

## ECHOES

The Sephardi Department  
World Zionist Organization, 1980

### WATCH OUT FOR PEOPLE FROM THE DEVELOPMENT TOWNS FOR LEADERSHIP WILL EMERGE FROM THERE

*The Hebrew University of Jerusalem presents, in the framework of a new experimental project, special conditions to 100 students from distressed neighborhoods: convenient acceptance conditions, exemption from tuition fees and a maintenance-scholarship of IL 18,000 per year. The aim: to increase the number of academicians in the development towns and to establish a new generation of leaders there.*

### ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP FROM THE HEADS OF THE DEVELOPMENT TOWNS AND DISTRESSED AREAS IN ISRAEL

In 1979, 1200 students will study at 5 universities in Israel:

University of Haifa	500
University of Tel-Aviv	100
University of Jerusalem	100
University of Ben-Gurion	250
University of Bar-Ilan	250

The phenomenon of students coming from the development towns has already become commonplace in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. It seems that of late, this University has joined others with the purpose of helping to do away with 'the second Israel' in the development towns. (The pioneer in this area was, it will be remembered, the Haifa University, which established some four years ago the unit to bridge social and communal gaps).

'To return after one's studies to the development town is not a point of punishment but a point of departure', says David Shilah, who came from Migdal Ha'emek to take up Middle Eastern studies at Hebrew University.

As the son of a large family, which grew up in a development town, David is conscious of the problems of his town. He is aware of the fact that there is a lack of academic forces in the development towns. Therefore, he says, he will return to Migdal Ha'emek after his studies and will work for the benefits of the population there with the help of the knowledge which he has acquired.

David is only one of a hundred students who came to the University from development towns and from distressed neighborhoods, to whom the University has recently been giving special academic help and advice.

### Motivation for community activity

The beginning of the road was in 1977. The heads of the Sephardi Federation and the Sephardi Department approached the President of the University, Avraham Harman, and put before him a plan of comprehensive assistance to student from the Eastern communities. The University supported the plan and the Deacon's office organized to put it into practice. Auxiliary lessons were inaugurated for the students, student to assist them were attached to them, advisory teams were established in the University advisory services and a special coordinator was appointed who would deal personally with these students.

The University also accepted the request of the Sephardi Federation and introduced in the framework of the University courses in the heritage of Sephardi Jewry.

Yair Shagi, Assistant to the Deacon says: In accepting the plan, what stood before the University was the aim of <sup>TO INCREASE</sup> increasing the number of academicians in the development towns and giving these towns a young and educated generation of leaders (that is why the plan is called 'the leadership plan'). Shagi goes on to note that the students receiving assistance have motivation for communal activity and in the past took part in social work in the areas where they lived. They were chosen for the plan according to these criteria.

One of those who have these attributes is Channa Bardogo from Maalot, a student of social work. She is already involved all over the campus in winning people for her town, Maalot. As parliamentary assistant to Knesset Member Moshe Katzav, she also works for Maalot in the parliamentary framework and therefore she tries to arouse the awareness of Knesset members to developments in the development towns.

On finishing her studies, Channa promises to return to Maalot and engage in her occupation in community centres there: 'there is a lot to do in Maalot to gird my loins and start work', says Channa Bardogo.

### A special trial framework

What does she think of the plan? Giving academic assistance to students from development towns is a positive act, Channa thinks and may in time help to close the gaps. People will reach high achievements in their studies and the barriers will fall.

In the course of his studies, every student participating in the plan receives wide economic support: exemption from tuition fees and a maintenance scholarship of IL 18,000. In return for every year of financial assistance, the student accepts an obligation to a year of work in a development town.

David Ironi, a fifth year dentistry student, thinks that the financial support helps students reach a high level of professionalism in their fields of study since the time that they would devote to making a living is invested in their studies.

But there is another way to transform people from development towns into leaders. David says: The Universities must broaden the plan and absorb students from the development towns in law, medicine and business management, without rigid criteria such as psychometric tests and outstanding school finishing certificates. The best proof that these admission criteria are not necessarily a yardstick of academic ability is provided by some tens of students from the Eastern communities and distressed neighborhoods who are learning in

the School for Social Work in a special experimental framework of three years. They have brought about an upset in the School's admission policy. Most of the students studying in the framework of the project learn with perseverance, whilst every student has a tutor, an outstanding student in his last years in the School, to help him in his supplementary lessons. The results are fruitful.

#### The research team follows up

Professor Eliezer Yaffe, who was among the first to conceive the project, lectures in social work and is the Chairman of the admission-committee for the first degree in School of Social Work. He points out that in the examination data of the first year in which the project was put into practice, not a single failure was registered. He goes on to say that the process will continue and more and more people from the Eastern communities will be trained as social workers (up to now the percentage of Ashkenazim in the School was 88). Most of the 'new' students note that they did not feel a gap existed between themselves and other students studying here. Most of them were engaged before coming to study in welfare occupations, as counsellors for street-gangs, community workers operating clubs etc. This is their advantage over other students in the School who came without this training. Meanwhile, a special research staff has been set up in the School to follow up the studies. Prof. Yaffe struggled hard against opponents before he succeeded in putting the plan into action. He also had financial difficulties. The project is now financed by the University, the Joint and the Sephardi Federation.