

EDITORIAL

BRAIN DRAIN

In the recent years, the developing countries have been depending on personnel training in the developed nations, and selected candidates have been sent for professional training overseas. The developed nations, too, with systems of Colombo plan aid and similar measures make places in universities and postgraduate institutes available. The idea has been that with these returned trained men, progress may be made to improve the lot of the developing countries, and the degree of international co-operation for a moment shed a glow of splendour upon the troublesome waters of the world.

However, the plan though excellent on paper, has gone awry in execution, for many of the students either failed to return or on returning, became so frustrated that they migrated out of the country again. Thus, trained men and women from India and Ceylon crowd up English hospitals, and counterparts from Taiwan enrich the intellectual store of the United States. It looks certainly as if that with the widening of the financial gap between the have and have-not nations, there is also a similar widening of the gap in professionalism and expertise. Just as the many plans of international economic assistance have only served to make the poorer nations poorer, the academic and professional aid plan is causing a brain drain to the more favoured nations, and is causing concern everywhere.

Some have sought to put right this anomalous situation by insisting that the developed nations should insist on the foreign students returning to their countries rather than employing them in good posts and give them attractive inducements in the way of money, status, and citizenship. Others try to bind the students with contracts, bonds, sanction on emigration, and other pressure tactics. All these have not been very effective, but on the contrary, a good deal of frustration and unhappiness have been engendered.

There is no doubt of the good will envisaged by the Colombo plan aid, and likewise there is no doubt that developing countries want more

trained men. It certainly appears that this is a situation of a clear cut objective been known, a scheme with good intentions on both the donor and the recipient been implemented, and yet a result totally at odds with the expectation has resulted. Some, faced with this, resign themselves by saying that it is rational for trained and skilled persons to move about, and hence brain drain is inevitable. Yet others are ever ready to blame the developing nations for administrative failure and nepotism, so that ability is not used in the proper way.

However, it should be borne in mind that the concept of training man in another country has a definite weakness, for in the period of training which can run to several years, alienation of feeling and understanding becomes inevitable. A man sent to learn building in a nation of skyscrapers will find himself very perplexed when he returns to a land of attap and plank houses, and a physicist spending 3 to 4 years of his most impressionable period of life in high-powered nuclear research is apt to feel inept and unhappy when he returns to his basic laboratories in the pre-atomic era. In sending man and woman overseas, we must realise that we are creating a situation where brain drain is a solution to an impasse, for we are training them without due consideration of the conditions under which they are expected to be working.

Quite obviously, training and planning have not been co-ordinated in as efficient a manner as can be expected, and equally evident is the fact that unless preliminary planning is done carefully, to send the cream of intellect from a developing nation away for training is only to invite an efflux of brains which these nations can ill afford. It looks as if that unless one is prepared to accept that in the world, some nations would be rich and powerful and others poor and weak to the extent of an almost illogical predeterminism, then international training aid programme have to be seriously reviewed and reshaped.

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