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Diploma Diplomacy

In his recent *The Voice of the Dolphins*, a slim volume of commentary on contemporary affairs in the form of science fiction, Leo Szilard, of the Enrico Fermi Institute of Nuclear Studies, at one point predicts the outcome of one part of our program of educational assistance for less-developed countries. The prophecy is that our fellowship program for bringing African students to this country, educating them in American colleges, and then sending them home, a program that began last year with action by the Kennedy Foundation and the State Department, will grow through the years to produce an Africa that is developed but that is unyielding in the ill will it bears us. The basis for this prediction is the expectation that the visiting students, who will be the leaders of the new Africa, will be treated by white Americans with the same courtesy they give Negro Americans.

As a piece of political satire, this example of an unexpected and undesired consequence of educational assistance may not be entirely successful. The fact is that if we look to the present, instead of the future, the difficulty that is already upon us is rather the reverse. In the matter at least of advanced scientific training of many of our foreign students, the trouble is not what attitudes our visitors display toward us on their return but their reluctance, in view of the educational and research facilities they enjoy here, to return at all. But if Szilard's example is not altogether convincing, it makes a valid point. In educational assistance and in other parts of public affairs, we frequently get into trouble because we are not prepared, as we are in scientific investigation, to explore the consequences of our ideas.

A proposal has been offered, however, that meets both the contingency that the scholars we have helped will not like us and the contingency that they will like us only too well. Arthur F. Burns, professor of economics at Columbia University, has suggested that instead of bringing students to this country we send the universities to them, instead of importing students we export universities. The suggestion was offered in a brief speech given last year at the University of Chicago and now published under the title "Why not diploma diplomacy?" in the first number of that university's new magazine, *Context*. Burns suggests that we build universities, for those countries that ask for them, in which such professions will be taught as engineering, agriculture, medicine, and public administration. He also proposes that we provide as much assistance in the way of staffing these institutions as is wanted.

This suggestion was offered in the context of the more general problem of financial grants and easy loans to other countries, and Burns finds that it compares favorably with other forms of economic aid. The cost of the universities could be met by using some of our present funds for economic aid. From the viewpoint of foreign policy, the building of universities on foreign soil, Burns says, would be free of the distrust of our motives that characterizes some of our other efforts at aid, as when, for example, because of the deficit in our international accounts, we seek arrangements requiring that the credits we offer be spent on American goods. From the viewpoint of economics, and this from a professional economist, the benefits of building universities could repay the cost a thousand fold.—J.T.