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THE BRAIN DRAIN

FROM

DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Address by

The Honorable Walter F. Mondale
United States Senate

August 31, 1966

Mr. President...

In past months we have seen widespread evidence of the growing gap which separates the wealthy nations of the West from those in Asia, Africa, and Latin America where the struggle for survival is a daily ritual.

World Bank President George Woods has compared our per capita income of \$3,000 with the \$120 average in 40 of the world's poorest countries. And even more foreboding, he estimates that if present trends continue, the American figure will rise by \$1,500 before the year 2000, while income in the poorest nations will increase only \$50 per person.

Mr. President, we can look only with the deepest concern on the threat which this poses to world peace for our generation, and for the generations

to come. President Johnson pinpointed this danger when he said two years ago,

"I do not believe that our island of abundance will be finally secure in a sea of despair and unrest or in a world where even the oppressed may one day have access to the engines of modern destruction."

To narrow this gap, or at least to keep it from growing, has become one of the major objectives of United States foreign policy. We pursue this objective with the sober realization that unless present trends change, food riots in India may prove but a prelude to the mass uprisings which will follow throughout the world.

Yet in our approach to this problem, we have almost ignored one of the major forces accentuating the gap between rich and poor -- the brain drain from talent-hungry young nations to the technologically advanced countries, above all the United States.

There are, of course, many brain drains.

There is the movement (adversely affecting my state) of many of the best brains from the Midwest to California and the East Coast. There is the migration of scientists and other professional people from Britain and Western Europe to America. In fact, our nation was built by a sort of brain drain from Europe, and the West was won through the movement -- we might call it a braun drain -- of some of the toughest, brightest and most ambitious residents of the East Coast. And many centuries ago, there was a brain drain to Rome from the outlying provinces.

But without denying the importance of the others, I feel that the brain drain from developing countries is particularly urgent. It compromises our commitment to development assistance, by depriving new nations of high-level manpower indispensable to their progress. It runs counter to the education and training programs which are so vital in our foreign aid.

It is, in the words of Assistant Secretary of State Charles Frankel, "one of the steady, trying, troublesome diplomatic issues confronted by [our] government... one of the most important problems faced not just by the Department of State, but more important, by the United States and by mankind as a whole."

I believe that the time has come to take a hard look at the brain drain.

We must examine its scope and its effects.

We must ask whether our immigration policies and education programs serve to intensify the brain drain.

We must consider whether the causes of the brain drain lie in the developing countries themselves, and if they do, how our aid program can be forged into a major instrument to attack these causes.

We must carry out more research on the brain drain, for our lack of detailed knowledge hinders efforts to combat it. But we must also consider concrete actions to slow it down.

Let us first look at the facts we do know.

The brain drain is serious among scientists. The National Science Foundation estimates that, between 1956 and 1963, 2,858 scientists and engineers from South America moved permanently to the United States. In the same period, 4,114 from Asia did likewise.

The brain drain is severe and growing among doctors and health specialists. Dr. C. Halsey Hunt, Executive Director of the Educational Council for Foreign Medical Graduates, reports that 10,974 of the 41,102 residents and interns serving in American hospitals are graduates of foreign medical schools, three-quarters of them from developing countries. They may originally plan to return. But their experience here best fits them to remain in America, and is often ill-suited to the needs of their homelands. So a conservative estimate is that 20 to 25 per cent stay.

The brain drain is acute among foreign students. In an article in the July Foreign Affairs, Cornell President James A. Perkins cites an estimate that "over 90 per cent of Asian students who come here to study never return home." Immigration and Naturalization Service statistics indicate that 30 per cent of Asians who come here on student "F-visas" adjust their status to permanent resident. Whatever the exact figures, the non-return of students to Asia is of massive proportions, particularly severe for countries such as Taiwan, Korea, and Iran.

We can be pleased that the brain drain is

not acute in AID-sponsored training programs. More than 99 per cent of participants return home when their programs are completed; indeed, they must pledge to work there at least two years putting their training to work.

Yet while AID was bringing from Asia, Africa, and Latin America some 16,493 trainees from 1962 to 1964, during this same period 8,151 other students from these same areas adjusted their status to permanent U.S. resident. Only half as many, perhaps, but for each man that left, a developing country lost an educational investment of many years, while the AID training averaged nine months.

Thus, the brain drain among students more than cancels out one important phase of our foreign assistance programs.

These statistics establish beyond doubt the severity of the brain drain. But they do not show that those who leave developing lands are, all too often, men of the very highest potential.

Imagine how different American history would have been had we been deprived of such men as Benjamin Franklin, John Quincy Adams, Ralph Waldo Emerson, the elder Oliver Wendell Holmes, Justice Brandeis, and J. Robert Oppenheimer, all native Americans who studied or received training in Europe during their early lives.

This may make it easier for us to see what developing nations may be losing every year, and why Charles V. Kidd of our Office of Science and Technology calls the loss of scientists "a national catastrophe" to developing countries, since they have so few to build a base for scientific and technological progress.

The need for doctors is even more acute. Nigeria, with one-fiftieth as many doctors per person as the United States, graduated 19 physicians in 1963 from its one medical school -- at the same time 16 Nigerian doctors were serving as residents and interns in U.S. hospitals. The Philippines, with health conditions still much worse than our own, graduates 1,010 doctors a year, and provides us 2,108 residents and interns. In the teeming city of Hong Kong, there are long lines in the streets of people waiting to see the doctor, and many are known to have died before their turn has come.

As one human example, Gregory Henderson of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research tells of the death of the young wife of a Korean friend. Her disease was curable; her

husband came from his village's richest family. But there was no doctor to diagnose her illness, just as there are no doctors in over half of Korea's counties. Like over 20,000 others in the world each day, she died because the doctor was not there.

Under other circumstances we might rejoice that the torch on our Statue of Liberty, lighting the way for the oppressed in the last century, has today become a beacon attracting men of highest calibre from all over the world. Were our objective simply to siphon off the world's most talented people -- to draw them to the United States -- we would consider the brain drain an unmixed blessing.

But in today's world it is barely a mixed blessing. It may be a brain gain for us in the short run, but it threatens one of the paramount long-run objectives of American foreign policy, progress in underdeveloped lands.

For as Secretary McNamara said in his remarkable speech at Montreal, world security -- and American security -- depends on development in these countries, development at sufficient speed to satisfy at least a portion of their rising aspirations.

Since the brain drain threatens development, it is ultimately a threat to the security of our own land.

The brain drain is the sum of thousands of individual decisions, decisions by talented, trained people to leave their home countries. These are not decisions lightly taken. We must realize that the student, or scientist, or doctor from a developing nation faces a unique kind of pressure. He is expected to serve as a bridge between two cultures, to apply the knowledge and technology of the West as a working member of a radically different society. Any effort to reduce the brain drain must provide him help and support, and increase his prospects for a rewarding professional life in his homeland.

A brain drain program must be selective, focusing on those nations and occupations where the problem is most acute.

Some countries, which lose 50 to 95 per cent of their students studying abroad, could probably not put all of them to effective use, though they could benefit from a substantially

higher rate of return. In other countries, the brain drain may not be a major problem.

And certain skills may not be in demand. Many African countries have a limited need for atomic physicists, for example, and some Africans mastering this field may be best employed outside their homelands.

A brain drain program must be undertaken without doing violence to the spirit of the 1965 immigration legislation ending the discriminatory "national origins" quota system.

A brain drain program must be humane, recognizing the importance of uniting families, and providing refuge to many cut off from their homelands for political reasons.

A brain drain program must recognize that not all of the drain from developing countries is to the United States. Our efforts in this area must be coordinated with our allies, for we do not want to reduce the drain to the U.S. only to increase it in equal measure to Canada and Western Europe.

A brain drain program must recognize that, in a number of important areas such as medicine, the United States has very serious manpower shortages. And if we would not turn our backs on the needs of others, neither can we ignore our own needs.

But when all the necessary qualifications are made -- and they are necessary -- the fact remains that the brain drain is an international problem of the first magnitude, and a problem which we have hardly begun to deal with.

There are, in my view, at least five areas where action is urgently needed.

First, we must expand our research on the brain drain, in order to know better its magnitude and its causes.

There is certainly a brain drain. Yet estimates of its extent vary widely. Dr. Perkins writes that 90 per cent of Asian students do not return -- INS figures indicate about 30 per cent. The true figure may lie somewhere in between, but it is important to know where, and in what countries, and, more difficult, for what reasons. Nor are our statistics much more better for doctors, or

other professional groups.

The Immigration and Naturalization Service can make an important contribution here. It is the only agency which keeps records on all of the individuals who come to the United States. It has already furnished some valuable information on students adjusting their status to permanent resident.

But more is clearly needed. We need the figures on adjustment of student status over a much longer time period, as well as adjustment of others on temporary visas. We need a breakdown on skilled immigrants by profession from each developing country, something which is not now available. I hope that INS will find it possible to undertake these tabulations.

Research on the underlying causes must be undertaken mainly by private scholars, and much of this is already underway. The Interagency Council on International Educational and Cultural Affairs provided a shot in the arm by sponsoring a conference of scholars on the brain drain in June. The Council is now compiling a bibliography to stimulate future research.

But though more knowledge is urgently needed, we know enough now to provide the basis for concrete action.

So, as my second suggestion, I feel we must substantially expand educational opportunities for Americans in areas like medicine where we are now seriously dependent on manpower from developing countries.

Dr. Hunt, whose statistics I cited earlier, writes that:

a "If the 11,000 foreign graduates who are now occupying internships in United States hospitals were suddenly withdrawn, many United States hospitals would be forced to curtail sharply their services to patients. I submit that for the long run this is a completely untenable situation."

The situation is not only untenable -- it is a national disgrace. The growing shortage of medical and health personnel has been evident for many years. That the United States should, in the face of such clear evidence, depend increasingly on doctors from developing countries to make up for

our insufficient number of medical graduates is inexcusable.

In the long run, there can be only one decent answer -- we must sharply increase the output of our medical schools. Then, when we welcome foreign interns and residents on exchange programs we can concentrate not on filling the gaps in our medical manpower, but on providing them with skills and experience which will increase their capacity to serve their own people.

Like many Senators, I have often been asked to work for admission of foreign doctors to the United States to serve communities in my state. These doctors have served us well. I shall continue to work for their entry in cases of clear urgency, for I feel an obligation to help my constituents to meet their medical needs.

But this is all the more reason to attack the root of the problem -- the shortage of doctors and nurses, and the urgency of training more today to meet the demands of tomorrow.

Medicine is the most crucial area, but in other professions we are also severely dependent on the brain drain. It is disturbing to note an estimate by a Labor Department economist that, over the next decade, 1 out of every 11 new professional workers in the United States will be an immigrant. I certainly appreciate the impressive contribution that immigrants have made and will make to our national development. But I am troubled by the one-way character of the permanent flow, and by the picture of the richest nation in the world, with some of the finest educational institutions, following a continuing policy of draining professional manpower from countries whose rapid development is strongly in our national interest.

As a third step, I think we should encourage our colleges and universities to reshape programs for foreign students in this country -- not just those under government sponsorship -- to make these programs more relevant to the needs of their homelands.

A large part of the brain drain, as we have seen, is among young people who come here to study and, then decide to change their status to permanent resident.

In opening their doors to these students, our colleges and universities perform a national and international service of the first order. But

they face a difficult paradox -- the better their foreign students adjust to university life, the longer they extend their periods of study, and the more successful they are in pursuing them, the more likely they are to want to remain permanently in the United States.

To resolve this paradox, we must shape programs for foreign students which orient them toward the needs of the developing nations to which we hope they will return.

Therefore, I would urge that the federal government inaugurate a program of pilot grants to educational institutions, to support development of new curriculums to relate the education of foreign students to the problems they will face on returning home. The authorization under the Fulbright-Hays Act would, I understand, be broad enough to support funding of such programs. Or it might be preferable to amend the International Education Act, once that program gets underway, to accomplish this aim.

As an example how this idea might be applied to the field of law, I ask unanimous consent that a portion of my recent speech to the Federal Bar Association in Edina, Minnesota be printed in the Record at the close of my remarks.

Such an effort would help to remedy the present imbalance in official concern about the brain drain problem. For understandable reasons, federal efforts to reduce it have been predominantly directed toward students directly sponsored by our government, though the Interagency Council on International Educational and Cultural Affairs, and the State Department, have recently begun to concern themselves with the brain drain among non-sponsored students as well. But the major problem is precisely with this non-sponsored group, and I feel we must help our universities make a start in dealing effectively with it.

We should also provide more funds to help universities strengthen their foreign student counseling services. This should include increased efforts to help the student maintain contact with developments and opportunities in his homeland, a very important element in his decision to return.

Such services for non-sponsored foreign students were endorsed by both the Senate Foreign Relations and House Foreign Affairs Committees in their 1961 Reports on the Fulbright-Hays Act.

As a fourth approach to the brain drain problem, I believe we must give far more attention to helping developing countries make effective use of the skilled people they do have.

For while we spend hundreds of millions on education and training of foreign citizens, and then drain many away to meet our own needs, developing countries thirst for skilled, professional manpower, and often do not provide good opportunities for the people they already have.

Dr. George P. Springer, Associate Dean of the Yale University Graduate School, has said, "As a university person, I find it difficult to advise an engineer from India who is offered a \$10,000 a year job here or in Canada to go back to his country where there is a high risk that he will be a clerk-typist for the next ten years."

This may overstate the general situation, but there is ample evidence to support the conclusion of Professor George Seltzer of the University of Minnesota that the brain drain "may be symptomatic of a host of fundamental shortcomings regarding the development and utilization of high-level manpower. The wastage of those who stay," Seltzer adds, "may be as great or greater than those who leave."

Part of this problem may be in the proportions of skilled people; a country may have too many scholarly scientists and not enough engineers.

But at the root is the lack of effective economic and social institutions to attract the right man to the right job, to award posts on the basis of potential capabilities rather than personal connections, and to allow a talented young man to advance as fast as his abilities merit.

We are not without this problem in America, but it appears to be far more severe abroad, in countries far less able to afford it. And until this fundamental and neglected problem of manpower utilization is met in developing countries, there will continue to be a severe brain drain no matter what else we do.

That is, of course, primarily the responsibility of the developing country itself --- so is the whole question of economic development. But our AID program should make this problem one of its major areas of concern.

Part of the answer may lie in promoting diversity and pluralism in young nations, so that talented

individuals can establish their own businesses, or found their own schools, or run their own cooperatives -- so that they will have a chance and an incentive to develop their talents and to test them in the crucible of experience, rather than serve time in some stifling bureaucracy. As David Bell has written in the latest issue of Foreign Affairs.

"There is now ample evidence and a growing consensus supporting the proposition that those countries will develop faster which rely most heavily on multiple sources of private and local initiative and energy -- in contrast to countries which rely most heavily on central direction and control."

Much of the answer, I feel, lies in better placement systems for professional talent.

One experiment, with mixed success so far, has been India's Scientists' Pool. Under this program, Indian scientists are guaranteed temporary placement when they return to their country, thus giving them time to shop around for suitable permanent employment without worrying where their next rupee is coming from.

Much can be accomplished by opening recruiting and placement offices in America to offer concrete opportunities to foreign students concluding their study here. The Ford Foundation has just granted \$200,000 to an Indian business group called "Assist" to support a job-placement office in New York.

Developing countries might also be encouraged to establish national service corps -- similar to our VISTA and Peace Corps -- to involve returned students in national service work. Built into these corps should be serious efforts to evaluate capabilities of members so they can move into permanent jobs equal to their talents.

Such service corps could be organized to welcome the talents of those who, for political reasons, were unable to return to their particular homelands. For example, an Argentine barred from return by the recent coup could work in another South American nation, contributing his much-needed skills to development.

There are other alternative possibilities. But what is vital is to focus far more effort on the neglected problem of the effective use of talent and skills, one of the most difficult and crucial that

developing countries face.

Finally, we should look into the possibility of negotiating bilateral agreements with developing countries severely affected by the brain drain, to modify the effect of our visa and immigration policies.

This is an area where we must tread with extreme care.

As one who co-sponsored the bill to end our national origins quota system, I would not want us to violate in any way the spirit of the new immigration act. Yet the increased emphasis on the skills of the immigrant, regardless of his origin, clearly exacerbates the brain drain problem. And already we are seeing its effects.

In fiscal year 1965, under the old law, 54 Indian immigrants came to this country under the preference category for professional and technical workers and their families. In that same year, 51 such immigrants came from Korea. But with the reallocation of unused quota numbers provided by the new law, 1750 Indians in this category, more than 32 times as many, were admitted one year later, together with 400 Koreans under the same classification.

There is also the related problem of adjustment of visa status. We have already seen that of the thousands of Asians who come here to study under student "F-visas," about thirty per cent change their status to that of permanent resident.

And I am told that the new law makes it easier for students to do so, by making it unnecessary for them to gain endorsement of university authorities when they apply.

Because of the severity of these particular problems, combined with the importance of maintaining the general provisions of our immigration law, I think we should explore the chances for bilateral agreements with particular developing countries to deal with the problems as they arise in each national case.

Such agreements might provide that all students coming here from a particular country enter on exchange visitor visas, which provide that the visitor return to his homeland for two years before becoming eligible to apply for permanent immigration.

Such agreements might establish a mechanism for considering the needs of a particular developing

country in our immigration policy, as well as our own needs. It might be possible to set up some sort of bi-national "immigration review panel" to consider individual cases. Also, the United States might commit itself to honor restrictions on passports issued by the developing country, designed to make them invalid for immigration purposes.

Any such bilateral agreement, I believe, should provide that the developing country take specific, concrete steps to remove root causes of the brain drain by increasing opportunities for talented individuals.

We cannot pretend that such agreements would involve no restrictions on the freedom of the individual who wishes to come to our shores. Yet no one is advocating today an open American immigration policy; the question is rather who shall be admitted, and who shall be kept out.

We have determined, as one basic principle, to place high priority on our need for skilled people. I feel that it is essential to find some way to consider another principle, the manpower needs of countries whose development is a goal of our national policy.

In other words, what is needed is some way to strike a balance.

And a balance is what is needed in many other action areas I have discussed. Our people do need doctors, as our economy thirsts for more scientists and engineers. We prize the presence of foreign students on our campuses. We profit from the contribution of immigrants from all continents to our national life.

Yet if we would build a world where our children can live in peace and freedom, development of poor nations must likewise receive high priority in our national policies.

And if we continue to neglect the brain drain, and present trends continue and accentuate, we may reap a grim harvest in the fulfillment of the Biblical prophecy, "To him that hath, it shall be given; from him that hath not, it shall be taken away, even that which he hath." The gap between rich and poor will continue to widen, and hopes for lasting peace will vanish for our century.

I hope and believe that this outcome can be avoided. With the combined efforts of our nation and those in other lands, I believe that it can be.



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