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Meet “Mr. Fixit”, a Filipino Hero

I EMPLOY A Filipino helper nicknamed “Eddie Fixit”, because if anything goes wrong in the house, Eddie is sure to manage to fix it.

Eddie was unable, for financial reasons, to enter university in his home country. Consequently he had to join the band of “heroes”, so-named in the Philippines, because they go to other countries to work. Nearly 200,000 Filipinos work here in Hong Kong. Many others are forced to seek work in other countries, such as Singapore, and in the Middle East, because their country provides no way for them to make a decent living at home.

When Eddie took a driving test, he proved himself a very careful and efficient driver. When he took a short course on computers, he was soon able to troubleshoot, assemble, and install computers himself. Consequently I sent him for further study of computer networking, to provide him with some qualification for his future career. I know that eventually he will have to return to his family in the Philippines. In fact, Eddie Fixit has a natural engineering talent, and has practical knowledge in electricity, plumbing, bricklaying and building. What a waste of talent to have to do domestic chores in Hong Kong!

Their President claims that Filipinos work abroad because they want to support globalization. What a joke! They just have no choice. Would they not serve their country’s economy better

if they had the chance to take up some useful profession at home and were paid a reasonable salary to keep them there?

Some Filipinos are qualified nurses, doctors, teachers, even engineers, but their salaries in the Philippines are too low to support a family. Consequently they are compelled to accept domestic work abroad, where they are sometimes treated harshly, and have to accept reductions in the minimum wage.

What reward do these “heroes” receive? None. Their country even imposes a tax on any interest they receive on their savings, and provides little or no protection when they are treated unfairly abroad. We employers in Hong Kong should respect our helpers and treat them like family members. In my estimation, the terms of the contracts for these overseas domestic workers are unfair, because it is comparatively easy for the employer to fire the worker for a trivial reason, but extremely difficult for a worker to find a new employer in the two weeks they are allowed to remain after being fired.