Kong and other organisations. There are more than 30 Chevening scholars from India, and more than 20 from Pakistan—in which I know that the noble Baroness, Lady Finlay, will be interested. Concentrating its scholarship resources on the two schemes, Marshall for the USA and Chevening for the rest of the world—including, of course, developing and developed Commonwealth countries, too, except the EU—gives the FCO the flexibility to ensure that its scholarships are targeted at those countries which will be most important to its policy goals over the coming years. I emphasise that the Chevening scholarship scheme continues to be available to all developed Commonwealth countries, except the two EU members, although the number of scholarships is admittedly lower than under the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Scheme.

The department's decision to stop funding Commonwealth scholarships for developed Commonwealth countries does not reflect any lessening of the Government's commitment to that institution. We are a proud member of the Commonwealth and we value the opportunity to work closely with the secretariat on a range of issues. We fully support Commonwealth programmes on a range of topics: democracy, human rights, gender, youth, good offices, and the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group. We work closely as a Government with the Secretary-General, Mr Sharma, and his team across these programmes.

The Commonwealth is of course about much more than money, but I could read out the contributions that will be paid by the department to the Commonwealth in broad terms during this year. I could also read out the same figures as far as DfID is concerned. I shall not waste the Committee's time by doing so, but I know that it will accept that the Government and the FCO spend a lot of money on the Commonwealth—and quite right, too. Recent examples where we have collaborated with the secretariat include the Maldives, Pakistan, and Kenya.

The Government recognise the excellence of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan. The Government's commitment to the whole scheme has increased from nearly £17 million

in 2007 to nearly £18 million this year. Next year the Government will give nearly £19 million and in 2010-11 about £18,300,000, as the continuing cost of FCO-funded Commonwealth scholars reduces. That increase is largely because the Department for International Development is increasing its contribution each year up to 2010. It has increased by £1 million this year to nearly £16 million and will increase to nearly £17.5 million in 2009, and then to £17.5 million in 2010. That is the contribution of DfID to this plan. That was what my right honourable friend the Prime Minister promised at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Kampala in November 2007. It reflects the importance the Government attach to helping developing Commonwealth countries.

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Of all the outstanding speeches, I shall mention two. The noble Baroness, Lady Finlay, talked with great passion about Indian and Pakistani doctors who have done brilliantly in this country, and the noble Lord, Lord Sutherland, talked about South Africa with great affection and skill. We are talking in each of those three cases about developing countries, none of which is part of the eight countries whose scholarships the FCO used to meet. These are developing countries. The criticism that may be made of the Government as regards stopping the £2 million each year for the developed Commonwealth countries is one thing—and the criticism has been well made. But it must be remembered that as regards developing countries the amount of money that will be spent, not by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office but by DfID, which is an associated branch of Her Majesty's Government, is going up, as the Prime Minister promised at Kampala. I would argue that the overall government commitment to Commonwealth scholarships and fellowships will have increased—

Lord Sutherland of Houndwood: I thank the Minister for giving way. The point that I was making was that there is a climate-of-opinion issue here. I was aware that there is a difference of treatment for developed and developing countries. I simply emphasise the climate of opinion, which the Government can influence significantly.

Lord Bach: I am sorry if I did not take that point in what I have just said. I agree with the noble Lord entirely. Of course there is a climate of opinion, and there is no doubt that we have work to do to continue to make countries sure that we are delighted to have overseas students in this country and that it is a very important part of our and the Commonwealth's tradition.

I am also delighted to be able to say that, since the noble Lord, Lord Luce, tabled his Question for Short Debate in the summer, the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills has decided to provide funding for developed Commonwealth countries through the plan, at £400,000 each year. This will be for new doctoral awards in 2009 and 2010, allowing 16 new PhD scholars in the first year, the same number as the FCO is funding this year, and a minimum of six in the second year. The universities will match these costs through to 2012-13.

The Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills has agreed to provide this funding because it recognises that the availability of funding for PhD students from developed Commonwealth countries is important to the competitiveness of UK universities—a point made time and again, very effectively, in this debate—in attracting the best international research talent. International researchers from all over the world

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contribute a huge amount to the life and vitality of our institutions. There is much competition, particularly from the USA. It is important to have as broad a base as possible from which our institutions can choose their researchers. To remove the option to award scholarships to research students from the developing Commonwealth would work against this and so disadvantage our own important institutions.

Although the FCO has reduced its overall budget it is still spending more than £79 million in the three years 2008-11, which represents—the Committee will forgive me for using these figures—respectively 19.8 per cent, 17.25 per cent and 15.25 per cent of its annual discretionary programme budget, and there are nearly 1,000 Chevening scholars in this academic year 2008-09. There should be a similar number in 2009-10. The Chevening scholarship scheme remains one of the largest of its kind in the world and is more about future leaders than the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan, which places greater emphasis on academic excellence. There is an argument to be had about that but the Government have gone down the leadership route, as has been acknowledged—although not always approved of—in the debate.

The FCO is further refining Chevening's selection procedures and working with co-sponsors to ensure it is targeting the right people. Chevening connects scholars and alumni probably more directly to our network of diplomatic missions than, frankly, the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan, and it is less expensive student for student because it is a one-year award or an award for even shorter courses. Through it the FCO can direct resources in a way that more accurately reflects our priorities.

The FCO is continuing to develop the Chevening fellowship scheme, selecting more than 200 mid-career professionals a year for a range of tailor-made 12-week courses in this country directly related to FCO policy goals. This scheme is leading to long-term beneficial relationships between us and the fellows, helping us to develop global networks in key areas. We thank the universities involved for their positive attitude to the scheme.

The noble Lord, Lord Hannay, is, quite rightly, a great supporter of the Marshall scholarship scheme, and I have had an opportunity to read his various questions on it over the course of the past year. We place a high value on the scholarship scheme for US students and £2.2 million for 2009-10 has just been confirmed to the Commemoration Commission despite the reduction that we are making in the FCO scholarships budget. The noble Lord is right about it not being inflation proof, but it should allow the commission to offer a higher number of scholarships than for 2008-09 because the continuing costs of a smaller number of existing scholars will be lower.

We are developing closer links with Chevening scholars and alumni, including through the introduction of a web-based alumni networking system this autumn. This new website is up-to-date with the most modern networking sites such as Facebook. A few years ago the very idea of that would have been frowned on, but not today. Chevening alumni are a significant part of our overseas audience and the FCO will use that website to engage them on foreign policy issues. We hope to do the same with Marshall alumni through the Association of Marshall Scholars in the USA. We also want to strengthen its links with Commonwealth alumni.

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The noble Lord, Lord Luce, asked about the Government's plans for future funding of Commonwealth scholarships. I am afraid that I am not in a position to make any financial commitments beyond the period covered by the last Comprehensive Spending Review. However, the Government take seriously the need to continue to offer scholarships to attract the best overseas students to the UK. A departmental group is being set up by the FCO, including Universities UK and British business, to map all the UK scholarships on offer to international students, to look for ways of maximising their impact and to explore the possibility for additional funding, including doctoral awards.

The noble Baroness, Lady Sharp, complained about the Overseas Research Students Awards Scheme and the decision taken in the summer. The new departmental working group on scholarships will also consider the impact of the decision to stop funding for those awards.

The noble Lord, Lord Luce—I hope that I am now dealing with his fourth point—asked for the terms of reference. They have not yet been finalised; once they have been, I shall be happy to provide him and all other noble Lords who have spoken with a copy as soon as possible.
