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Brain Drain from the Third World

Economic progress in the Third World presupposes a steady advance in education and training. Apart from the elimination of illiteracy and the training of specialists — e.g.: in the framework of technical aid — the training of executive personnel in all spheres is of crucial importance.

Many of these executives receive their training abroad. There has been a steep rise in the number of students from developing countries at the colleges of the industrial nations since the second world war. In 1950, to give an example, about 100 students from developing countries attended West German colleges — by 1965 their number had risen to over 31,000. The numbers have continued to rise steadily over recent years. Parallel to this trend, there has been a rise in the percentage number of college-graduates who instead of returning home chose to practise their profession in the host country. The result has been a brain drain to the detriment of the developing countries.

Political factors have certainly been responsible for the decision of some students not to go home. Many others, however, have stayed behind because they had become accustomed to the way of life and to the working and earning conditions in the industrialised country. To some extent the developing countries have only themselves to blame for this trend. Scholarship grants have often been distributed indiscriminately, with no information being vouchsafed to students going

overseas concerning future prospects of employment and the demand for graduates of this or that discipline in their native country. In consequence many college-graduates are meeting insuperable difficulties when they look for work in their own country. Whether most of the students who take the initiative to study abroad would heed information and warnings from their native countries is another question, for the student, who goes abroad to study there, always hopes that he will benefit from enhanced prestige and enjoy other personal advantages. In the developing countries as elsewhere, the academic diploma is increasingly considered to be a status symbol and a key to closed doors.

This brain drain will diminish only if conditions are improved in the developing countries themselves. First of all, the school systems must be better adapted to local conditions. They should leave the widest possible vocational choice to the school-leaver. Secondary school-graduates should be supported only if their studies abroad are aligned to their country's needs for specialised staff and will later be of service to the developing country. The flow of information between student and home country must be extended so that the student does not lose contact or "miss out" on the needs of his country. After his return, attractive outlets must be created in concrete terms for men of the highest calibre, and specialists must be given the appropriate remuneration. Only thus can work at home be made to ap-

pear more attractive to these college-graduates than does emigration.

But industrial nations have also contributed to the brain drain from developing countries because they have provided large numbers of scholarships for students from the Third World. The training programmes offered to these students, however, are adapted entirely to the requirements of industrial nations. Future business managers and mechanical engineers from developing countries, for instance, are taught techniques and processes which only in rare cases lend themselves to use in their own countries.

This being the case, the industrial nations should lay less stress in future on scholarships for studies in their countries and instead promote the erection and extension of technical schools and colleges in developing countries. These teaching institutions must offer training programmes which correspond to the requirements and development trends in the country concerned. The danger of a brain drain will recede the faster, the more colleges in the Third World come up to the standard of foreign training centres or are clearly superior to them by virtue of their orientation towards their own country. Those nations in particular should recognise their responsibility and offer increased support for provision of technical schools and colleges which, in the past, derived great advantage from the brain drain from the developing countries.

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