

PROFESSOR THOMAS SYMONS

(1929-2021)



Professor Tom Symons chaired the Commission on Commonwealth Studies, which produced its report in 1996.

- *I have just been informed of the death of Professor Thomas (Tom) Symons on New Years Day at the age of 91. He was a Canadian of great distinction who at a young age founded Trent University at Peterborough, Ontario in 1962 and was its first President. He received many honours in Canada having been at different times chair of the National Commission on Canadian Studies, the National Library Advisory Board, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, the Canadian Educational Standards Institute, the National Statistics Council of Canada, the Canada Council, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. He was also chaired the Board of United World Colleges at one period.*

Concern for and engagement with the Commonwealth was a major facet of Tom's life. He served over a long period on the Council of the Association of Commonwealth Universities, was Council Chair and for quite a long period ACU Treasurer. He chaired the very successful 75th Anniversary Appeal in 1986-88 which raised a substantial sum for ACU's endowment so enabling the Association to fund a number of programmes of scholarly exchange. Tom personally funded the Symons Award conferred by ACU on individuals who have made a signal contribution to the Association or to Commonwealth higher education co-operation.

Tom Symons had important political and business connections in Canada and was often helpful in mobilising Canadian support for Commonwealth educational co-operation and exchange. Well before his work with ACU, Tom as a young man had played a significant role in relation to the creation of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan at the end of the 1950s. Our colleague Hilary Perraton, who wrote the official history of CSFP published a few years ago, recalls that when Tom had studied at the University of Toronto he had been chair of the students council at a time when the university president and vice-chancellor was Sidney Smith: they became friends and in subsequent years Sidney Smith frequently asked Tom to help him work up ideas. One such theme was international student exchange among Commonwealth countries. By 1958 when the

Commonwealth Trade and Economic Conference was hosted by Canada in Montreal, Sidney Smith had become Canada's foreign minister. In May 1958 at Sidney Smith's request Tom drafted a brief for him on this subject prior to the Montreal Conference where Smith proceeded to canvass the possibility of creating a Commonwealth scheme of the kind that was actually adopted in Oxford at the Commonwealth Education Conference in 1959. Hilary Perraton observes that Tom Symons' draft "contained many of the features that were to find their way into the plan: bilateral exchanges, support from both governments and universities, open competition for 'excellence in any field', its value as a means of strengthening universities and its potential for fostering 'knowledge and understanding of the Commonwealth itself '". Small wonder that Tom so despaired of Canada's withdrawal seven or eight years ago from the Plan that Canada itself had initiated half a century earlier.

For the Commonwealth Secretariat Tom Simons served for many years on the Commonwealth Standing Committee on Student Mobility, chaired by Sir Roy Marshall, in the 1980s when Rex Akpofure and I were successive Directors of Education. In the 1990s he chaired the Commission on Commonwealth Studies at the invitation of Chief Anyaoku of which both Vishnu Persaud and I were members (and in my case also Secretary). The Commission reported to the Auckland and Edinburgh CHOGMs (1995, 1997) and our report "Learning from each other: Commonwealth studies for the 21st Century" was published in 1996. Only two months ago Tom and other surviving Commission members (amongst whom only Vishnu had died in the interim) co-signed letters to Dominic Raab (as Foreign Minister of the country occupying the Commonwealth Chair) and the Vice-Chancellor of London University about the need to avoid closure of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies.

Tom was a bon viveur and a generous host who liked to conduct business over lunch or to ply his colleagues with huge teas at the Stafford Hotel in St James Place, just two hundred yards from Marlborough House, where he and his wife Christine regularly stayed during his visits to London. He was courteous and generally soft spoken.

I only once heard Tom Symons use these assets for a public 'demolition' of someone who had incurred his righteous wrath. This was on the occasion of the ACU's 75th Anniversary Conference at Perth in Western Australia in 1988 which both Moni Malhoutra and I attended for the Secretariat. The Guest of Honour invited to propose the Toast to ACU at its 75th Birthday Banquet was John Dawkins, an appropriate choice as he was at the time the Federal Minister of Employment Education and Training, and the MP for Fremantle. Dawkins had recently introduced highly controversial higher education reforms that were far from popular with Australian higher education leaders. When he came to deliver his keynote after-Dinner address Dawkins, to the consternation of all present, decided to use the occasion- and in particular the presence of TV and the press - not for the celebratory purposes intended but for the highly political purpose of explaining and justifying his reform package to the Australian public. He did this in combative terms and at great

length, hardly referring at all to ACU and its anniversary, but instead unashamedly addressing himself to the cameras rather than his audience who became visibly disconcerted and annoyed by this dreadful discourtesy. I don't remember the precise opening words Tom used in reply but the gist was (I paraphrase) - "Mr Chairman, I think I have brought the wrong speech. I thought that what I was supposed to do was to thank our guest speaker for graciously congratulating the Association on its 75th Anniversary, for his rehearsal of what has been achieved over 75 years, on the value of Commonwealth co-operation and exchange in higher education and of Australia's commitment to it. But now I am in a quandary because our guest has not done a single one of these things. I am left wondering whether perhaps it was he who mistook the occasion and accidentally delivered the wrong speech" This was received by a gale of laughter and thunderous applause by the assembled gathering. Tom was the hero of the evening. Anyone who was there is unlikely ever to forget his brave and superb put-down. The Commonwealth owes Tom Symons a great debt of gratitude. **Peter Williams**

The papers of the Commission on Commonwealth Studies are held in the archive collection of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies.

An article about Professor Symons by Peter Williams appeared in the Round Table,

Selected links:

[Thomas H.B. Symons](#)

[Thomas Symons, 1929-2021](#)

[Tom Symons: a huge loss to education in the Commonwealth](#)

MR SANJIVI SUNDAR

(1939-2021)



Mr S Sundar, seconded from the Indian Administrative Service, worked as Director and Special Adviser in the Technical Assistance Group which was renamed Special Advisory Services Division in 1980s and 1990s.

- *I have just received the sad news that Sundar passed away in India on 30 April. Colleagues will recall with affection that Sundar worked in ComSec throughout the 1980s and very early 1990s as a Special Adviser (Economic) and then as Director of Technical Assistance Group (TAG which became ELASD). **Roger Nellist***
- *Very sorry to hear about Sundar's passing. He was a sincere colleague who was always willing to help and share ideas on a wide range of issues, from economics, politics to philosophy. He was also a great Director of ELAS under whom the division launched several new initiatives that contributed singularly to capacity building in member countries. Essence of what CW should be about. He was a learned man and always great company to have around. My deep condolences to his family. **Rumman Faruqi***

Selected links:

[Top administrator Sanjivi Sundar who introduced 'external commercial borrowing' system no more, ET Government \(indiatimes.com\)](#)

[Former transport secretary Sanjivi Sundar passes away - The Economic Times \(indiatimes.com\)](#)

MS BRENDA HOLLAND

(-2021)

Ms Brenda Holland served as a Personal Assistant in the Commonwealth Secretariat for most of her working life in the SG's Office, International Affairs Division and the Commonwealth Youth Programme.

- *Brenda worked with me for eight years. She was efficient, principled, dedicated to her work and intensely loyal. Brenda was also very kind to those who worked with her and sympathetic to their needs and aspirations.*

*We have held annual get-togethers of those who worked in CYP, usually close to Christmastime, and she was always present, travelling down from Derby for each occasion. Sadly we could not meet in 2020 but when we gather in 2021, we shall remember her with even greater affection. May she rest in peace. **Raja Gomez***

- *So very sorry to hear of Brenda's passing She was a very kind and patient person - one of those unsung stalwarts who were the backbone of the Secretariat. **Cheryl Dorall***

- *I was very saddened to learn of the death of Brenda. We met when I arrived for my first day to work for John Syson in SG's office. Brenda was then PA to David Caffin. We shared an office for about two years – happy days. She was efficient, kind and hardworking and a very good mentor to me while I found my feet. And a good friend.*

We kept in touch when I left and exchanged news at Christmas. I did not receive a card this last Christmas, and now I know why. I will miss her. May she rest in peace.

Elizabeth Hinks

MR JOSEPH NSAMBU MUSISI

(-2021)

Mr Joseph Musisi worked as a project officer in the Industrial Development Unit for several years.

- *Will say a prayer for him and his family. **Michele Law***
- *So sorry to hear of Joseph's death. He was a good and cheerful colleague. **Cheryl Dorall***
- *What a tragedy! What sad news!! The covid-19-struck- death of Joseph Musisi is a very agonising news indeed. I worked with Joseph in IDU, under the directorship of Alban Couto, where he was much admired and respected; a talented engineer, highly industrious and of peaceful personality. Africa has yet lost another promising son!! May the good Lord grant Joseph eternal rest. My heartfelt sympathies to his family and friends. **Trudi Coleman***

DR S K RAO

(-2021)

Dr S K Rao served the Commonwealth Secretariat in various capacities in the Economic Affairs Division and Strategic Planning and Evaluation Unit of the Secretariat between 1978-2001.

- *Feel very sad to have to inform that Dr S K Rao passed away on Thursday the 7 October in Hyderabad . SK was a highly regarded member of the secretariat during the eighties and early nineties .He was director of the unit responsible for work on restructuring the Secretariat under the guidance of Chief Emeka Anyaoku. For those of us who had known SK for many years the loss really hurts. May he rest in peace. Deepest condolences for his family at this sad time. **KBK Rao***
- *This is indeed very sad news. S K's passing is a serious loss; his contributions to the Commonwealth were significant. Condolences and respect. **Sandy Jones***

- *S.K.'s passing is, indeed a great loss. His life with us in the Secretariat – and beyond - was one of great distinction. **Sonny Ramphal** (Sir Shridath Ramphal, Commonwealth Secretary-General, 1975-1990)*
- *This is very sad news. SK made an outstanding contribution to the Secretariat both internally, in the reshaping of the Secretariat that followed the High-Level Review of 1991, and also externally, in many aspects of economic and financial policy, including Commonwealth sanctions against apartheid South Africa. He was also a delightful and valued colleague: dedicated and thorough, with an impressive intellect, and great fun too, with an infectious sense of humour. In mourning his passing, there will be many, I am sure, who will remember SK with great affection and with much gratitude. **Stuart Mole** (Chair, The Commonwealth Association)*
- *I think that Stuart has said it for all of us ... SK was a true 'Commonwealth person' who cared passionately about what the Commonwealth did and his own contributions to it all. Undoubtedly he was one of the best of us. **Cheryl Dorall***
- *I too am saddened by SK's passing and fully support Stuart's comments. A wonderful colleague and friend. **Chris Bowman***
- *This is very sad news. Stuart, Cheryl and others have spoken for all of us. SK was a brilliant mind and a beautiful soul. He always listened to the other person's point of view, never had a bad word to say about anyone and never a harsh word to anyone. He was a great friend and colleague whom I shall miss dearly. Deepest condolences to Yoga and the family. **Lorna McLaren***
- *I too must add my voice to the tributes already paid. SK was a lovely man, with a gentle and humble nature and a towering intellect. He leaves behind an army of friends and admirers.
May his soul rest in peace and may Yoga and other family members have the strength to reconcile to their loss. In sorrow, **Amitav Banerji***
- *Stuart said it from all of us . A great loss. **Mohan Kaul***
- *I remember him well. I am very sorry to hear this. I liked SK. **Annie Carlton***
- *I felt so sad to get this message, for which thank you David for sharing. Echoing Stuart's words it's hard to imagine a world without the kind gentle and utterly determined wisdom of SK in it.*

I remember him as I came into the new SG's office back in 2000 as this ethereal font of all knowledge that was sat a floor (or two) above us with Krishnan by his side just sort of gently steering the intellectual thinking of the building.

I have fond memories of him at CHOGM meetings around the printer looking at final statements pondering how he could get the best language into the document that

would enable us to do the best for our poorest and most vulnerable members. And before then he'd have helped us to think through and achieve the best possible political outcomes at the most critical meetings that we could get that year based on a culmination of a zillion factors balanced against members appetite for whatever it was that was going on at that moment.

He was also just this grandfather professorial person to me. Someone I trusted and looked up to. A talisman for what was good and enduring in the commonwealth.

I think people like SK are few and far between and I feel so honoured to have worked with him and learned from him and can imagine his loss will be felt greatly by his loved ones. My thoughts are with them at this time. With sadness but joy for the life of a great person x to SK, **Michele Law**

- Dear Stuart, I very much agree with those who say you speak for us all. Thank you. I have no intention of paring blushes all round when I say that, in parallel with my admiration for dear S K, and all the tributes paid to him, I have an admiration no less great for the wonderful group of people who are paying them. There is something special about the Commonwealth. **Peter Marshall**
- S.K was certainly one of the lynchpins of 'the wonderful group' to which Peter refers - a fine and dependable colleague. I'm sad to hear of his passing and if any colleague can lay hands on his biodata I would welcome updating myself on what he did before and after his lengthy spell as our colleague in Marlborough House. **Peter Williams**
- I am deeply saddened to hear of Dr Rao's passing. My deepest sympathies to his family. He was an understated international civil servant who combined his superb intellect with his ample patience to solve the great challenges of his time. I first came to appreciate the virtues of Dr Rao when I was lucky enough to have had the opportunity in 1998/9 to form part of an internal committee chaired by SK to review the CFTC. The Secretariat was under relentless pressure from powerful stakeholders to embrace reform. It is ironic that the same situation applies today.

SK was a brilliant economist, but his greatest skills was as strategic thinker questioning the status quo and challenging his and others' assumptions of the current state of play as well. He encouraged us to also embrace divergent points of view. What makes strategic leaders like SK stand out from the rest is their capacity to interpret points of views and to make sense of them. SK was adept at making sense of the disparate and conflicting views expressed by committee members. He would carefully reflect and examine the problems expressed through the multitude of lenses on the committee and came forth after just three such meetings with a road map for reform. I believe this to have been the beginning of the Secretariat's journey to conduct periodic strategic plans that asked "why?" and which remains today the basis of results-based management methodology. SK had an amazing capacity to zoom in on the details and out again to see the big picture and had a gift for quantitative analysis. I recall sheepishly visiting his office to

advise that I was unable to determine how best to proceed with my analysis. He took out his pencil wrote out a few lines for me to follow in his inimical handwriting and I left in awe of the ease with which he had solved the problem.

I wish I had been gifted with SK's strategic and beautiful analytical mind. It is a tribute to Chief Emeka that he recognised in SK this valuable and rare ability to anticipate, challenge, interpret, decide, align, and, of course, to learn. The review of the CFTC allowed us to stave off further reviews of the CFTC for quite some while. It allowed the organisation to master its destiny for a few more years without becoming victim to the disruptive nature of excessive contemplation dressed up as reform. We all know, that while reform can be valuable and often necessary, handled wrongly, it can make or break both an organisation and careers.

*Finland's former president J. K. Paasikivi (1946 – 48) was fond of saying that wisdom begins by recognizing the facts and then "re-cognizing," or rethinking, them to expose their hidden implications. It was therefore especially relevant for SK to have chosen to call the 1999 review of the **CFTC: A Rethink**. **Roy Rodriguez***

- *I fully endorse every word of Roy's extremely eloquent and wholly apt tribute to Dr S K Rao, as well as the warm words expressed by a host of highly respected colleagues.*

He was my immediate boss when I joined COMSEC way back in 1989. Over the following six years, I had the good fortune and great privilege of having first-hand access to his great knowledge and expertise. The combination of a very powerful intellect and an exemplary work ethic meant that SK was a tower of strength for COMSEC throughout his stellar career at the Secretariat. He, inter alia, led the groundwork on sanctions on South Africa; had stewardship of the work of a number of Commonwealth Eminent Persons Groups; and had extremely hands-on oversight of seminal work on the international financial architecture, structural adjustment with a human face, low-income country indebtedness, climate change and the vulnerability of small states. He then became, as Roy has pointed out, the "father of strategic planning" at COMSEC. A wholly unenviable task given the disparate interests and priorities among the membership. It required someone of SK's strength of personality and subtlety of mind to make sense of such a challenging task at the outset of the whole process. He was fortunate to have had Chandrashekar Krishnan to support him in this endeavour.

*After his retirement, SK continued to support COMSEC activity when he was the Head of the Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI). Training was provided to public servants from Commonwealth countries and to managers of companies in which the Regional Equity Funds, established under the Commonwealth Private Investment Initiative, had invested in. The Commonwealth is deeply indebted to Dr S K Rao. **Indrajit Coomaraswamy***

DR HILARY PERRATON

(-1934 - 2021)



Dr Hilary Perraton served as an education professional in the Education Programme, Commonwealth Secretariat, from 1984-1993.

- *Hilary was one of the unsung heroes of today's Commonwealth. 'Unsung' because he was a person uninterested either in promotion or in self-promotion so that much of his superb professional work was undertaken out of the limelight and glare of publicity: I can well imagine that many survivors from the Marlborough House of 35 years ago can't put a face to his name - but that is not the case with those at the very top as their warm tributes to Hilary testify. Hilary has a place among Commonwealth 'heroes' as chief architect with (Lord) Asa Briggs and Sir John Daniel of the conceptualisation and creation of the Commonwealth of Learning inaugurated in September 1988 and opening its doors to business on January 1989 as the third of the triumvirate of Commonwealth inter-governmental organisations alongside the Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth of Learning. Hilary's extensive range of contacts in distance education were influential in deciding the composition of the Briggs Committee for which he and I formed the secretariat; and he and Asa Briggs were together chief draftsmen of the Briggs Committee Report Towards a Commonwealth of Learning. After the Vancouver CHOGM in 1987 had resolved to create a new institution he and I worked with John Daniel to operationalise the general principles. Hilary then handled the Secretariat's exchanges with COL in the first five years of its operations under James Maraj as President (a not exactly 'trouble-free' zone!). COL always recognised its debt*

to Hilary and made him one of its distinguished Honorary Fellows.

Many years later Hilary played a prominent role in relation to the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan, becoming a Commissioner and Deputy Chair on the UK Commonwealth Scholarship Commission and writing the history of CSFP, Learning abroad: a history of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan.

Hilary joined the Secretariat from the International Extension College where he had been one of the founding co-Directors. The IEC had been founded by Michael Young (Lord Young of Dartington) who is credited with having been chief author of the 1945 Labour Party manifesto, creative thinker and founder of many social enterprises, and a major player in creation of the Open University. Michael was a friend and role model for Hilary (a lifelong strong Labour Party supporter) as long as he lived. The IEC sought to develop and promote educational opportunity in developing countries, particularly for adults and rural communities through radio, self-learning materials and short face-to-face tutorial courses. Hilary was first Director of the Botswana Extension College, one of IEC's affiliates in Africa, and then returned to the IEC central office in Cambridge. In the late 1970s Michael Young forged an alliance with the Department of Education in Developing Countries at the Institute of Education about the time I became Head of Department, to provide short and longer courses for distance education professionals. Hilary took a major share of the teaching load and was thus an associate member of our staff: during that time I supervised his PhD which he received in the early 1980s.

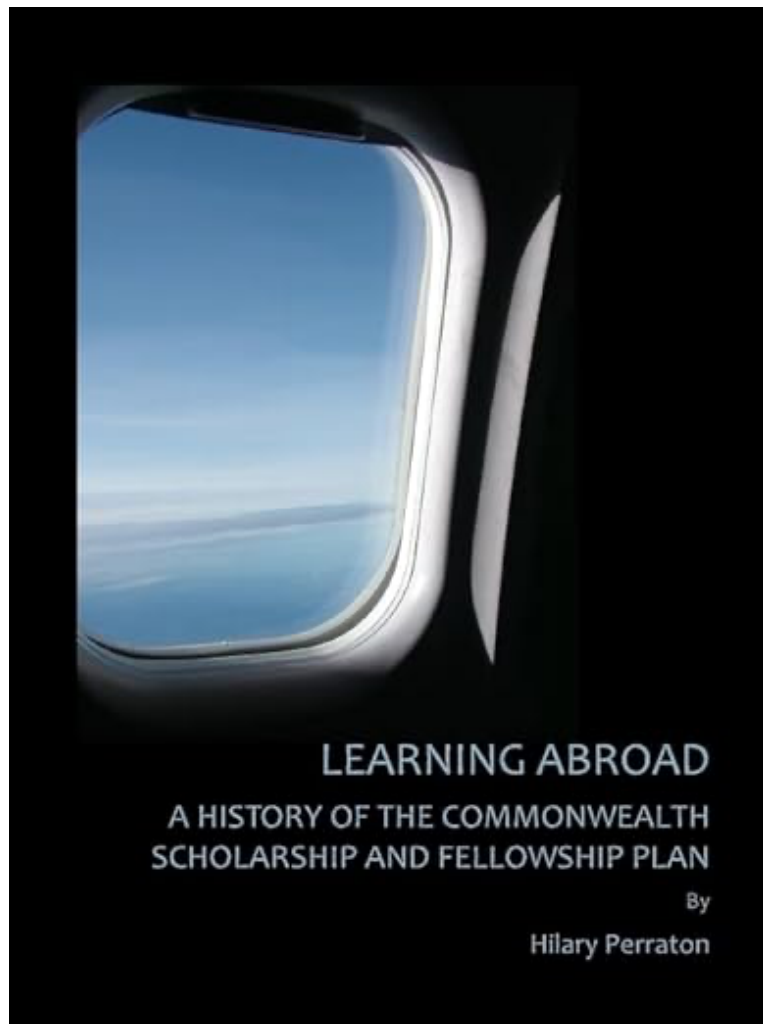
IEC as a small NGO in a not-yet-fashionable field of activity, always struggled to make ends meet and I think it was probably in the interest of job security and an eventual pension that persuaded Hilary to apply for and obtain a post dealing with adult and non-formal education in the newly styled Education Programme of the Commonwealth Secretariat at the start of 1984. It is interesting to speculate whether Hilary would have stayed at the Secretariat for ten years if it had not been for the unexpected opportunity to help fashion and bring to life COL. He was impatient with bureaucracy and its necessary formalities, he was uninterested in the diplomacy, protocols and ceremonies that accompanied ministerial conferences. Moreover he was a grassroots education man devoted to basic and secondary and out-of-school education. Much of the Education Programme's focus at the time was necessarily on Commonwealth student mobility in the wake of UK and Australia's introduction of full-cost fees for international students and attempts to maintain student and staff exchange through inter-university partnerships. Hilary chafed at that and also thought we were far too obsessed with the Conferences of Commonwealth Education Ministers which he thought took an inordinate amount of time and expense. He later told me his judgment on that had been wrong and of course it is also a matter for wry amusement that in the last two decades Hilary's own superb scholarly writing should have focused quite so largely on CSFP and international student mobility whose salience in our programmes during his time at the Secretariat he so much deplored! At the same time Hilary was realistic enough to appreciate that the crisis in student mobility and fee regimes for

international students helped to propel Commonwealth interest in international distance education so that the birth of COL owed quite a lot to the fees crisis. We were considerably helped by the fortunate accident that the then Secretary-General of ACU was the dynamic Anastasios (Chris) Christodoulou, founding Secretary of the Open University, a good friend of Hilary's and, like Hilary, extremely well respected among the leading international players in distance learning.

My point in rehearsing all this is to observe that although Hilary was worth his weight in gold to the Secretariat - as a widely read, experienced, and committed professional who could always be relied upon for an honest critique of any document, proposal or plan - we probably would not have succeeded in keeping him for ten years at Marlborough House (more accurately in pretty dismal working space on the third floor of Quadrant House) had it not been for the opportunity he was given to bring COL into existence. Appreciated as he was by his close colleagues he was only too glad to retire at the end of 1993, to be done with the long daily commute from his home in Cambridge and to take up first an assignment in Barbados helping UWI to establish its distance education provision and then to return to Cambridge and scholarly writing, the research for which the University Library provided him a good base. Googling 'Hilary Perraton' on the internet reveals a host of publications under his name from before and after his Secretariat years. All this intellectual activity was punctuated with frequent walking holidays with Jean in Greece the UK and elsewhere.

*We have lost one our finest colleagues. I understand Hilary's funeral will be a small private family occasion but already discussions are taking place about the possibility of arranging a celebratory event paying tribute to his achievements possibly in the spring or summer of 2022 and I will attempt to keep colleagues informed. I can also supply Jean Perraton's address to anyone who wishes to send condolences. **Peter Williams** (Director of Education, 1984-94)*

- *I remember well his quiet personality and his, as you frequently mentioned at the time, solid contribution to your Division's impressive work in the Secretariat. Please convey my condolence to his family. And may his soul rest in peace. **Emeka Anyaoku** (Chief Emeka Anyaoku, Commonwealth Secretary-General, 1990-2000)*



- *This is sad news indeed. I remember with admiration Hilary's contribution to the Commonwealth of Learning and the great debt we owe to him. I was always struck by the contrast between his talent and abilities and his modest and unassuming manner and refusal to seek the limelight. All this made him an unusual and endearing personality. I respected him greatly.*

*You rightly describe him as an unsung Commonwealth hero. He was also a very special kind of individual who threw himself wholeheartedly into the task at hand. Working with him was such a rewarding experience. Please convey my heartfelt sympathy and condolences to Mrs Perraton. **Moni Malhotra***

- *Dear Peter, You, Emeka and Moni have all spoken for me. I share every sentiment. The Commonwealth of Learning is now a memorial to Hilary. Please convey all these sentiments to Mrs Perraton and the family as from us all. **Sonny Ramphal** (Sir Shridath Ramphal, Commonwealth Secretary-General, 1975-1990)*
- *I would like to second this warm tribute to Hilary from Peter Williams. He was an incredibly knowledgeable and enthusiastic educator, and indeed one of the unsung heroes of his time. **Richard Bourne***

- So sorry to hear of Hilary's passing. He was one of the important building blocks in the Secretariat's education programme. **Cheryl Dorall**
- This is very sad news and I echo all the warm tributes to Hilary that many have made. His work attested to the real quality of the Education Programme under Peter's leadership. 'Unsung' Hilary may have been at the time but I am glad we can now appreciate quite how outstanding his contribution was to education in the Commonwealth, both through and beyond the Secretariat. I do hope a celebration of Hilary's life will be possible in 2022, even as our immediate thoughts are with his family at this difficult time. **Stuart Mole** (Chair, The Commonwealth Association)
- I would like to echo all the nice words which have been said about Dr Hilary Perraton. I knew him through the Council for Education in the Commonwealth, to which he made a long time contribution. I thought Peter's eulogy encapsulated so much that I cannot think of anything to add beyond saying he was a great servant of the Commonwealth. **Mark Robinson**
- I endorse what everyone has said about Hilary. My colleagues and I in FTP worked with him on a number of projects. He was perceptive, hardworking and highly capable. He commuted every day from Cambridge but was never late for any meeting. A great loss. May his soul rest in peace. **Mohan Kaul**

Selected Links:

[Hilary Perraton: obituary in the Guardian](#)

[Tribute to Hilary Perraton - Commonwealth of Learning](#)

[Tribute to Hilary Perraton - National Extension College](#)

PROFESSOR LALAGE BOWN

(1927-2021)



Professor Lalage Bown was an English educator, feminist and women's literacy advocate.

- *Lalage was an eminent adult educator and promoter of literacy and women's development who worked in six universities Legon, Ibadan, Jos, Lagos, Zambia, Makerere in four Commonwealth African countries in the 1950s, 60s and 70s; and was later Professor of Adult Education in Glasgow for ten years.*

Although not a Commonwealth staff member Lalage was regularly at Marlborough House in the 80s 90s and 'noughties'. She was a Member of the Commonwealth Standing Committee on Student Mobility and Higher Education Co-operation, was one of the co-founders of the (now defunct) Commonwealth Association for the Education and Training of Adults (CAETA), and was Deputy Chair of the Council for Education in the Commonwealth for several years. She collaborated with Jasbir Singh of the Secretariat's Education Programme in producing a book on CW education exchange and co-operation, Towards a Commonwealth of Scholars, and co-authored books published by the Secretariat on the first 40 years of Commonwealth educational co-operation, Commonwealth student mobility, and the universalisation of primary education in four Commonwealth African countries. For the first five years of its existence, until 2013, she was a member of the Support Group for the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan Only five years ago, in her late eighties, she was invited by UNESCO to give the World Literacy Day oration at UNESCO HQ in Paris.

She was involved in a host of voluntary organisations and campaigns on behalf of the empowerment of women and girls, literacy and adult education, museums. Amongst others, drawing on her early working life connections in Commonwealth West Africa, she was a strong supporter of Ghana School Aid and the Britain-Nigeria Education Trust.

Lalage Bown was a truly remarkable woman, great public speaker and wonderful raconteur, adored by young people for the encouragement and support she gave them and her readiness to share her experience and contacts. She was a feisty person who was regularly to be found in enthusiastic conversation at the bar with (preferably) a scotch in hand at the end of any conference day. One of my colleagues has amusingly recalled an event in the 1960s:

*"One evening we went out together with two famous fellow Resident Tutors from Makerere, to an out-door village night club near the University of Dar es Salaam campus. After several beers which she drank as avidly as any of us younger men, we got up to leave and Lalage was mugged by a young man who grabbed her handbag. Like a flash, she kicked him where it hurts most and grabbed back her handbag! I've been somewhat in awe of her ever since!. **Peter Williams***

- *My thanks to Peter Williams for circulating the sad news about the death of Lalage Bown. We have lost a remarkable woman who made a significant difference in education and literacy for women and girls in the Commonwealth and beyond. And her actions made a significant difference in my life.*

In 1986 I was accepted into the British Council's Fast Stream Overseas Careers Service (OCS). The OCS was the route into senior leadership. There were 24 of us, 12 men and 12 women. On taking up the job I discovered that women had only been a small minority of the OCS intake before 1986 but a British Council advisory committee member had insisted on a target of 50% women since the British Council had very few women in leadership. I asked the name of that Advisory Committee member and it was Lalage Bown. Years later I introduced myself to her at an event on girls' education and thanked her for what she had done. Years after that when I joined ComSec as Director STPD she wrote to congratulate me and I was able to meet her more often. She was razor sharp, inspirational and fearless.

*I mourn her passing and I celebrate her life, which brought opportunity to so many girls and women, including me. We stand on the shoulders of giants like Lalage. May she rest in peace. **Ann Keeling***

- *I am impressed by the late Professor Lalage Bown OBE who, unfortunately died in Shrewsbury Hospital after a fall at her home this week . Peter says that she was 94.*

Her work shows that she was a versatile person and a top professional in many fields. I am impressed by her work and achievements. Her empowerment of women is shown when after coming out of a pub where she drank a lot of beer,

a young man mugged her and took her handbag. She kicked him and got her handbag back. Great courage and female empowerment.

I was very interested to learn that she collaborated with my senior colleague, Jasbir Singh, of our Education programme to produce a book on Commonwealth exchange and cooperation entitled , 'Towards a Commonwealth of Scholars' and cooperated with CW in various ways.

*I am sorry I did not meet her but she was one of the gems that we have lost. But her contributions will remain. May she be in heavenly bliss. **Selina Mohsin** (Bangladesh)*

- *Thank you for telling us about Lalage Bown's death. She was a splendid person, and kindly wrote a blurb for the London (Zed) edition of my Nigeria history which came out in 2015. Am I right in thinking that her adopted Nigerian son was head of the Nigerian space agency? I hope Chief Anyaoku has been informed of her death. Please tell us if there are any plans to remember her. **Richard Bourne***
- *I would also like to add my tribute to Lalage. When I was a PhD researcher at Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria in the mid-1970s, she welcomed me to her social and intellectual life and gave me a lot of support at a fragile time in my life. **Richard Longhurst***

Selected links:

[Obituary in the Guardian](#)

[Lalage Bown 1927-2021 - Council for Education in the Commonwealth](#)

[A life through clothes: Professor Lalage Bown, OBE](#)

DR MD TAP BIN SALLAH
(-2021)



Dr Md Tap bin Sallah served as Deputy Director in the Management Training Services Division (MTSD) from 1996 to the early 2000s.

- *I'm gutted. I have many good memories of him. He was a lovely man. In my sitting room, I still have the Malaysian vase he gave (one to all the Secretaries) in MTSD as a present one day. I also kept the 2 paintings and the ship in the case he gave to me because he wanted to throw away when he was clearing out his office when he left the ComSec and I said they were too nice to throw away. I will always remember him when I see these things every day at home. I will also always remember his big ginger cat for whom he had to import British cat food from UK to Malaysia because it wouldn't eat local food when he left the UK (and took his cat with him). If there is an online memorial service for him I please let me know the details of it. **Annie Carlton***

- *I am saddened at the loss of Dr Tap. I was his Secretary in MTSD. He had a good heart, and respected everyone regardless of their level/class. I travelled to a number of countries with him for workshops but never to Malaysia. When he was leaving ComSec, I told him that I wasn't happy that he had left without taking me to Malaysia. In 2013 when his son, Azrief was getting married he sent me an invitation to the wedding together with Ivy, William and Shakira. Dr Tap gave us red carpet treatment. He assigned a table to the four of us, gave us special mention in his speech. He invited us to his home, took us out for a meal. He loved his family very much. He used to send me updates about his son's family. He sent me photos of his first grandchild when she was born. And again when his second grandchild was born. He informed me about his 70th Birthday celebrations two years ago. My last communication with him was 12 October. I was gutted when I got the news about his death from his son.*

*The world and Malaysia specifically have lost a great man. We pray for God's comfort to his family. May Dr Tap's soul rest in eternal peace. **May Caplin***

Selected links:

- <https://www.utusan.com.my/terkini/2021/11/mohd-tap-salleh-meninggal-dunia/>

MS EILEEN MURTAGH

(-2021)

Ms Eileen Murtagh served as Librarian, first of the Commonwealth Economic Committee and then from 1966 to 1998 with the Secretariat.

- *I was always impressed by her efficiency and her quiet authority. **Stuart Mole** (Chair, The Commonwealth Association)*
- *Eileen became an excellent research support for me in EAD. She was always enthusiastic about going the extra mile. A very good colleague and friend. **Bishakha Mukherjee** (Deputy Chair, The Commonwealth Association)*
- *Eileen's was a life of dedicated service away from the limelight; but for all time a beacon will shine in a small corner of the Secretariat's archives in remembrance of her. I have written directly to her nieces. **Shridath Ramphal** (Sir Shridath Ramphal, Commonwealth Secretary-General, 1975-1990)*
- *I remember Eileen fondly aside from sharing same birth dates, 20 June. She took me under her wing and enlightened me of the workings of The Library, Carlton House Terrace. Memories! My condolences to her two nieces and family. **Jennifer Fonseka***

