

THE BRAIN DRAIN

# Stopping the exodus

How does one plug the "brain drain"?

For many years, planners have been searching for the right formula to keep trained professionals within the country's confines. Several steps had been taken in the past to stop the outflow, but every year, the Philippines continued to lose the services and skills of thousands of trained men who leave the country shortly after graduation.

Among those who go out to work abroad are: four out of every six doctors, one out of every two nurses, nine out of every 10 dentists, one out of every four architects, two out of every three dietitians and nutritionists, and one out of every five mechanical and civil engineers who graduate from college each year.

Records of the US embassy reveal a pattern of a steady increase in the erosion of the country's corps of professionals and technical and kindred workers since 1967. Topping the list of those who obtained US immigration visas are elementary and secondary school teachers who, from 342 in 1967, rose to 2,285 in 1970. They were followed by engineers, who started from a low of 346 to 1,165 in the same period; physicians and surgeons, from 612 to 968; nurses, from 445 to 554; other technology and related fields, from 194 to 1,709; other medical and related fields, from 240 to 640; other professional and

kindred workers from 95 to 411. Even the sciences have not been spared from the effects of the drain. While only 85 natural scientists left the country in 1967, the figure rose to 283 in 1970; and social scientists from 13 to 67 in 1970.

The figures do not include those who first obtained tourists visas and later converted them into blue (immigrant) cards in the United States. Also not included in the listing are those who had migrated to Europe, Canada, Australia and other countries.

The country filled up 29.72 percent (19,997) of the total of Asian immigrants (67,280) to the United States in 1970 from a previous low of 5.26 percent in 1967. On the average, the Philippines—a developing country which needs all the training and expertise of these technical men in its march toward development—had lost about 50 percent of its total highly skilled college graduates every year.

Thus far, there is no firm consensus among foreign and local labor experts on whether or not such a brain drain constitutes an irreparable loss to the country. West German economists, for instance, count the professionals as part of the country's capital investments. Another country, Russia, is levying a heavy tax on every Russian Jew who emigrates to Israel, and among other reasons perhaps, she wants a reimbursement of the investments by the state.

Mr. M. L. Gupta, a manpower assessment and planning expert of the International Labor Organization who is currently conducting a study of RP labor, says "one must be cautious about inferring conclusions about the merits and demerits of the losses and gains from brain drain."

"While poor countries lose trained

manpower to the rich countries, there are a number of ways in which they also gain," Mr. Gupta adds. "A number of migrants provide real benefits to the country in the form of income remittances, paid or unpaid direct consulting services and the production of knowledge some of which may be of specific relevance to the problems of developing countries and which they may be able to produce more efficiently abroad than at home."

Just the same, Philippine labor authorities are concerned about the problem. Secretary of Labor, Blas F. Ople said recently that "effective and immediate policies must be made to counteract the threat."

The Office of Manpower Services under the labor department has recommended to Secretary Ople a two-pronged plan to limit the medical brain drain and increase the employability of Filipino doctors and nurses.

The OMS says Filipino doctors and nurses must be made to undergo five years' training in local hospitals before they could become eligible for overseas work. Secretary Ople said that "while the ultimate objective is to limit their outflow, this plan may represent the first step in the long process designed to develop or increase their employability."

Since September too, when the program of reform and renewal began in earnest in the Philippines, the country saw a steady decline in emigration, particularly that of professionals. If this new trend continues, one of the immediate beneficiaries will be the medical field and one can perhaps expect more doctors and nurses to be working soon in the rural areas, where their services are badly needed.

Complementary measures, of course, are now being drawn up or put into effect to encourage professionals

to work in their own country.

In line with the administration's policy, Mr. Gupta suggested the adoption of bigger wage differentials in favor of desired skills, adjusting the educational system to include in the curricula such requirements as service in the rural areas by medical students, assistance to tenants in the implementation of land reforms by law students, making extensive use of trained persons in local technical assistance programs; research grants; encouragement for the establishment of private scientific and research foundations; review of Philippine participation in exchange visitors programs and initiation of bilateral agreements with foreign countries and international organizations engaged in development work for possible greater use of indigenous highly trained manpower.

The proposal of the Office of Manpower Services may be the prelude to the implementation of some of Mr. Gupta's suggestions.

Josefina R. Cortes, in a study made in the course of obtaining a doctorate degree in philosophy in international development education at Stanford University in 1970, traced the three major causes of the exodus to the United States. She said these were: (1) government inefficiency, red tape, favoritism and meddling in appointments and promotions; (2) poor pay and inadequate material rewards; and (3) poor professional climate.

With the removal of these conditions following the proclamation of martial law and the adoption of other positive measures, the Filipino professional and technical men may now find it more fruitful and more rewarding to apply their knowledge and skills for the good of their fellowmen and the economic development of their own country.

MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT

# Correcting an imbalance

utilization of the nation's manpower and out-of-school youth."

This government agency was born four years ago, toward the end of the first term of President Marcos. Its forerunner was the Manpower-Development Council, created by the President in 1966 and initially designed to conduct experimental training programs. Two years later, a manpower training program was launched on a nationwide scale. The initial results proved more than encouraging. After three quarters of its first year of operations, more than 37,000 individuals had acquired skills training in some 40 course offerings. In an effort to upgrade the training standard, the government sent 75 Filipino vocational administrators, supervisors and trainers to the United Nations Development Program Vocational Training Center in Turin, Italy. At the same time, the MDC conducted studies and analyses of training programs in various government agencies.

In his 1969 State of the Nation address, the President could already report that "manpower development is a breakthrough in the solution of the perennial unemployment problem." He said that "for the first time we have set up a national program



Trainees at the youth center: the core of educated manpower.

designed to give new skills to workers who otherwise would have no chance to get a formal training."

With the establishment of the NMYC, manpower development as an institution gained a permanent status.

The council is composed of eight ex-officio members coming from the government and six appointed members coming from the private sector, particularly industry, labor, family and youth welfare. It is a policy-making body and has a secretariat which serves as its implementing arm. The secretariat is headed by a director-general and has three component offices (Manpower Planning and Development, an Office of Out-of-School Youth Development, and a

National Manpower Skills Center) and several staff and service branches.

During the NMYC's first year of operation (fiscal year 1969-1970), 98,098 unemployed adults and out-of-school youth enrolled in 49 different courses in 174 training centers. Of these trainees, 77,420 or 79 percent graduated.

Although manpower training program was considered mainly the concern of the government, the program also called for coordination with the private sector. Thus, the NMYC entered into a closer liaison with the private sector. The result was an inroad in the fields of in-plant and instruction training geared to the up-

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"In a laissez-faire society, we thought that the best way to the top is to go there, and when we are already all there, we find that the only vacuum left to be filled is at the bottom," an educator once commented.

He may as well have been describing too the malaise obtaining in manpower development in the Philippines. The number of graduates in "prestige courses" like commerce, law, education, and liberal arts had been much greater than the demands and needs of the labor market. The result was a mass of educated manpower that was largely unemployed or underemployed. More professionals were being produced than the economy could absorb. On the other hand, "at the bottom," where the demand for vocational and technical skills was great, the available trained manpower was inadequate.

A number of measures are now being implemented to correct that imbalance. The educational system, for one, is being reoriented to relate it to the country's development needs. For another, manpower development is an important new activity now being vigorously pursued by the government.

On the forefront of this activity is the National Manpower and Youth Council (NMYC), created "to take care of, train and develop human resources and to establish institutions and formulate integrated plans, programs and projects as will ensure efficient and proper allocation, accelerated development and optimum