



More scholars needed for Commonwealth award

Commonwealth countries have been urged to encourage their brightest students to take part in a scholarship scheme that offers young men and women of high intellectual promise the opportunity to study in a Commonwealth country other than their own.

The call has come from the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP), one of the largest and most successful schemes of its kind in the world.

Officials concerned with running the CSFP met in Ottawa recently for the first time in its 28-year history and discovered that some awards under the scheme were not always taken up for one reason or another.

Among the reasons was lack of awareness of the availability of the scholarships.

It was decided that publicity of critical importance and that participating countries should mount publicity drives to make the scheme widely known. The awards would be advertised on radio and television as well as in newspapers.

The meeting, held at Carleton University in the Canadian capital, also recommended that special efforts should be made to offer more scholarships to women.

More than 12,000 awards have been made since the Plan was established in 1960 — most of them are men. The meeting noted that although the number of women award-winners had gradually increased, further efforts were needed to have more women nominated for awards.

But women will still have to compete with men on an equal basis and win awards on merit, said Gail Larose of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Education Programme who helped organise the meeting.

Mrs Larose, a native of Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, who heads the Secretariat's Higher Education Unit, said: "We want to attract more women because it will not only be beneficial to them in their own careers but also to their countries. Women have an important role to play in national development."

The Commonwealth Scholar-

ship and Fellowship Plan was set up on a suggestion by Sydney Smith, a former Canadian Minister for External Affairs and previously President of the University of Toronto. He believed that forging educational links between Commonwealth countries was of vital importance.

Recent three-yearly meetings of Commonwealth Education Ministers in Sri Lanka, Cyprus and Kenya have commended higher education co-operation as an important area of focus for the Secretariat's work and encouraged support for the Plan.

The Plan does not have its own office. The Secretariat and the Association of Commonwealth Universities, celebrating its 75th anniversary this year, provide central services from their London headquarters.

An Administrative Handbook produced by the Secretariat provides the framework for the Plan. Its administrators — mostly senior education officials — until now had never

heard that more than 50 Commonwealth countries, associated states and territories were currently taking part in the scheme and that some 2,000 scholars were pursuing courses throughout the Commonwealth. This involved an annual expenditure of about £20 million.

The main aim of the meeting was to ensure that awards already offered were taken up and that pledges of awards made by governments were translated into scholarships. Improving the operation of the Plan was another objective.

The meeting was one of a series of activities undertaken

met to discuss matters of mutual interest. The meeting brought together administrators from the 27 countries that make the awards. The countries included Mauritius and Zimbabwe which recently announced awards for the first time for study at their universities.

The meeting brought together administrators from the 27 countries that make the awards. The countries included Mauritius and Zimbabwe which recently announced awards for the first time for study at their universities.

Mrs Larose said participants appreciated the opportunity to meet their colleagues from across the Commonwealth. "Now everyone knows everyone else," said Mrs Larose, who was herself concerned with the Plan's operation in Canada before joining the Secretariat in 1986.

"We've been able to provide a setting which will lead to better communication among those responsible for running the Plan."

Mrs Larose, formerly Director of International Relations and Scholarship Administration at the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, based in Ottawa, described the meeting as a tremendous success.

"We were able to discuss common problems, appreciate each other's needs and concerns and exchange ideas and information. I'm sure all this will contribute to the smooth running of the Plan and result in an increased take-up of awards — both by men and women."

BY ASIF KHAN