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The Social and Economic Status of Labor in Iraq During the Last Two Decades with Special Emphasis on Unionism and Its Effect on This Status

Ramzi Nadhim Frangul

Loyola University Chicago

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THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STATUS OF LABOR IN IRAQ
DURING THE LAST TWO DECADES WITH SPECIAL
EMPHASIS ON UNIONISM AND ITS
EFFECT ON THIS STATUS

by

Ramzi Frangul

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of
Social and Industrial Relations

February
1958
LIFE

Ramzi Nadhim Frangul was born in Mosul, Iraq, July 27, 1929. He was graduated from Al-Shrik High School, Baghdad, Iraq, June, 1950. And from The College of Commerce and Economics, June, 1954, with the degree of Licenciate in Commerce and Economics.

From June, 1954, to August, 1955, the author worked in commercial firm engaged in foreign trade in Baghdad.

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His career with Loyola University started in February, 1957. He was elected the President of The Foreign Students Association at Loyola University.
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His Excellency Nuri es-Said, Prime Minister of Iraq, one of the principal architects of Iraq's present stability and future potential and a corner-stone of the constitution; soldier, diplomat, world statesman; one of the most outstanding personalities in Arab history.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Owing to the fact that this thesis deals with a foreign topic, it may be more understandable to the reader if a general survey is given of the Iraq people, land, and government.

Iraq covers a total of 172,000 square miles of a triangular shaped area. Its base runs south-west to north-west from the Syrian desert up to the mountains of Turkey. Its apex terminates northward on the Persian Gulf. Bounding the upper edge toward the east are the mountains of Iran, and on the lower edge toward the west and south are the frontiers of Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait.

Iraq is a country of geographical contrasts. In the northeastern corner are the mountains of Kurdistan with peaks reaching to 11,000 feet or more. To the west and south vast desert areas extend into Syria and the Arabian Plateau. The northern and southern deserts as they are called, together with the island desert, — between the upper reaches of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers — form forty-seven per cent of the total area. These vast, level, sandy stretches, broken in parts by the uplands and rocky hills, are waterless and uncultivated, and inhabited only by Bedouins, 'nomads' with their flocks and camels. But the heart of Iraq, is the land of two rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates, which rise in the mountains of Turkey to flow southwestward through Iraq. They approach within twenty miles of each other on the level of Baghdad, and diverge again before finally uniting at Qurna to form
the broad navigable Shatt-El-Arab for the last 115 miles of their course into
the Persian Gulf. The flat, tremendously fertile, alluvial plain stretching
about three-hundred miles up from the Persian Gulf, and one-hundred miles in
width, contains two-thirds of Iraq's cultivated land.

North of the alluvial plain lie the uplands of Iraq. In the Mosul-
Ramadi-Khanaqin triangle is an undulating plateau of gravel steppe and rich
plough land, averaging one-thousand meters in width. Rainfall, averaging
eighteen inches a year, is sufficient for winter cereals, fruit, and vines to
be grown.

Iraq has a temperate climate, with hot dry summers, cold damp winters,
and brief transitional seasons in April and November.

Iraq is underpopulated in proportion to its area and resources. The
population at the last census in 1947, totaled 4,816,000. Now it is estimated
at a little over five-million.

Iraq is an Arab country. Islam is the religion for 4,500,000 of its
people. There are also about two-hundred-thousand Christians found in all the
principal communities, representing four sects: Syrian Orthodox, Assyrian,
Chaldean, and Syrian Catholics. Other small but interesting minorities are
found. There are about 32,000 Yazidis who believe in the principle of evil.
There are about 6,600 Sabean who are followers of St. John the Baptist.

Iraq as a constitutional monarchy, has a written constitution. It
clearly defines the position and prerogatives of the King, the rights and
obligations of the people, the structure of the legislature, and the ministry
of justice.
A. PROBLEM AND IMPORTANCE

The problem of labor in Iraq has three interrelated aspects: social, political, and economic. They all stem from the fact that Iraq is a backward country, or as classified by the United Nations, as one of the under-developed countries. Iraq is moving in a vicious circle of poverty, illiteracy, disease, and a semi-feudal system which makes the circle complete.

Poverty afflicts the vast majority of the people. The standard of living is deplorably low and is almost the same today as it was thirty years ago. No comprehensive studies of income in Iraq have been made. It is true that the statistical office of the United Nations in 1949, made an estimate of eighty-nine dollars per person a year. ¹ This, however, is hardly more than a rough guess without any real basis. A more accurate picture can be derived from examining the wages of workers. In 1939, the minimum wage earned (not statutorily fixed), was about fifty fils a day 'fourteen cents'.² Under law number 54 of 1953, the minimum wage for a laborer is specified as 250 fils per day 'seventy-two cents'. If a comparison is made with a laborer's cost of living for Baghdad, it appears that this law causes a laborer's standard of living to undergo little change; i.e., he now earns five times his pre-war wage, but the prices of the commodities he buys have also increased nearly five times.

² Ibid., 152.
In respect to illiteracy, out of 3,727,045 (total population over five years old of the Ilwas, 'states' at the time of the last census in 1947, excluding the Nomad tribes) 3,319,469, or eighty-nine per cent, were illiterate.\(^3\)

The standards of health are very low. Thousands of Iraqis fall victim every year to tuberculosis, trachoma, bilharzia, malaria, hookworm, and dysentary. Statistics about the spread of diseases are misleading, both to actual and relative incidence of the different diseases, because they are related only to cases actually treated. As a matter of fact, diseases are much more widely spread than the cases treated would suggest. Nevertheless, Table I gives an idea about the health situation in Iraq.

**TABLE I**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disease</th>
<th>Cases treated</th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>1952</th>
<th>1953</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malaria</td>
<td></td>
<td>456,299</td>
<td>409,075</td>
<td>451,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilharzia</td>
<td></td>
<td>35,287</td>
<td>32,672</td>
<td>29,249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hookworm</td>
<td></td>
<td>16,188</td>
<td>23,666</td>
<td>19,167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trachoma</td>
<td></td>
<td>677,599</td>
<td>618,403</td>
<td>499,527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dysentary</td>
<td></td>
<td>16,569</td>
<td>16,184</td>
<td>31,449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuberculosis</td>
<td></td>
<td>9,925</td>
<td>11,066</td>
<td>6,746</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


All these factors worked together and are still working to offset the progress of the social and economic status of the people of Iraq in

\(^3\) Ibid., 2, 231.
general, and the labor force in particular. The country operates by a semi-feudalistic system where a small group of landlords and industrialists who have the political power in their hands, prevent any truly progressive program of reform, and keep the average individual in bondage, thus creating the labor problem.

The importance of the labor problem is also closely connected with the development of Iraq. Thirty years ago, a sound labor policy could not assume a vital importance for the reason that in those days, industry in the modern sense never existed. However, comparatively recently, and especially after the second world war, with the rapid development of industry has come the recognition of the vital importance of a sound labor policy to regulate the relationships between employers and employees, and to elevate the status of the underprivileged worker. Any system of industrial relations in the modern American sense of the term, pre-supposes the existence of worker's organizations capable of representing their members in their relations with employers. Such organizations existed, but a sound system of labor relations never developed.

B. ISSUES: ECONOMICAL—POLITICAL

Economical Issues

Until the first quarter of the Twentieth Century, Iraq economy was based on a self-contained system of subsistence agriculture, supplemented by cottage industries and trade guilds. The impact of Western penetration has affected a drastic change in this situation. One of the direct consequences was the growing consciousness of the importance of industrial and agricultural development.
There are no statistics available about the national income in Iraq before the second world war. In 1947-48, the national income was 23,000,000 dinars. In 1953-54, it had risen to 48,000,000 dinars. For the year 1956-57, it was calculated at 62,000,000 dinars. However, no estimate of national income in Iraq is at all reliable, since the majority of the workers are engaged in agriculture, where the greater part of their income is in kind, and their cash income is small. For this reason, the national income in Iraq in the sense in which the term is usually employed, if it were accurately assessed, would afford no comparison with countries which are mainly on a cash or market economy.

In agriculture, which is the backbone of the economy, and where the bulk of the people are engaged, the land tenure system, where the farmer is a share tenant, is a very serious problem. It does not allow production to increase because of the lack of incentive for greater efficiency or capital investment. Only recently, scientific methods in farming were introduced on a small scale. Extensive farming and shifting cultivation are characteristics of agriculture in Iraq. There is little use of farm machinery, and only one-fifth of the cultivated land in Iraq is actually being cultivated. As a result of this backward state of economic organization, productivity is low and per capital national income of the farmer is low. The Iraq Development Board started several years ago to utilize a portion of oil revenues for improving the systems of irrigation and drainage, to bring more land under

1 A dinar equals $2.80

5 Salter, THE DEVELOPMENT OF IRAQ, 153.
cultivation. Dams and barriers are now under construction to control and manage the flow of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

The underdeveloped state of agriculture sets limits to the capacity for industrialization, by causing low purchasing power for the rural population and a limited market for manufactured goods. There is little opportunity for large scale, low cost manufacturing enterprises capable of competing against the products of industrialized nations. Most of the early industries existed and are still existing with the help of tariff protection. The development of industry was hampered to a great extent by insufficient capital for investment, because of the low income of the people and their limited ability to save. Another serious obstacle is the shortage of skilled workers, competent trained administrators, shop foreman, and field managers. As a consequence, there has so far been little large scale industrial development in Iraq.

Table II of the large industries in Baghdad based on the average number of employees shows the general pattern.

**TABLE II**

**LARGE INDUSTRIES IN BAGHDAD**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Number of Firms</th>
<th>Number of Employees</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bricks, Tiles, etc.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3,532</td>
<td>168</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,92</td>
<td>1,10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3,285</td>
<td>298</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity and Water Supply</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,192</td>
<td>281</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textiles</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4,510</td>
<td>281</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cigarettes and Tobacco</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4,361</td>
<td>345</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>54</strong></td>
<td><strong>13,934</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Provisional figures from the Industrial Census, 1954.
In commerce, foreign trade per capita is very low and the exports are mainly food products and raw materials. Imports are mainly manufactured goods. Iraq was and still is suffering from a deficit balance in its external trade.

The mineral wealth of Iraq has never been properly prospected (excluding oil), but there is evidence of valuable supplies of phosphates, manganese, and iron.

To sum up, Iraq has great economic potentialities, possesses large areas of arable land, a vast supply of water, derives ample funds of its own for development purposes from oil royalties, and has a population a little over five-million. Iraq has an opportunity for economic development equal to any of the new nations in any part of the world.

Political Issues

By and large every large labor movement throughout the world was influenced to a greater or a lesser degree in one or more stages of its development by politics. This is true not only in respect to labor movements but of social movements in general. S. A. Morrison stresses, "(A)t every point social reform depends upon political changes." The Labor in Iraq as a part of the social movement, not only was and still is influenced by politics, but represents an extreme case. This is why a portion of this research is devoted to the political background of Iraq.

To begin with, the Ottoman government and later the British, in order to maintain public order with the least possible expenditure of money

---

and man-power, were obliged to rely on the power of the landlords, who were semi-feudal forces which stood against any social change. The establishment of an independent national government in 1932, was not enough to change this situation, for it is necessary that such a government be truly democratic and representative of the people. The forces whose interests were threatened by social progress and enlightenment, were still in power and controlled the new government. It is true that some good responsible elements expressed their desire to take steps for social reform, but they simply echoed ideas which had never actually been practiced. "Only too often promises of far-reaching reforms have been scattered over electioneering programmes and speeches at the opening of Parliament, but in practice little has been achieved." 7

The political issues which make Iraq such a unique case can be summarized as follows:

a. The political instability which manifested itself in the great frequency of changes in governments. No government could stay in office longer than six months. In the 27 years between the period 1922-1950, there were forty-five governments, more than one a year. 8 This political instability did not allow enough time for the governments to develop and carry out their programs.

b. The existence of a semi-feudal system where a group of landlords are in control of the government. Jon Kimche in his trip to Iraq finds that,

7 Ibid., 6, 91.
"the governments of the past thirty years have been drawn from the same fifty or sixty families... only the periodic revolutionary uprising has produced an occasional new comer. For the rest it has been governments by the sheikhs, their nominees and friends, for the sheikhs, their nominees and friends".\(^9\)

c. Democracy in Iraq has never been perfected, because a basic concept of democracy by a strong, influential, organized opposition never developed to power. The following is why this condition exists:

1. The Western powers in their conservative policy often failed to support the minority liberal groups against the majority of the landlords. George Hakim states, "the western powers have in the past generally supported the reactionary semi-feudal forces... and have thus incurred the enmity of the rising progressive forces".\(^10\)

2. The progressive forces could not develop enough strength to enable them to gain control over the government. This is due to the fact that the middle class which usually supports such groups is still infant. As Majid Khadduri has said, "the position of the moderate and liberal groups in Iraq was rendered the more hopeless by the absence of an important middle class".\(^11\)

d. Often, the liberal groups being frustrated in their efforts, shifted their attention from the social and economic issues to international issues like combating imperialism.

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9 SEVEN FALLEN PILLARS, New York, 1953, 100.


The coups d'etat, upheavals, and tribal uprisings which filled the history of Iraq during the past thirty years, not only converted the efforts of maintaining social reforms to strengthening the army, but exhausted the budget for any possible basic reform.

C. SOURCES AND METHODS OF RESEARCH

The theme of this thesis is people as laborers. What is outside this sphere will either be omitted or discussed only briefly to give a background to the limited scene depicted.

No student of research of current or recent events can be positive that he has checked all of the published sources of material dealing with the subject of his research; nor can he quote a specific authority for every statement made. One cannot be that positive and can only hope that the bibliography for this thesis omits no really valuable work. A varied and selective range of contemporary newspapers and periodicals of local and foreign countries have been used, as well as histories and monographs, in both Arabic and English. Translating from some of the material from Arabic to English may have resulted in some misinterpretations.

A source of material which does not appear in the bibliography is the observations and information derived from personal experience of the author as a citizen of Iraq.
CHAPTER II

CHANGES IN POLITICAL CONTROL IN IRAQ

A. FOREIGN CONTROL TO THE 1930's

(1) Turkish control before the first World War

The Turkish influence in Iraq began in 1534 and continued to the first World War. The Ottoman Empire was basically military in character and organization. The main goal was the welfare of the state, not the welfare of the subjects. It was, "a state organized primarily for warfare rather than for the welfare of its people". 12 Iraq in those days was divided into three wilayats, 'provinces': Baghdad, Mosul and Basrah. The function of the provinces was to provide the central government with revenues in the form of material wealth and manpower for armies. Wali, 'provincial governors' whether they were local lords, Turkish officials, or naaamlu, 'slaves' fought for ascendancy leaving the people suffering from corruption, ignorance and miscarriage of justice. The central authority interfered little in the affairs of the people provided that its demands were met. The only interference was on the part of the local officials of the ruling creed or race. Catholic missions were admitted in the seventeenth century, though they were subjected to changes in local authorities.

Among the countries dominated by Turkey, Iraq stood in a unique position. "The distinctive feature of the Iraqi situation stemmed from the prepon-

derance of the Sheit element in the population, difficulty of communication with headquarters in Constantinople, proximity of Sheit Parsia and cleavage between towns and tribes.13

The observer of Iraq during the Turkish rule can see only a dark picture. The only bright spot is the period between 1869-1872, during the administration of Madhat Pasha, the liberal and progressive statesman. "Madhat Pasha... in three short years began to organize for the first time a system of land registration... He made plans for river-reclamation, river navigation, industrialization, town improvements. He founded municipalities and administrative councils, enforced conscription, tried, but failed to suppress corruption, and in Baghdad started a newspaper, military factories, a hospital, an alms-house, an orphanage, and numerous schools whereby the literacy-rate among townspeople rose from perhaps one-half percent in 1850, to some five to ten percent by 1900."14

In spite of all these developments, the historian of modern Iraq concludes: "The country passed from the nineteenth century little less wild and ignorant, as unfitted for self-government, and not less corrupt, than it had entered the sixteenth; nor had its standards of material life outstripped its standards of mind and character. Its resources lay untouched, however, clearly indicated by the famous ages of the past and by the very face of the country."15

13 Ibid., 12 737.
At the start of the twentieth-century Iraq participated in several movements which have been initiated in the Middle-East, partly as a protest against Turkish mis-rule and corruption, and partly as a national movement. Iraqi officers in the Turkish army joined the secret society Al-Ahd, founded in Constantinople to work for the independence of Arab provinces. Al-Ahd had branches in the three principal cities of Iraq: Baghdad, Mosul and Basrah. But these movements were never fully coordinated. Great faith was placed for a short while in the victory of the young Turk party over Sultan Abdul Hamid II in 1908; but the young Turk party proved to be as unsympathetic towards the Arab's claims as the Sultan himself. The negative attitude of the Young Turk pushed the Arab nationalists to the more extreme demands which culminated in the revolt of 1916.

(2) British control to the 1930's

At the outbreak of the first World War the British occupied Basrah because of its importance for the security of their position in the Persian Gulf and the safety of their communications with India. In the course of the war the lower part of Iraq was conquered. In 1917, General Maude commanding British forces entered Baghdad and issued the well-known proclamation, that the British came as "liberators, not conquerors". At the same time, a great event was taking place in Mecca, the heart of the Arabian Peninsula, which affected the whole Arab world. A secret agreement was reached as a result of the McMahon correspondence of 1915-1916, between Great Britain and the Sherif Husseain of Mecca representing the Arabs. According to this agreement, the Arabs would revolt against the Turks, and their reward for the risk they were taking would
be independence. Morrison stresses this as he states, "In the event of Turkey's defeat, the independence of the Arab states will be recognised by Great Britain within the territories in which Great Britain is free to act without the detriment to the interests of her ally France, and according to the limits and boundaries proposed by the Sherif of Mecca."

In November 1918, a joint Anglo-French military declaration stated that it was their aim to establish in Syria and Iraq national governments and administrations deriving their authorities from the initiative and free choice of the indigenous population. The doubts of the Arabs were removed by President Wilson of the United States of America. One of the famous fourteen points states: "Turkish portions of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured undoubted security of life, and absolutely un molested opportunity of autonomous development."

Arab disappointment was bitter, when at the end of the war, the Arab states were denied full independence.

When at the conclusion of the San Remo conference in 1920, Iraq was placed under British mandate, revolution broke out. The revolution swept the country simultaneously in north and south in Iraq. Government authority broke down and provisional governments were set up in the areas conquered by the revolutionaries. "It took several months of fighting, the dispatch of 70,000 British troops to Iraq, and the expenditure of a vast sum of money, to put the
revolution down."17

For Iraq, the revolution provided the opportunity to establish an Arab government. At the Cairo conference held in the spring of 1921, under the chairmanship of Mr. Churchill, then Colonial Secretary, the plan was agreed upon for the establishment of an Arab government in Iraq under Faisal, the son of Sherif Hussein of Mecca. In August of the same year, Faisal was proclaimed King of Iraq.

The substitution of indirect rule did not change the situation in Iraq. "The British continued to hold the reins of government. The high Commissioner was the real head of the administration, not withstanding the accession of a king and the formation of an Iraqi council of ministers."18

The Iraqis were still hostile to the mandate, so, "The British aware of this widespread hostility, offered the mandate in the guise of a treaty of alliance. But the treaty hardly differed from the texts of the mandate. Signed in October 1922, by the British-appointed Iraqi government, it was widely criticized by the nationalist leaders and the public."19 This treaty was followed by a number of revised treaties. "In one of the most important... that of December 1927, Britain undertook to recognize Iraq as independent and entered into a twenty-five year alliance with it. The treaty of June 1930 was decisive. Britain renounced its mandatory rights and recognized the full sovereignty of

19 Ibid.
of Iraq. Two years later the new state was admitted to membership in the league of Nations. Thus did this country, despite its large tribal population, sectarian division and comparatively low level of education, become the first Arab land to join the family of nations—a remarkable instance of post-war national development."20

B. POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE

(1) Succession of kings

a. The Royal family of Iraq which is called the Hashimite family, belongs to the Koreish, the most distinguished of the Hejaz tribes. Koreish had been custodians of the holy Kaaba at Mecca long before the advent of Islam. The prophet Mohammed was of the Hashimite family, and so were the Abbassid Caliphs. It was through the Hashimite family under Sherif Hussein of Hejaz, that the Arab revolt began in 1916 against the Ottoman rule.

b. King Faisal I The accession of Faisal the third son of Sherif Hussein of Hejaz, as King Faisal I in August 1921, did not bring full independence immediately, which he and the people of Iraq had expected. It was not until 1932 that Iraq gained its full independence. This was due in part to his moderate approach to dealing with the British, which was to take what the British were ready to give, and strive for more. "He followed a policy aptly called in Arabic 'take and ask', or, in Western terminology, 'step by step'."21

Faisal was a moderating element in the Anglo-Iraqi relations. He was able to secure a balance between the British and Iraqi nationalists. It was

20 Hitti, HISTORY OF THE ARABS, 753.
21 Khadduri, INDEPENDENT IRAQ, 5.
thus that he was capable both of securing British sympathy for Iraq's national aspirations, and of controlling the nationalist elements. 22

Faisal's tribal background made it possible for him to win the confidence of the tribes, who had been a constant headache to both Ottoman and British administrators. Faisal I played a great role in the construction of the new state. However, this was not fully recognized until his death in 1933, and his loss was deeply felt in the days that followed.

c. King Ghazi I On September 9, 1933, Prince Ghazi, King Faisal's only son was proclaimed King Ghazi I.

Ghazi I came to the throne at the age of twenty-one, active, sincere, and patriotic. However, he lacked the experience and stability of his father. Troubles and disasters marked the six year period of his reign. Many of these troubles could have been avoided if he had had the wisdom and experience of his father.

On many occasions he had denounced violently the British and French imperialism and the Zionist claims in Palestine. This made out of him a hero in the eyes of the Arab nationalists and the rank and file of the people. Thus, his tragic death in a car accident in 1939, was regarded as a national calamity.

c. King Faisal II Prince Faisal was only four years old when he was proclaimed King Faisal II. His uncle, Prince Abdul Ilah was appointed regent and Heir of the Throne by act of Parliament. Under the constitution of Iraq, the King attains his majority on his eighteenth birthday. On the

22 Ibid., note 21, 7.
second of May, 1953, therefore, King Faisal II was crowned King.

Under the Regency of his uncle, King Faisal II pursued the policy initiated by his grandfather King Faisal I.

At the outbreak of the second World War, Iraq broke off diplomatic relations with Germany and stood by its treaty obligations to Great Britain. However, differences between the British and the Iraqi government on application of certain terms of the treaty, coupled with dissatisfaction with some of features of British policy toward Iraq, led to the armed revolt of 1941, which resulted in declaring war on the allies in the second World War, but which lasted, however, for only one month. After a short fight the British troops occupied Iraq in July of 1951, and a government with a policy of cooperation with the British came into office.

After the end of the second World War, the emphasis was on the revision of the 1930 treaty with Britain. The first attempt in this direction was in January 1948, and proved to be a big failure. It was wholly rejected after a bloody demonstration on the part of the people. In 1955 a new treaty between Iraq and Britain was signed with the nation under the condition of martial law.

(2) Growing pains

The division of population into tribal and city dwellers, the rivalry between Sinna and Sheit, 'the two major Moslem sects', the existence of oppressed minorities, the absence of a sound democratic system of government, the weakness of the foundation of government, and the constant foreign intervention,—have exposed Iraq to violent political disturbances. The period
between 1932-1937, was filled with tribal uprisings, military coups d' etat, rebellions of minorities, and labor strikes. During the period of 1936-1943, seven coups d' etat took place in Iraq. The last of the minority rebellions was in 1945-1956. There were so many tribal uprisings that it is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss them. Labor strikes marked the period from 1945 on. These labor disturbances left a deep mark on the labor movements in Iraq, and were a vital factor in retarding the progress of the labor movement.
CHAPTER III
SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE PEOPLE

The social and economic status of people in Iraq was and still depends to a great extent on their social and economic system, which is still largely in a semi-feudal stage of development.

This socio-economic system is characterized by a unique social structure. At the top a wealthy minority forms what is called the upper class. At the bottom, a poverty-stricken majority forms the lower class. In between is a small and weak middle-class trying to fill the gap in this social structure.

In order to give a full picture of the social and economic situation of the people in Iraq, a more detailed description of this social structure might be helpful.

A. THE UPPER CLASS

The upper class consists of the wealthy landowners on one hand, and the town's businessmen on the other hand, but without the sharp distinction between these two groups which formerly existed in some European countries. Some members of the well-to-do families are concerned with their estates, while others are engaged in commerce.

1. The land owners

The big land owners are of two types; tribal chiefs, and, influential townsmen who own the water wells used on the farms (pump-owners). Before the British mandate, land was the common property of the tribe. The provisions of the mandate, to win support of the Shaikhs allowed them to secure
legal title to the land, which by custom and tradition was the property of the tribe. The national authorities followed the example of the mandate and handed over large estates to their supporters. It did not take long before the shaikhs acquired the attributes of land lords. They controlled the land and acquired its rewards. They grew rich, immensely rich; and so they became in fact, not only the land lords of Iraq, but also its economic masters. Election to parliament and appointment to offices were decided by them. The shaikh picked his candidates, ensured their election, and controlled their purses.

S. A. Morrison states, "in southern Iraq, large land owners of Shaikhs possess virtually all of the land." 23

The influential pumpowning townsmen usually are members of old and noble families. This type of land lord is usually an absentee city dweller who lives in luxury and abundance, and only visits the land in harvest time to collect his rent. The power of some land lords is such that they can defy the government and even instigate revolts which are difficult to quell. They support the government so long as it protects their ascendancy and vested interests.

2. Town businessmen

The towns businessmen are a minority of foreign trade merchants, real estate owners and industrialists who live in the main cities. They are less influential than the land lords, but more socially advanced. This is due to the fact that they are more exposed to Western civilization. They are

23 MIDDLE EAST TENSIONS, 81.
indifferent to social reforms, and in this respect they differ from the land lords who usually oppose social reforms.

B. THE LOWER CLASS

The lower class consists of the farmers, beduins, and the urban masses.

By Western measurements the standard of living of this class is deplorably low. The gap between it and the upper class was and still is so wide that those on the lowest level could never hope to rise to a higher class.

1. The farmers

The farmers form the bulk of the population. They are usually members of settled tribes. The farmers are mostly share tenants, cultivating the lands for the land lords. As a share tenant, a farmer has no security of tenure on the same plot of land. He is not certain of keeping the land and receiving the fruits of any improvements he might be able to make by greater experience, or by investment of his savings if any.

The dependence of the farmer on his land lord is complete, and in his narrow and limited vision seems irrevocable. He rarely has an opportunity to work and make a living other than to remain on the land and be subserviant to his master. He is frequently indebted to the latter or to a grain merchant who closely co-operates with the land lords. He is not only dependent on his master economically, but also socially and politically. If any dispute arises among the farmers, they have to resort to their feudal lords to settle it. In time of trouble and hardship they go to him for advice and help. Whenever any problem arises which requires intervention with the government administration
of the courts, it can be settled only with the land lord's help or through his influence. During elections, the farmer votes for his land lord for candidates supported by his land lord. He does not vote against him since the secrecy of the ballot is not assured in practice, although it is established in law.

2. The Beduins 'nomads'.

Beduins form an important part of the population. The tribal system under which they live is even more detrimental to economic progress than the feudal system. As producers, the beduins play a very insignificant role in the national economy. As consumers the beduins benefit the national economy very little, because of the meagerness of their resources and the primitive simplicity of their life. Their needs can be met with a small quantity of the cheapest goods. Furthermore, the Beduins horizon is limited to his tribe. He knows no father-land and cannot tolerate the restraints of a modern state. It is of no concern to him whether he be an Iraqi, a Syrian, or a Najite. Nor is he bothered by the fact that his ruler may be a king, a dictator, or the president of a democratic republic. What concerns him is fertile land where he can turn his cattle and camels to pasture. Which state may hold the land is no concern to him. He understands no official boundaries and recognizes no color map. Longrigg describes this situation well; "In the year 1952,....among the Beduins, still leading their hard, hungry and unenvied lives, the visitor to their tents would find every scene and circumstance unchanged for the last five or fifty decades.... Their extreme poverty forbade them any less primitive material equipment, and their social organization and isolation precluded al-
most every means of cultural progress". 24

3. Urban masses

The urban laboring masses are confined to cities and big towns only. Their standard of living is by no means better than the rest of the lower class. Their wages are very low, and they lead a life of continual struggle for bare subsistence. Their income is not adequate to support their families which usually are large in number. As a result of this, child labor with all of its evils is a common practice, although it is prohibited by law. M. Khadduri gives a descriptive picture of the masses in Iraq: "In the cities, the population of Iraq is divided into the relatively small but wealthy class, and the wretched and exploited masses. Hundreds of thousands of them were, and still are, without home, without land, without schools, and even without personal property. They were constantly threatened by starvation and disease." 25

Because of these conditions it can be said with some confidence, that although the worker's conditions in life did not experience a drastic change during the last thirty years, they did become aware of their social and economic situation. This is due to their exposure as city dwellers to modern civilization, mechanization, industrialization, and political activities. Because of this awareness, coupled with dissatisfaction with the government's attitude of inattention toward them, the urban laborer became a source of headache to the authorities. Encouraged by political parties, he often revolted, struck, or

24 IRAQ 1900 TO 1950, 363.
25 INDEPENDENT IRAQ, 11.
or displayed signs of dissatisfaction. "The rank and file, utterly neglected, and despairing of any hope of improvement, have become a great source of unrest to the existing regime in Iraq. These masses have often revolted in the past on various pretexts, such as religious differences and nationalism; but today they are attracted by Communist propaganda. The real cause of their unrest is their deplorable socio-economic conditions." 26

C. THE GROWTH OF THE MIDDLE CLASS

In between the wealthy minority at the top and the poor majority at the bottom, there lies a small, but weak middle class consisting of salaried business employees, technicians following various skilled occupations, government officials of the lower grades, and members of the professions. This middle class does not fill the wide gap in the social structure and has very little, but growing political power. However, it produces the intellectual and the progressive elements in the population.

The middle class is in an early stage of emergence, because in a predominantly agricultural country, where feudalism has persisted for such a long time, it is not possible to expect a rapid rise of the middle class. However, for reasons which are mentioned below, the middle class is gradually growing and exerting more influence on social and economic development.

1. Education

The growth of the middle class accompanied the growth of education in Iraq. In 1920-21, Iraq had eighty-eight primary schools for both boys and

26 Khadduri, INDEPENDENT IRAQ, 12.
girls with 7,452 pupils, while the number of students in the secondary schools was only 110. In 1949-1950, the number of students enrolled in all the schools of Iraq was 243,372. Statistics of current education facilities show that over 300,000 young people were being taught in schools and colleges in 1953.

Education is a decisive factor in shortening the distance between the upper and lower class. The characteristics of the system of education in Iraq has a great deal to do with the middle class and its effort to bridge the gap between the lower class and the upper class. The following are the characteristics of the Iraqi system of education:

1) Education is free at all levels of study. Moreover, in most high schools, especially technical schools, and in most colleges, room and board are provided for the students without charge.

2) Standardization of entry requirements for elementary schools both public and private, make them available for rich and poor alike.

3) Students enjoy important exemptions and privileges in their military service obligations, and this is a motive to attend schools.

4) Education is closely related to economic opportunities. School graduates are able to earn a living in clerical and professional jobs. Non-students, who in most cases are restricted to manual labor, can hardly support

27 *The Arab World*, 197.
28 *The Development of Iraq*, 231.
29 Ibid.
their families.

2. Skills

Industrial development in Iraq has released dormant forces within the nation and opened new fields of opportunity for talents and energy. Modern industry, requiring skills which were unfamiliar to the people of Iraq now provides the middle class with a career outside the government service, the professions, or politics. Moreover, the competition of the allied armies during the second world war for a small group of skilled labor, induced a great number of people to start learning new skills because of the economic benefits that could be derived from acquaintance with new technical skills. The training for these skills was mostly "on the job", but with increased demands for skills, new technical schools were opened and the old ones were enlarged. In some special cases, e.g., in industries requiring highly skilled craftsmanship, an apprenticeship system was developed aided by financing and facilities from the Ministry of Education, which not only provided for an apprentice's education, but also contributed to his support while he was being trained.
CHAPTER IV

ATTEMPTS AT UNION ORGANIZATION

A. GUILD SYSTEM

Iraqi labor organizations can be traced to unions which appeared at the end of the 1930's. They were the product of conditions brought about by the introduction of the factory system. They were by no means the descendants of the informal guilds which existed in Iraq during the last four generations. This was due to two reasons: 1) they were excluded from Labor Law 72 for 1936 by the following statement; "Industrial undertaking does not include any undertaking in which only the members of the family of the proprietor of the undertaking are employed." 2) most of the guilds were not affected by the process of modernization which the factory system brought about, either because they were engaged in manufacturing requiring highly skilled craftsmanship as in the case of the silver-smith industry, or were producing a type of merchandise to which modern manufacturing techniques are difficult to apply, as in the case of the copper-smith industry, the products of which are used only by the tribesmen or nomads.

The guild system in Iraq differs from the meaning usually implied by this term. It is by no means related to the Western System. Its main characteristic is that it is informal. The periods for apprentices, journeymen and masters are not defined. The wages are not fixed by the guild, and the

30 LABOR LAW NO. 72 FOR 1936, (amended 1942), 2.

29
individual contract is the common practice in fixing the wages. The guilds are conducted in the mains, along traditional lines by closed communities. They are confined in most cases to highly skilled crafts. Each guild operates in a certain area of the city where all the members of that guild work.

Handicrafts, for which Iraq has been famed through the ages, still form an important part of industrial production. Mosul, which used to be the center of cotton and rayon handloom industries, still maintains its reputation although to a lesser degree. A number of fine industries have survived in Baghdad; wood and metal carving, the kettles of the coppersmiths, and the curious antimony-silver Amara work of the Sabeans.

The Craftsman who have inherited the skill of generations are still using the same methods and tools used by their ancestors. To the craftsman, these things are more than a practical necessity that keeps them in usage; it is the reverence due to age and untiring workmanship. What the craftsmen lack in time-saving devices and modern tools is painfully evident. They work very hard with the dignity of an artist, and think "why should one discard what has been found good by one's ancestor merely that he may save one or two hours of time?"

The secrets of the craft are guarded and the past masters of the guilds were more than finished workmen; they were priests with a formal code and sense of personal importance, and so is the case with their successors.

No where else in the world are crafts more a matter of race and inheritance than in Iraq. The son follows the trade of his fathers. The father saves the cost of a helper in the apprenticeship of his son. Every family is
specialized in doing one thing. For example in the dying industry there is the brown-dying family, the member of this family knows just how the various concoctions of barks, herbs and whatnot should be mingled to produce the rich brown color. Somewhere else in the neighborhood is the red-dying family, the blue-dying family may be next door. It is strictly one-family affair.

Unfortunately, there are no statistics available which reveal the percentage of workers who are engaged in these skilled crafts. However they form a minority within the labor force.
B. THE FACTORY SYSTEM

Iraqi acquaintance with the factory system is rather recent. Some of the causes for this industrial lag rest with the Iraqi society itself, others lie at the doors of foreign interests. The Iraqis lacked the managerial skill, the initiative, and the training for industrial enterprise. They preferred to invest their capital in land, a secure investment, rather than venture into unfamiliar fields where foreign competition was strong. Foreign capital, which flowed into Iraq after the first quarter of the twentieth century, was not invested in industry because European capitalists did not want to produce competition with their home economies. Foreign investment capital found ample and profitable investment opportunities in mortgage banking, transportation, and financing the rapidly growing foreign trade. The only exception to this trend was the petroleum industry. As a result of these conditions, modern industry was slow to appear. There was no modern manufacturing in the twenties, although various possibilities were often discussed. The petroleum industry, however, the future source of the country's greatest single enterprise and wealth, advanced during these years from the conference room into the open.

The government's industrial exhibition at Baghdad, in 1932, indicated production in only a few industries. There had been local development of electric power, mechanized brick-making, two ginneries for cotton, two wool mills, small cigarette factories, soap factories, and a tannery.

A cement factory was long projected, and in 1932 a concession was granted to a group of citizens. Plans were made for a shoe factory, a fruit canning plant, and date-sugar production. Oil export did not commence until
late in 1934.

The years from 1932 to 1934 produced little more industrial development. One or two small factories were enlarged, more small cigarette factories and mechanized brick kilns were established, ice and soda factories (soft drinks industry) came into existence, a third cotton ginnery was planned, and factories for the making of confectionaries and matches were established. A date packing industry in Basrah consisted of two factories, one British and American, and the other Iraqi. On the other hand the oil development during these years progressed rapidly.

During the Second World War, the desire for industrial expansion was shortages and an increased labor market. In spite of factors like the shortage of raw materials, competition for skilled workers, and the impossibility of importing factory equipment, the number of modern factories reached seventy by 1944.

By mid-century, the observer of Iraq industrial development could see rapid industrial expansion. This rapid progress was a result of the disappearing of the war-time limitations and government encouragement and protection of industries. The emphasis was on industries using Iraqi raw materials in order to diminish the need for imports, and included the manufacturing of cement, soap, alcohol, vegetable oil, leather and shoes, cigarettes, beer, and textiles.

The Development Board, established to supervise part of the use of oil royalties, devoted considerable expenditures to industrial and mining schemes during the period 1951-1955. Most of its projects were complete by the
end of 1956.

By 1957, the number of industrial establishments in Iraq reached 22,500 and employed 100,000 workers.31

C. DEVELOPMENT OF LABOR ORGANIZATIONS

The following factors promoted the initiation of unions in Iraq:

1. The exposure to Western industrialization.

Unionism is a natural concomitant of industrialization. Iraq's exposure to Western industrialization affected the urban workers, for with this method of economic organization came the associated Western social grouping of trade unions. Official concern for labor began to be felt in the 1930's when industrialization was started in order to strengthen the Iraqi economy.

2. The contribution of the International Labor Organization.

One of the direct consequences of the involvement of Iraq in the conferences of the International Labor Organization, was the growing consciousness of the importance of formulating a labor policy concerning their recognition of unionism. This interest of Iraq in labor affairs on the international level was due to the fact that Iraq as a nation which recently emerged on the stage of the world, wanted to follow the footsteps of other new nations in their attempts to prove to the world their actual existence.

Iraq as a member of the International Labor Organizations, benefited a great deal from this membership, for many times it adopted recommendations and proposals of the International Labor Organization conventions.

Table III shows the international agreements which have been approved by the Iraqi government.

**TABLE III**

**INTERNATIONAL LABOR AGREEMENTS APPROVED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAQ**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. and date of the agreement</th>
<th>Subject of agreement</th>
<th>The Iraqi law which approved the agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. 18 for 1925</td>
<td>Workers' compensation for work illness</td>
<td>Law No. 20 for 1937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 19 for 1925</td>
<td>Policy with foreign labor</td>
<td>Law No. 6 for 1940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 41 for 1934</td>
<td>Women night work</td>
<td>Law No. 11 for 1937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 58 for 1936</td>
<td>Minimum working age</td>
<td>Law No. 7 for 1938</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Abstracted from Iraqi labor laws noted, below.

Iraq's contributions to the International Labor office, and literature published by that group during the 1920's, led to some efforts to produce suitable labor legislation. Since almost no factories had as yet been established in Iraq, however, European criteria and standards were largely inapplicable. The first seeds of social interest in labor matters were sown.

The passage into law of a labor code in 1936, reflected pressure on the government to initiate, at least ostensibly, something resembling modern standards in the treatment of industrial workers, although the act for the moment had little practical effect. It did, however, recognize by law the right of workers to organize.
In 1940, two developments were evident. On the one hand, there were attempts within the ranks of labor for widespread organization. On the other hand, government policy was, fuller development of trade unionism. As a result, several unions came into existence. Of these the most important ones were those of the Railway Workers, and the Iraq Petroleum Company's workers.

This hopeful situation lasted for only one year, for the government which had come into office after the coup d'état in 1941, dissolved the existing trade unions. "In economically undeveloped Iraq,... trades-unionism is weak; except in the Iraq Petroleum Company and in the State Railways; it was until recently officially discouraged by the governments that succeeded the military Putsch of 1941".32

The governments following the coup d'état of 1941, permitted union organization again.

The year 1944 was the most important year in the history of Iraq unionism. The amending law passed in 1942, to the labor code of 1936, began to bear fruit. It provided for improved conditions for women workers, the prohibition of child labor, paid holidays, compensations for injuries, and arbitration of labor disputes. A number of hopeful trade unions were organized including those of the weavers, show-makers, masons, cigarette makers, Basrah port workers, and a number of less important industries. Their total membership in those days reached seven-thousand workers. This figure represents roughly ten per cent of the labor force in Iraq in those days.

32 Kirk, SHORT HISTORY OF THE MIDDLE EAST, 256
D. THE DEMISE OF THE UNIONS

The labor movement, however, having no political ideology of its own, stood in a welter of confusion between the conflicting ideologies coming from abroad, and spokesmen of the existing political parties. It was tempting for labor to travel along the road leading toward communism, which presented itself as a tempting solution to Iraq's deplorable social and economic condition. This new ideology captured the imagination of the workers with its promises of a brighter future. It is true that the workers did not grasp even the most elementary principles of this doctrine, but they were assured by communist propaganda that in Marx's words, they had "nothing to lose but their chains."

Although political activities of the unions invariably proved to be of no help to their cause, unions continued to follow this course of action hoping to find effective political methods. Their involvement in politics became deeper and deeper through the years, until it reached the point that, "...labor, both union and non-union was always in the forefront of the national struggle."33

Another factor also caused labor to become deeply involved in politics. Liberal and moderate non-union groups, frustrated in their efforts to secure enough support from a weak middle class, gradually began to think that their political future would depend on gaining the support of the lower class or working class. As a result, the conditions of the workers were used as slogans by the liberal groups and certain opportunists, to champion their

33 Nabih Amin Faris and Mohammed Tawfik Husayn, THE CRESCENT IN CRISIS, Lawrence, Kansas, 1955, 51.
causes against the ruling class, or to embarrass the government in power.

The situation that existed upon the termination of the second World War, lent itself to labor unrest. The needs of the allied armies which were in Iraq during the war, and which created a large demand for labor, ceased immediately after the war. Moreover, there was a noticeable decline in the real wages of workers during and after the war on account of the gradually increased cost of living. The labor force, fearing unemployment and economic insecurity, and encouraged by secret communist propaganda and certain political groups, staged a series of strikes and indulged in national agitation.

The first strike was of the Railway Workers' Union in 1945. "A railway-workers' strike in April 1945 ended only with heavy-handed suppression of workers and union alike."31 Another strike shortly after the railway workers' strike, was conducted by the Port Workers Union in Basrah for a wage increase, and also ended in failure and the disintegration of the union.

The most serious strike in the period took place in 1946, among the workers of the Iraq Petroleum Company in Kirkuk. Although this strike was attributed to politicians of communist sympathy, it can be said with confidence that the real cause of the strike was economical. K. Khadduri writes: "The Kirkuk strike of 3 July 1946, although fully exploited by the communists, was in the main the result of the bad post-war economic conditions. Wages of workers of the Iraq Petroleum Company, though considered fairly good, had not kept up with the rise in prices, and there was a critical shortage of housing.

31 IRAQ 1900-1950, 312.
When the workers' demands for an increase of wages and the formation of a trade union were not conceded, they struck and denounced their employers as 'imperialist exploiters'. On 14 July, when the 3000 workers appeared to have seen no tangible results of their strike and were about to return to work, the Iraqi police fired into a demonstration of about 400 workers, killing five to eight persons. The belligerent method in which the strike was settled, provoked extreme discontent and criticism among the people in Iraq. In order to mitigate the situation, the company raised the wages, and added medical facilities, but allowed only a company union.

As a result of these failures, the leaves of unionism started falling one after the other, as the falling of the leaves of trees in autumn, but the difference was that the leaves of unions were falling in the spring of their youth.

After 1944, the strongest unions, those of the Railway workers, and the Basrah port workers disintegrated. The following years were marked by other unions disappearing due to their political activities, which the communists and political parties exploited for their own interests.

By 1950, trade unions appeared to be strong only among the cigarette workers and textiles. There was also some union activity in the transport, building, and shoe manufacturing industries.

E. GOVERNMENT OPPOSITION

By the year 1954, union activity had become so deeply involved in
politics and political unrest, that the government once again took measures to eliminate unions. These measures followed two methods. The first method was through legislations, and the second was resorting to force. The following is a review of the legislative and force measures whereby unions were eliminated.

In its early relationship with unions, the government used legislation as a means to limit the scope of union activities. With the passage of the Labor Law No. 72 in 1936, the workers were allowed to form unions and bargain collectively. But the act was limited in scope. It placed the unions under strict government supervision, and excluded from its provisions large sections of workers. It prohibited the formation of a general federation of labor.

According to this law, the unions could set up under certain conditions only, and only with the government's approval. The government had to approve the constitution and by-laws, and could dismiss the union's executive committee. The council of ministers could cancel a union's permit if a union endangered the safety of the state, or handled its activities in a manner which would threaten the public security.

During the four or five years which followed the passage of this law, the government met the objections which were made to its limitations by saying that liberal labor legislation would impose an intolerable strain on the still infant industry. But the expansion of industry during and after the second World War, and the increased demand for workers during the war, improved the bargaining power of the unions, and their demands for more freedom in managing their own affairs became more insistent. These demands constituted a new challenge for the government, which could not be met by sticking
to the old argument.

With encouragement by politicians, labor demands began taking the shape of strikes. The government with no desire to make changes in the existing legislation, started using the methods of force in dealing with union unrest. Police measures were used in dealing with new threatening situations. The unions were severely oppressed, and their leaders were arrested and punished. Many casualties resulted from the clashes between police and strikers.

The unions which engaged in strikes were dissolved.

On August 22, 1954, in order to save itself more trouble, the government decided to dissolve all remaining unions. It issued on that date the "General Associations Regulation". This regulation stated that all the existing unions were to be dissolved for reasons connected with the safety of the country.36

After dissolving all unions in 1954, the government through the Ministry of Social Affairs looked after the interests of workers. Its actions have been principally to initiate housing schemes, and to provide a social security law.

36 See page 45, #6.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A. EXPERIENCE GAINED.

Unionism in Iraq, although a recent development and as yet limited in scope, has nevertheless made its mark upon the conditions of labor in Iraq. What has been leaned in Iraq from its experience with unionism so far might be summarized as follows.

1. Between 70% and 80% of the total population of Iraq is still engaged in agriculture, and is thus an unlikely prospect for union membership. Trade unionism has always developed slowly in scattered, mainly agricultural communities, on account of the natural difficulties of applying unionism to agricultural workers. There tends to be only a limited number employed on any one farm, and long distances must be traveled to attend union meetings. Moreover, a very substantial proportion of those who work on the land are share tenants, so the wage earning agricultural workers are actually a minority among those who gain their living from the land. Furthermore, those who are employees tend to work on a seasonal basis.

2. Despite the former influence of the old system of guilds, it was the practice in more recent years for employers and workers in industry to regulate their relationships by means of individual contracts. The idea of regulating their relationships by means of collective bargaining made little headway against the individual contract.

3. The period of growth of the young trade union movement, coincided
with periods of political changes. Many unions disappeared completely as a result of changes in government.

4. The leaders in many respects were inexperienced in the art of establishing and operating trade unions.

5. Typically, the labor union in Iraq was small in membership. This did not allow the union to accumulate enough power to exert pressure on the employer.

B. SUMMARY OF LABOR LAWS

Although the General Associations Regulation of 1954 suspended all union activity, the constitution and laws of Iraq, without this suspension, do contain a basis for union organization, and in the future might enable Iraq to progress in this important phase of the life of a modern nation. The following is a summary of the principal provision of existing labor laws.

1. Freedom of association:—Provisions guaranteeing freedom of association have been included in the constitution of Iraq. The Organic law of 21 March 1925, one of the texts forming the basis of the Iraqi constitution, guarantees freedom of meeting and of forming and joining associations within the limits prescribed by law. Specific provisions guaranteeing the right of individuals to combine for occupational purposes, are contained in Labor Law No. 72 for 1936.

2. Excluded workers:—The right of association is extended to workers who are defined in Iraq labor law as persons employed in industrial undertakings, but specifically excludes particular categories from the right to form a union. The labor laws of Iraq do not apply to undertakings in which only
members of the proprietor's family are employed. Also, the labor law of Iraq exclude agricultural workers from its operation.

3. Equal treatment:—Industrial workers employed by the government are treated no differently under the labor law than other workers.

4. Formation of a union:—The right of occupational association conferred is limited by the provisions of law. This limitation takes the form of the requirement of prior authorization for the establishment of an occupational organization. The persons forming or joining trade unions must normally be engaged in the same or similar occupations. Applications to form a union are addressed to the Ministry of Social Affairs, accompanied by the constitution and rules, names, and addresses of the organizers. The competent minister accepts, rejects, or amends the application within fifteen days of the receipt of the application. In case of rejection, the final decision rests with the Council of Ministers. It is not possible to appeal a rejection through the courts.

5. Objectives and activities of unions:—The principle object of trade unions is defined in the law as, the defense, protection or promotion of the occupational interests of their members. Various welfare and social activities are also specified as proper to trade union activity; for example, the establishment of mutual assistance funds and cooperatives. The unions of Iraq are to contribute to the spreading of a spirit of co-operation, and to industrial development.

6. Suspension or dissolution of unions:—Apart from the question of voluntary dissolution, the law contains provisions in various circumstances
relating to the involuntary suspension or dissolution of trade unions. Article 28 of the Labor Law of 1936, states: "In the event of it being proved that an association is conducting its affairs in a manner which would lead to a breach of the public security or the safety of the state or what would lead to the prejudice of the interest of the work and the proper performance thereof, the Council of Ministers may at the request of the Minister of the Interior, cancel the permit."

7. Supervision of unions:—The government of Iraq exercises a degree of control and supervision over trade unions. Unions in Iraq are subject to inspection by the competent minister. Supervision is exercised with regard to trade union meetings, records, and finances. The first general meeting of a union to elect its executive committee is supervised by a representative of the competent minister.

8. Determination of wages and fixing hours of work:—The traditional method of fixing wages and other conditions of employment is the individual contract. For this reason, following the example many western countries in similar circumstances, the government has a minimum wage fixing machinery, which to a greater or lesser degree is a device which may be considered as a curtailment of freedom to make individual and collective bargaining contracts. The labor law of Iraq gives the government power to prescribe minimum wages for any trade. According to the Minimum Wages Regulation for Workers No. 34 for 1953, Article I, "...the minimum daily payable to:

(a) The unskilled workman aged 16 years and over is 250 Fils (72¢)
(b) The young person (Murahiq) aged 12 to 15 years is 180 Fils (50¢)
At the present time the Ministry of Social Affairs, through the Council of Ministers, fixes the wages of port and railway workers. The Ministry of Social Affairs also fixes the daily wages for children: "The rate of daily wages for children between 10 and 12 years of age shall not be less than 40 per cent of the wages paid to adult workers in all industrial undertakings." The daily hours of work for all industrial undertakings according to the notification of the Ministry of Interior are eight hours a day, with the exception of construction workers, carpentry, and the weaving industry, where the daily hours are nine.

9. Collective bargaining:—Under the Iraqi labor law, trade unions may conclude collective bargaining agreements. However, there were hardly any unions that became strong enough to secure collective agreements in Iraq.

10. Settlement of labor disputes:—According to Regulation No. 63 for 1934, a labor dispute is defined as: "...any dispute between an employer and five or more workmen concerning work or conditions of employment." The Labor Law of Iraq No. 36 for 1942, makes provisions for the issue of special regulations for settlement of industrial disputes, but no such regulations have yet been issued. In practice the Ministry of Social Affairs seeks to act as a mediator in any dispute that may arise. The Minister of Social Affairs endeavors to settle the reported dispute by conciliation. In case the dispute is not settled by conciliation, the Minister refers the dispute for settlement

37 MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS NOTIFICATION NO. 1 FOR 1946.
to a Board of Arbitration appointed by the Minister and consisting of one or more persons nominated by the employer, and an equal number of persons nominated by the workers. The decision of the Board of Arbitrators is final and enforceable.

11. Strikes:—As far as the question of strikes is concerned, the Labor Law of Iraq contains no specific provision prohibiting strikes. A trade union may be dissolved if it is conducting its affairs so as to, "prejudice the work or the proper performance thereof." Under the Maintenance of Public Peace Law of 1952, all sympathy strikes are considered illegal, and when a strike involves a danger that it will lead to a disturbance of the public peace, a hindrance of transportation or cessation of supplies in general, the government authorities may designate the strike as an "extraordinary" strike, and thereafter any person deemed "dangerous" by the authorities may be assigned a compulsory residence, or forced to cease to reside in any specific place or places.

12. Collaboration between public authorities and unions—No actual machinery exists at present for collaboration at the national level. The labor law provides that worker's associations, "may offer guidance facilitating the application of the law," and provides also for the establishment of general employment agencies, empowering the government to set up tripartite committees for consultation on matters affecting the administration of such

38 Labor Law No. 72 for 1936, Article 28.
39 Ibid., Article 23.
agencies. So far, no such committees appear to have been established. Collaboration at the industry and undertaking level is little developed. A joint committee is understood to exist for the oil industry. There are no Work Councils in Iraq.

C. CONCLUSIONS

Nowadays, if a person makes a comparison between the three groups which compose the lower class; the farmers, the nomads, and the urban workers, he must reach the conclusion that the nomads and the rural workers are lagging far behind the urban workers as far as their social and economic status are concerned. It is true that many factors worked together in favor of the urban workers and helped to put them in a position ahead of the nomads and the farmers. The mere fact that urban workers are living in the cities made it possible for them to be affected more during the last thirty years, by the processes of modernizations, mechanization and industrialization than the other two groups. Moreover, they have the direct concern of politicians, being closer to them. This puts the pressure on the government to discuss their affairs and occasionally produces some reforms. But what was the role of unionism in this development?

Unions played an indispensable role in the career of the workers. They developed a sense of solidarity among the working class. They made it possible for them to gain a feeling of importance, of social entity, and a sense of belonging. They increased their knowledge of their own problems and the world around them. This growing self-consciousness was shown a rights-of-workmen movement in 1944, which demanded a newspaper
an insurance system, and a wage-arbitration board.

The Iraqi worker today no longer puts his thumb print on any paper that is offered to him. He reads, discusses, and makes suggestions, and is not prepared to accept anything unless he is convinced that it is right.

The short life period of unionism in Iraq was due to a large degree to the political situation both national and international. It was difficult for labor, which was largely unorganized, to exert any pressure in order to influence the price and wage policies of the employers. The efforts of the infant labor unions in this respect proved to be hopeless. Moreover, with the absence of a labor party and a genuine labor spokesman in the parliament, there was no way to check the powerful landlords which dominated parliament and opposed progressive labor legislation for fear it might extend to rural workers.

This thesis has shown that Iraq has but recently emerged from the colonial status into the responsibilities of political independence. As a result of this, the practice of democracy is still in its early stages and leaves much to be desired. The government administration and political affairs is prevalent. Moreover, as a result of the semi-feudal social structure, the government is controlled by the landlords. In their narrow and limited outlook the landlords think that any social reform is nothing but a dangerous threat to their wealth and power. Social reform leads to enlightenment which means a demand for improvement. The result of improvement is a better standard of living, which in turn means redistribution of wealth, and this is out of the question as far as the landlord is concerned. Therefore, it is not surprising to find the road of union progress blocked by government opposition.
Turning to the issue of communist influence in Iraq, there are apparently a number of misconceptions in respect to Iraq unionism in its relationships with communism. Some writers and historians on local and international levels apparently view the labor movement in Iraq as part of a communist movement, attribute all labor activities to communism, and say all strikes were organized only for political reasons. One historian writes: "Communism played its part in every strike..."\textsuperscript{40}, and in another place he writes: "...examples were thenceforward to be frequent of the organization of the strikes among workers for political purposes with little regard to their actual grievances."\textsuperscript{41} Another historian states; "Organized urban labor has natural ideological affinities with the Russian system."\textsuperscript{42}

It was declared on many occasions by the governments who succeeded in office, that unions are fertile soil for communism and in encouraging unions, we are inviting communism to our country. Others went to the extreme of using terms communism and unionism interchangeable. These critical judgments are far from the truth and are obviously being made without resorting to scientific research. It is a universal fact that communists always fish in troubled waters. They are always ready to interfere whenever the opportunity presents itself in the form of social, economical, or political maladjustment. Such an opportunity was available in the case of labor in Iraq. Naturally the Communists...

\textsuperscript{40} Longrigg, IRAQ 1900 TO 1950, 353.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 312.
\textsuperscript{42} Kirk, SHORT HISTORY OF THE MIDDLE EAST, 258.
starting working on this case, and they did achieve a degree of success which enabled them to penetrate into the labor movement. However, this success was not enough to control unions and their activities and to label unions with red. So, if the labor cause was exploited by communists and political manipulators, no one can take the freedom to say that the labor movement is a communist movement, and if unions conducted strikes as a last resort to achieve their goals, that does not necessarily mean they are communist. It can be surmised with confidence that the main reason for labor unrest in Iraq is the inadequate social and economic conditions of life.

One must draw the conclusion that the attitude of the present government of Iraq toward unions, rather than discouraging communist influence, instead only encourages communist activities. The government controlled principally by large land owners, and failing to carry out reforms to benefit the people of Iraq as a whole forces the kind of social and political unrest upon which communist agitation thrives. It is an attempt to hide the shortcomings of the present government to blame all unrest and agitation upon the communists. The true solution to the problem is to remove its causes which are depressed and unjust economic condition, and thus avoid its effects.

The people of Iraq are first of all Iraqis, and lastly desirous of being a part of a foreign ideology such as communism. Communism has merely concentrated more than other foreign ideologies upon exploiting the failings, weaknesses, and corruption already existing within the country. It thus often appears stronger, and sometimes eventually becomes stronger, that other foreign ideologies better intentioned but less skillful at exploiting a country's
weaknesses.

D. THE FUTURE OF UNIONISM IN IRAQ

It may be interesting to speculate on what the future has in store for unionism in Iraq.

Today there are no unions in Iraq, and the government is in charge of labor affairs. In its efforts as a substitute for unions, the government is trying very hard to fill the vacuum which is left by the absence of unions, by inaugurating a series of labor reforms. The first among these and the most important was the passage of the Social Security Law No. 27 for 1956. This law provides for the following benefits:

(a) Old age benefit
(b) Permanent invalidity benefit.
(c) Survivors benefit.
(d) Marriage benefit.
(e) Maternity benefit.
(f) Death benefit (funeral, burial, shroud).
(g) Sickness benefit.
(h) Unemployment benefit.

Although this law provides limited financial assistance, it can still be considered a good step toward social reforms. Considering its recent passage, its effect is still to be seen. Another reform which is worthwhile to mention is the establishment of the labor court early in 1957 to deal with labor disputes. Other plans which are on the list of the Ministry of Social Affairs are: a new labor law, establishment of employment agencies, and a plan for technical training centers.

With all these recent government attempts to better the conditions of labor, the question arises, how far is the government a successful substi-
tute for unions? It is difficult to give a definite answer, because freedom of association is not in practice today where unions can operate, so a comparison cannot be made. Also, because of the occasional existence of martial law, it is difficult to tell precisely what the reaction is of the workers in their choice between the government and the unions. They are afraid to state their opinions.

My opinion in this respect is that the present situation cannot endure for a long time, and the government cannot take the place of the unions, because on the one hand, the government does not provide for the workers a sense of belonging or a feeling of importance as in the case of the union. On the other hand, the worker's bitter experience with the government in the past, has caused the government to be looked upon by the workers with suspicion and mistrust.

To sum up, during the past thirty years Iraq experienced significant social changes as evidenced by the spread of education, the growth of industrialization, the modernization of agriculture, and above all the increasing awareness of rights among the mass of people. But these developments, creditable as they are fall far short of what is needed to reconstruct Iraq society.

The crux of the problem may be stated thus: will the government be able to persuade or force the feudal lords to give up some of their privileges in favor of liberal reforms? The future seems to be more elusive than either the government or the landlords are willing to admit, for if they do not permit social evolution, social revolution will be inevitable.
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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Ramzi Franqul has been read and approved by three members of the faculty of the Institute of Social and Industrial Relations.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Social and Industrial Relations.

February 10, 1958

Signature of Adviser