

The big difference is that Europeans still publicly pretend that their "guest" workers are likely to stay only for a limited time. Europe's immigrants have become a large and permanent economic entity constituting a self-generating population. Their children, officially natives of the countries of their birth, are statistically likely to inherit the poverty and inferior social and employment status of their parents.

Human rights

The uncontroversial resolution by the Human Rights Commission in Geneva expressing particular concern about "the situation of the children of migrant workers and the effects upon their cultural, medical and psychosocial well-being and the difficulties of adaptation and separation to which they are exposed" has added impact when one considers that one-fifth of the school-age children of migrant workers are believed to be receiving no education.

In view of this fact, and in connection with the International Year of the Child, the Commission asked all UN organizations to give special attention to improving the lot of migrant workers and their families. It has also established a working group on the human rights of migrant workers to ensure that the topic receives recurring attention.

Out of this request have come a number of projects and directives. Education pilot projects in many European cities try to ensure that the one and a half million migrant children attending school not only learn the language of their adopted country but also retain their original language and culture. The EC's Council of Ministers has adopted a directive to ensure that school curricula meet the specific needs of migrant children. A proposal to combat illegal immigration and the employment of illegal immigrants has been prepared by the European Commission; and there has been a gradual co-ordination of the immigration policies of the member states. Various housing pilot schemes aimed

at the cultural integration of migrants have been started.

These measures, however, hardly meet the actual needs. A comprehensive report on the housing of migrant workers published by the European Commission proposes the establishment of a fund to finance urgent measures to end discrimination. The report, compiled by 30 specialists throughout the Community, including anthropologists, social geographers, economists, psychologists and sociologists — all of them independent of both the European Commission and the national administrations —, treated the issue as a long-term problem of considerable effect on the entire Community.

Canada

Despite political controversy, Canada's record on the integration of immigrants has been far more successful than the European experience. The reason is probably that in Canada both the newcomers and their hosts admit that they must learn to live with each other permanently.

Ottawa's 1978 Immigration Act gives landed immigrants the same basic rights as those enjoyed by Canadian citizens — with the notable exception of the right to vote. Significantly, an immigrant can apply to bring in his relations as soon as he reaches Canadian soil. The reunification of the family is a consistent objective of postwar Canadian immigration policy, and the present legislation recognizes three classes of immigrant: sponsored (close family members), nominated (more distant relatives) and independent (must qualify on the basis of skills and education).

The European Commission is promoting some modest proposals for a gradual sharing of political rights with the resident foreigners. The Commission also wants them to have an automatic right to bring in their families — as in Canada — and as proposed by the Human Rights Commission. But these proposals are doggedly resisted by member countries, whose governments have been

on the retreat from the vocal extreme-right political movements that thrive on economic insecurity and seek the compulsory repatriation of the foreigners.

Paradoxically, immigration restrictions imposed on foreign labour are likely, in fact, to increase, rather than decrease, unemployment among the natives, according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. It explains that labour shortages confined to a few sectors of the economy cause a shortfall of output and therefore redundancies. Another study, published in Geneva by the UN's Economic Commission for Europe, argues that economic recovery in Western Europe may well depend on a fresh influx of foreign labour.

This confirms Canada's experience. While it is difficult to assess the economic advantages and costs of immigration from the Canadian perspective, the Economic Council believes the "immigrants from the developing nations . . . appear to have contributed positively to the economic well-being of Canada". The Council's own calculations, based on replacement costs, place at \$2.9 billion the sum that Canada would have to devote to training its own population from 1966 to 1974 had it not benefited from immigration from Third World countries. Its report establishes that the economic advantages may be considerable. The undiscounted net gain for the typical immigrant from the Philippines or India is estimated at close to \$400,000 (in 1974 prices).

Even if it were possible — and, indeed, desirable — to expel the foreign workers from Western Europe, their places would soon be taken by others. Portugal, Spain and Greece are expected to join the European Community within the foreseeable future, opening the door to vast numbers of South European pre-industrial peasants. The cherished principle of free circulation of labour within the Community will thus perpetuate Western Europe's embarrassment over imported poverty.