

# European and External Affairs Committee

Date: 27 May 2004

Venue: 9.00am Committee Room

Title: The work of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

## Background

1. On the 7th July 1999, the National Assembly for Wales unanimously agreed a Motion signed by the 4 leaders to apply for membership to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). Wales was formally welcomed into the CPA at the General Assembly meeting in Trinidad on 19th September 1999.
2. The CPA mission is to promote knowledge and understanding about parliamentary democracy, with particular reference to Commonwealth countries, and to further co-operation and consultation between Commonwealth Parliaments. The CPA achieves its mission through the following activities:
  - Conferences, seminars, workshops & training events
  - Publications
  - Providing information
  - Parliamentary visits

## CPA Wales Branch Activity

3. All Assembly Members are members of the CPA Wales Branch. A Branch Executive Committee is elected once a year. All Members are informed about forthcoming conferences, seminars and other CPA activities and invited to express an interest in attending. Delegates who attend these activities are expected to report back to the Assembly via the CPA website on the Assembly's Intranet. Reports are also included in the CPA newsletter which is sent to every Assembly Member each term (appendix 1). Members also receive copies of the Parliamentarian, the CPA's quarterly journal.
4. Seminars, study groups and workshops are an important aspect of the CPA's work and the Assembly has sent delegates to a variety of events. For example, Phil Williams attended a study group in Malaysia in 2002 on the Development of Professional Knowledge-based Parliamentarians to meet Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Lorraine Barrett, Alun Pugh and Jeff Cuthbert have attended the annual Parliamentary seminar in Canada. Ron Davies and Jocelyn Davies were invited to observe the Referendum in Gibraltar

in 2002. The Wales Branch hosted a prestigious conference on Voter Participation in 2003, which was attended by delegates from 20 Commonwealth countries as well as Lorraine Barrett and Jocelyn Davies.

5. The CPA Wales branch also regularly hosts visits and delegations from other Commonwealth countries and states. Because it is one of the world's newest democratic institutions and makes extensive use of new technology, other parliamentarians are very interested in the National Assembly. The most recent visit was from 28 Members of the Ekiti State House of Assembly, Nigeria. The Branch has also hosted delegations from Namibia (including Kandy Nehova, the then President of the CPA), Malaysia and Lesotho, as well as very many visits from individual parliamentarians.

6. Parliamentarians from across the globe have an opportunity to discuss the issues of the day at the annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference. The next one will be held in Canada in August. The British and Mediterranean Region also hold an annual conference at which the plenary and workshop agendas focus on matters of regional interest. The Wales Branch successfully hosted this event in 2002.

7. The focus of the activities of the CPA Wales Branch is the annual celebration of Commonwealth Day. The Branch works closely with the Assembly's Education Service to provide a full programme of activities for over 50 school children. A very popular feature of the day is a "Question Time" session with four Assembly Members in the Chamber, which includes questions on the role of the Commonwealth. The Wales CPA Branch pioneered the idea of subsidising the travel costs of schools from North and Mid Wales, so that all pupils in Wales can have an equal opportunity to visit the Assembly to participate in these activities. .

## **Forthcoming Activities**

8. In April 2005 there will be a CPA Youth Parliament in Australia for young people aged between 18 and 29. The CPA Branch is liaising with Funky Dragon in choosing a delegate to represent the National Assembly for Wales. In July a delegate from the Assembly will be attending the open-air sitting of Tynwald, the Parliament of the Isle of Man.

9. The role of the CPA is constantly developing. The British Islands and Mediterranean Region has established a working group to look at the future role of the CPA and how it can further serve the needs of its members within the region and the CPA as a whole. The Wales Branch has been fully involved in these discussions and has invited the Regional Secretary, Mr Andrew Tuggey to the next CPA branch meeting to discuss their ideas (which include a closer relationship between the work of the Region and the priorities established by the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM)). The Wales Branch has also campaigned to improve the representation of women on the Executive Committee and tabled a motion to this effect at the Annual Conference in 2002.

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