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Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit

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Annual Report, July 2006

Introduction

In the course of the last year we at the CPSU have seen many changes, in leadership, in personnel, in our workload, in our relationships with other organisations, and, most important of all, in our forward planning. This Report does not attempt to tell the whole story. Those interested in the details can easily glean them from our now rapidly changing website, the numerous documents that are referred to in it, and the documents we will be publishing in the coming months. As always, moreover, the best way to explore the implications and the details is to come and talk to us. Our doors are always open.

Leadership

There has been a major change in leadership in the last year. Richard Bourne, the inspiration and founder of the CPSU, retired in late 2005 from his role as full-time Head, although happily he has been able to remain with us not only as a project officer but as guide, philosopher and friend. This is enormously valuable to us in a time of very rapid transition for the CPSU.

There was some unavoidable delay in appointing me as Richard's successor. Daisy Cooper very kindly agreed to stand in as Acting Head from January to March 2006, and I thereupon took over as Head, albeit on a part-time basis for the time-being.

A valuable degree of continuity is provided by the Advisory Board, in particular through the role of Professor James Manor, and by Richard Bourne, Daisy Cooper, Deryn Holland and a number of others. It would therefore be mistaken to see my appointment as marking a fundamental change of direction. I intend to build on the solid achievements of the first five years. But of course I have various ideas of my own, and have been encouraged and warmly supported by Professor Manor, Richard Bourne and other colleagues both in thinking them through and in the work of implementing them.

Recently completed and continuing research projects

The last year has seen work continuing on various projects. The details are available from the website and in the 2006 Development Plan which, subject to the approval of the Advisory Board will shortly be published on the website.

In particular we note the following:

Commonwealth Local Democracy

This project was funded by the Commonwealth Local Government Forum and ably conducted by Malaika Scott. It was backed up by ten brief country cases, and was published in the CLGF Handbook for the Commonwealth Local Government Conference in Aberdeen in March 2005. The project was completed in 2005

Indigenous land rights and resource management in the Commonwealth. The inception phase for this project was funded by CPSU itself and by the Commonwealth Lawyers' Association. The Project Development Officer was Tunde Omilola. This was an inception project for a sequel to the Indigenous Rights in the Commonwealth project, and an application was lodged with the European Commission and DFID in May 2005, but has proved unsuccessful. If the application had been successful it would have led to a three year project focusing on indigenous land rights, resource management and environmental stewardship in ten developing countries. We are now considering how to take this forward.

How the Commonwealth and the European Union can support the NEPAD process.

This Project, led by Richard Bourne, was completed in 2005.

"The case for a compact in Valletta"

"The case for a compact in Valletta" was the title of a report dated September 2005, written by Richard Bourne on how the Commonwealth can cooperate with the European and African Unions to implement the promises of that year for African development. It was aimed at the Malta CHOGM, whose communiqué supported the NEPAD process. The CPSU organised conferences in London in May 2005 (with a reception sponsored by Unilever), in Brussels in June (in partnership with the European Policy Centre and with funding from the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and the Hanns Seidel Stiftung), and in Valletta itself in October 2005 in partnership with the University of Malta. The project received funding from the Commonwealth Secretariat and the development fund of the Vice-Chancellor of London University.

Commonwealth-UN Co-operation for Development

With funding from the UK's Department For International Development (DFID), Daisy Cooper carried out an inception project in 2004. Her report worked on how the Commonwealth could help strengthen the UN development system, with its varied agencies ranging from UNDP to UNIFEM and UNICEF. Her report, following a consultation with the Commonwealth ambassadors in New York, was to have been available in time for the Millennium Review at the UN and the Valletta CHOGM. The project ran out of funding in early 2006, but has recently received a donation of £10,000, which we intend to use to revive it.

Commonwealth Clubs in Secondary Schools in England

This Project has received funding from the UK's Department for Education and Skills. The Project Officer is Deryn Holland, ably assisted by Christian Oragbade. The Project began in November 2004 and was originally designed for a two-year timescale. The idea originated in West Africa, notably in Nigeria and Cameroon. The project is being supported by a steering committee chaired by Professor Jagdish Gundara, and the Royal Commonwealth Society has agreed in principle to maintain it at the end of the CPSU's pilot period. CPSU obtained supplemental funding in January 2006 and the project will now continue until the end of the year.

Sierra Leone – collaboration between civil society and government

Collaboration between civil society and the Government in Sierra Leone formed the subject of a short-term consultancy contract which in February 2006 was awarded to the CPSU by an entity set up by CARE International in that country, with funding from DFID. The aim was to facilitate a national collaboration strategy between state institutions and civil society. Richard Bourne, Dr. Manisha Diedrich and Mrs. Malaika Mikaelsson comprised the CPSU team to carry out this work. Dr. Diedrich visited Freetown to prepare an inception report. However due to political developments in Sierra Leone the commissioning body decided to cut short the consultancy after the CPSU had completed its inception report and literature review.

United Kingdom Constitution

Inspired by the pocket guide to the South African Constitution, published in 1996, the CPSU obtained funding from the United Kingdom's Department of Constitutional Affairs to prepare an accessible guide to the UK's "unwritten" constitution. Richard Bourne prepared a detailed outline in 2004-2005, working in cooperation with the Citizenship Foundation and the Constitution Unit at University College London. This has been successfully carried forward by the Citizenship Foundation, which has expertise in publications for young people. CPSU's involvement is now virtually complete. "Inside Britain" is launched this month (July 2006) with the active personal participation of Lord Falconer.

Case studies on advocating change

The CPSU and the Institute of Commonwealth Studies were jointly awarded a research contract by the Economic and Social Research Council over two years, from 2005 to 2007. The team is lead by Professor Richard Crook of the ICS and by Richard Bourne and Professor James Manor from the CPSU. We are undertaking five out of the twelve case studies. The object is to see why some civil society organisations or networks are more successful than others in advocating changes in national or international public policy. Richard Bourne is looking at coalitions based in India, Pakistan and the UK. Professor Manor is looking at organisations based in India and Ghana.

New Projects Programme

The CPSU plans an ambitious programme of new projects, intended to result within the next year to 18 months in a marked expansion of its activities. Details can be found on the website.

Events

The CPSU has enjoyed another active year, holding a series of meetings, including perhaps most notably an open meeting at the Valetta CHOGM and a second and very successful Summer Conference for young people, ably organised by Frank Soodeen, which was held in London at the end of June 2006.

Publications

In addition to project-related publications, CPSU has continued to generate a series of briefings for Commonwealth Ministers and others, notably the CHOGM briefing for Heads of Government and a series of briefings for Commonwealth ministerial meetings. The texts of all these briefings are available on the website, and our profound thanks are due to the authors and contributors.

Our ability to discharge our Mission

As CPSU increasingly comes of age, its capacity to give valuable assistance, and the need for its services, have never been more obvious. Huge problems and ambitious programmes are in the air in all four of the areas that, subject to the Advisory Board's approval of the Development Plan, are designed to constitute the four pillars of CPSU's future activity – societies, environment, economies, and governance. In each of these fields, CPSU is a unique resource, available to the Commonwealth, its central institutions, its governments, its peoples, its organisations. It exists to stimulate research, analysis, thinking and debate within and about the Commonwealth, enabling the various communities of the Commonwealth to pool their experiences and learn both from each other and from the experience of the non-Commonwealth world.

In the nature of things, this mission can never be fully discharged. Given the scale of the need, however, our opportunity to do valuable practical service is huge, and the inescapable conclusion is that we should expand our output markedly. At the same time, we need to improve the focus of what we do, to make sure that, as we do more, what we do is always of serious value to the communities we serve, consequently making an ever-growing impact. We also need to take radical action to improve our funding position, which from the beginning has been excessively dependent on external project finance.

The intellectual hive

Until we have the financial muscle to engage full-time paid staff, CPSU depends for almost all its activity on its dedicated Project Officers, and on the voluntary assistance of a wide range of enthusiastic workers, from the members of the Advisory Board to the interns. Their work and enthusiasm is truly remarkable, and is the largest single

guarantee of our future success in expanding our work and thus discharging our Mission.

Also highly important is our network of partnerships with other organisations of all kinds, inside and outside the Commonwealth, from the Institute of Commonwealth Studies to a range of regional think-tanks in other parts of the world, from the Commonwealth Secretariat to local governments in far-flung island states.

One of Richard Bourne's most striking achievements has been to establish a strong network of past and present alumni, friends and supporters, who taken together represent the hub around which CPSU's manifold activities are centred. CPSU is nothing if not a people-business. We are now moving rapidly towards a step change in the quantity of our output, while carefully maintaining and enhancing its quality. New minds, new blood, many of them absolutely first class, get in touch with me virtually every day. That is the bedrock on which the New Projects Programme is being built. Equally it is the basis for a marked expansion in the size, influence and value of the intellectual hive that Richard has built, and the guarantee that what we do will make an ever growing impact and be of increasing importance and value to the Commonwealth and its peoples.

Future planning

Careful planning is essential if we are expand our size, activities and impact successfully. Accordingly I have devoted considerable attention to the preparation of a Development Plan, which has already been widely discussed in draft, and will be considered by the Advisory Board at its Annual Meeting this month. In light of the Advisory Board's decisions, the key elements of our future planning will then be published on the website. Subject to the Advisory Board's approval, they will include a marked expansion in our on-going Research Project work resulting from the New Projects Programme (see above), a substantial programme of future events, a strengthening of our human resources, a marked improvement over time in our financial position, and the start of an on-going Funding Campaign.

Accounts, finance, and our relationship with the Institute of Commonwealth Studies

One of the CPSU's most important institutional relationships is with the Institute of Commonwealth Studies. The intellectual synergy between us has always been considerable, and we all hope and anticipate that it will increase considerably in the coming years, to the mutual benefit of both, but without in any way impairing the outreach of either to the external world.

At present the CPSU's accountancy and office needs are handled by the ICS administration, and we all recognise and appreciate the importance of what they do. The ICS is now in the process of acquiring a new Director. Once the new Director is firmly in place, it will clearly be appropriate to discuss how to take the mutual arrangements between the two organisations forward in an appropriate manner. This may well involve modifications to the existing Memorandum of Understanding, which has been so valuable in the past.

Incorporation and charitable status

CPSU has formed a company limited by guarantee. Subject to the approval of the Advisory Board it is intended in due course to transfer all the business and activities of the CPSU to the new company, which will operate under the same name. This will give the CPSU a legal personality independent of its officers and members, give it the benefit of a legally limited liability, and endow it with a constitutional structure, through a corporate Memorandum and Articles of Association, that is appropriate to its developing situation and needs.

The CPSU has applied for the company to be granted the status of a registered charity by the United Kingdom Charities Commission. This will ensure that, when the Funding Campaign is under way (we aim to begin it later this year), donors from a number of jurisdictions, and in particular from the UK, can be confident that they will earn tax relief on the amounts they give.

Conclusion

On a personal note, it is a great privilege for me personally to have been given the opportunity of leading the CPSU into a period not of consolidation but of rapid expansion. Much has already changed, and much more will change in the future. However our fundamental ethos, of a community of service, of intellectual quality and integrity, of stimulating and high quality work, of friendliness, flexibility and adaptability, has been the vital ingredient that has formed and sustained CPSU in its first six years. It will continue.

CPSU can and does marry hard-headedness to a great ambition, not an ambition for itself or even for its staff, but an ambition to serve. It already occupies a great and important position. It can and will use that position to ever increasing effect in the coming years.

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