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Article

Brain Drain: Some Evidence from European Expatriates in the United States, Dinner Speech by Günther Beckstein

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Dinner Speech by

GÜNTHER BECKSTEIN

Minister President of the Free State of Bavaria

Brain Drain and Brain Gain

The world-wide competition for talented people is one of the decisive challenges for Europe, Germany and Bavaria. If our best people leave, if we are unable to win talented people from abroad, Bavaria's competitiveness and innovation ability will fail. That would have dramatic consequences for economic growth and employment opportunities in this state. For Bavaria the "brain drain and brain gain" is of great importance. Basically we do not have any raw materials. Although oil was recently discovered in areas near the Alps, the amounts are so small that even though the present oil prices would make drilling profitable, there is no concern that we might join the OPEC or be taken seriously by them.

In fact our only important asset is the talent of our people, their ideas, the skills of young and old. Ideas breed innovation, innovation creates new products – products that will hopefully be sold on the world market. Our land lives from the creative potential of its people. It lives from inventors, researchers and entrepreneurs. That is why it is so important for us to keep the highly qualified, creative people with ideas here in Bavaria. Equally important is our goal to encourage excellent scientists and entrepreneurs from abroad to come to live and work in Bavaria.

At present there are a lot of high-fliers working here – especially from EU countries. I want to emphasize that we are interested in increasing the internationality of Bavarian universities. Two of our universities were rated as excellent – the Technical University of Munich and the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich. Of the first five universities given this rating in Germany – and I might add that these five were obviously so much better that no controversy arose about the rating system – two were from Bavaria.

But we also want our other universities to be able to compete worldwide with the best universities. To this end we have invited young people from Lithuania to Slovenia, from Romania to Great Britain and Ireland to come and study in Bavaria. Because intelligent research is being carried out worldwide, global competition is also an international exchange of ideas. We want to strengthen this internationalisation. The Munich Economic Summit, of course, regularly contributes to this goal. But we also want you to carry the message to young people of high quality that they are welcome to come to Bavaria. And to entice young students, we might add that Bavaria with its beautiful mountains and lakes offers more than just excellent universities.

The preservation of this landscape is also politically relevant and I am proud to say that Bavaria was the first region in Europe to set up its own ministry of ecology. In my conservative language that means "preserving the creation", which is not only a superficial goal but a deeply ethical task. We have been successful, I believe, in keeping our villages and cities beautiful and attractive, taking into account both the preservation of monuments and modern architecture. Munich is a good example: with the *Pinakothek der Moderne*, for example, we have built a museum of international renown but at the same time preserved and highlighted historical parts of the city and of Bavaria.

Bavaria is a safe region. International statistics show that a Turkish citizen living in Munich is safer than if he lived in Istanbul, Ankara or Antalya. Every foreigner should know that he is welcome to live here and that we will look after his safety. We have competitive schools and universities and an excellent traffic infrastructure to offer foreign students. We need an elite interested in achievement to develop our future. Our priorities are high-tech and high-quality products. We want to increase our expenditure on research and development – 15 to 20 percent more than the goals recommended by Minister Schavan – so that we can be the locomotive that will drive the economy for all of Germany.

We are interested in increasing the strength of our economy and will continue to support economic

growth as a positive value in political discussions, even though there are some political groups who automatically connect economic growth with the exploitation of natural resources. But without economic growth we will not be able to solve the social problems of the world. Without economic growth we will not be able to compete with the United States and, to an even greater degree, with the Far East. That is the reason why our first task is to determine how we can strengthen our economy. This is the issue that we need your advice on. The strengthening of entrepreneurial freedom, the reduction of bureaucracy – these are the topics that I have also struggled with. And as a benchmark for Germany I can say that if we in Bavaria have been able to take care of 60 percent of building permits within one hour, then this shows that we have taken a step in the right direction toward streamlining bureaucracy. There are, however, examples, where it takes years for building permits to be granted, particularly when the projects are politically controversial at the municipal or federal level.

Let me conclude by saying that every investor is welcome in Bavaria and every excellent researcher should consider how he or she can work at least partially at a Bavarian university. Bavarians believe in hard work – our civil servants work longer in Bavaria than in any other federal state in Germany because hard work is a pre-requisite for success in life. But when we have worked hard and long, then it is time to relax and enjoy the fruits of our work. This culture of hard work and enjoyment will provide the appropriate environment for talented young people who want to succeed.