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Academic change must also be a matter of the heart

"Our foreign students want to learn and do research here. But they also need our attention as fellow-beings," Bonn's Development Aid Minister Hans Klein emphasized recently at a Westdeutsche Rektorenkonferenz (West German Rectors' Conference (WRK), an organisation of rectors and presidents of German higher education institutions. The Minister's creed: "Development cooperation — regardless of whether it is the setting up of an irrigation project or the academic exchange of experience — it must also be a matter of the heart."

For the first time for years, the Westdeutsche Rektorenkonferenz concerned itself with the question of the possible contribution by the 200 univer-

sities, other institutions of higher education and Fachhochschulen to the development of the Third World. The fact that such a contribution is of the utmost importance was under-scored by the Development Minister who had been invited to address the meeting: "Any form of cooperation with higher education institutions in developing countries—even if this is not readily discernible on a short-term basis in individual cases—generates development impulses."

There are currently 350 cooperation agreements between German higher education institutions and their counterparts in developing countries. Many of these agreements receive financial support from the Federal Government. Out of a total of 80,000 foreign students in the Federal Republic

of Germany, more than 25,000 come from developing countries. A good 5,000 of them are in receipt of a German scholarship.

"The advancement of higher education institutions in the Third World enjoys a high rating in the Federal Government's development policy," Klein assured the Westdeutsche Rektorenkonferenz. "These higher education institutions train the urgently needed top experts as the indispensable prerequisite for technical economic, social and cultural progress." On an annual basis, the Federal Government provides just under DM 1,500 million for the advancement of the education systems in the Third World—from primary school to university.

The Bonn Development Aid

Ministry is now funding 15 further education programmes lasting several months for young academics from the Third World in the way of 150 scholarships at German higher education institutions. Klein paid tribute to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) for their exemplary collaboration. They provide German scientists with financial assistance wherever they involve scientists from developing countries in their work. Problems will exist, of course, for German researchers who have teaching and doing research in the Third World for some time and then return to Germany. Because of the strapped financial situation at universities and other higher education institutions, it is hardly possible to keep positions open for them.