The Great Brain Robbery

The largess of industrial nations toward the Third World is well known. Less appreciated is what often comes in return. Between 1961 and 1972, for instance, the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom gave developing countries $46 billion in assistance, and received back nearly $44 billion in skilled labor.

The brain drain, according to Canada's International Development Research Center (IDRC), has increased during the past two decades. The migration of skilled labor to industrial countries is facilitated by the ease of travel and communications. The World Health Organization estimates that $100 million is spent each year educating Filipino doctors who eventually leave the country. In Canada, 30 percent of all physicians are foreign medical graduates. In the United States, the figure is 22 percent.

The sheer volume of the brain transfer—estimates range from 12 to 20 million workers abroad—has touched off a spate of studies aimed at better understanding the problem. IDRC is currently studying the exodus of Filipino men who work on contract in the Middle East, and has long-term projects aimed at the Caribbean area. Yue-Man Yeung, IDRC's senior program officer for demographic research, says international labor flows have become "a major concern" in both sending and receiving countries, "yet very few studies have so far been undertaken to assess and analyze systematically what the effects of such labor movements are."

The immigration of skilled workers clearly saves the host country the cost of educating its own workers, but it can also be viewed as a blessing for the exporting country. The migrants, after all, often send home much of their earnings. In 1975, for instance, remittances to developing countries reached some $8 billion, according to the IDRC. Mexicans working in the United States each support an average of 5.4 dependents by repatriating 30 percent of their earnings.

Yet the greatest profit undoubtedly goes to the host country. The ability to import temporary workers means that a country has, in effect, a reserve supply of labor. This allows easier responses to shifts in demand, and also generates a demand for goods and services. When things get tough, moreover, the migrants often return home. The IDRC estimates that in the mid-1970's, 1.2 million temporary workers left Western Europe due to economic recession. This ability to export unemployment to less developed countries helped many European nations offset the effects of recession by keeping domestic unemployment at lower levels.

—William J. Broad

Whitehead-MIT Link Wins Final Approval

The way has finally been cleared for an extraordinary affiliation between the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research, a nonprofit unit that millionaire industrialist Edwin C. (Jack) Whitehead plans to establish on the fringe of the MIT campus. The MIT Corporation voted on 4 December to approve the affiliation, thereby ending more than a year of negotiations which have been marked by intense, sometimes rancorous, debate among the MIT faculty (*Science*, 23 October, p. 416).

The Whitehead Institute, which should be in operation in about 2 years time, will be an ambitious undertaking. Whitehead plans to put up $20 million for the facilities, provide $5 million a year in operating funds, and leave an endowment of $100 million when he dies. The institute will be headed by David Baltimore, professor of biology at MIT.

The link between MIT and the institute is unusual and controversial in that while the two outfits will be administratively separate, most Whitehead Institute researchers will be full faculty members of MIT. This arrangement has drawn fire from some faculty members who argue that it may result in divided loyalties and distort the usual mechanisms for selecting staff and research in the biology department.

After some 2 hours of debate, the MIT Corporation overwhelmingly passed a resolution approving the link but acknowledging the concerns voiced by members of the faculty. Its action paves the way for formal signing of an agreement.***—Colin Norman***

Penn Students Lobby for Brailovsky's Son

Students at the University of Pennsylvania have mounted an enthusiastic campaign to persuade the Soviets to grant an exit visa to Leonid Brailovsky, son of the exiled cyberneticist Viktor Brailovsky. Leonid has been accepted as a freshman at Penn, but his applications to leave the Soviet Union have been turned down.

Students at Pennsylvania have been active on behalf of refuseniks for some years through a campus group, the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry (SSSJ). Two years ago—a year before the arrest of Viktor Brailovsky—the students decided to adopt Leonid as a peer. They smuggled application documents to Russia and elicited recommendations for the youth from professors who knew his family. One figure active in the campaign was Mark Azbel, a Soviet physics professor now in Israel, who was the subject of a similar lobbying effort by SSSJ several years ago.

The scale of the project to free Leonid continues to grow. He is already considered a Penn freshman by students and has been elected an honorary member of the undergraduate assembly. In early December a steering committee for Brailovsky, made up of students from various campus groups, traveled to Washington to seek support from Pennsylvania members of Congress and scientific societies (including the AAAS Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility), and to hold a vigil in front of the Soviet Embassy. Now a larger steering committee is being created containing university professors and Philadelphia community, religious, and political leaders. Susan Freedman, chairperson of SSSJ, says that among publicity activities planned for Leonid are a mini-marathon across the campus to be held in the spring and an ecumenical Seder during Passover. The SSSJ is also trying to get similar campaigns started on other campuses in Philadelphia.

Time is of the essence for Brailovsky, 20, who wants to study mathematics. Now in vocational school, he is likely to be drafted if he does not continue his education.

—Constance Holden

0036-8075/81/1218-1325$01.00/0