Letterhead of ACADEMIC STAFF ASSOCIATION
THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Secretary
Manpower Panel
LEGCO
Hong Kong
(Fax: 2121 0420)

28th March 2001

Dear Sir,

Admission of Mainland Professionals Scheme

It is disturbing that the Government is cutting funding to universities in Hong Kong on the one hand, and is proposing to import professionals from the Mainland on the other. Unlike the Talent Scheme, the proposed Professionals Scheme has not specified the areas of expertise for which the Scheme is intended. In support of their Talent Scheme proposal, the Government produced a high-end estimate in the shortfall of IT graduates of 4,000 now, and possibly rising to 14,000 in 2005, and 50,600 in 2010. These forecasts are produced by simple extrapolation, which is well known to be an inaccurate forecasting method. Indeed, it is readily computed from these forecasts that the total shortfall in IT graduates from now to 2010 will be 210,626. Assuming Hong Kong produces this number of IT graduates over the same period, there will be 421,2332 IT graduates. How many IT companies have to be set up in Hong Kong to provide employment for them? The recent burst of the dotcom bubble and consequent redundancies of IT staff makes the government forecast on the shortfall of IT staff even more incredible. If the Government forecasts on manpower requirements in Hong Kong lack credibility, how can Hong Kong people trust the Government using the same methods and tactics in their proposal for yet another labour import scheme?

The regulations governing the movement of residences from the Mainland to Hong Kong were thoroughly debated when the Basic Law was constituted. The regulations are there for very good reasons. They are there to ensure Hong Kong continues to prosper under the "One Country Two Systems" principle. The unlimited quota in the proposed Professionals Scheme clearly violates the spirit of the regulations in the Basic Law. It would be a betrayal of Hong Kong people to approve the proposed Professional Scheme, as they are told that they are protected by the Basic Law from an unlimited influx of residence from the Mainland. Therefore, I urge members of Manpower Panel not to approve the proposed Professionals Scheme.

How do we go forward from here? I wish to draw your attention to the fact that first degree programmes provide a broad education. Graduates can be trained in other special fields by relevant full-time taught master degree programmes. For example, science and engineering graduates can be readily educated in IT by 1-year full time taught master degree programmes. In one year, we could have trained sufficient IT graduates to satisfy the IT needs of Hong Kong. Unfortunately, the Government has not supported full-time taught master degree programme. Maybe they should do it now.

Hong Kong people can only survive competition from other leading Asian countries, and increasingly the Mainland, through their own efforts. Importing professionals will only give a sense of false security.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Yours sincerely,

C. W. Chan
Chairman of the Academic Staff Association
The University of Hong Kong of Hong Kong