

Different Drummer, Same Parade
Britain's Palestine Labour Department, 1942-1948

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines a longstanding object of scholarly inquiry -- the degree and nature of Palestine's distinction from other settler colonies -- in light of two developing fields. Some historians now examine the social history of Palestine; others, twentieth-century British colonial theory and practice. The topic of labour administration in the British mandatory government -- the work of the Palestine Labour Department from 1942 to 1948 -- brings together the two perspectives.

The thesis first surveys pressures on British colonial policy during the interwar period and the responses of the Colonial Office and colonial administrators. In particular, policies and programs reflected a growing importance accorded to colonial workers, both settlers and so-called "natives," as the approach of World War II revealed Britain's dependence on colonial stability to protect vital material and strategic resources. As it places the Palestine mandate in this context and analyzes the operation of the Palestine Labour Department, the thesis refers to the example of Northern Rhodesia, another colony with highly organized settler workers and a coalescing "native" workforce. Drawing mainly on British and mandate government records, the thesis presents the department's aims, achievements, and deficiencies in light of support and hindrance from external political and economic forces and other parts of government.

Examination of one protracted and ultimately uncompleted project, an attempt to set up a system of government-run labour exchanges, provides a detailed example of the strengths and vulnerabilities, strategies and tactics, of the agencies and interests that shaped labour administration in the mandate.

The thesis argues that the Palestine Labour Department shared in the pressures from government and external forces that commonly affected contemporary colonial labour departments. At the same time, the distinctive characteristics of Palestine and its workforce required a labour department that differed in composition from its counterparts. That difference in experience and outlook made Palestine's labour agency a forerunner of the social service agencies of the succeeding phase of colonial administration.

Keywords Palestine; mandate; British empire; colonial labour

Subject Terms Palestine -- history -- 1917-1948; Palestine -- politics and government; Palestine -- economic policy; Palestinian Arabs

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In memory of Bill Cleveland
with great appreciation

For Jack, always

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Contents

Approval	ii
Abstract	iii
Dedication	v
Acknowledgements	vi
Contents	vii
Chapter 1. Introduction	1
The Argument	2
Significance of the Topic	4
Assumptions	5
Foundations in the Literature	7
Terms	12
Archival Sources	13
Notes	14
Chapter 2. British Colonial Policy in the Interwar Period	16
An African Analogy	16
Pressures on British Colonial Policy	19
New Political and Economic Policies	28
Notes	38
Chapter 3. Colonial Labour Policy: A Response to New Conditions	45
Recognition of a Stable Native Working Class	48
Turning to Native Labour Organization	59
Stagnant Policies: Settlers	67
Notes	77
Chapter 4. Palestine as an Instance of Colonial Labour Administration, 1920-1940	85
Distinctions in Situation: The Natives	86
Distinctions in Situation: The Settlers	97
Similarities in Administration, 1920-1940	107
Notes	117
Chapter 5. Palestine Acquires a Labour Department, 1940-1942	127
Avoiding the Issue, 1935-1940	128
Settler Workers: An Urgent Need for Labour Administration	130
Struggle for a New Agency	134
The Labour Adviser	136
Notes	159
Chapter 6. Palestine's Modern Agency	166
Notes	184

Chapter 7. Palestine's Model Colonial Labour Department:	
Initial Successes, 1942-1943	189
Everyday Tasks	190
The Model Department	201
Effective Labour Pacification	203
Arab Organizing, 1942-1945	219
Notes	234
Chapter 8. Growing Obstacles	
to Modern Labour Supervision, 1944-1947	245
The "Difficult Period"	245
The Workers Divided	248
The Rulers Divided: on Native Unions	250
The Rulers Divided: on Public Employee Rights	258
The Rulers Divided: on Economic Planning	267
Limitations of the Labour Department	272
Notes	281
Chapter 9. The Struggle for Labour Exchanges, 1940-1947	289
Importance of Job Allocation	290
A Five-Year Suspense Story	303
Forerunners	304
Department Initiative, Mandate Support, 1943-1945	307
Detention in the Colonial Office	317
Persistent Advocacy	322
Employment Exchanges or Resettlement Register?	327
Notes	333
Chapter 10. The Palestine Labour Department:	
How Exceptional?	344
Same Parade: Obstacles and Goals	
of Colonial Labour Departments	344
Different Drummer: The Modern Attitude	350
An Unresolved Struggle	352
Past Failure, Future Success	357
Notes	362
Sources Consulted	363
Books and Articles	363
Archival Sources	376

Chapter 1 Introduction

The British officials who established a labour department for Palestine in 1942 knew it had better be good. An exceptional challenge faced it: to ensure that no labour troubles disrupted colonial stability or the war effort as Germany's Afrika Korps advanced towards Cairo and Italian air raids reached Haifa. In this endeavour, it would confront not only local workers with inconveniently little organization, but local workers with inconveniently much: politically mobilized settlers. Accordingly, the Colonial Office and government of Palestine set out to recruit an exceptional staff.

By many standards, their enterprise succeeded.

Palestine served the British military as a base throughout the Middle East campaign. In barely five years of existence, moreover, the labour department saw hundreds of disputes resolved through arbitration and educated thousands of workers and managers about workplace safety and health standards. The Colonial Office distributed copies of the department's quarterly bulletins and annual reports as examples of excellence for other colonial labour departments.

The British government did not, however, place its resources, financial or political, where its expressed hopes were. Like other social services across the empire, the Palestine Labour Department suffered throughout its existence from lack of staff and lack of funding. Like other labour departments, it faced metropolitan political and

economic limitations. Further difficulties arose from governments' established assumptions about workers -- and their further assumptions about the workers they called "native." Colonial labour departments could not depend on government support for their initiatives to help workers -- even when these initiatives were fashioned to serve the governments' own best interests.

The Argument

This thesis argues that although the Palestine Labour Department was designed to confront a settler worker population of unusual sophistication, its aims, its problems, and its resources fit easily within the outlines of labour departments in other settler colonies. Further, its failures either matched those of its counterparts or became absolute only because of the sudden end of British rule in Palestine. Specifically, despite having international political resources, the Histadrut -- the conglomerate which governed the settlers' major enterprises -- did not wield power that differed in effect from that of strategically placed settler-worker organizations in other colonies.

In support of this argument, the thesis first explores international and empire-wide factors bearing on the British government's decision to foster colonial labour departments, as well as the local factors that suggested the Palestine Labour Department's distinctive composition. It considers the Labour Department's work in the context of political and

economic factors bearing on other agencies of the British and Palestine governments as well as on the department itself. To provide perspective, it from time to time examines analogous factors operating in other British settler colonies. In particular, Northern Rhodesia, a colony in Southern Africa whose situation might be expected to contrast most sharply with that of the "developed" Fertile Crescent, will furnish a comparative example.

As a case study, the thesis analyzes in depth the interplay of common and exceptional colonial forces in one particular project of the Labour Department. From its formation until the closing days of the mandate, the department attempted to establish a system of government-run labour exchanges to bring jobs and job-seekers together. The operation of labour exchanges seems a routine task compared to the handling of strikes, lockouts, and revolts. To British colonial labour administrators, however, exchanges were of vital importance as mechanisms of economic and social control. By 1943, nearly a dozen colonial labour departments -- many, like Palestine's, in their first years of operation -- had established such agencies. In some settler colonies, settler workers raised no opposition to public exchanges: they had found contractual or legislative means to exclude native workers from desirable jobs. In Palestine, however, settler worker organizations chose to exert their full strength against establishment of public job agencies open

to "native" and non-unionized settler workers. There, the Labour Department's attempt to set up government-run exchanges never succeeded.

The thesis acknowledges that several common characteristics of British colonial administration, as well as forces common to settler colonies, militated against the establishment of exchanges and that some of these were particularly strong in Palestine. It argues, however, that these forces never proved insurmountable. Palestine's participation in common colonial conditions and its exceptionally strong settler community achieved only delay, which political factors then rendered permanent. The collapse of civil order in 1947 ultimately determined the outcome of the drive to establish labour exchanges. The effort was still proceeding when civil war cut it short; counterfactual speculation on its likely success or failure in different circumstances would be pointless.¹

Significance of the Topic

The myth of Palestine's exceptionality endures in shifting forms. The very general original, which scholars, notably Roger Owen, discredited decades ago, today continues to inform reportage and diplomacy regarding Israel.² In other contexts, the institutional strength of the pre-1948 settler community has provided slightly more sophisticated elaborations of the original. One variety of this enduring myth of Zionist invincibility concerns the Histadrut. An examination

of forces affecting Britain's Palestine labour policy casts doubt on the assumption that the strong organization and external resources of Palestine's settler population gave its worker organizations vastly greater influence than counterparts in other colonies.

In addition, analysis of the strands of power and opinion affecting the Palestine Labour Department will beneficially complicate some common views of the ways in which British colonial governments arrived at decisions. Few attentive scholars now accept the idea that "Britain," or "the British government," or even "Westminster" carried out a seamless policy in the colonies (or, for that matter, at home). Ways in which the various interests within government struggled among themselves to establish policy continue, however, to require elaboration. This thesis analyzes contentions within and between the London and colonial governments over basic standpoints and policies concerning native and settler workforces. In so doing, it brings attention to the growing influence in colonial policy making of modern labour relations advocates, part of a rapidly widening range of technical "experts."

Assumptions

The thesis assumes the accuracy of two crucial (and hardly controversial) economic suppositions. First, by the end of World War I, Britain's government could no longer find the money to administer the empire in even its customary hap-

hazard way. The Great Depression, the Second World War, and the demands of domestic recovery then successively worsened the economic situation. Second, in spending what money it could secure for colonial administration, the Colonial Office commonly yielded to colonial governments' pressure to provide what seemed necessary for the maintenance of civil order rather than insist on improving social services.

Palestine's wage earners (especially non-organized Arabs) from the beginning of the mandate in 1922, and the Labour Department itself from its formation in 1942, suffered from both London's parsimony and administrators' unbalanced priorities. By the late 1930s, the programmatic emphasis at both levels of government was shifting in favour of social services, but by this time the money to pay for colonial programs of any kind was steadily decreasing. The indigence and the priorities of the London and Jerusalem governments constituted the framework within which arguments about Labour Department policies were conducted.

Four further assumptions, equally uncontroversial, specifically concern the process that produces government decisions. First, the beliefs of government officials were shaped by their backgrounds and experiences and, in turn, shaped the positions they advocated. Second, officials made their decisions within limits set by political and bureaucratic policy decisions, by budgetary priorities, and by both organized and unorganized external political pressures.

Third, officials reported the events and mustered the testimony and pressure that they thought would secure the decisions they favored. Finally, in the colonies as in the metropole and internationally, the viewpoints and interests of the political party or parties in power affected, though they did not solely determine, decisions.

Foundations in the Literature

Several common practices have limited the scholarly examination of British labour administration in the Palestine Mandate. These concerned assumptions about the mandate government, emphasis on political rather than social history, and preoccupation with the settler community. Studies of colonial labour policies have concentrated on formal colonies. More recently, however, new approaches to analysis of colonialism and state action have opened ways to deal with these topics more productively.

Both political and social historians have generally dismissed the British government of Palestine either as a simple instrument of the London government or as a battleground of pro-Arab and pro-Zionist officials in London, in Jerusalem, and in the administrative districts.³ These oversimplifications conceal the location of the Palestine government among several dozen British colonial governments with common assumptions, concerns, and internal tensions.

Early studies of Palestine's Arab and Jewish workers examined labour issues as factors in political contentions.

Gershon Shafir's 1989 work, Land, Labor, and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882-1914, overturned the assumption that the ideology and institutions of the settler community grew naturally from European socialist thought. Shafir argued that local conditions had a major impact; notably, the availability of low-paid Arab workers was a basic impetus for development of the Labor Zionism that dominated Zionist political thought for most of the century.⁴

The pioneering work on Arab wage earners themselves was the (unpublished) 1977 thesis of Rachelle Leah Taqqu. Her "Arab Labor in Mandate Palestine"⁵ deployed abundant archival material on the employment and organizations of Arab workers. Taqqu approaches trade unionism as a disruptive and ultimately destructive force in Arab society, and the Labour Department staff as a locally ignorant group of British expatriates assembled to enforce government restraint of the Histadrut. This stance reflects a part of the record; it is also the position which the Histadrut itself expressed at the time the department began operation. More basically, it treats Palestinian Arab workers' history as relevant primarily in its impact on Arab political history.

By the 1990s, the developments of recent decades in social, specifically labour, history were taking hold in Middle East studies. In Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish Workers in Mandate Palestine, 1906-1948,⁶ Zachary Lockman took an approach unprecedented in studies involving

Zionist institutions by examining the mutual effects of Arab and Jewish labour organizations and workers. In doing so, he consistently took account of the changing aims, beliefs, and reactions of Jewish and Arab historical actors. As for the Labour Department, however, it figures in the discussion primarily as it contributed to Arab unionization -- an important but limited part of its work.

In her Constructing Boundaries: Jewish and Arab Workers in Mandatory Palestine,⁷ Deborah Bernstein analyzed factors in the growth of economic and ideological resentment between Jewish and Arab workers in Haifa. Bernstein's study concluded with the firm establishment of this resentment, which she located in the early 1940s. The book therefore does not explicitly discuss the work of the Labour Department. It does, however, provide insight into the dynamics of the situation the department would find in Haifa.

As major previous writers on mandate-era labour have found the Labour Department peripheral to their interests, students of the Colonial Office and of British colonial government have neglected colonial labour departments as a group. For more than three decades, the conspicuous exception was Labour in the Tropical Territories of the Commonwealth by B. C. Roberts.⁸ Roberts traced the development of trade unions and of labour law and labour administration, emphasizing the activities and influence of government and external labour institutions. Then, in 1996, Frederick

Cooper's extensively researched Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa⁹ opened up the examination of sources of change in colonial labour policies. Cooper, like Lockman, took account of the impact of supposedly powerless groups, examining the mutual effects of colonized and colonizers. He also took care to avoid any assumption that events moved smoothly in directions that only later became evident. Although Cooper deals with Africa only, some policies and practices he analyzes offer a comparative perspective for Palestine.

Since the decolonization of the British empire, scholars, politicians, and the interested public have debated, in increasingly sophisticated terms, the merits of the colonial system as a whole and of administration in individual colonies. This debate has developed to a point where many scholars seek to place the decisions they study in the context of the information and opinion available to those who made the decisions.

That effort is related to a broader shift in approach. Recent renewed attention to the effect of state action has signalled no return to reporting policy statements as though they automatically established the conditions they envisioned, or to approaching a complex of government agencies and officials as though they operated by consensus. Rather, some scholars have examined the state in light of the social and economic forces that affect official decisions and ac-

tions, unraveling the competing interests and convictions of its constituent agents.

Historians of colonialism and the imperial state, in particular, have used this perspective in analyzing both the metropole and the colonies themselves. An early investigator of the local limits of colonial power in regard to labour was Ian Henderson, in his 1972 study of the mutual effects of political interests and labour policy in Northern Rhodesia in the first half of the twentieth century.¹⁰ Anne Phillips, in The Enigma of Colonialism, emphasized the limitations that local land and labour conditions imposed on colonialist power in West Africa.¹¹ Elizabeth Thompson, in Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon, traced the interactions of various state agencies with social groups distinguished on intersecting lines of class and gender.¹²

Recent scholars have used similar methods to dissect policy making in the Palestine mandate. At the turn of the twenty-first century, Niall O'Murchu compared Palestine and Ireland with regard to the fiscal and political pressures, both local and metropolitan, that influenced British policy decisions.¹³ Martin Bunton has examined the reasons and rationalizations of administrators attempting to impose metropolitan concepts of land ownership and use in face of existing local practices and wavering official commitment.¹⁴ These scholars examine economic and ideological as well as

political aspects of policy development. To date, however, no one has dissected the interactions that produced Palestine's labour policy -- mainly those among the labour advocates in Palestine's labour department, the politically oriented colonial secretariat and Colonial Office staff, and outside groups that sought to influence them. That is the task of this thesis.

Terms

In this discussion I have chosen, for what I consider defensible reasons, to use several terms that are generally outmoded or of dubious accuracy. In referring to the previously established inhabitants of territories taken over by European colonizers, I use the term "natives." By employing the colonizers' original patronizing and dismissive term, I intend to emphasize both the subject peoples' prior occupancy of the land and common British attitudes toward them during the period under study. Regarding Palestine in particular, I refer to the Arab and Jewish residents as a group as "Palestinians"; the Arab population, now known as "Palestinians," as "Arabs" or "Palestinian Arabs"; and the adherents of Zionist agencies and organizations and their policies -- but not the Jewish population of Palestine in the aggregate -- as "Zionists."

In relation to job classifications, I use the terms "skilled," "semi-skilled," and "unskilled," even though these are purely arbitrary and derive more from racial,

class, or other irrelevant categories than from any inherent requirements of job performance. South African labour specialist Julius Lewin suggested this function for the terms in 1941, when he pointed out,

By policy all "skilled work" becomes the monopoly of organized white men, who secure high wages for it, while unorganized Africans are confined to "unskilled work" for which the wages are very low. The dividing line between skilled and unskilled workers is thus made to coincide with the colour line.¹⁵

In discussing the administration of Palestine, I refer to the territory as a "colony," simply because it fell under the jurisdiction of the Colonial Office, which in most regards administered it like a colony, although within limits set by its relationship to the League of Nations mandatory system.¹⁶ I refer to Palestine as a "mandate" only where I discuss its mandate status or the mandate government in particular.

Archival Sources

The records consulted are almost exclusively British. In the UK Public Records Office (PRO), Kew, the major files consulted concerned Palestine and the Social Services Department; a smaller group dealt with Northern Rhodesia. At the Rhodes House Library, Oxford, the papers of A. H. Couzens and of the Fabian Colonial Bureau were extremely useful. At the Middle East Centre, St. Antony's College, Oxford, some holdings in the private papers collections cast light on issues affecting labour. Papers of the Trades Union Congress at the

Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick in Coventry provided illuminating correspondence regarding Palestine. The British Library holds publications of the Northern Rhodesia Labour Department. Some records of the Palestine Labour Department itself and of other British agencies dealing with related issues are housed in the Israel State Archives, Jerusalem.

Other records consulted come from the yishuv. The Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem, include relevant correspondence and reports concerning labour during the mandate. The Archives of Labour (Machon Lavon), Tel Aviv, contain some correspondence between Histadrut and Labour Department officials.

Notes

¹In a broader context, the elimination of Palestine's Labour Department and its projects upon British withdrawal differed from the usual disposition of Britain's colonial social services. Upon independence, the agents, methods, direction, and extent of social services came into the hands of the leaders of the new state -- commonly members of what had been the colonized population. Israel was among the few former colonies where settlers, not "natives," took control. The leaders of this new state felt no need for British social service structures; they had decades of experience in providing most social services for their own community.

²Roger Owen, "Introduction," Studies in the Economic and Social History of Palestine in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (London: Macmillan Press for St. Antony's College, Oxford, 1928), 1-9.

³One example is Bernard Wasserstein, The British in Palestine: The Mandatory Government and the Arab-Jewish Conflict, 1917-1929, second edition (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991).

⁴New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989. Shafir draws on George Fredrickson's classification of settler colonies in

White Supremacy: A Comparative Study of American and South African History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

⁵Rachelle Leah Taggu, "Arab Labor in Mandatory Palestine, 1920-1948." (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1977).

⁶Zachary Lockman, Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine, 1906-1948 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

⁷Deborah S. Bernstein, Constructing Boundaries: Jewish and Arab Workers in Mandatory Palestine (Albany: State University of New York, 2000).

⁸B. C. Roberts, Labour in the Tropical Territories of the Commonwealth (London: London School of Economics and Bell, 1964).

⁹Frederick Cooper, Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa (New York: Cambridge, 1996).

¹⁰Ian Henderson, "Labour and Politics in Northern Rhodesia, 1900-1953: A Study in the Limits of Colonial Power" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1972).

¹¹Anne Phillips, The Enigma of Colonialism: British Policy in West Africa (London: James Currey, 1989).

¹²Elizabeth Thompson, Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

¹³Niall O'Murchu, "Labor, the State, and Ethnic Conflict: A Comparative Study of British Rule in Palestine (1920-1939) and Northern Ireland (1972-1994)" (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2000).

¹⁴Martin Bunton, Colonial Land Policies in Palestine, 1917-1936 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

¹⁵Julius Lewin, The Colour Bar in the Copperbelt (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations for Southern African Committee on Industrial Relations, 1941), 6.

¹⁶In Mandates and Empire: The League of Nations and Africa, 1914-1931 (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1999), Michael Callahan discusses ways in which the mandate system changed the colonial powers that took on mandatory responsibilities.

Chapter 2 British Colonial Policy in the Interwar Period

Between 1937 and 1941, the number of British-ruled territories with labour officers or labour departments tripled, reaching a total of thirty-three.¹ The sudden development expressed a new empire-wide concern for labour relations, driven by changes in the nature and content of British colonial policy since the end of the First World War. Those changes and the pressures that helped to create them are the primary subjects of this chapter. At the outset, however, I will explain the choice of a comparative case which I will use, in this and succeeding chapters, to illuminate some commonalities and distinctions of Palestine's situation within the colonial empire.

An African Analogy

During the interwar period, British colonial policy took on increasing coherence. The Colonial Office had been organized geographically, approaching each dependency -- or, at most, region -- as a separate entity, whose concerns were related only incidentally to those of others. Now, facing comparable economic and social upheavals in widely diverse colonies, officials acknowledged a need to address topics like economics and welfare across the colonial empire as a whole. Increasingly, the colonial secretary addressed requests for information and suggestions for action to most or all of the territories under the Office's jurisdiction -- that is, to

most British colonies and mandates other than India and Iraq.

Even as empire-wide policy coherence grew, officials were increasingly preoccupied with the problems of administering Britain's vast holdings in Africa. Bureaucrats considered some southeast Asian and West Indian colonies to be more "advanced." In every territory, local situations and pressures continued to give any general colonial policy a distinct form and pace. Yet decisions concerning African issues almost inevitably affected overall colonial policies as they developed.²

Because of the importance of African concerns in Colonial Office thinking, this thesis from time to time refers to the administration of one specific African colony -- Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) -- which offers several grounds for comparison with Palestine.³ Distinctions between the two territories are obvious. Local conditions differed between indigenous cultures based on African and on Arab heritage and between economic structures based on mining and on farming and industry. British policy distinguished between a territory designated as primarily in trust for its natives and one explicitly designated, at least in part, for settlers. As for influence on policy, Africans had found well-organized advocates in London since the founding of the antislavery movement; Palestine's Arabs had few and scattered supporters in the metropole. Yet similarities, less

conspicuous, also affected the way Britain administered the colony and the mandate.

Both Palestine and Northern Rhodesia were among Britain's last territorial acquisitions, coming under British rule at a time when colonial practice was adjusting to an evolution in international codes of conduct.⁴ The former company territory of Northern Rhodesia brought into its new existence as a British protectorate the legislative body that Palestine was never to achieve.⁵ In contrast, however, the two territories entered the empire with similar administrative structures -- the executive and secretariat. On the individual level, several officials brought Palestinian experience to their work in Northern Rhodesia.⁶

More significantly, in both territories influential bodies forcefully represented the interests of settlers. Because its ecology was inhospitable to large-scale European farming, Northern Rhodesia differed from Palestine in being set aside primarily for natives, with a small group of European tobacco farmers. As the copper industry stabilized, however, white workers began to think of themselves as permanent residents -- settlers -- rather than as expatriate sojourners.⁷ Beginning in the 1930s, a strong nonfarm settler community arose. The settler communities of both colonies were well placed to address their concerns to government: in Northern Rhodesia, through the Legislative Council; in Palestine, through the community's official rep-

representative, the Jewish Agency. In both colonies, settlers pressed for increased immigration so as to enlarge their communities. In each colony, too, powerful organizations were to urge the demands of settler workers in particular.

The commonalities of structure and interest groups in the two territories naturally favoured similarities of policy and program. In addition, however, the administrations of both territories kept pace with the same evolutions in British colonial policy -- evolutions which the rest of this chapter will examine.

Pressures on British Colonial Policy

The policy changes of the interwar period were, in part, responses to two new pressures: changed international political attitudes and heightened economic stringency. The elaboration of social services -- such as the supervision of labour relations -- formed an important part of the Colonial Office response to these pressures.

In the political sphere, the first policy shifts were formal gestures made after World War I. The effects of these gestures then worked inward for the next quarter-century. The makers of colonial policy learned to express themselves in the terms that international consensus was rapidly coming to require; gradually, the substance of the policies took on a degree of conformity to those terms.

At the end of World War I, colonial policy expressed the strategic thinking which, since the era of the Congress

of Berlin, had preoccupied the foreign ministries of Europe's "great powers" and of aspirants to "great power" status. British authorities in, or concerned with, colonies were primarily interested in whether colonial policies were in Britain's economic and political interests. Politicians considered the effects on strategic competition with France or Germany. The concerns of British manufacturers, traders, and investors, both in Britain and in the colonies, weighed heavily. As for the interests of the colonized peoples, British reformers both defined and advocated for these, insofar as anyone did so.

In line with this geopolitical tradition, the British government legitimated by treaty its military occupation of the territory that became Palestine. It first secured international permission to hold the territory at the 1920 San Remo Conference, which allocated among European powers the former Ottoman holdings. In 1922 it confirmed its title through the League of Nations -- in composition a latter-day Concert of Europe, modified to reflect the postwar distribution of power. Through the mandate system, the League gave Britain and France (or, in a few cases, lesser Allied powers) the authority to govern former German colonies and Ottoman provinces. The League's allocation favored Britain's strategic and economic claims in Palestine against France's counterclaims; in the case of Syria, French interests prevailed. This was in essence the diplomacy of the old school.

Just as British negotiators shaped the substance of the Palestine mandate as an extension of prewar geostrategic contests, however, the mandate form typified postwar international accords. The phrasing of League of Nations mandates reflected the then-current popular enthusiasm for Woodrow Wilson's concept of "the self-determination of peoples." Article 22 of the League Covenant designated for mandate status those former colonies of defeated powers "which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world." The "well-being and development" of these peoples were "a sacred trust of civilization." The mandatory powers were thus charged to serve the peoples of the mandated territories as trustees, educating them to govern themselves, albeit in a future so distant as to be imperceptible.⁸

The League required His Majesty's Government, along with the other mandatories, to report annually and in detail on the progress of each of its wards towards economic and political independence. Receiving the reports, and setting questions to the mandatory powers, was the League's Permanent Mandates Commission (PMC). The PMC's requirements were hardly stringent: in two decades of operation, the body rejected only one report. This relaxed approach was consonant with the Commission's composition: although the League appointed the nine members as individuals, they came from countries which were mandatories or colonial metropolises.

Nonetheless, the PMC did periodically ask questions that required at least the formulation of excuses. The long-serving British member, Frederick Lugard, was among those posing such questions -- particularly to his own government.⁹

In the official views prevalent among the colonial powers, the interests in play had changed little, yet the rhetoric of the peace conferences and the establishment of the mandate system clearly required the use of new language. British policy makers realized that they needed to present an image of colonial government as a responsible trustee, not only for territories held under the new mandate form, but for existing colonies and protectorates.

Such an image was ready to hand. In 1921, as the League handed out its mandates, Sir Frederick Lugard, a former governor of Nigeria already known to both policy makers and the British public as a theorist of colonial administration, published The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa. In this work, Lugard enunciated the idea that colonial powers were responsible for developing the resources of their colonies for the benefit not only of the rest of the world (in effect, of Europe and North America), but of the peoples of those colonies. Europe sought in Africa the benefit both of its own industrial classes and of natives "in their progress to a higher plane."¹⁰

Two years later, Lugard (by then Lord Lugard) became the British member of the League's Permanent Mandates Com-

mission, a post he would retain until 1936. In his new position, he upheld the principle of the dual mandate, pressing London with some success to adopt Africa policies consonant with trusteeship.¹¹ By the mid-1930s an advocate of the new doctrine could argue that the terms of the mandates, along with the PMC's interpretations of those terms, had brought about "a definite reorientation in the theory of colonial government." Any colonial power claiming to recognize a responsibility for trusteeship in the territories it controlled would now, she believed, have to respect the standards the PMC was setting.¹²

Increasingly, then, as the rhetoric and new political structures of the Great War settlements took effect, both the Colonial Office and the administrators charged with carrying out the British mandates found themselves balancing between the old and new ideologies of colonial policy. In the course of the interwar period, political and economic changes in Europe and in the empire itself would make old-style colonialism increasingly unaffordable politically, as well as fiscally. Whether or not British policy makers wished it, the Wilsonian form of the mandates as preparation for self-determination gradually transformed the colonial substance. As this transformation progressed, it would make the expansion of social services in colonies -- including, as we shall see, the establishment of labour departments -- not only conceivable, but necessary.

At the end of the 1930s, with the approach of the Second World War, yet another political influence came to bear on colonial social policy. The British government saw no hope of defeating the Axis powers without the help of the United States. Although the isolationist forces that had precluded U.S. membership in the League of Nations remained powerful, President Franklin Roosevelt found ways to provide some of the assistance that Britain required. U.S. aid began to arrive, in the form first of Lend-Lease shipments and eventually of active military participation.

Along with the aid, however, came pressure. Despite its own occupation of the Philippines, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and numerous smaller territories, the United States until the end of the Second World War enunciated a strong anti-colonialist stance. This position its representatives argued in international forums such as the planning meetings for the United Nations. They also pressed the point in bilateral discussions, such as the shipboard consultation between Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill that, in August 1941, produced the Atlantic Charter. Churchill immediately assured Parliament that the Charter's promise of postwar self-determination was meant to refer only to Nazi-occupied territories in Europe -- certainly not to the British empire.¹³ The U.S. administration, backed by the weight of Britain's existing debt and future needs, insisted that the empire was included.

Given these varied external political pressures, the maintenance of the empire required the inclusion of social, economic, and even political development among Britain's enunciated aims for its dependent territories. Further, it required some evidence of an intention to carry out these new aims. The dependencies' colonial status now had to be treated as temporary, even though decolonization still appeared to most policy makers as at least generations away.

Along with international politics, the international economy influenced the decisions of Britain's colonial policy makers. Economic changes affected both government budgets and definitions of government responsibility. By the time the League of Nations language for expressing colonial relationships penetrated the sphere of administrative practices, the Great Depression was putting further downward pressure on colonial budgets. Colonial governments cut staffing wherever they could; often, the cuts they considered acceptable affected their fledgling social service agencies.¹⁴

In Britain, the Depression both revealed and increased the needs of the working class for social services, forcing re-examination of government responsibilities. The Conservative-led National Government vigorously denied any obligation to protect citizens against the worsening effects of poverty.¹⁵ Even so, some national and local government agencies responded to the pressure of demonstrations and

public opinion.¹⁶ Spending on social services crept upward.¹⁷ More significantly, the consciousness of widespread need awakened during the Depression was to find expression in the 1942 Beveridge Report. This blueprint for the postwar welfare state then furnished arguments to advocates of both metropolitan and colonial social services.

The government's newly perceived responsibilities towards citizens, joined with its acknowledged League of Nations responsibilities to the peoples of the colonial empire, began to affect perceptions -- both within government and among the public -- of the government's economic and social role in the colonies. The government had long accepted a duty to foster (with as little cost as possible to the British taxpayer) the endowment of colonies with roads, railroads, and ports. These were designed, not to develop the local societies and economies, but to ease the export of raw materials and import of manufactured goods for the profit of British settlers, traders, and manufacturers.¹⁸ Some government advisers and influential groups now began to believe that the government had not only new obligations to citizens at home, but at least some analogous responsibilities for the welfare of colonized peoples. By 1939, according to the Fabian Colonial Bureau, the concept of trusteeship was clearly obsolete. Colonial responsibility went far beyond maintaining order, protecting human rights, preserving native institutions, and dispensing justice.¹⁹ New in-

formation, and new phenomena, had given force to arguments that the government must spend money on social programs if it were to maintain the claim that British rule benefited the peoples of the colonies -- or even, in some cases, to preserve Britain's actual control over those peoples.

Official investigations in the late 1930s had made clear that alarmingly high proportions of the populations of British colonies were immersed in poverty and had only severely limited access to nutritious food or to Western-style health care or education. Already, the colonized themselves were forcefully expressing their recognition of the injustices and deprivations that the studies now revealed to the metropole. A wave of strikes, riots, and demonstrations began in Trinidad in 1934 and swept through the West Indies the following year, spreading to Africa and Southeast Asia by 1937.²⁰ These disturbances took the greater effect on official thinking because bureaucrats expected striking workers in colonies (or in Britain) to become violent.

When a Royal Commission on the West Indies delivered its report in January 1940, the government published only the recommendations. It suppressed the commission's findings, which seemed likely to elicit severe domestic and international criticism, for the duration of the war.²¹ Despite this precaution, information about colonial living conditions continued to spread, and colonial unrest persisted.

In September 1939, events in Europe gave urgency to the arguments of the modernizers. Hitler's army invaded Poland; Britain declared war on Germany. The empire became beyond question not merely important, but essential to Britain, both economically and strategically. Colonial economies -- and, even more, colonial loyalties -- were crucial to the new, vigorous war effort. Various colonies could, if willing and able, provide raw materials, troops, bases, and supply lines. Colonial social programs, vital for good relations with colonized peoples, took on intense interest for the London government.

The combination of colonial upheaval and international crisis gave urgency to the political and economic pressures that had been accumulating throughout the interwar period. In response, gradual and inconspicuous changes in Britain's colonial theory and practice became rapid and apparent. In this context of urgent reform, most of Britain's colonial labour departments would come into being.

New Political and Economic Policies

Faced with a novel and alarming situation, conservative officials found new concepts of colonial rule increasingly difficult to withstand. British policy makers -- in the cabinet, in Parliament, and in the ministries -- expressed doubts about previously dominant assumptions. Colonial Office bureaucrats found it necessary to endorse new goals for colonial administration: raising colonial standards of

living and preparing colonials (whether native or settler) for independence, albeit in what they still assumed would be the very remote future.²² The new aims naturally required the consideration of changes in policy. Some officials began advocating alternatives to two firmly established principles of colonial administration: political "indirect rule" and fiscal self-sufficiency.

Britain's practice of "indirect rule" -- broadly, colonial rule through cooperative native dignitaries -- had spread with Britain's claims to African territories in the late nineteenth century; in the early twentieth, Frederick Lugard aggressively popularized it as a system through his governorships in Nigeria and his later writings.²³ British administrators favoured this mode of domination wherever they found, or could establish, indigenous rulers who appeared securely seated, pliable, and at least somewhat palatable to British tastes. In Palestine, the pattern took two forms: support for the establishment of village mukhtars and reliance on urban notables.

The expressed aim of indirect rule in Africa, as anthropologist (and advocate) Lucy Mair presented it in 1936, was to make Africans "better Africans." This aim she contrasted with the French colonizers' expressed aim of making Africans "better Europeans."²⁴ Mair ridiculed the assimilationist assumption that all societies develop along

the same course.²⁵ African societies must develop on their own path -- though not without careful guidance.

The reasoned rejection of the ideas not only that all societies were progressing, but that all progressed on the same path, could have encouraged colonial administrators to develop greater appreciation for the societies in which they worked. In practice, it often allowed them to blame unrest on innovation rather than oppression. After a 1935 strike in Northern Rhodesia's Copper Belt, the official Commission of Enquiry took this line, attributing the unrest to the "breaking down of native custom and authority by industrialization" and "insufficient contact between District Officers and the natives in the [mine] compounds." The workers' expressed grievances, in contrast, concerned taxes, pay, rations, and disrespectful treatment.²⁶

Indirect rule, as Mair presented it, set a high standard: benefit to Africans was to be the criterion both for allowing Europeans to establish enterprises and for tampering with African institutions. Governing through native authorities, colonial administrators were to take care neither to make puppets of their collaborators nor to give them unconditional support. To actually accomplish this, Mair noted, they would need to understand the interrelationships among the parts of African society.²⁷

Successful pursuit of these policy aims required administrators who were disinterested and culturally percep-

tive to a degree that was in practice exceptional. While anthropologists argued the dignity of African culture, many administrators equally committed to indirect rule turned for guidance to Lugard's Dual Mandate. Still frequently reprinted in the 1930s, the book described "the typical African" as a "happy, thriftless, excitable person, lacking in self-control, discipline, and foresight."²⁸ This influential view of the governed gave shape to the common applications of indirect rule. Misapplied, the concept often led to diplomatic, military, or humanitarian disasters, in Africa and elsewhere. British attempts to manipulate the Arab notability of Palestine provided striking examples of the risks involved.²⁹

Despite frequent disappointments, indirect rule retained official sanction in the 1930s. The policy's attractions were, after all, not wholly philosophical. Where it succeeded to any appreciable degree, it reduced the London government's administrative and military expenses, as well as the perceived need to risk the lives of British troops in alien climes. These practical economies not only were useful in themselves, but helped shore up British public support for maintenance of the empire.

As for administrators' native elite partners in indirect rule, many showed little interest in leading their subjects toward a more "modern" way of life. Enjoying the colonizers' support for their continued dominion, they were

likely to fear rather than foster the educational and political modernization the London government envisioned. Popular education, a vital element in "modernization," seemed to them -- and to district administrators who enjoyed cordial relations with them and supported them -- a threat to their continuance in authority.³⁰

Many exponents of indirect rule in fact regarded educated natives as a conceited, rabble-rousing nuisance whose apparent sophistication was rootless, lacking the necessary grounding in European civilization. They found the growing population of native lawyers and journalists -- which incidentally provided many of the leaders of dissident movements -- especially pernicious.³¹ Colonial administrators expressed particular concern about alleged undue influence of the educated over the large migrant (and growing urban) populations of native wage earners, whom the government sought to keep under the control of traditional leaders.

As the symbiotic opportunism that bound native elites and administrators became apparent, critics of indirect rule gained a hearing. In 1938, W. Malcolm (later Baron) Hailey, a former provincial governor in India and acknowledged "India expert," published An African Survey: A Study of Problems Arising in Africa South of the Sahara.³² This work immediately attained wide influence among bureaucrats and parliamentarians concerned with colonial affairs. Hailey showed no reverence for the established assumptions. Indirect rule

had passed through three stages, he asserted: as useful administrative device, as political doctrine, and finally as religious dogma.³³ Hailey had already succeeded Lugard as British member of the Permanent Mandates Commission; he quickly superseded him as the acknowledged authority on Africa. Four years later, Hailey would enunciate the concept of "partnership,"³⁴ with its intimations of shared responsibility; it would rapidly replace "trusteeship" as the accepted guiding principle of colonial rule.

Although most colonial administrators resisted the idea of entrusting natives with any real responsibility for government, a few officials were in the late 1930s beginning to express the view that preparation for democracy, cited for decades as a major aim of British rule, should actually begin. In 1938, Colonial Secretary Malcolm MacDonald acknowledged a likelihood that colonies would eventually become "self-supporting and self-reliant" members of the Commonwealth (although in some cases only after generations, "perhaps even centuries").³⁵

Within the year, Northern Rhodesia inched in the direction MacDonald had indicated, appointing one European from outside the government to represent Africans' interests on the sixteen-member Legislative Council.³⁶ Such shifts became increasingly common; apparently infinitesimal, their cumulative effects would disturb the equilibrium of colonial administrative structures. Within a decade, a new balance

would appear, formalized in the Local Governments Despatch of 1947.³⁷ Setting aside the indirect rule model, this measure called on administrators to recruit Western-educated natives to develop democratic councils adapted from the basic British domestic model.

Also beginning to take hold in the 1930s was a new view of colonial economic development. Treasury officials were keenly aware of the need for prudent (and politically defensible) management on behalf of British taxpayers. They therefore resisted releasing any funds whose expenditure they could not control, or which would not produce a calculable economic return. From this standpoint, the Colonial Office and colonial governments, which increasingly sought extra funding for public health and educational projects, appeared particularly irresponsible. In response, the Colonial Office discouraged colonies from seeking grants-in-aid, which brought with them Treasury control. Both Treasury and Colonial Office commonly pressed colonial governments to spend only as much as they could raise themselves through private investment, local revenues, or the London market.³⁸

By the late 1930s, Colonial Office bureaucrats, galvanized by their determined secretary of state, Malcolm MacDonald, were expressing a conviction that improvement of social and economic conditions was vital to maintaining the colonial empire. To secure a general standard of living that would be presentable to the metropolitan, the international,

and the increasingly important local public would, they argued, require the investment of more money than most colonial governments could afford.

In response to the 1935 Copperbelt strike in Northern Rhodesia, a Royal Commission studied economic conditions in that colony. In its report, issued in 1938, the Pim Commission argued from the established principle of trusteeship for the new principle of welfare. The Commission had found that the colony's essential social services were far below standard. The principle of trusteeship required that they be brought up to standard and kept there, even if this required financial help from the Treasury.³⁹ The same year, Lord Hailey extended this recommendation to the entire continent.⁴⁰

By January 1940, preparations for war were replacing economic depression with economic mobilization. Secretary MacDonald, locked in struggle with the Treasury over welfare appropriations, was appealing to the principle, not of responsibility, but of self-preservation:

If we are not now going to do something fairly good for the Colonial Empire, and something which helps them to get proper social services, we shall deserve to lose the Colonies and it will only be a matter of time before we get what we deserve.⁴¹

In July, Parliament, at MacDonald's urging, took responsibility for just the kind of development Hailey had proposed. The Colonial Development and Welfare Act would, had it been fully funded, have made available £5 million a

year for ten years. The measure authorized an additional £500,000 a year, for an indefinite period, for research.⁴²

The bill met vigorous opposition from the Treasury. Officials envisioned disastrous consequences: government support for recurrent expenses would encourage reckless spending by colonial governments, while support for social services would obligate the Treasury to a permanent dole for indigent colonials and colonial governments. Economic development was best left to private enterprise. To Colonial Office representatives, the Treasury's concern for financial returns on investment seemed to endorse exploitation. In the end, pressure to produce legislation on the subject forced compromises in wording and administrative structure.⁴³

The Act would have little direct effect. As it progressed through Parliament, German armies rolled over the Low Countries, then France; British troops evacuated Dunkirk. By the time the bill received the Royal Assent, the Battle of Britain had begun.⁴⁴ Military and economic mobilization took all the funds the government could muster. The metropole pressed colonial administrators to concentrate their attention on the demands of the war effort.⁴⁵

The arguments supporting the act, along with Parliament's endorsement of it, had nevertheless altered official assumptions about the principles of colonial finance. Although Treasury officials continued to express skepticism about the value to the British taxpayer of almost any given

colonial development project, they began at least to profess agreement with the principle of colonial investment. Colonial administrators, for their part, believed that industrial development, by diversifying their economies as a defence against recession, would ease tensions among their local populations.⁴⁶ Soon the movement towards a welfare state in Britain, taking impetus from the Beveridge Report of 1942, gave currency to expanded concepts of government's social responsibility. Irreversibly, if imperceptibly, the culture of colonial administration had begun to shift: the principle that colonies must pay for their own development -- not to mention their own welfare -- was losing its dominance.

Between the end of the First World War and the end of the Second, Britain's colonial administration altered in both aim and approach. The makers of colonial policies responded to new pressures arising in the League of Nations, at home, and in the colonies themselves. Changes in economic and political assumptions during the interwar period led to a transformation in the principles upon which policy rested. The underlying concept began to shift away from trusteeship designed to preserve, or incrementally "modernize," the established society of a colony. The British government started to experiment with programs intended to foster economic, social, and even carefully supervised political development -- and to do so with at least a limited degree of participation by the colonized peoples.⁴⁷

As it adjusted its strategies of colonial rule, the Colonial Office was changing its approach to making colonial policy. As noted above, the agency began in the 1930s to promulgate policies for the dependent empire as a whole, rather than deal with each colony as a separate case. Then, through the war and into the postwar period, government acknowledged colonial economic and political concerns as vital to the well-being, even the survival, of the metropole. In consequence, the Colonial Office attained more control over both local colonial affairs and empire-wide colonial policy than ever before, or ever again.⁴⁸ These alterations, as they occurred, would affect social policy towards native workers and unions.

Notes

¹Critics complained that the new labour officials were still far too few for the tasks they faced. In February 1942 -- after the extraordinary proliferation of labour departments -- the Fabian Society's Colonial Bureau asserted that the Colonial Office regarded labour issues as merely "a subsidiary concern of the social services department" and that only serious industrial upheavals could spur colonial administrators to address labour concerns. Fabian Society, Labour in the Colonies: Some Current Problems (London: Victor Gollancz and the Fabian Society, 1942), 15-17.

²The West Indies did, however, take on increasing importance because strikes and public disturbances there (described below) alerted officials to the possibilities of colonial labour unrest.

³Because of their more powerful settler populations, either Southern Rhodesia or South Africa might seem more suitable than Northern Rhodesia for comparison with Palestine, but these were not directly administered by the Colonial Office. The Republic of South Africa was independent; Southern Rhodesia's whites in 1922 voted for internal autonomy, al-

though Britain continued to set foreign policy and retained, at least in theory, a veto on native policy.

Northern and Southern Rhodesia differed significantly in orientation: Southern Rhodesia's legal system was based on the Roman and Dutch systems, Northern Rhodesia's on the English. Southern Rhodesia drew its civil servants from the Cape; Northern Rhodesia, from British public schools and universities. Colonial Office, Government of the United Kingdom, Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the Financial and Economic Position of Northern Rhodesia [Pim Commission report], Colonial No. 145 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1938), 148.

⁴The ways in which Britain obtained control of the two territories typified the approaching and the receding eras of colonial expansion. Having secured possession of Palestine by the ageless method of military capture, Britain in 1922 acquired title to the territory in the most modern form then available: as a League of Nations mandate (see below). Two years later, Britain made one last use of a centuries-old method, taking over administration of Northern Rhodesia from a chartered company, the British South Africa Company.

⁵Northern Rhodesia's original fourteen-member Legislative Council included nine officials and five representatives elected by those British subjects who could meet the property requirement. Palestine's inability to establish a legislative body hinged on disagreements between natives and settlers over representation. Northern Rhodesia had no such problem: Africans, non-"subjects," had no franchise.

⁶Of the shared administrators, the most prominent was Ronald Storrs, governor of Jerusalem from 1917 to 1926, who served as governor of Northern Rhodesia from 1932 to 1934. The most relevant to this study was C. E. Cousins, an original member of Palestine's Labour Department, who became chief inspector in 1945 and deputy director in 1947. In 1948 Cousins went to Northern Rhodesia as commissioner of labour; he remained there in charge of labour and mines, under various titles, until his retirement in 1962. A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, A Biographical Dictionary of the British Colonial Service, 1939-1966 (London: Hans Zell Publishers, 1991).

(The first governor of Southern Rhodesia, from 1923 to 1928, was John Chancellor. He took his African experience directly to Palestine, where he served as high commissioner from 1928 to 1931.)

⁷Hooker, James R. "The Role of the Labour Department in the Birth of African Trade Unionism in Northern Rhodesia." International Review of Social History 10 (1965), 2.

⁸Article 22 of the League of Nations Covenant, embodied in the Treaty of Versailles, set up the mandate system in these terms:

To those colonies and territories which as a consequence of the late war have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the States which formerly governed them and which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world, there should be applied the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilization. . . .

The Supreme Council of the Allies appointed the mandatories, with the League Council's assent.

The concept of trusteeship remained controversial as late as the end of the century, when L. J. Butler attacked it as a sop to defenders of native culture and opponents of "exploitation" and as a brake on economic progress. Industrialisation and the British Colonial State: West Africa, 1939-1951 (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 17.

⁹Callahan, Mandates and Empire, 86-87.

¹⁰Frederick Lugard, The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1921), 617. Lugard maintained that unrest in such places as India and Egypt demonstrated that the natives had absorbed the lessons of liberty and freedom: "Their very discontent is a measure of their progress" (ibid., 618-19).

¹¹For examples, see Callahan, Mandates and Empire, 76.

¹²Lucy Mair, Native Policies in Africa (London: G. Routledge, 1936), 2.

¹³The third point of the Charter read: "They respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them." Cmd. 6321, PP [1940-41], VIII, 591, in A. N. Porter and A. J. Stockwell, eds. British Imperial Policy and Decolonization, 1938-64, Vol. 1, 1938-51, Cambridge Commonwealth Series (London: Macmillan, 1987), 101.

¹⁴A conspicuous casualty of the new parsimony was Tanganyika's pioneering labour department, exceptional among African colonial administrative agencies. The department, established in 1925, had functioned with evident success for six years. In the opinion of Africa specialist Lucy Mair, its abolition was "one of the worst pieces of mistaken economy indulged in by any colonial government of recent years." Mair, Native Policies, 14.

¹⁵For example, employers and workers contributed about a third of the cost of income assistance and about 85 percent of the cost of national health insurance; government contributed only the remainder. Charles Loch Mowat, Britain Between the Wars, 1918-1940 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 496-97, using figures from G. D. H. Cole and M. I. Cole, The Condition of Britain (London: Victor Gollancz, 1937), 323-48, and Political and Economic Planning, Report on the British Health Services (London, 1937), 199.

¹⁶University of London researchers Noreen Branson and Margot Heinemann maintain that fear of loss of control, even more than economic expediency, motivated the reactionaries' determined resistance. Britain in the 1930's (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 322-23, 324.

¹⁷Spending for unemployment benefits, pensions, public assistance, national health insurance, education, housing, hospitals, and child welfare increased by more than two thirds between 1924 and 1931. During the same period the social services share of government spending rose from about a fourth to nearly two fifths. Altogether, social service spending rose from £225.4 million in 1924 (already up from £74.6 million in 1913) to £376.8 million in 1931 and, after sagging, to £382.4 million in 1935. Mowat, Britain Between the Wars, 496-97, drawing on Colin Clark, National Income and Outlay (London, 1937), 140-41.

¹⁸See, for example, Butler, Industrialisation, 33-34.

¹⁹Fabian Colonial Bureau, Downing Street and the Colonies (London: George Allen and Unwin and Fabian Society, 1942), 14. The Fabian Society had established its Colonial Bureau in 1940, an indication of the increasing importance of the colonies in British political thought. The new venture's leaders were Rita Hinden and Arthur Creech Jones, prominent critics of Britain's colonial policy. Creech Jones would become colonial secretary in the postwar Labour government.

²⁰A first Northern Rhodesia strike took place at the end of May 1935. According to the report of the West India Royal Commission, African workers struck in Mauritius in 1937; Kenya in 1939; the Gold Coast and, again, Northern Rhodesia's Copperbelt in 1940. Report of the West India Royal Commission, Cmd. 6607 (January 1945), quoted in Roberts, Tropical Territories, 31.

²¹The government released the embarrassing findings only in 1945. J. M. Lee and Martin Petter, The Colonial Office, War, and Development Policy: Organisation and the Planning of a Metropolitan Initiative, 1939-1945 (London: Maurice Temple

Smith for University of London Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 1982), 38-39.

²²In 1943, O. G. R. Williams of the Colonial Office envisaged that even the gradual transfer of some legislative powers to regional Native Authorities would take "a good many years (perhaps a good many generations though it would be impolitic to say so openly)." Williams, note of discussion with Secretary of State, 27 October 1943, and minute, 4 September 1943, PRO, CO 554/132/33727, quoted in R. D. Pearce, The Turning Point in Africa: British Colonial Policy, 1938-1948 (London: Frank Cass, 1982), 61, 69.

²³Notably his 1921 Dual Mandate, mentioned above.

²⁴Mair, Native Policies, 281-82. The comparison of English to French approaches would remain popular among colonial officials.

²⁵"That an event is known to have been repeated several times does not constitute it a law of nature." Mair, Native Policies, 281.

²⁶Colonial Office, Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the Disturbances in the Copperbelt, Northern Rhodesia, Cmd. 5009 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1935), 4.

²⁷Mair, Native Policies, 12-15.

²⁸Although "courageous, courteous, and polite by nature," Lugard's African was also "vain and unconcerned about truthfulness, caring for neither future nor past, but only for the present." Lugard, Dual Mandate, 69.

²⁹A salient example is the Palestine Government's appointment as "Grand Mufti" of Hajj Amin al-Husayni, later the most powerful advocate of British withdrawal from Palestine.

³⁰Africans -- like most colonized people -- generally recognized the potential of schooling to increase their children's future prestige and earning power. The provision of schooling in many colonized areas was retarded because British local administrators accepted and advocated the position of "their" local rulers. By seeking to provide the schools that the government withheld, Christian missionaries gave Muslim rulers and their British supporters a reason to oppose Western education.

³¹Mair was one advocate of indirect rule who did not simply dismiss these individuals, but traced their attitudes back to British preoccupation with maintaining "traditional" in-

stitutions combined with a racial arrogance developed during two centuries' rule in India. These British failings had led "Europeanized" West Africans to suspect that indirect rule was only a trick to maintain dominance. Mair, Native Policies, 18.

³²William Malcolm, Baron Hailey, An African Survey: A Study of Problems Arising in Africa South of the Sahara (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938). Hailey, then governor of India's United Provinces, began work on the Survey in 1935. Soon afterward, he took up Lugard's position as British member of the Permanent Mandates Commission, serving from 1936 to 1939. Sir Cosmo C. Parkinson, The Colonial Office from Within, 1909-1945 (London: Faber & Faber, 1947), 121, 122.

³³William Malcolm, Baron Hailey, "Some Problems dealt with in the African Survey," speech at Chatham House, Hailey Papers, Rhodes House, Oxford, quoted in Pearce, Turning Point, 45.

³⁴Lord Hailey introduced the concept of "partnership" in the House of Lords in May 1942.

³⁵Speech at Oxford, PRO, CO 847/20/47139, quoted in Pearce, Turning Point, 23.

³⁶Colonial Office, Economic Position, 148.

³⁷25 February 1947.

³⁸The government of France was no more farsighted in its administration of the Syrian and Lebanese mandates, as Elizabeth Thompson points out. Colonial Citizens, 63.

³⁹Colonial Office, Economic Position, 338-39.

⁴⁰Hailey, African Survey, 1358.

⁴¹Minute, 14 January 1940, PRO, CO 859/19/7475/1939; quoted in Lee and Petter, Development Policy, 29, note 45.

⁴²The Fabian Society's Colonial Bureau hailed the Act as evidence that at last Britain had acknowledged a responsibility to ensure a reasonable standard of living in the colonies. Fabian Colonial Bureau, Downing Street, 14.

⁴³Treasury negotiators agreed to leave the term "welfare," which rendered them deeply uneasy, in the title of the act; the Colonial Office agreed to drop the idea of a fund administered by an advisory committee. For a detailed description of the negotiations, see Lee and Petter, Development Policy, 41, 45.

⁴⁴Parkinson, Colonial Office from Within, 86.

⁴⁵So few and so limited were the proposals for grants under the Act during the war that from 1940 to 1944 the whole colonial empire absorbed only £4 million out of the £20 million that Parliament had authorized. Cooper, Decolonization, 119.

⁴⁶Butler, Industrialisation, 7.

⁴⁷Butler, Industrialisation, 3.

⁴⁸Joanne Lewis attributes this power to four factors: faster communications and travel technology, the failure of indirect rule in social services, the new view of state responsibility, and pressure and suggestions from the Permanent Mandates Commission. J. E. Lewis, "'Tropical East Ends' and the Second World War: Some Contradictions in Colonial Office Welfare Initiatives," Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History 28:2 (May 2000), 43.

By 1943, standardization had so developed that an analyst with the Fabian Society's Colonial Bureau found grounds to assert that despite the individual situations of the fifty-some Colonial Office territories, the same policies and principles, mechanisms, even attitudes applied to all. Rita Hinden, "New Trends in Colonial Policy: Trusteeship and Partnership, Colonial Development Act," MSS Brit. Emp. s. 365 (Fabian Colonial Bureau papers), Rhodes House Library, Oxford University, Box 176, file 2, 207.

Chapter 3
Colonial Labour Policy: A Response to New Conditions

Pressures on the British government first to formulate colonial labour policy, and then to modernize that policy, came both from the domestic left and from international bodies. In Britain, liberal and labour groups had since the late nineteenth century criticized the growth, and later the administrative practices, of the empire, though few advocated actual divestiture. After the First World War, the newly powerful Labour Party took a growing interest in the treatment of colonized workers; its parliamentarians repeatedly raised the issue of labour standards and welfare in the colonial dependencies.

At the same time, British unions were recognizing that their members' interests were connected with those of colonized workers. By 1925, the Trades Union Congress could consider a resolution which declared "complete opposition to Imperialism," charging that the government's domination of "non-British peoples" not only constituted exploitation in itself, but, by securing cheap raw materials and cheap labour for British capitalists, effectively lowered the compensation of British workers. The text resolved to support not only the efforts of workers throughout the empire to organize unions and political parties, but the right of the empire's peoples to "self-determination, including the right to choose complete separation from the Empire."¹ Defense of British workers' pay and working conditions was the resolu-

tion's primary selling point and probably its primary aim. That the text did not stop at "self-determination," however, indicates an elastic political vision stretching further than self-interest required.

Outside of Britain, the 1920 establishment of the International Labour Office (ILO), which represented not only the government but employers' and workers' organizations in each member country, introduced international pressure for modernized labour policies. The ILO drafted conventions on labour issues, from health and safety to hours of work and the right to organize, seeking ratification by the countries it represented. The colonial powers were members of the ILO; increasingly, that body -- or, where relevant, the League of Nations Permanent Mandates Commission -- asked them to account for their colonial administrations' compliance (or noncompliance) with ILO conventions.² These international bodies could accept the nonexistence of a specific industry in a specific colony -- in Palestine, for example, a merchant marine -- as a reason for not enforcing a convention regarding that industry.³ Increasingly, however, they questioned assertions (by the government of Palestine, among many others) that local economic or social conditions rendered a particular convention inapplicable.

By the early 1920s, then, British colonial policy makers and administrators faced more than the expressed international consensus that colonial administration should

benefit the colonized in general. Specific international pressure encouraged them to care for the fair treatment and well-being of colonized workers. In response, colonial administrators set up rudimentary systems to regulate industrial health and safety in their colonies and mandates, but took little initiative to address other labour issues.

The obstacles to further development of labour policy in the early 1920s went far beyond the usual defense of employers' interests and established prerogatives, which in the home country was then building to the crisis of the 1926 General Strike. Across the colonial empire, the issue of how to organize native labour preoccupied colonial administrators and employers through the interwar period. Two ruling precepts blocked the development of official thinking. One, linked to the indirect rule doctrine of governance, was that development of a permanent native working class would disrupt traditional society to the point of chaos. The other held that native labour unions, presumed to be both undemocratic and irresponsibly led, would constitute a standing threat of political upheaval. Both assumptions were current not only in London, but among administrators in colonies -- including Palestine as well as Northern Rhodesia -- where the labour force was not yet stabilized. Policy makers would have to rid themselves of both assumptions if they were to keep pace with changing realities.

Recognition of a Stable Native Working Class

If natives were to work for wages at sites distant from their homes -- and settler farmers and European mining firms, among others, were determined that they should -- they would regard themselves either as temporary sojourners or as permanent settlers at the workplace. Contention arose among both administrators and employers about which alternative the government should support.

Colonial administrators committed to indirect rule (including many in Palestine -- a few as late as the 1940s) believed that preserving native ways of life would help prevent the "unrest" that social change was likely to bring. By definition, then, natives who worked for monetary wages rather than as part of some customary system of obligations were a source of concern to these officials. Yet such workers were necessary to European enterprise, and in many areas of southern Africa, at least a period of wage work had already become a routine part of life. Young men normally worked in the mines for a few years before settling down; some women, too, left the village for the city or the mine compound.⁴

Worried officials, noting that these natives had ranged outside the bounds of traditional control systems, were wary of labour migration. Until the labour upheavals of the mid-1930s, they were confident of controlling unruly workers during their stints at the work sites. Their concern

was that when migrants returned to the countryside, they were likely to carry with them the mores of the city or the mines. Local administrators and visiting experts warned that homecoming migrants spread disrespect for the traditional or pseudo-traditional rulers upon whom British administration depended.

A 1933 book on The African Labourer by Major Granville Orde-Browne, who had headed a pioneering labour department in Tanganyika, presented what some would consider an even more ominous prospect.⁵ Orde-Browne's report signalled a new recognition among employers and administrators: African workers were more sophisticated than previously realized. They thought and behaved like workers rather than simply like Africans. Orde-Browne took an approach that labour officers in Palestine in the 1940s would follow at a more sophisticated level. He did take account of current anthropological thinking, acknowledging the influence of physical environment and perceived traditional culture. He also, however, applied his experience in African labour relations, noting economic, social, and cultural effects of European activity on African workers' behavior and attitudes and pointing out motivations that African workers shared with their European counterparts. Recognizing colonial governments' interest in a smoothly functioning labour market, Orde-Browne urged administrators to help motivate workers by regulating working conditions and pay.⁶

Orde-Browne's view that the attitudes of African workers were shaped partly by geography and "tribal" culture, partly by the labour relations that enmeshed them, was to gain considerable currency over the succeeding decade. Five years after issuing his report, Orde-Browne became the first labour adviser to the Colonial Office. He would retain this post, taking an active role in shaping labour policy throughout the colonies -- including the establishment and work of Palestine's labour department -- through the end of the Second World War.

When Orde-Browne's report first appeared, however, much of the news it brought was unwelcome to many administrators. While they may have feared the consequences of the migrancy system, they were keenly aware of its advantages relative to its only apparent alternative: the maintenance of a permanent wage labour force, whose advent Orde-Browne announced.

The migrant labour system offered fiscal benefits to both employers and the colonial government. As long as the native male wage earner was merely a sojourner in the urban workplace or the mine compound, administrators reasoned, his real home remained the village. (The migrant female wage earner was commonly employed in a household, farm, or gender-segregated industry; she, too, was presumably returnable at the end of her usefulness.) In his village the migrant could find subsistence and support in times of unem-

ployment;⁷ there he would return when he had earned enough to buy a desired item or had otherwise fulfilled his aim in wage labour. There he would keep his family; there he would end his days when he ceased to go to the workplaces at all.⁸

The concept of the village as a durable haven saved colonial governments, or employers, the expense of providing workers with social and economic support in periods of unemployment, disability, retirement, or child rearing.⁹ Existence of a body of permanent wage workers would, in contrast, face a colonial government with the need either somehow to secure them the standard benefits the international community required, or to explain to critics why it did not do so.¹⁰

The migrancy system offered colonial governments not only economic, but social advantages. Although returning migrants might bear unsettling modern attitudes, they could also transmit progressive modern practices. A migrant worker could bring the village useful new ideas -- about food, hygiene, education -- along with items like tools and lamps, or maybe improved seeds. This was the kind of gradual change that indirect rule envisioned.¹¹ More important, the alternative -- a permanent wage labour force -- could menace social stability far more than migrancy ever had. Unemployed workers who did not return to their villages, but lingered around the workplace, might at any time coalesce into that volatile mass whose potential for unrest the colonizers in-

creasingly feared. Migrant workers presented the danger of insubordination to the traditional authorities in their home villages; permanently urbanized workers could completely escape such authority. Their traditional beliefs eroded, these workers, whether skilled tradesmen in big firms or part of the "floating urban population," could easily become criminals or prey to inflammatory political propaganda.¹² In the Palestine of the early 1930s, the adherents of 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam around Haifa furnished an ominous example.

Faced with the expensive and alarming implications of stabilization, many colonial administrators resisted acknowledging that some natives had left their villages for years, or for good, and were beginning to constitute a permanent, urbanized workforce. Reporting to government, the 1938 Northern Rhodesia economic commission [Pim Commission] starkly admonished: "Whether this is desired or not, a proportion of the men working [in the mines] will become an industrial population and the implications of this fact must be recognized."¹³

Employers were somewhat more ready than government to recognize the existence of a permanent workforce. As they first set up their undertakings, they commonly valued the flexibility that migrancy offered when their business interests called for an expansion, a reduction, or a change in the composition of the workforce.¹⁴ Beginning in the early 1930s, short-term flexibility came to seem less important as

enterprises that survived the Depression reached maturity. One by one, established firms began to acknowledge that the steadiness and commitment of a core of seasoned workers could render their native workforces far more valuable. In Palestine, government enterprises such as the railroad employed native skilled workers.

The new system turned sharply away from the conservative principles of indirect rule. The Pim Commission showed no concern in its assessment of mining companies' family quarters: "the large majority are . . . not suited for the bringing up of families according to native custom; but native custom is necessarily modified under urban conditions."¹⁵ The concept of modernized, urbanized native workers had become acceptable.

In many colonies, the notion of a primarily or entirely migrant workforce had in fact become obsolete by the end of the 1930s, or even the 1920s. Some natives still worked for a year or two, then returned permanently to the village. Others returned to worksites repeatedly, perhaps during seasons of inactivity on village farms. As they gained experience with the work and with the practices of the workplace, some workers settled at the mine or in the city for a period of years. They might or might not return permanently to the village after reaching some goal, or to retire. If they left one employer, they might go on to another rather than back to the countryside. In some territories, this spectrum be-

tween migrancy and stabilization persisted after decolonization.¹⁶ Whatever the government or employers preferred to admit, a permanent, urbanized workforce was in being.

Bureaucrats and administrators could not overlook the new labour force for long. In 1930, colonial governors ignored a circular dispatch from the Labour government's colonial secretary, Lord Passfield (the Fabian socialist Sidney Webb), urging them to develop standards for working conditions, to declare unions legal, and to require unions to register.¹⁷ Despite its lack of broad immediate effect, the dispatch would provide a precedent for important initiatives put forward a decade later.

Beginning in 1934 (as noted above), native workers themselves applied a series of shocks -- strikes in the West Indies, Africa, and Southeast Asia -- that stimulated both London politicians and colonial governments to pay more attention, not simply to natives, but specifically to native workers' conditions and attitudes. The continuing unrest repeatedly brought to London's attention that native workers were no longer to be disregarded. Officials expected striking native workers to become violent; violence would lead to "disorders."¹⁸ The Commission investigating Northern Rhodesia's 1935 Copperbelt strike (when police killed six strikers) predicted, "any serious strike among the natives at the mines must for many years resolve itself into a strike with violence."¹⁹

In November 1935, Britain's Conservative-led government responded to the perceived threat with the first step towards formulating empire-wide policies on colonial workers since Passfield's fruitless exhortation of five years before. The colonial secretary asked colonial governments what they were doing to monitor and regulate working conditions.²⁰

By the spring of 1938, the growing colonial labour unrest and European political insecurity had brought policy makers at the Colonial Office to recognize that some means of communicating with colonized workers was vital to British interests. The agency began a series of innovations that within two years established a capacity to guide colonial governments' dealings with workers. In March it secured its first labour adviser, the Africa specialist Granville Orde-Browne. In September Malcolm MacDonald, still in his first months as colonial secretary, issued a dispatch vigorously encouraging colonial governments to develop labour policies and to employ labour officers to deal with native workers.

Early the following year, the Colonial Office institutionalized its recognition of workers' new importance. With the grudging permission of the Treasury, it established a Social Services Department with the sweeping mandate "to deal with all questions of social and labour policy in the dependencies," as well as to monitor the execution of policies and to provide researchers as resources for policy

makers.²¹ A year after this structural advance, the Colonial Office obtained its first empire-wide coercive power on labour issues. The Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940 included two stipulations regarding labour. To secure a grant, a colony had both to enact laws authorizing and regulating unions and to require that its public works contracts include fair wages and minimum age clauses. This stipulation gave bureaucrats some leverage on colonial governments, when they chose to use it.

Facing combined internal and external pressures, many colonial governments began relinquishing their insistence that native workers were essentially natives and need not be regarded as workers. Once having acknowledged the presence of a permanent native workforce, officials had difficulty ignoring the concerns of that workforce. The Pim Commission concluded that most problems on Northern Rhodesia's Copperbelt stemmed from a lack of labour policy: the government dealt with the mines as though they were temporary enterprises requiring no state supervision. Rather, the commission admonished, since Europeans had assembled the sizable populations of the mining centres, Europeans must take responsibility for regulating them.²²

The government of Northern Rhodesia resisted any admission that stabilization was a permanent and growing phenomenon. To the commission investigating the 1940 Copperbelt strike, it responded vigorously that accepting that

body's recommendations on married housing for miners did "not commit Government to the policy of establishing a permanent industrialised Native population on the Copper-belt." It supported this position by appeals to the need to protect the skilled jobs of the white mineworkers who would, presumably, return from the war, as well as to its perennial apprehension of a slump in the copper market.²³

Despite such sporadic entrenched resistance, more and more colonial governments were now admitting what the Colonial Office had been suggesting. Coherent labour policies -- specifically, policies concerning native workers -- had become necessary to the pursuit of social and economic stability. Patchy adherence to international conventions would no longer suffice.

In designing native labour policies, officials applied their priorities for general native administration (which closely resembled the London government's priorities for domestic labour administration). The primary goals were order and productivity. To mould the desired orderly and reliable native workforce, administrators commonly envisioned three objectives: removing sources of disorder from workers' surroundings; dissuading workers from resort to the "strike weapon"; and excluding nationalists and leftists from control of workers' organizations. The first addressed the increasing physical concentration of the urbanized population; the other two dealt with wage earners as workers. Colonial

governments pursued these objectives with varying degrees of enthusiasm and success.

To tackle the first task, administrators concentrated on insulating their new urban masses from unsettling influences. Their efforts at once collided with the delights and disorders of mushrooming urban native neighbourhoods being built by the intermittently, illicitly, or independently employed. As Northern Rhodesia's labour department saw it, "unfortunately many Africans, in their present stage of development, would be content to live in ['the worst type of slum'], if it meant proximity to an urban area and the avoidance of tribal obligations."²⁴

Colonial administrators were eager to regulate the lives of urban natives. The government of Palestine repeatedly destroyed native shantytowns in the name of public health and in the service of public order.²⁵ Administrators who found their natives less alarming sought less conspicuous methods. A 1943 report which the Northern Rhodesian government commissioned (and then discounted) handed government the responsibility for combatting urban disorder by providing social services. Its author, A. Lynn Saffery, was former secretary of the South African Institute of Race Relations. Invoking not only moral but economic considerations ("any decline in the effectiveness of labour must ultimately show itself in a fall in national income"), Saffery, like previous observers, prodded the government to acknowledge

the existence and needs of a stabilized workforce. If urbanized natives were a problem, the solution was simply to deal with them as town dwellers in need of the social services that any town dweller required to ward off "the inherent dangers of urban life."²⁶

Colonial governments enjoyed limited success in applying this kind of solution. For reasons discussed above, money for colonial social services was difficult either to budget internally or to extract from the Treasury. Many colonial administrators mistrusted outside experts, including social service professionals. In wartime, moreover, experts of any type were in short supply. A rapid postwar development of colonial social services would ease the problems of finance and supply, but that of trust remained. Nor were the natives reliably appreciative.

Turning to Native Labour Organization

The two other requisites for an orderly workforce -- avoidance of the "strike weapon" and of subversive influences -- required addressing workers as workers. Colonial administrators generally had less experience of wage earners than of traditional native groups. To guide these alien masses, more and more governments would adopt a strategy reminiscent of indirect rule: they set out to establish Western-style labour unions.

The impetus to encourage unionization, like the broader initiative to formulate labour policy, came from the

London bureaucrats. In 1939, the new Social Services officers in the Colonial Office, under pressure to forestall colonial labour unrest as the war approached, were looking for means to influence colonized workers. They found a suitable instrument ready to hand. In May 1926, the General Council of the Trades Union Congress had restrained, then halted, a week-long general strike in Britain.²⁷ Authorities in the metropole had, in some quarters with surprise, recognized that labour unions were not necessarily wild beasts to be exterminated: they could be tamed. A rightly guided union could offer government a medium for securing workers' commitment to good behavior -- and this medium was available not only at home, but in many parts of the colonial empire.

The advantages of organizing workers were becoming evident to colonial administrators. In 1943 an aggrieved provincial commissioner in Northern Rhodesia burst out: "[The native strikers] say they want more pay, they will not talk to anybody, they will not listen to anybody and when it comes to the point they do not know what they want." He thought it time therefore "to force these people to have some sort of native organisation to represent them."²⁸ The commissioner was not advocating government establishment of native unions. In his exasperation, he did, however, look to labour organization to provide management a bargaining partner and restrain workers from using the "strike weapon" as a first resort.

The idea was not original. In his 1930 dispatch on labour, Lord Passfield, as colonial secretary in a Labour government, had asked colonial governors not only to establish labour standards, but to foster labour organizations for native workers. Acknowledging the inevitability, even the desirability, of unionization among colonized workers, Passfield said he considered it "a natural and legitimate consequence of social and industrial progress."²⁹ Seven years later, when colonial labour unrest had become conspicuous, a Conservative colonial secretary looked not at the progressive advantages of unions but at the dangerous alternatives to the familiar Western form. Prohibiting trade unions or subjecting them to onerous regulation, he warned governors, "would almost certainly encourage illegal bodies, which might develop into secret societies and become politically active."³⁰

In December 1939, after the Second World War had officially begun, the Colonial Office urged governors even more strongly to provide proper supervision of labour conditions during the war "and the still more critical period which was likely to follow it." In particular, they should do their utmost to maintain harmonious relations between employers and workers.³¹ His Majesty's Government had apparently come to share the view of the socialist Fabian Society: "In many colonies . . . Trade Unions must be actively encouraged by the Labour Officers or British colonial labour policy will

fail, with disastrous results to the cause of peace within the empire."³²

At the time the Colonial Office recommended unionization, a few colonial governments accepted the suggestion. The Northern Rhodesian government typified the many that did not, following, rather, a pattern common in colonies where administrators continued to consider native workers primarily natives, rather than primarily workers. Both management and government sought to maintain workers' loyalty to "tribe" rather than class. When the copper mines opened around 1930, for example, the managers appointed "tribal elders" to deal with workers' disputes and present their complaints. When, in 1940, workers rejected these imposed leaders, management and government permitted them to elect "tribal representatives"; shortly afterwards, they allowed some clerical and supervisory workers to form their own associations. Late in 1946, after a decade's hesitation, the government declared that it aimed to foster African unions.

Nevertheless, a decade after the 1937 circular dispatch promoting unions, the colony's labour department still found it necessary to spell out the utility of labour organizations: even though organization gave workers more strength, it also eased handling of disputes. Previously, "unvoiced grievances smouldering for long periods" had "led to a sudden conflagration." Organizing workers could bring complaints to light immediately, when settlement would not

be difficult.³³ A year after this explanation, and nearly two decades after Passfield's recommendation, Northern Rhodesia's African clerks and miners began registering the first formal native unions. The initiative had the advice and support of the Labour Department and the acquiescence of the Northern Rhodesia government.³⁴

Advocates of unionization clearly recognized that to organize workers would not in itself guarantee social and labour peace. The London policy makers and colonial administrators who had recognized unions' potential value still feared the effects should native demagogues gain control. Passfield in 1930 had recommended that colonial governments "smooth the passage of such organizations, as they emerge, into constitutional channels." Organizations of common labourers who had no practice in forming groups to pursue common goals would need "sympathetic supervision and guidance." Otherwise, their unions might fall prey to "disaffected persons" who could turn them to "improper and mischievous ends."³⁵ Passfield was well-qualified to recognize the dangers: as Sydney Webb, he had collaborated on a history of British unions.

J. G. Hibbert, the Social Services Department's labour officer, explained that the danger came from the infamous educated natives. It was, he warned, "only to be expected" that the new unions could not produce competent and disinterested officers. In many cases, "more educated people in

the Colony" who were "generally very politically-minded and often pure opportunists" had taken control.³⁶ The ambitions of these leaders were likely to lead to the indiscriminate use of the strike weapon.³⁷ One or two governors had alleged that agitators set up unions solely in order to foment a strike in a particular industry.³⁸

An industrial relations officer of Britain's Ministry of Labour and National Service, sent out in 1941 to help the government of Jamaica, described how one colony's unions had gone wrong. Most union members did not really understand the principles of unionism. At least partly to blame was union propaganda, which generally "appeal[ed] to class distinction and bitterness, suspicion, and political enmity."³⁹ Jamaica's unions had evidently fallen into the hands of "disaffected persons."

Fear of the leadership of educated natives pushed the Colonial Office to foster unions in order to control them. The Social Services Department deployed a set of initiatives to develop "unions along sound lines" -- that is, labour organizations that would reinforce, not disrupt, public order. One of the new programs aimed to provide potential leaders with training in Britain. This could help them attain "an intelligent and well balanced outlook" toward industrial relations. They would then see that "round table talks" were more effective than strikes in settling grievances and that a union had responsibilities, not only to its members, but

to its country.⁴⁰ Wartime conditions diverted the funds, the facilities, and the transport needed for such a program. In 1948, African workers were still asking for overseas training for future labour leaders.

Early in 1941, the Social Services Department found a more feasible response to the fear of uncontrolled organization -- one which was to have a great impact on Arab workers in Palestine. British trade unionists could serve as advisers to both colonial administrators and colonized workers. In proposing this project, Hibbert offered the current standard analysis of colonial unions. It was needed because of "the formation of a considerable number of trade unions in the Colonies, which in many instances are in danger of developing on the wrong lines."⁴¹ Another officer elaborated: Colonial union movements often started unexpectedly and developed surprisingly fast. The presence of an experienced labour officer was vital "to guide any such movement on the right lines" the moment it showed signs of developing.⁴²

If the native demagogue was the acknowledged problem with new native labour organizations, however, the British unionist was not universally recognized as the solution. Some colonial administrators remained less convinced of the value of "responsible" unions than of the dangers of "irresponsible" ones. Such officials were reluctant to accept metropolitan unionists into their colonies. The labour commissioner of British Guiana, for example, reportedly at-

tached a crucial proviso to acceptance of a unionist: "providing level-headed and experienced men could be selected." He apparently feared the appointment of "young men without mature balance of judgment."⁴³

Despite the qualms of such administrators, most British government officials who dealt with labour issues retained a firm faith in the potential of unions. The labour officer who described the Jamaican situation in such dark terms presented in the same report an idealistic vision of what a union -- colonial or otherwise -- could be.

[Trade union] leaders must be inspired and fearless men who know sacrifice and who are men of substance, balance, and sound judgment.

Movements led by such men command confidence and respect, and the groups they represent, reflecting the qualities of their leaders, pass forward to recognition and the realisation they deserve.⁴⁴

The vision of unions as means of uplift for colonized peoples remained clear through the Second World War and beyond. As Britain's postwar Labour government increasingly enunciated the empire's responsibility to prepare colonies for self-government, some of its members and officials considered unions basic to this preparation. Sydney Caine, a Colonial Office economist during and after the war (and later director of the London School of Economics), went so far as to assert that union development was to the field of employment what the extension of voting rights was to political life -- "the recognition of the right of the common man to a say in the settlement of the affairs that af-

fect his livelihood and his life."⁴⁵ The nurture of unions "on the right lines" would remain a basic concern of the Colonial Office well into the period of decolonization.

Stagnant Policies: Settlers

Despite growing agreement on the importance of native unions, a single issue divided colonies in their policies towards such organizations, and in fact towards labour affairs in general. As approaches to other social and economic concerns developed during the interwar period and beyond, British colonial policy stagnated on the issue of response to settler concerns. The presence or absence of British or other Western settlers, as workers or employers, necessarily influenced a colony's labour policy. The size, level of organization, and economic and political importance of each settler community affected the level of pressure it could exert.⁴⁶ Where settler influence was strong, British policy makers failed to develop progressive new responses. On the contrary, as the Second World War began, settler workers' ability to impede production of raw materials or military goods increased their power to affect decisions on issues important to them.

In some areas, such as West Africa, the British had made a deliberate decision not to allow Europeans to establish plantations or otherwise to settle in large numbers. In such colonies, relations between administrators and natives remained bilateral. These relationships both absorbed and

fed the empire-wide stereotypes of native workers as migrant; village-based; emotional, sexually undisciplined, and politically volatile; and fragmented by lineage. The policies shaped by such preconceptions were largely paternalistic. In the calculations of policy makers, the interests of the natives, as the British understood these, competed against the perceived interests of the colonial administration and the metropole. This was Lugard's "dual mandate" in practice.

Even in colonies whose policies precluded large-scale foreign settlement, native workers encountered unfair competition. In most such territories, a sizable proportion of Western "unofficial" (nongovernmental) residents were employees (commonly not only British, but Italian, French, or perhaps Greek or American) of trading or mining companies. These expatriates usually worked as supervisors or in jobs classified as skilled, or at least semi-skilled. If they had native counterparts, they generally pressed for guarantees that their own pay would remain higher, their working conditions better. Frequently, they aimed to enforce their privileges by establishing a colour bar -- that is, by excluding native workers from jobs classified as requiring skill or a developed sense of responsibility (like skill, a matter of opinion). When the Northern Rhodesian copper mines began operation in the early 1930s, white miners (preponderantly immigrants from Southern Rhodesia or South Africa)⁴⁷

cited Africans' lower standard of living as reason to exclude them from skilled positions. The whites argued that Africans were able, even willing, to live in conditions far worse than those which Europeans required. If they could freely enter skilled jobs, wages would fall for both Africans and Europeans; only "the capitalist employer" would profit.⁴⁸ Zionist bodies employed (and British officials often accepted) similar arguments in Palestine.

Lucy Mair, whose commitment to indirect rule carried with it a belief in the abilities of Africans and a hearty disapproval of any clearly unfair treatment, described the expatriates' position. Because African workers would work for lower wages than whites, they offered strong competition in occupations "which the European does not despise" (or, as another critic phrased it, "anything that does not involve hard manual labour"). Therefore, these fields must be closed to Africans, either by straightforward ban or by excluding them from the necessary training.⁴⁹

The ambitions of a Western expatriate workforce in an officially non-settler colony thus might complicate the tasks of company and government administrators. Rarely, however, could such a workforce exert a strong influence over the general policies of the colony. Colonies where permanent settler communities were mobilized, regardless of their numerical weight in the population, presented a different situation. Pressures from the settlers warped the bilateral

relations between British administrators and native workers. Organized settlers generally contended against both government and natives, though with different goals and in different ways. They commonly demanded freedom to appropriate native land (particularly in the areas thought to be the richest for farming or mining) and native labour -- both of them with the least possible compensation. They demanded government suppression of natives who tried to defend their land, and they pressed for favourable trade terms for their own products. They besieged colonial governments with political pressure by "unofficial" members in legislative councils; with petitions, demonstrations, and strikes; and with the threat of violent assault. At the same time, the settlers' business and political allies in Britain asked questions in Parliament and pressed the Colonial Office on their behalf, opposing the influence of international agencies and native rights advocates.

The influence of a colony's settlers reflected not just their external and domestic political power, but their capacity to disrupt civil order, the economic system, or both. In Palestine, settlers exerted primarily economic power before and during the Second World War, primarily paramilitary power in the postwar period. The Europeans who increasingly regarded themselves as permanent settlers in Northern Rhodesia held both paramilitary and economic power. They were heavily armed in a thinly defended colony, and the

British government attached vital importance to the colony's copper industry, which European miners could shut down. In the late 1930s, according to one scholar, the government suffered from a "passive and almost hysterical apprehension that the Europeans on the Copperbelt were on the point of revolt."⁵⁰ After a successful European miners' strike early in 1940, a strike leader would proclaim, "This action has . . . shown the Imperial Government that there are white people in Northern Rhodesia."⁵¹

Where such forces existed, natives who had joined the workforce suffered disadvantages beyond those which all natives shared. Settler communities put their weight behind the usual pressure of Western expatriate workers to exclude natives from desirable jobs. To pursue this primary aim, they elaborated on their general economic and political strategies by establishing labour unions and labour parties.

In 1936 the secretary of the South African Mine Workers' Union came to Northern Rhodesia to organize a union of European mineworkers there. The virulent racism of white miners in Southern Africa had already attracted the condemnation of African rights groups and government officials. Now, the South African organizer promised that a European union would establish a colour bar to protect its members. He had come, he said, "to help make Northern Rhodesia a white country." He was shocked to find natives in semi-skilled and even skilled jobs. If European miners organized,

he promised, they could establish skilled jobs as the exclusive preserve of union members.⁵²

The European Mine Workers Union (EMWU) formed after his visit rapidly gained strength. Four years after it won recognition, its members followed up a strike victory by moving into electoral politics, with the announcement, "We are getting four seats on the Copperbelt in the next election." They were modest: their white Labour Party won five seats in the Legislative Council the following year.⁵³

Settler unions tailored common settler strategies to the labour context, the situation, their own attitudes, and sources of possible support. In Northern Rhodesia, their primary strategy for excluding native workers from jobs considered skilled -- or, to the extent possible, semi-skilled -- was to secure and maintain a colour bar. As in other colonies, they needed such a bar not only because of the low cost, but because of the competence of native workers. In May 1940, following a strike by African Copperbelt workers, the South African researcher Julius Lewin conducted a study of the Northern Rhodesia colour bar. He concluded that "most of the present embarrassment arises from the very rapidity with which primitive Africans have in practice and without formal training learned to do semi-skilled work." Lewin noted that at one Copperbelt mine Europeans drove the trucks at a rate of some £30 a month, while at another Africans did the same job for a tenth of the pay.⁵⁴

Settler groups aimed to monopolize desirable jobs even when African workers could demonstrate more competence than their white counterparts. In the late 1950s, an EMWU leader would candidly explain:

It is difficult to think straight about African advancement [into skilled positions] if you know for certain that some of your pals and their children simply haven't got what it takes to keep ahead of the black man. But, damn it man, they're white and they're decent people, and they can't just be left behind!⁵⁵

As a general tactic, settler workers groups commonly attempted to present themselves as primarily interested in class rather than race issues, in equity rather than privilege. They appealed to international class solidarity in seeking the support of foreign labour organizations. In Palestine, the General Organization of Hebrew Workers ("Histadrut") consistently succeeded in such efforts for a quarter-century (see chapter 4). Similar results were uncommon. In 1922 South Africa's Chamber of Mines moved to cut mining companies' expenses by replacing some white workers with low-paid Africans. Striking in protest, white miners raised the slogan "Workers of the World Unite, and Fight for a White South Africa!"⁵⁶ They were still awaiting the response of the international working class when the government suppressed the strike. Similarly, in 1948 Britain's TUC put off an EMWU request for support on the grounds of objections from the colonial government.⁵⁷

As these examples suggest, calls for class solidarity generally did more harm than good in the eyes of onlooking

metropolitan and colonial governments. To bureaucrats, the appeal to class constituted a second powerful reason to block settlers from influencing native workers. In addition to their perceived responsibility to protect natives from manipulation, they felt a need to forestall what, to class-conscious official eyes, looked like potential revolution. "By war's end," according to James Hooker, "Government had begun to worry about the unlikely danger posed by an African work force controlled by militant white socialists."⁵⁸ Officials also feared, more plausibly (but, as suggested above, mistakenly), that the settler miners could attract support from British unionists. In the case of Palestine's powerful Histadrut, which proclaimed itself socialist, the government was even more wary (see chapter 4).

In a few instances -- for example, the Northern Rhodesian copper mines and, in certain periods and occupations, Palestine -- settler organizations sought to decrease wage competition from native skilled workers by raising labour's traditional demand for equal pay. Like the general appeal to class solidarity, this demand had at least the potential to elicit support from overseas labour movements. Natives, the settler unions would argue, should receive the same pay as settlers for any given job. For example, EMWU leaders told a panel investigating the 1940 Copperbelt strike that they did not object to Africans holding any job, with two provisos: that they do as good (or "nearly as

good") work, and that they receive the same pay, as a European. The European workers simply opposed exploitation.⁵⁹

Like settler unions elsewhere, the EMWU knew that employers would not hire natives if they had to pay them as much as they did settlers. The investigating panel acknowledged both African workers' claim to advancement and European workers' fear that their pay would fall to African levels if African workers were hired for "European" work. It ultimately concluded that requiring equal pay for Africans "would be unfair to [the African], reducing as it probably would his chances of employment."⁶⁰ As Cooper has pointed out, the EMWU defended their monopoly on desirable jobs by appealing to a principle that Africans could hardly attack, and they rightly assumed that neither employers nor the government would stand up to them.⁶¹

In addition to insisting on the principle of equal pay, some settler unions attempted, or pretended to attempt, to organize native workers into segregated branches. In Palestine, over a fifteen-year period, the Histadrut made repeated, if less than wholehearted, gestures towards organizing a federation of Arab workers which it called the Palestine Labour League (see chapter 4). In Northern Rhodesia, the EMWU also proposed to organize African unions, but only at strategically important junctures.⁶² Officials doubted the good faith of these proposals, suggesting that

the EMWU designed them for overseas labour movement consumption or to blunt African demands for higher pay.⁶³

Through the interwar period and beyond, the Colonial Office, safe in London, generally opposed settlers' demands to dominate natives. Governors and other local officials confronted a different and increasingly difficult situation. They encountered growing numbers of assertive settler representatives in their colonies' legislative and even their own executive councils. In addition, they themselves were subject to exasperation with native resistance to Western cultural and economic ideologies. They were thus more likely than London bureaucrats to yield to, even sympathize with, settlers' aspirations. When settlers brought demands to the London government, many governors supported their contentions, in whole or in part.

Given these circumstances, native workers in settler colonies found themselves facing determined efforts at severe restriction, posed by settler workers who often enjoyed the support of the organized settler community and of pro-settler bodies in London, as well as the nervous acquiescence of the colonial administration. Opposing these -- at least to the extent of asserting the right of natives to jobs at varying levels of perceived skill -- were two flawed European constituencies: on the one hand, the generally liberal but distant Colonial Office bureaucrats; on the other,

local employers who wanted the freedom to hire natives at lower than European rates.⁶⁴

Native workers in Palestine shared the situation of their counterparts in other settler colonies. Their position, however, had one additional peculiarity. In many territories, settlers claimed skilled or semi-skilled jobs but had no interest in the shifting categories of labour that employers and government assigned to natives. Other colonies, including Palestine, attracted sizable bodies of settlers who made no claim to recognized skills: barring natives from jobs defined as "responsible" or even semi-skilled was no help to these people. They would benefit only if natives were excluded from any job that any settler might want. There, as a result, native workers were not secure in even the simplest jobs. In some such colonies, particularly the older ones in North America and the South Pacific, settlers at least partially exterminated the natives, incidentally excluding them from competition for unskilled jobs. In Palestine, the native population survived.

Chapter 4 will show how the common colonial patterns of interaction among administrators, settlers, and natives shaped labour policy in the special circumstances of Palestine between the world wars.

Notes

¹Report of Proceedings at the 57th Annual Trades Union Congress (London: Co-operative Printing Society, 1925), 553-54.

²The Commission asked all mandatory powers to answer certain questions, broadly standardized but tailored to specific territories, in their annual reports on their administration. The Palestine reports began in 1923 (Colonial Nos. 5, 1924, and 9, 1925) to address five questions about labour policy. These concerned compliance with ILO conventions; other labour regulations; government powers to enforce the fulfilment of contracts; and the authorities responsible for drafting and for carrying out labour legislation.

³The Palestine administration asked to be excused from observing five conventions on the ground that Palestine had no merchant marine. Colonial Office, Report by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of Palestine and Transjordan for the Year 1931, Colonial No. 75 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1932), 69-70.

⁴For a sympathetic and detailed description of the lives of African men and women in the Northern Rhodesian lead mining centre of Broken Hill around 1940, see Godfrey Wilson, An Essay on the Economics of Detribalization in Northern Rhodesia, Rhodes-Livingstone Papers, No. 5 (Livingston: Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, Northern Rhodesia, 1941; reprint, Manchester: Manchester University Press for Institute for Social Research, University of Zambia, 1968).

⁵Granville St. J. Orde-Browne, The African Labourer (London: Oxford University Press for International Institute of African Languages and Cultures, 1933), 105.

⁶Orde-Browne argued, for example, that some of the "inertia" of African lowlanders arose from diseases such as malaria and hookworm. In addition, "tribes" familiar with forced labour had had reason to develop methods of doing as little work as possible or avoiding employment altogether. Orde-Browne deplored the use of coercive recruitment and taxation policies to force Africans into wage labour as an attempt artificially to inject Western economic incentives into an inappropriate setting. Such regulations, he noted, also removed employers' incentive to provide attractive, or even tolerable, working conditions (*ibid.*, 27, 35, 30, 31).

⁷Orde-Browne reported that it was "possible for the African labour market to absorb surprising quantities of discharged men without the widespread distress that would be caused in Europe" (*ibid.*, 112).

⁸As Mair pointed out, "Government provision for [migrant workers was] held to be unnecessary seeing that all could obtain subsistence in the reserves." Mair, Native Policies, 107. In relation to Northern Rhodesia, the anthropologist

Audrey Richards flatly contradicted this view: in the villages she studied, the absence of a high proportion of the young men in the mines imposed "a crippling kind of depression" such that a returning worker would find his village starkly different from the one he had left. To Richards, "the dead appearance of villages with a large percentage of absent men [was] one of the most striking features of the country-side." Audrey Richards, Land, Labour, and Diet in Northern Rhodesia: An Economic Study of the Bemba Tribe (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the International African Institute, 1939), 405.

⁹In Palestine, the village refuge provided administrators a rationale for not even collecting statistics on native unemployment, as they did not hesitate to explain to the Permanent Mandates Commission (see chapter 4).

¹⁰Mair, as she opposed rapid change in colonized societies, condemned governments' refusal to take responsibility for the results of such change, advocating "the maintenance of a stable labour force by means of a system of insurance." Mair, Native Policies, 107.

¹¹Orde-Browne, African Labourer, 97-99. Five years later, a report on the Northern Rhodesian economy expressed doubt about whether such benefits actually accrued. Colonial Office, Economic Position, 40-41.

¹²Orde-Browne, African Labourer, 103, 104. In 1931, for example, a committee charged with examining Palestine's existing labour laws and proposing new legislation was asked to consider, among other questions, "whether the fixing of a higher minimum wage for Arabs is likely to cause an influx of Arabs to the towns swelling the ranks of unskilled labour in the town." Colonial Office, Report on Palestine for 1931, 73-74.

¹³Colonial Office, Economic Position, 47.

¹⁴The Pim Commission reported in 1938 that the Northern Rhodesian copper companies maintained a cushion of excess workers in a sort of limbo: "The mines keep in reserve a few hundred men each, who have been passed but are not immediately required. They are fed but receive no pay." *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 41. The report comes out strongly in favor of stabilization (although not necessarily permanent).

¹⁶In 1947 the Northern Rhodesia Labour Department was still classifying African workers as "migratory," "semi-stabilised," and "stabilised." It worried that the last group, unless diluted by "a better type, such as senior African

Civil Servants and mineworkers," could become a problem. Northern Rhodesia Labour Department, Annual Report for the Year 1947, 9, BL, CSB 314/50.

¹⁷"Trades unions," circular dispatch to colonial governments, 17 September 1930, PRO, CO 323/1077/10, item 3, in Ashton, S. R., and S. E. Stockwell, eds., Imperial Policy and Colonial Practice, 1925-1945, Part II, Economic Policy, Social Policies and Colonial Research, British Documents on the End of Empire (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office for the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, 1996), 226. Passfield's description exactly fits the trade unions bill which the government of Palestine never managed to enact into law (see chapter 7).

¹⁸In 1939 Arthur Creech Jones, a future Labour Party colonial secretary, warned Parliament that continuing to call colonial labour problems "disorders" instead of "simple industrial disputes" would obstruct the search for solutions. Speech to Parliament, 7 June 1939, House of Commons Debates 348, c. 487, quoted in Cooper, Decolonization, 64.

¹⁹Government of Northern Rhodesia, Disturbance in the Copperbelt [1935], 35. Indeed, after the next great Copperbelt strike (when troops and police killed seventeen strikers), investigators reiterated this analysis, remarking on "how easily the passions of the African workers are aroused and how quickly an industrial dispute may develop into serious riot and disorder." Government of Northern Rhodesia, Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Disturbances in the Copperbelt, Northern Rhodesia [1940] (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1941), 23, 49.

These attitudes towards colonized workers resembled establishment descriptions of British workers at a similar point in their forcible socialization into an industrial working class.

²⁰J. G. Hibbert, memorandum, 1 February 1940, PRO, CO 859/28/10.

²¹Roberts, Tropical Territories, 184.

²²Colonial Office, Economic Position, 47.

²³Government of Northern Rhodesia, Statement by the Government of Northern Rhodesia on the Recommendations of the Report of the Copperbelt Commission, 1940 (Lusaka: Government Printer, 18 February 1941), 3.

²⁴Labour Department of Northern Rhodesia, Annual Report for the Year 1948, 7, BL, CSB 314/50. The government's task was the more difficult because some large employers (such as the

Rhodesian Railways) themselves provided housing whose objective conditions resembled those of a slum (*ibid.*, 5).

²⁵For example, in Haifa (1935) and Jaffa (June 1936).

²⁶A. Lynn Saffery, A Report on Some Aspects of African Living Conditions on the Copper Belt of Northern Rhodesia (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1943), 74.

²⁷Through the 1930s, union leaders continued to fear rioting, according to Branson and Heinemann, Britain in the 1930s, 7.

²⁸Northern Rhodesia Archives, Box 430, Hi 2, Vol. I, diary of strike, 12-13 January 1943, quoted in Hooker, "Labour Department," 12.

²⁹"Trades unions" [circular dispatch], in Ashton and Stockwell, eds., 226.

³⁰W. G. A. Ormsby-Gore, circular dispatch, August 1937, cited in Roberts, Tropical Territories, 183.

³¹Colonial Office, Labour Supervision in the Colonial Empire, 1937-1943, Colonial No. 185 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1943), 6.

³²Fabian Society, Labour in the Colonies, 12.

³³Northern Rhodesia Labour Department, Annual Report [1947], BL, CSB 314/50, 11. In 1944, when mines' managers prevented collective bargaining literature from reaching African foremen, the Labour Department had warned that the practice "encouraged [sic] the appeal of communist doctrine." Ass. 52/17, memo of 28 December 1943 and notes of 22 April 1944, quoted in Hooker, "Labour Department," 15.

³⁴Information about labour organization in Northern Rhodesia comes from Hooker, "Labour Department," 7, 8, 17, 18, 21, and Henderson, "Labour and Politics," 210. "Boss boys" (assistant foremen), followed by clerks, formed their own associations in 1942.

³⁵"Trades unions" [circular dispatch], in Ashton and Stockwell, eds., Colonial Practice, 226.

³⁶Hibbert to Hodges, Ministry of Labour and National Service, Industrial Relations Division, 19 August 1941, PRO, CO 859/59/10.

³⁷Hibbert, draft letter to Miss Taylor and Miss McAdam, 19 May 1941, PRO, CO 859/59/8.

- ³⁸Hibbert to Hodges, 19 August 1941, PRO, CO 859/59/10.
- ³⁹Ibid., quoting Lindon, a staff member whom Hodges had "given" the Colonial Office for service in Jamaica.
- ⁴⁰Hibbert to Taylor, Ministry of Labour and National Service, "Appointment of UK Trade Unionists to Colonial Labour Departments," PRO, CO 859/59/9.
- ⁴¹Hibbert to Hodges, 19 August 1941, PRO, CO 859/59/10.
- ⁴²Charles J. Jeffries [Colonial Service] to Alan Hunter (Governor, British Honduras), 23 September 1941, PRO, CO 859/59/10.
- ⁴³Governor, British Guiana, 18 February 1941, PRO, CO 859/59/10.
- ⁴⁴Hibbert to Hodges, 19 August 1941, PRO, CO 859/59/10, quoting Lindon.
- ⁴⁵Roberts, Tropical Territories, Preface by Sydney Caine, x.
- ⁴⁶See Fredrickson's classification of settler communities' strategies for securing land and jobs according to their demographic, geographic, and political situation (White Supremacy, xxi-xxiv).
- ⁴⁷Lewin, Colour Bar, 9.
- ⁴⁸Orde-Browne, African Labourer, 118. By casting the "capitalist employer" as the real adversary, these workers sought to lend an air of class solidarity to their contention.
- ⁴⁹Mair, Native Policies, 262. The second characterization comes from an unsympathetic commentator on Southern Rhodesia's colour bar, embodied in the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1934. Henry Rangeley to Andrew Cohen [Colonial Office], Cholo, Nyasaland, March 1938, Salisbury (Southern Rhodesia) Archives, RA 1/1/1, quoted in Hooker, "Labour Department," 4.
- ⁵⁰Henderson, "Labour and Politics," 114.
- ⁵¹Johannesburg Star, 27 March 1940, quoted in Lewin, Colour Bar, 18.
- ⁵²London Group on African Affairs, Rights and Liberties of Africans, No. 2: South African Native Policy, 14, quoted in Lewin, Colour Bar, 5.

⁵³Lewin, Colour Bar, 18. The Labour Party leader, railroad worker Roy Welensky, came to lead the settlers' movement of the entire colony, eventually serving as Prime Minister through most of the decade of confederation with Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, until 1963.

⁵⁴Ibid., 10-11, 7.

⁵⁵J. F. Holleman, White Mine Workers in Northern Rhodesia 1959-60 (Leiden: Afrika Studiecentrum, 1973), 19. A decade earlier, a commission examining possibilities for African advancement had foreseen the problem of the second generation (as had Lewin, as early as 1940): "The advance of the African may not affect those other persons who are at present in employment but may affect them indirectly through their sons." Government of Northern Rhodesia, Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the Advancement of Africans in Industry (Lusaka: Government Printer, 1948), 35.

⁵⁶Leonard Thompson, A History of South Africa, rev. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 160.

⁵⁷Northern Rhodesia Archives, J 4/52/20, June 1948, quoted in Hooker, "Labour Department," 12.

⁵⁸Hooker, "Labour Department," 11.

⁵⁹Government of Northern Rhodesia, Disturbances in the Copperbelt [1940], 46-47.

⁶⁰Ibid., 47.

⁶¹Cooper, Decolonization, 341. The equal pay strategy in fact attracted support from some native workers. African miners who supported the call for equal pay were in effect abandoning the drive for "African advancement" -- the abolition of the colour bar that excluded Africans from jobs considered skilled or semi-skilled. This position was not unreasonable: "African advancement," had it ever been achieved, would have secured such jobs -- paid at less than the European rate -- for only those few African workers per year whom the mine managers were willing to accept. According to Cooper's calculations, the 1954 Forster Commission recommendation would have opened up 300 jobs to Africans over a five-year period, affecting fewer than 1 percent of African workers. Government of Northern Rhodesia, Report of the Board of Inquiry Appointed to Inquire into the Advancement of Africans in the Copper Mining Industry in Northern Rhodesia (Lusaka: Government of Northern Rhodesia, 1954), 27-29.

⁶²Northern Rhodesia Archives (Lusaka), Sec./Lab./34, 1 October 1943, quoted in Hooker, "Labour Department," 10.

⁶³One provincial commissioner suggested that the union wanted to get credit from overseas unions for wanting to organize natives, but relied on the government to prevent it from doing so and thus to take the blame. Northern Rhodesia Archives (Lusaka), Sec./Misc./67, 6 September 1943, quoted in Hooker, "Labour Department," 11.

⁶⁴The government panel investigating the 1940 strike (Government of Northern Rhodesia, Disturbances in the Copperbelt [1940], 46) gave the employers the benefit of the doubt. Though African advancement might reduce labour costs, the panel concluded, it would be unfair to assume that any gesture by the companies towards satisfying Africans' aspirations was self-interested.

Chapter 4
Palestine as an Instance of Colonial Labour Administration,
1920-1940

The successive governments of Palestine, like their counterparts elsewhere, generally conformed to the established British colonial administrative and social orthodoxies of their day. As empire-wide concerns about poverty, education, labour, and native government gained the attention of the Colonial Office, colonial administrators increasingly recognized -- sometimes with annoyance -- the importance these issues had attained in London. Colonial governments received growing numbers of Colonial Office circular dispatches bearing inquiries and admonitions about social conditions. Increasingly prominent among the bureaucrats' concerns was the situation of workers.

In response to these -- as to inquiries from the Permanent Mandates Commission, the International Labour Organization, or any other outside agency -- the administrators of any colony were likely to argue that their particular territory's specific geographic, demographic, and cultural circumstances set it apart from the rest of the empire, entitling it to special consideration. In addition, each colony underwent the effects of the distinct personalities and ideologies of its particular administrators.

The mandate government was thus no exception in considering its situation exceptional. In significant ways, however, conditions in Palestine did deviate further than

most from colonial norms. The distinctions arose from the perceived attributes and the activities of both natives and settlers.¹ Combined, they would bring the mandate a labour administration unlike any other.

Distinctions in Situation: The Natives

One broad distinction in official attitudes set Palestine (and, in different ways, Britain's other major Arab holdings, Egypt and Iraq) apart from African and many other colonies. That distinction concerned the colonizers' view of the natives. In early 1940, the Colonial Office's assistant secretary for the Middle East contrasted the two sets of assumptions. From the vantage point of previous responsibility for West Africa, he asserted that Palestine was not like "colonies with fairly primitive populations." Although Palestinian Arabs were "primitive in standards of living," he maintained, they were "far from uncivilized or 'exploitable.'"²

This differentiation, which had antecedents in long-held British attitudes, was also in accord with the official international consensus. The League of Nations mandates for Arab territories were "Class A" mandates. The League, that is, had defined the peoples of the former Ottoman Empire, unlike those of formerly German Central Africa, as having "reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized" (although, of course, needing administrative advice and as-

sistance from a European power until they were "able to stand alone").³ The official consensus concerning Africans held that they would require decades, if not centuries, of tutelage to become capable of self-government.⁴

At least some administrators in Palestine agreed with London and Geneva about the relative promise of their native charges. Looking back at the mandate, Palestine's first labour director, Richard Graves, would write of "the Arab" in laudatory, though immensely patronizing and ethnocentric, terms. Noting that Britons tended to consider Arabs primitive, he insisted that the relative rarity of educated individuals did not mean that Arabs in general were "in any way recalcitrant to education." On the contrary: Arabs, although not very realistic, were "intelligent and adaptable." Perhaps most important, they were "perfectly able to acquire not only the external signs of culture, but also the knowledge and sense of values which give culture authenticity." In Graves's view, Jerusalem's Arab society "compare[d] favourably in education and manners with the society of many European cities of similar size."⁵

Early in the mandate, colonial officials began to extend to Arab workers in particular the relative esteem in which they held Arabs in general. To do so, they overcame preconceptions acquired in other colonies. The British had brought to Palestine assumptions about native workers formed in India, Africa, and Southeast Asia. They often described

Arab workers with the standard mixture of condescension to unfamiliar cultural values, faith in officials' firsthand interpretations, and patronizing acknowledgement of natives' few perceived similarities to Europeans. From nearly forty years' experience in Egypt, in particular, they brought specific assumptions about Arab workers -- as well as about Palestine's relative lack of development. In Palestine, officials encountered Arab peasants who turned to wage work as it arose and quickly began to organize themselves.

Some administrators were able to adjust their views to the situation they found. Officers making up a 1922 report on Palestine included Arabs in their enumeration of the territory's skilled workers.⁶ In 1931 officials reported, with apparent satisfaction, "Arab Unions are . . . making themselves felt in teaching the doctrines of trade unionism,"⁷ although the workforce still included "an advanced Jewish proletariat and a primitive Arab working class."⁸ The following year, representatives of Arab as well as Jewish employers and workers sat with British officials on the government committee charged with examining labour legislation and recommending changes.⁹

By the time Palestine's economy expanded in the mid-1930s, officials clearly had more confidence in native workers than did their counterparts in Africa. Some even apparently expected Arab workers to master their nationalist sentiments in favour of class mobilization. Even as Arab

frustration built towards the upheavals of 1936, Britain's 1935 PMC report actually implied disappointment that Arab workers had not been sufficiently class conscious to remain in Zionist-backed segregated unions: large numbers were resigning as "the feelings engendered by the [Zionist] arms smuggling incident overcame the still unformed sense of social solidarity."¹⁰

British officials had at least begun to express their hopes and fears about the native workforce in terms of class and nationalism as well as tradition and custom. Arab workers seemed neither "primitive" like their African counterparts nor "radical," like the Zionists' Histadrut conglomerate. These distinctions would by the end of the decade constitute a perceived opportunity for "sound unions" -- a vision that would shape the mission of the Palestine Labour Department.

The anomalies of native labour organization in Palestine appear clearly in the context of the similarities between the situation of native workers there and in Northern Rhodesia. The economies of the two colonies followed similar courses. Their native wage earners were concentrated -- in Palestine, in industrial and agricultural concerns along the coast; in Rhodesia, on the Copperbelt. In both colonies, the major enterprises quickly took root in the mid-1920s, suffered a collapse in 1930 and 1931, and began a sharp recovery in 1933. Construction of the major Copperbelt

mines began in 1925 and occupied some 30,000 Africans in 1930, when the price of copper began a year-long fall that reduced it by five eighths. Two of the four large mines closed. Recovery began two years later; by 1934, 14,000 and by 1939, 26,000 Africans, and about a tenth as many Europeans, worked on the mines. This timing closely followed the initial development, sharp depression, and rapid early 1930s recovery of the Palestinian economy, though not the economic disorganization that accompanied the Arab revolts of 1936 and 1937-39.

The organization of native workers in the two territories, however, followed far different trajectories. In Palestine, both large employers and settler worker organizations exerted much less pressure against collective bargaining for natives; colonial officials were much more cordial to the prospect of native unions; and the union form became important to the workers themselves much sooner than in Northern Rhodesia.¹¹

Native workers in Palestine began to experiment with labour organization in the 1920s. When the British first occupied the territory, late in 1917, most Arabs lived and worked in farming communities, or in native or settler orange groves. Almost at once, the colonial administration began hiring labourers, primarily on public works projects. Foreign and settler firms quickly established large, mechanized industrial enterprises. The prospect of unskilled jobs

attracted thousands of villagers. Within a few years, a native industrial workforce was forming around a nucleus of experienced urban artisans in skilled jobs, and its members had begun to organize.

In the mid-1920s, different groups of Arab workers founded labour organizations with variously defined constituencies and aims; many of these resembled organizations of European or North American workers at analogous stages of industrialization. Some, like Jaffa's Orthodox [Christian] Cooperative Labour Society,¹² founded in 1924, explicitly defined themselves by religion. Some, such as the Arab Workers Party of Nablus, also founded in 1924, were established by members of leading families, presumably to organize the families' adherents. Others, like the Jerusalem Car and Driver Association, included both owners and employees. But just beyond Palestine's newly drawn borders, among their more highly industrialized Egyptian and Lebanese neighbours, the Arab workers could see a different kind of organization: the labour union.

Palestine's native labour organizations began to take the form of unions in the mid-1920s. As early as 1921, Arab mechanics in the Haifa railroad shops asked the Jewish railroad workers union to organize them. After extended discussions, the Zionist labour federation, the Histadrut, rejected its affiliate's attempts to do so in the integrated format that the Arab workers expected. In 1925, the Arabs

founded their own labour union, the Palestine Arab Workers Society (PAWS).¹³

PAWS's leaders concentrated their organizing efforts on workers in the railroad shops and in Arab enterprises, which were commonly of limited size. They also organized Arab labourers in Jewish enterprises, notably quarries and orange groves. From the beginning, they expressed strong nationalist positions: they showed little interest in class struggle against Arab employers, and they feared that cooperation with Histadrut unions would open the way for those unions to compete for Arab workers. PAWS would retain this basic stance throughout the mandate.

From the beginning, too, PAWS's leaders considered their organization a union federation in formation. They established chapters in several cities during the late 1920s. At the end of the decade, heightened antagonism between Palestinian Arabs and Zionist immigrant organizations, brought to prominence by the violent conflict of August 1929, sharply raised Arab national consciousness. Taking impetus from this national awakening, the Arab union movement began, after only five years of existence, to coalesce. In January 1930, PAWS and Arab Communist unionists held a conference of some 60 representatives. These had been elected from the big industrialized cities, like Haifa and Jaffa, but also from hill towns and villages. The group passed some nationalist resolutions, but also called (despite some ob-

jections on behalf of nationalist employers) for an eight-hour day and minimum wage. The delegates further set out an ambitious plan for a nationwide Arab union federation.

Observing this development, the British officials writing the 1930 report to the Permanent Mandates Commission took the advanced, rather than the traditional, colonial position. They welcomed both this relatively familiar form of organizing and the new, stabilized working population it indicated: at last some Arab wage earners seemed to be interested in remaining in the workforce beyond seasonal employment.¹⁴

Almost at once, Palestine's depressed economy of 1930 and 1931 limited employment and hampered organizing. The Arab union leaders lacked experience. Commenting on the year 1931, British administrators reported with regret that the new, Western-style organizations had become dormant.¹⁵ More than a decade would pass before Arab workers would construct an enduring labour federation.

The mid-1930s did see unprecedented, though short-lived, growth in Arab unions. The country's infrastructure was expanding sharply. Using considerable Arab labour, the Shell oil company completed a Haifa facility in 1930.¹⁶ Beginning in October 1929, the government employed up to 1,500 Arab labourers to build a new deepwater port in Haifa, which officially opened in October 1933.¹⁷ The following month, the oil pipeline from Iraq reached Haifa;¹⁸ over the next

half-decade the Consolidated Refineries (British Petroleum), Socony Vacuum, and the Iraq Petroleum Company would construct refineries there. After Hitler's accession to power in Germany in January 1933, a stream of German Jews brought their skills and capital to Palestine.¹⁹ More than three times as many people immigrated in 1934 as in 1932; more than ten times as many as in 1931.²⁰ Suddenly Palestine's building, manufacturing, and citriculture industries required many more workers. Pulled by the new opportunities and pushed by landlords' sales, moneylenders' foreclosures, or the repeated division of family inheritances, Arab peasants entered the labour market in greater proportions than ever before.²¹

Although both Arab notables and the Histadrut attempted to set up organizations for them,²² Arab workers themselves built the unions that quickly developed in Haifa and Jaffa in the mid-1930s. To the union form -- by now familiar -- they brought varying traditions. In Haifa, leaders emerged from the railroad shops, where workers now had nearly a decade of union experience. In addition, "a good many hundreds" of Arabs had secured jobs in the new Haifa petroleum refineries.²³ There they presumably had some contact with European expatriate workers from, for example, Italy and Greece -- and with European working-class organizational and political concepts. In Jaffa, where workers had

experimented with more varied forms of labour association, the Arab left provided leaders.

The resulting organizations, though they enrolled only a small proportion of Arab workers, had much in common with many unions in Britain and North America. While Arab workers generally rebuffed the Histadrut's attempts at organizing them into segregated affiliates, Arab union leaders apparently saw value in some Histadrut programs. Besides negotiating contracts and conducting strikes, they experimented with Histadrut-style member benefits, seeking with varied results to establish producers' and consumers' cooperatives, workers' banks, sick funds, and labour exchanges. Like the Histadrut, they lobbied the Jerusalem and London governments; lacking the Histadrut's massive influence, they had little effect. Like both the Histadrut and unions in other colonies, the Arab unions were nationalist. They defended members' jobs against the workers of other communities, and they cooperated with nationalist politicians. Overall, in fact, the Palestinian Arab unions of the 1930s behaved much like counterparts not only throughout the colonial world (settler as well as native), but in the West as well.

Within less than three years, however, the Arab unions of the mid-1930s abruptly disintegrated. Even at the height of Arab employment, in 1936, only eight percent of Arab wage earners were working in mechanized industries.²⁴ During the boycott and strike of mid-1936 and the rebellion that began

in 1937, many Arab workers left their jobs and took to the hills. By early 1939, when the British declared the revolt exhausted, Jewish entrepreneurs had developed independently; they now required far fewer Arab workers or products. The Arab economy was disrupted; the government concentrated on enforcing order. In this situation, little remained of the Arab unions beyond the original PAWS chapter in Haifa and the experience of the Arab organizers and rank and file.

During the 1920s and 1930s, then, Palestine became, as it would remain, an anomaly in colonial labour relations. While the European powers prepared for war, the native workers of Palestine underwent the neglect common to colonized workers. At the same time, they enjoyed some advantages not available to their counterparts in many other colonies. Despite the brevity and shallowness of their unionizing experience, they had accumulated useful organizational skills. They also benefited from British assumptions about Arab abilities: employers and administrators commonly recognized their ability to do skilled work; officials generally viewed their unionizing with benevolence rather than alarm; and managers in many large enterprises, accustomed to deal with unions, did not balk at organized Arabs. Even the settler labour organizations, though dismissive of native unions, considered Arab workers suitable for unionization. When war industries brought them into the wage workplace in unprecedented numbers, Palestine's native workers would be

exceptionally well situated to work with a colonial labour administration.

Distinctions in Situation: The Settlers

In important ways, labour policies in Palestine differed even from those in Britain's other "Class A" mandates or its other Arab holdings. The differences reflected more than the unusually rapid development of Palestine's native workforce. The Zionist settlement project, a colonization movement whose primary backing came not from the ruling power, but from international sponsors, set Palestine apart from other colonies. The terms of the League of Nations mandate had transmuted Britain's 1917 promise of a "national home" for the Jewish people into an international responsibility. Representatives of the international Zionist community supported the Jewish immigrants and made sure that that responsibility was not forgotten. In their view, Palestine was to become a settler colony. Colonial Office bureaucrats thus encountered exceptional external pressures as they sought to maintain their agency's expressed commitment to natives. At the same time, both suspicion of socialists and disdain for Jews reinforced their customary resistance to settlers.

In regard to labour, the colony's exceptional character showed plainly in the position of its settler labour unions. The most powerful of these nestled within a conglomerate known as the General Organization of Hebrew Workers in the Land of Israel -- the Histadrut. This organi-

zation bore little resemblance to the labour federations of Western Europe or North America -- or even, for that matter, of the Soviet Union. Despite its self-identification as a labour organization, the Histadrut also performed the functions of both an employer and a political grouping. Its combination of roles developed from the range of assignments that the conglomerate took on in the Jewish immigrant community -- the yishuv.

Founded in 1920 as the trade union organization of the yishuv's Labour Zionist parties, the Histadrut put to political use the relationships it established with workers, and with the population of the yishuv in general. Most notably, it skillfully mobilized support for its two largest supporting parties. In 1930 these merged to form the Labour Party (MAPAI) -- a body that would thenceforth dominate the politics of the yishuv (and then, until 1977, the government of Israel).

With funds supplied by the World Zionist Organization, the Histadrut established the basic industries -- construction, manufacturing, food processing, transport, banking -- for an eventual independent Jewish state to occupy Palestine. These activities achieved a second Zionist aim: to provide jobs that could attract and support new immigrants. In the process, the Histadrut became the yishuv's biggest employer while giving the immigrants cause to support it in turn. Through its construction enterprise, the

Histadrut provided workers housing; through its health plan, it provided health services not only to union members, but to others -- eventually almost all Israeli citizens and some Palestinians under occupation -- who paid an insurance fee. To many settlers, the Histadrut became indispensable.

This combination of activities and roles elicited very different responses from the British Left and the Colonial Office bureaucracy. Until near the close of the mandate, the Histadrut enjoyed strong support from British labour's mainstream political and trade union organizations. The conglomerate's leaders were European immigrants enunciating a socialist political philosophy. They affiliated their organization with international labour bodies, and the Labour Party (MAPAI) with the Socialist International. These relationships, along with the efforts of British Zionists, connected the Labour Zionists and their organizations with Britain's Trades Union Congress and Labour Party.

A discussion at the 1936 Trades Union Congress (TUC) illustrated this relationship between socialism and support. The TUC General Council brought forward a resolution calling on the British government to promote development and refrain from limiting immigration into Palestine. The presenter of the resolution, who had recently been a guest of the Histadrut, described Palestine as a beacon of emerging socialism, whose development the British government feared.²⁵ The resolution was unanimously adopted.²⁶

Such support from the Left for settlers was far from automatic. Britain's socialists had always been in a difficult position when confronted by organized settler workers. Their reservations about (and eventual opposition to) colonialism collided with a working class solidarity which not only extended to settler as well as native workers, but could converse more readily with the former. In the case of Palestine, the Histadrut and the Zionist movement in general found it possible to ease this dilemma somewhat by presenting themselves not only as socialist working-class militants but as both leaders of a just national independence struggle and defenders of native rights.

A team of Labour Zionist leaders deployed this multiple identity in 1928 as they urged the TUC to seek minimum wage legislation for Palestine. Yitzhak Ben Tzvi characterized the colonization of Palestine as not a capitalist, but a "popular colonisation . . . based on nationalised land and organised labour." Jewish organized labour promoted "mutual understanding among the different races, . . . [making] no distinction in Trade Union organisation between Arab and Jewish immigrants" (a plain falsehood at any stage of the Histadrut's history). Dov Hoz, in support, asserted the compatibility of "a Jewish National, as well as a Socialist and Labour standpoint."²⁷

For the first quarter-century of the mandate, the British Left found it possible, even easy, to overlook the

inconsistency between settler self-interest and socialist ideology. In 1942, the newly constituted Palestine Labour Department assigned an officer, Harold Chudleigh, to help Arab workers organize unions. Chudleigh, a former administrator in a leftwing British union, asserted that, where Palestine was concerned, Zionist bodies monopolized the information sources of the British Left.²⁸ Chudleigh had found only one work in English presenting the viewpoint of unionized Arabs: George Mansur's "The Arab Worker under the Palestine Mandate."²⁹ In his opinion, the booklet, though more "rabid" in tone than any Histadrut publication and equally "unbalanced," would help any sensible English observer form a reasonable opinion.³⁰

The near-monopoly of propaganda was not immediately evident, according to Chudleigh, because Zionist publications and representatives found ways to present their own views as Palestinian opinion in general, or even as Arab opinion. Because it represented most Palestinian union members, the Histadrut claimed to speak for all Palestinian workers. The only Arab union representative to make an official visit to England had been a Histadrut member.³¹

According to Chudleigh, the Histadrut's occasional attempts to organize native workers also had little result. Histadrut efforts to organize Arabs into the Palestine Labour League (PLL), a segregated federation, apparently represented passionate commitment on the part of some indi-

viduals, but little on the part of the organization's leaders.³² Chudleigh reported that of some 3,500 to 4,000 Arab union members in the fall of 1942, no more than 10 to 15 percent belonged to the Histadrut or its affiliates.

British leftists apparently remained unaware of the gap between Histadrut claims of representation and Histadrut Arab enrollment as the government calculated it. Chudleigh maintained that even "seeing for themselves" had not given visiting unionists a more accurate view of Arab workers' situation. British observers stayed a few weeks at the most, making no contact with Arab worker representatives or with Arab leaders who could present workers' case. Predictably, they returned with a biased view.³³

The presentation of the 1936 TUC resolution supporting Jewish immigration (see above) offers an instance. With the authority of an eyewitness, the presenter asserted that Arab and Jewish workers were coming together. In Haifa he had met the officials of the Arab trade union, organized and guided by the local Jewish railroad union. The current Arab strike and boycott he attributed to "rich Arab landlords" selling their land at inflated prices, then complaining that they were landless.³⁴ He offered the Histadrut argument that class solidarity -- developed through the enlightenment of the Arab masses -- would resolve intercommunal hostility. Class consciousness would overcome the landlords' incitement.³⁵

TUC officials often transmitted the impact of Histadrut and British Zionist influence to British Labour Party conferences and members of Parliament. In turn accepting the Histadrut's analyses -- at least until after the Second World War -- Labour politicians sometimes took up the Histadrut's causes. Their inquiries, carrying the implied threat of a question in Parliament, caused considerable anxiety among government officials. They also commonly aroused resentment and resistance; their practical results were generally negligible.

London officials felt none of the perplexity of the British Left in relation to settler unions, in which they simply saw political radicals making expensive demands. Feeling beleaguered by Zionist pressure, they resisted as best they could. A Colonial Office veteran expressed a typical position when the TUC supported the minimum wage for labourers on public works. Sir John Shuckburgh, deputy under-secretary for the Middle East, saw in the TUC's presentation of a continual Histadrut demand -- aimed at relieving Jewish workers from the competition of low-paid Arab labourers -- a familiar pattern of Zionist subversion of mandate government authority. He urged Sir Samuel Wilson, permanent colonial under-secretary, to reject the proposal on principle. High Commissioner Chancellor had already lost considerable authority through "Jewish tactics (unhappily so successful) in going behind his back to high political

authority in England." The TUC must not become "another channel for short-circuiting the King's Representative."³⁶

Colonial Office bureaucrats were in fact inclined automatically to resist any measure that the TUC or Labour Party presented on behalf of Zionist bodies. As a Labour appointee, parliamentary secretary Drummond Shiels judged it wise to emphasize that he was presenting the minimum wage proposal despite, not because of, its endorsement by the TUC. The government had been considering the issue before the TUC brought it up, he pointed out, and the action proposed was natural for any British government interested in order and welfare for Palestine.³⁷

British Labour's support for the Zionist cause would reach its peak in 1944, when the Labour Party executive committee issued its recommendations for "The International Post-War Settlement." These concerned not labour, but purely political initiatives: for example, to encourage a transfer of population in Palestine, Arabs moving out, Jews moving in.³⁸ After an outraged protest from the Palestine Arab Workers Society (PAWS) against the "unsocialist and unjust resolution" of their "British brothers,"³⁹ the Labour Party's colonial committee consulted with the Jewish Agency's London representative. As a result, the party executive elaborated on the wording of the recommendation: it envisaged only voluntary emigration, not expulsion. The

"British brothers" found it unnecessary to send the PAWS any response at all.⁴⁰

Another Labour recommendation ventured even further into the terrain of British foreign policy, urging that the government "agree" with Egypt, Syria, and Transjordan to extend the boundaries of Palestine.⁴¹ Shortly afterward, Hugh Dalton, who had headed the Labour Party executive committee when it presented its postwar plan, made a further suggestion. Dalton urged his party to adopt the position that Britain would cooperate with the United States and Soviet Union on "a policy, which will give us a happy, a free, and a prosperous Jewish state in Palestine."⁴²

The Labour Party Executive recommendation and the Dalton proposal represented the height of Histadrut influence on the official British Left. In 1947 and 1948, the TUC General Council rejected a Histadrut request to press for the admission to Palestine of a hundred thousand Jewish refugees;⁴³ it relayed to the full Congress, without comment, an April 1948 press release from the National Council of Labour, of which the TUC was a major constituent, supporting the government's decision to withdraw from Palestine.⁴⁴

The turn in Labour Party policy was even more conspicuous. For nearly a quarter century, party conferences had promised Palestine to the Jews.⁴⁵ In power, after the war's end, the Labour Party sought to exclude Jewish

refugees from Palestine, to remove Britain from Palestinian affairs, and to secure the position of the Arabs. At the 1944 Labour Party Conference which marked the height of Zionist influence on British Labour, Clement Attlee had argued for allowing Jews to form a majority in Palestine. The following year, Attlee had become Prime Minister; in 1948, as Britain hastily withdrew from Palestine, he still held that position.

The turn in Labour's policy appeared sudden and drastic; Zionist analysts sought explanations. At the end of 1947, the journalist Jon Kimche proposed two probable reasons why Labour's longstanding support had proven so insubstantial at precisely the moment when Zionists were expecting at last to enjoy the full commitment of the British government.⁴⁶ One was Zionists' reliance on Labour leaders' statements and corresponding inattention to the attitudes of union members. In addition, said Kimche, when Labour Party politicians joined the National Government in 1940, they had been "shocked" at the new information about the Middle East to which they suddenly had access. The Zionists had succeeded too well in obscuring the importance of the Arabs in the Middle East.⁴⁷ More recently, their success in securing U.S. support further injured their cause. According to Kimche, every member of the Labour cabinet, regardless of stance on the basic issue, was enraged when the Truman Administration attempted to dictate Britain's Palestine

policy.⁴⁸ British Labour's sustained, anomalous support for settler workers in Palestine had ceased, this Zionist observer concluded, largely because of the political and tactical victories of the Zionists themselves.⁴⁹

For two decades, official British Labour and labour organizations had maintained an exceptional policy toward Palestine, aligning themselves unequivocally with the settler labour organization and party. During this period, the labour establishment apparently trusted that any gains for these bodies would benefit and bring forward the "backward" native workers with whom the settlers supposedly shared the labour market. Only at the end of the Second World War, when the Labour Party was in government and had both access to information and responsibility for relations with the Arab world, did this attitude change.

Similarities in Administration, 1920-1940

Palestine's administrators explicitly distinguished both the native and the settler work forces from their colonial counterparts. Palestine, they repeatedly insisted, was unique. Yet for two decades they adhered to the established colonial patterns of labour supervision, both in legislation and in practice. In legislation, they followed the common pattern of ignoring labour issues to the extent that internal forces and international norms would allow (see chapter 3 and below). In practice, they acted on common stereotypes

of native workers or of workers in general, regardless of the supposed relative cultural development of the Arabs.

The Palestine government's notions about Arab workers had many elements in common with official views of other colonized workers -- indeed, of workers in general. Echoing the empire-wide concern about urban concentrations of native workers, officials in Jerusalem in the early 1930s expressed apprehension that a minimum wage for Arabs would "cause an influx of Arabs to the towns swelling the ranks of unskilled labour in the town."⁵⁰ An Arab labour leader complained in 1937 that merely to take an interest in the condition of workers made one a "nuisance." A "nuisance" who gained any influence was suspected of being either a nationalist agitator or a communist.⁵¹

From the beginning, Palestine government officials insisted that Arab workers were seasonal or migratory. Therefore they, like their African counterparts, were supposedly spared the burdens of unemployment. The mandatory's 1922 PMC report asserted that unlike Jewish workers, Arab workers did not depend entirely on wage work. Many had small plots or other means of partial support. Thus they were sometimes available for temporary work, but were not destitute without it.⁵²

Colonial officials commonly cited natives' lower standard of living to explain why they received lower wage rates than European workers. The mandate government in 1929 ack-

nowledged without apology that unskilled Arab workers customarily worked for a daily wage too low to support their Jewish counterparts. When the TUC inquired about wages on the Haifa Harbour construction project, Colonial Office notes for a response explained that although a commission of enquiry had concluded that the customary wage for unskilled workers would not support a Jewish family, "we have no information that the Government employ Jewish unskilled labourers at that rate."⁵³

Palestine's administration resembled those of other British colonies in making only perfunctory excuses for the gap in pay between natives and Westerners. One Colonial Office bureaucrat registered concern about the public relations impact, but not the substance, of the differentials. Although "a little doubtful about the reference in draft to the proposed Jewish bonus," he thought that since Jewish labourers reportedly already received higher wages, "perhaps it can stand without producing special embarrassment."⁵⁴

A dozen years later, the commission investigating Northern Rhodesia's 1940 Copperbelt strike would place a similar emphasis on public relations. They were, they said, "anxious to see the African mineworker's wage as high as is fairly possible." Such a wage would demonstrate the good faith of the "government (the guardians of African welfare)" and "convince all concerned that the African is not being exploited."⁵⁵

The common colonial assumptions about native workers supported a second common colonial pattern of labour administration that characterized Palestine. This was, simply, legislative and administrative neglect. For twenty years after taking on responsibility for administering Palestine, the British paid little attention to the country's workers, almost none to its Arab workers.

The structure both of the government and of its reports to the Permanent Mandates Commission (PMC) indicate the position of labour concerns in official thought. From 1920 through 1929, the annual reports dealt with labour mainly within their sections on immigration, linking it to Zionist development. As for actual administration, at first the Department of Immigration and Travel dealt with labour concerns, to the extent that anyone did. When, in December 1921, a "sub-department of labour" was established within the department,⁵⁶ little changed. Reporting the innovation to Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill, Civil Secretary Wyndham Deedes commented that he had always deplored the original arrangement. It suggested, he said, that the only labour issue was that of immigrant labour, as though Arab labour did not exist.⁵⁷ Having acknowledged the presence of Arab workers, he proceeded to re-emphasize the accepted position that in the non-farm labour market they were few and transient. More Jews than Arabs, he remarked, would always be looking for jobs.⁵⁸ Finally, in 1932, the government

employed its first labour officer; his assignment was to help the Immigration Department collect employment information.⁵⁹

In the existing political context, the connection of labour with immigration made practical sense. Labour was at the junction of the mandate's emphasis on the Jewish National Home with a 1922 White Paper linking the volume of legal immigration to the country's "economic absorptive capacity."⁶⁰ The pressing labour issue at this point was therefore the question of the number of new immigrant workers for whom jobs were available. Because of their insistence that Arab workers could always return to the village, the British based these calculations on unemployment statistics for the yishuv only. Despite Deedes' nod to "Arab labour," the government considered labour almost exclusively an immigration issue until the mid-1930s.

Beyond the issue of employment for immigrants, as late as 1924 the mandate government could report to the Permanent Mandates Commission that "there is no labour legislation proper."⁶¹ During the mandate's first two decades, in fact, all but one of its labour regulations concerned health and safety; the exception was a worker's compensation plan. Ordinances required protective fencing around dangerous machinery;⁶² protected workers in shops with steam boilers;⁶³ limited work with white phosphorus;⁶⁴ regulated (albeit within very wide limits) the working hours of women and

children;⁶⁵ and provided workers' compensation for accidents in a few of the most obviously hazardous occupations.⁶⁶ In addition to these responses to specific international agreements, the mandate government enacted the Mining Ordinance of 1925 (aimed at accident prevention) and the Regulation of Trades and Industries Ordinance of 1927 (intended to protect the "interests of the health and safety of the workpeople and the general public"). For some fifteen years, this extremely patchy system was in the opinion of British policy makers sufficient protection for Palestinian workers.⁶⁷

Enforcement of the ordinance limiting the amount and times of work for women, children, and young people received few resources. Inspection throughout Palestine was the ultimate responsibility of a single "inspector of welfare work," whom district administrative officers were to assist "so far as possible." A 1936 description of the inspector's duties illustrates the place of labour concerns in official thinking at the time. "The inspection of factories and workshops, under the Employment of Women and Children Ordinance" is listed sixth among nine duties, which also included concern about "the immigration of Cypriot girls for marriage to Palestinians" and "Participation in the work of the Cinematograph Films Censorship Board."⁶⁸

Women and children were nevertheless fortunate that the government regarded their hours of work as a health issue. The government considered that analogous regulations

applicable to men would constitute "wage and hour" legislation. This it refused to adopt at any time during the mandate, because, as it explained to the PMC in 1930, of "the still divergent requirements of an advanced Jewish proletariat and a primitive Arab working class."⁶⁹

The one workers' welfare measure the mandate government was willing to adopt was workmen's [sic] compensation. The original ordinance on the subject, enacted in 1926, took effect in January 1927. Nearly fifteen years later, when Palestine's labour adviser examined existing labour legislation, he found this act extremely limited. Although based on the general principles of the corresponding English law, it allowed compensation only to workers in certain occupations.⁷⁰ Despite the drafting of a revised bill in 1936, the comprehensive reworking which the labour adviser (and eventually the Labour Department) envisioned never took place. Although the department in its 1942 report issued a vigorous call for a "complete overhaul" of the ordinance, only a handful of amendments, enacted in 1928, 1940, 1942, and 1945, would broaden the coverage or extend the benefits of worker's compensation in the Palestine mandate.⁷¹

Purely labour matters, in fact, uniformly received less attention than health and safety concerns. Deedes, writing in 1921, had foreseen the need to address classic labour issues beyond that of unemployment. Questions of wages, working conditions, and the work week would probably

arise before long; furthermore, "labour troubles" were bound to occur.⁷² The government strongly and successfully resisted legislating on any of these basic issues, repeatedly citing as its reason the differences between Arab and Jewish workers. Perhaps with a view to encouraging investment in a colony notorious for socialist settlers, it also explicitly kept labour regulation within the bounds of capitalist interests. From 1927 through 1930, its PMC reports reiterated:

So far as concerns the application of standard labour legislation on European lines, the policy of the Administration is to confine interference in private enterprise as far as possible within the limits imposed by international obligations and by the interests of public health and order.⁷³

In 1927, the high commissioner appointed a committee to examine the wages of unskilled workers in Palestine and make recommendations. Chaired by a bureaucrat, it consisted of two members, who represented not only the differing communities but sharply opposed class interests: one "prominent Jewish labour leader" and one "Arab architect and building contractor." In introducing this tiny body, the government once again invoked the wide divergence between the Arab and Jewish workforces as a reason to approach labour legislation with caution. Wage regulation or indeed any adoption of normal European labour legislation would require "delicate and careful consideration" since Palestinian workers were so sharply divided by culture, social and political consciousness, and "industrial enlightenment."⁷⁴

Limiting wage increases was the primary concern expressed in the committee's recommendations (which one of the two non-official members, the Histadrut representative, refused to endorse). Unemployment relief work should pay no more than the minimum market rate; a minimum wage law would be "premature"; nor should the government set a minimum wage for public contract labour.⁷⁵ The only concession to workers' needs was to propose that the government's own wage rates rise in step with increases in the standard of living.⁷⁶ In the view of British Labour, the committee's result was "a report of two to one against all suggestions for the regulation of the conditions of labour."⁷⁷

Most of the limited body of labour legislation that the mandate government enacted in its first two decades reflected suggestions from the League of Nations Permanent Mandates Commission (PMC). As social issues came to attract the attention of the European powers, the PMC expressed increasing interest in labour administration. An "ILO expert" normally attended the PMC's semiannual meetings in Geneva to question the representatives of the mandatory states, and the PMC often asked mandatories to report on adherence to ILO conventions.

By 1929 the PMC was showing signs of impatience with Palestine's lack of a coordinated labour policy. Its seventeenth session expressed the hope that the administration's next annual report would indicate that it was developing a

body of labour regulations suitable to meet the problems of a country that was rapidly industrializing.⁷⁸ The government found it prudent to prepare a lengthy response for its 1930 report, though not to prepare the requested legislative program.⁷⁹

In 1935 the PMC asked its British member, Lord Lugard, to respond to a proposal to create a single agency to supervise Palestine's labour affairs.⁸⁰ At the time, duties concerning labour were not only few and uncoordinated, but scattered among several agencies. The Labour Sub-Department of 1921, mainly concerned with immigration, had vanished into the Permits Section. Various departments had specific responsibilities related to labour: the Agriculture Department, for example, was charged to guard tanners against anthrax.⁸¹ Although the PMC's query had no immediate administrative result, it was part of a pattern that would lead seven years later to establishment of the Palestine Labour Department.⁸²

Also in 1935, the PMC inquired about minimum wages; the government's 1936 report explained that a bill on the subject had been prepared. This draft did not establish regular machinery for fixing a minimum wage; rather, it allowed the high commissioner to set a minimum wage in specific industries and situations where he considered it advisable. In any event, the government explained, consideration of this often-postponed and very limited proposal (like that of

other pieces of legislation that did not bear directly on public order) was being "delayed by the disturbances."⁸³ In the case of minimum wage legislation, the delay proved to be permanent.

At the end of the mandate, the government of Palestine had enacted very little protective labour legislation beyond the sketchy health regulations established in the first decade. Though it prepared ordinances on a range of health and safety issues during the economic expansion of the early 1930s, it lacked the energy to complete them during the Arab strike and revolt of 1936-39. Although the government's concern for labour matters increased sharply with the onset of the Second World War, workers' welfare legislation would never progress beyond the minimum required to maintain civil order, and sometimes not that far. No wage-and-hour law appeared. Wartime labour regulations aimed at control of workers and their organizations. In the end, the establishment and support of the Labour Department would constitute the government's most substantial action on labour affairs.

Notes

¹Through the mid-1920s, the mandate government simply asserted that ILO statements were "inapplicable to Palestine in its present condition." Colonial Office, Palestine: Report by His Britannic Majesty's Government on the Administration of Palestine and Transjordan for the Year 1923, Colonial No. 9 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1925), 27. The 1926 report offered a rationale (refined the following year): "the application of standard labour legislation on European lines must be gradual and partial in a country where labour is so sharply divided by race, by standard of living and by social consciousness." Report by His

Britannic Majesty's Government to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of Palestine and Transjordan for the Year 1926, Colonial No. 26 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1927), 89. By 1928, the government apparently felt that it had complied with enough conventions to dispense with rationalization, simply referring back to previous responses. Report by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of Palestine and Transjordan for the Year 1928, Colonial No. 40 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1929), 125.

²H. F. Downie, minute, 8 February 1940, PRO, CO 859/28/10.

³See chapter 2 on the basic provisions of Article 22 of the League of Nations Covenant.

⁴As late as 1943, O. G. R. Williams of the Colonial Office drew up a "Tentative Plan for Constitutional Development" in West Africa that foresaw several generations of development without envisioning the attainment of self-government. [June or July] 1943, PRO, CO 554/132/33727, reproduced in Porter and Stockwell, eds., British Imperial Policy, 168-77.

⁵Richard M. Graves, Experiment in Anarchy (London: Gollancz, 1949), 48-49.

⁶[United Kingdom], Palestine: Report on Palestine Administration, 1922 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1923), 18.

⁷Colonial Office, Report by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of Palestine and Transjordan for the Year 1930, Colonial No. 59 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1931), 102. The report cited several examples of such doctrines: "the standardization of wages, the observance of an eight-hour day, and the payment of compensation to labourers injured accidentally in the course of their work."

⁸Colonial Office, Report for 1930, 103.

⁹Colonial Office, Report by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of Palestine and Transjordan for the Year 1931, Colonial No. 75 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1932), 73. The high commissioner had earlier appointed an Arab employer to a two-member committee on wages (discussed in detail below). Colonial Office, Report by His Britannic Majesty's Government to

the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of Palestine and Transjordan for the Year 1927, Colonial No. 31 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1928), 105.

¹⁰Great Britain, Colonial Office, Report by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of Palestine and Trans-Jordan for the Year 1935, Colonial No. 112 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1936), 119.

¹¹Government of Northern Rhodesia, Disturbances on the Copperbelt [1940], 4, 5.

¹²The last Colonial Office mention of this organization occurred in the Report of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of Palestine and Trans-Jordan for the Year 1933, Colonial No. 94 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1934), 100.

¹³For discussion of these transactions, see Zachary Lockman, "Railway Workers and Relational History: Arabs and Jews in British-Ruled Palestine," Comparative Studies in Society and History 35, No. 3 (July 1993): 610-15; Zachary Lockman, "'We Opened Up the Arabs' Minds': Labor Zionist Discourse and the Railway Workers of Palestine (1919-1929)," Review of Middle East Studies 5 (1992): 7, 11-22; Zachary Lockman, "Exclusion and Solidarity: Labor Zionism and Arab Workers in Palestine, 1897-1929," After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements, ed. Gyan Prakash (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 224-31.

¹⁴Colonial Office, Report on Palestine for 1930, 101, 102.

¹⁵Colonial Office, Report on Palestine for 1931, 74.

¹⁶Colonial Office, Report on Palestine for 1930, 38.

¹⁷Colonial Office, Report on Palestine for 1933, 236.

¹⁸Ibid., 204.

¹⁹Ibid., 34.

²⁰Colonial Office, Report of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of Palestine and Trans-Jordan for the Year 1934, Colonial No. 104 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1935), 34.

²¹For a graphic and detailed description of the changing labour geography of Haifa in the mid-1930s, see Bernstein, Constructing Boundaries, 77-79.

²²R. M. Graves, "Report: Survey of Labour in Palestine," enclosure I in MacMichael to Moyne, 3 April 1941, PRO, CO 859/55/4, 11.

²³Graves, "Labour in Palestine," enclosure I in MacMichael to Moyne, 3 April 1941, PRO, CO 859/55/4, 3.

²⁴Of that eight percent, most worked in very small enterprises. Roger Owen, "Economic Development in Mandatory Palestine: 1918-1948," in The Palestinian Economy: Studies in Development Under Prolonged Occupation, ed. George A. Abed, 16 (London: Routledge, 1988).

²⁵The presenter first carefully defined his hosts as "comrades -- I do not refer to them as Jews because I look upon them as fellow Socialists." Their experiment reportedly included an impressive feat of geographical restructuring: "Into a land where no soil existed before, these people had by their own labour carried earth from whatever place they could find it and built it up into terraces." Trades Union Congress, Report of Proceedings at the 68th Annual Trades Union Congress (London: Co-operative Printing Society, Ltd., 1936), 393, 394.

²⁶Trades Union Congress, Proceedings at the 68th Congress, 395, 396. From a different political quarter, a telegram from William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor, expressed North American support (ibid.).

²⁷Trades Union Congress, Report of Proceedings at the 60th Annual Trades Union Congress (London: Co-operative Printing Society, Limited, 1928), 274. Hoz and Ben-Zvi had settled in Palestine some two decades earlier. In 1912 Ben-Zvi, who forty years later would become president of Israel, had argued that in the undeveloped Palestinian economy, national should take precedence over class interests: "cheap and unorganized" Arab labour should be excluded from jobs in the Jewish sector. Lockman, Comrades and Enemies, 51, 184.

²⁸Chudleigh to assistant director, "Invitation to Prominent British Trade Unionist to visit Palestine as Guest of the Department of Labour," 26 September 1942, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

²⁹George Mansur, The Arab Worker under the Palestine Mandate (Jerusalem: Commercial Press, 1937).

³⁰Chudleigh to assistant director, "Invitation," 26 September 1942, PRO, CO 859/55/4. This "rabid" and "unbalanced"

booklet is the same one that Lockman considers "a clearly written and well-argued piece of work." Lockman, Comrades and Enemies, 253. I share Lockman's assessment.

³¹Chudleigh to assistant director, 26 September 1942. Chudleigh points out that the Histadrut's claim "was reflected in the recent 'Haifa Labour Council's Resolutions,' which as a Department, we have found it necessary to combat." In Britain, the TUC actively propagated the claim. Responding to a Fabian Society request for contact with "a Trade Union which was exclusively an Arab organisation," a TUC official put the inquirer in touch with Dov Hoz's secretary at the Jewish Agency office. A. E. Carthy to W. J. Bolton, TUC General Council, inter-departmental correspondence, 10 June 1936, MRC, 956.9/2.

³²Lockman, Comrades and Enemies, 103-5, 192-93, 279-80. For more on the PLL and its relations to the Histadrut and to Arab workers, see *ibid.*, 196.

³³H. E. Chudleigh to Assistant Director, 26 September 1942, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

³⁴The presenter, G. Isaacs, first informed the delegates that despite his name, he was not a Jew, but had come from Cornwall. Trades Union Congress, Proceedings at the 68th Congress, 395.

³⁵Trades Union Congress, Proceedings at the 68th Congress, 395.

³⁶Shuckburgh to Wilson, 18 June 1931, PRO, CO 733/206. Shuckburgh regarded the proposal as "yet another case of employing improper channels for bringing pressure to bear upon the Government" and noted the "utilization" of Malcolm MacDonald [then under-secretary at the Dominions Office] to present the Zionist case.

³⁷T. Drummond Shiels (parliamentary under-secretary for the colonies), Memorandum, 3 July 1931, PRO, CO 733/206.

³⁸Labour Party Executive report "The International Post-War Settlement," 7, quoted in note from H. B. Kemmis (secretary of the Colonial Advisory Committee of the TUC's International Department) in response to an inquiry from W. Schevenels (General Secretary of the International Federation of Trade Unions), 14 August 1944, MRC, 956.

³⁹Sami Taha telegram to British Labour Party, London, 3 May 1944, MRC, 956.

⁴⁰Labour Party Executive report "The International Post-War Settlement," 7, in Kemmis to Schevenels, 14 August 1944, MRC, 956.

⁴¹Jon Kimche, "British Labor's Turnabout on Zionism: The Events Leading Up to Withdrawal," Commentary (Jewish Committee), December 1947, 511, MSS Brit. emp. s. 365 (Fabian Colonial Bureau papers), box 176, file 5, Rhodes House Library, Oxford University.

⁴²Kimche, "Labour's Turnabout," 511, MSS Brit. emp. s. 365 (Fabian Colonial Bureau papers), box 176, file 5, Rhodes House Library, Oxford University.

⁴³Trades Union Congress, Report of Proceedings at the 79th Annual Trades Union Congress (London: Co-operative Printing Society, Ltd., 1947), 205.

⁴⁴Trades Union Congress, Report of Proceedings at the 80th Annual Trades Union Congress (London: Co-operative Printing Society, Ltd., 1948), 299-300.

⁴⁵Trades Union Congress, Proceedings at the 80th Congress, 527-28.

⁴⁶Kimche, "Labour's Turnabout," 510, MSS Brit. emp. s. 365 (Fabian Colonial Bureau papers), box 176, file 5, Rhodes House Library, Oxford University. The managing editor of the London Tribune, a prominent Labour weekly, Kimche had been a war correspondent for Reuters, the London Evening Standard, and the London Observer. Alone or in collaboration, he would write several books on the establishment of the Israeli state.

⁴⁷Ibid., 512.

⁴⁸Ibid., 513.

⁴⁹Ibid., 514-17.

⁵⁰Colonial Office, Report on Palestine for 1931, 73.

⁵¹George Mansur, Arab Labourer, 8.

⁵²Colonial Office, Report on Palestine, 1922, 17.

⁵³Norman Leslie Mayle, minute, 18 January 1929, PRO, CO 733/165. The same briefing minute specified that unionized and some non-union Jewish labourers worked an eight-hour day; Arab labourers, a nine- or ten-hour day.

⁵⁴O. G. R. Williams, minute, 19 January 1929, PRO, CO 733/165.

⁵⁵Government of Northern Rhodesia, Disturbances in the Copperbelt [1940], 47. The commission noted that the governments of some African colonies paid European and African higher civil servants on different scales, explaining that the African was at home, did not yet have a European standard of living, and furthermore did not expect equal pay.

⁵⁶Government of Palestine, Report on Palestine Administration, July, 1920 - December, 1921 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1922), 128-29. Despite the placing of the sub-department, the British government's report for 1922 dealt with labour as an aspect of "Customs, Shipping, Commerce and Industry and Labour" ([United Kingdom], Report on Palestine, 1922, 17-19). In April 1924, the duties of the entire Department of Immigration and Travel were transferred to the new Permits Section of the Secretariat, where labour administration would remain (despite varying headings in the annual reports) until the mandate government established its Labour Department nearly two decades later. Colonial Office, Report by His Britannic Majesty's Government of the Administration Under Mandate of Palestine and Transjordan for the Year 1924, Reports of Mandatory Powers submitted to the Council of the League of Nations in accordance with Article 22 of the Covenant and examined by the Permanent Mandates Commission during its Seventh Session, October 1925 (Geneva: League of Nations, 1925), 34.

⁵⁷Deedes to Churchill, 26 December 1921, PRO, CO 733/8/1341.

⁵⁸Deedes to Churchill, 26 December 1921, PRO, CO 733/8/1341.

⁵⁹Colonial Office, Report of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of Palestine and Trans-Jordan for the Year 1932, Colonial No. 82 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1933), 76.

⁶⁰Finegold argues that immigration did reflect Palestine's "economic absorptive capacity," in part because of British regulation, but also because people were more inclined to immigrate when good jobs were known to be plentiful. Julian L. Finegold, "British Economic Policy in Palestine," (PhD diss., London School of Economics and Political Science, 1978), 201-2. Finegold makes a strong case for his analysis, but only because, like the British government, he ignores the possibility of fully opening the job market to Arabs.

⁶¹Colonial Office, Report of the Administration of Palestine for 1924 (Geneva: League of Nations, 1925), 49.

⁶²Colonial Office, Report on Palestine for 1927, 104. The Fencing of Machinery Ordinance took effect in 1928. Colonial Office, Report on Palestine for 1928, 125.

⁶³Colonial Office, Report on Palestine for 1926, 90.

⁶⁴Colonial Office, Report by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of Palestine and Transjordan for the Year 1925, Colonial No. 20 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1926), 81.

⁶⁵Colonial Office, Report on Palestine for 1927, 104.

⁶⁶Ibid., 104. In subsequent years, the government extended coverage to port workers (Colonial Office, Report on the Administration of Palestine for 1928, 125) and to oceangoing mariners and fishers on Palestine-registered vessels (Colonial Office, Report by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of Palestine and Trans-Jordan for the year 1938, Colonial No. 166 [London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1939], 137).

⁶⁷Colonial Office, Report on Palestine for 1930, 103-4. In the field of labour regulation, the government proposed few pieces of legislation; it enacted far fewer. A Prevention of Intimidation Ordinance, related to labour disputes, and the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance complete the 1930 list of "progressive and protective legislation" enacted.

In 1935 and 1936, the government proposed a new Masters and Servants Ordinance, an amended Employment of Women and Children Ordinance, and an amended Workmen's Compensation Ordinance. Colonial Office, Report by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of Palestine and Transjordan for the Year 1936, Colonial No. 129 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1937), 140-43. Due to the civil disorders of 1936-1939, the government never enacted any of these.

Clearly aware of its regulatory shortcomings, the government in its 1940 report delegated responsibility to an agency barely in the planning stage, expressing the hope "that progress in labour legislation will be greatly accelerated when the Department of Labour comes into existence in the autumn of 1941." Colonial Office, Report by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of Palestine and Transjordan for the Year 1940, 14, PRO, CO 733/441.

⁶⁸Despite the welfare officer's heavy schedule, she (presumably with some help from district officers) inspected sixty-five workplaces in 1936. Colonial Office, Report on Palestine for 1936, 143-44.

⁶⁹Colonial Office, Report on Palestine for 1930, 103.

⁷⁰R. M. Graves, "Note on Present and Future Labour Legislation in Palestine," 3 April 1941, enclosure II in MacMichael to Moyne, PRO, CO 859/55/4, 1.

⁷¹Colonial Office, Report on Palestine for 1928, 93, 125; Colonial Office, Report on Palestine for 1940, PRO, CO 733/441. section XVII, "Labour," 15-16; 1941 report to the Permanent Mandates Commission, Section XVII, "Labour," 9, PRO, CO 733/457/18; on proposed amendments and need for "complete overhaul," Labour Department, Annual Report for 1942, 17-19, PRO, CO 859/56/10; Labour Department, Annual Report for 1945 (No. 10 of 1946) (Jerusalem: Government Printer, 1946), 14-15, PRO, CO 814/1708.

⁷²Deedes to Churchill, 26 December 1921, PRO, CO 733/8/1341.

⁷³Colonial Office, Report on Palestine for 1927, 105; Colonial Office, Report on Palestine for 1930, 103.

⁷⁴Colonial Office, Report on Palestine for 1927, 105.

⁷⁵Colonial Office, Report on Palestine for 1928, 92.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Walter Citrine (chair of the Trades Union Congress) to T. Drummond Shiels, 2 June 1931, PRO, CO 733/206/87253.

⁷⁸Permanent Mandates Commission, League of Nations, Minutes of the Seventeenth Session, 147. The minutes cited 96-98 of the 1929 report.

⁷⁹Colonial Office, Report on Palestine for 1930, 102.

⁸⁰Permanent Mandates Commission, League of Nations, Minutes of the Twenty-Seventh Session, 69, cited in Colonial Office, Report on Palestine for 1935, 121.

⁸¹According to the government's report, submitted in 1924, on responsibilities for labour, the Health Department was to enforce municipal regulations on workplace hygiene and safety; the Agriculture Department, to guard tanners against anthrax; and a committee was examining "the desirability of establishing machinery for conciliation and arbitration in labour disputes." Colonial Office, Report of the Administra-

tion of Palestine for 1924 (Geneva: League of Nations, 1925), 49.

⁸²In 1940, assignments remained scattered: the Health and Public Works Departments, for example, were responsible for inspections for violations of the [dangerous] Trades and Industries and the Machinery (Fencing) Ordinances, respectively. As noted above, officials then hoped to establish a labour department by the fall of 1941. Colonial Office, Report on Palestine and Transjordan for 1940, 14, PRO, CO 733/441, 15.

⁸³Colonial Office, Report on Palestine for 1936, 143. The comment by the Permanent Mandates Commission appears in the Minutes of the Twenty-Seventh Session, 159.

Chapter 5
Palestine Acquires a Labour Department, 1940-1942

In early 1940, the government of Palestine began moving to gather its labour administration activities into a single agency. One reason for this consolidation was obvious: wartime conditions made any labour unrest more potentially dangerous. In the late 1930s, labour upheavals in the West Indies and Africa had alerted Colonial Office bureaucrats and colonial administrators to the possibilities of lost production, civil disorder, and subversion arising from work stoppages. Now, in Palestine, Britain's local preparations for war were increasing the likelihood that labour unrest would occur. Both employment and inflation were rising steeply. In the first quarter of 1940, average real wages began to catch up, but apparently only because of a cost-of-living allowance in certain industries.¹ The potential for turmoil among workers was clear.

Although similar situations were prompting the founding of labour agencies across the colonial empire, further considerations strengthened the case for the establishment of Palestine's department. Over the preceding decade, beginning long before the war became imminent, the groundwork for the government's new interest in labour affairs had been laid from London and Geneva. The immediate impetus, however, was neither economic mobilization nor external pressure, but trouble within the Jewish labour community.

Avoiding the Issue, 1935-1940

In 1930 the government of Palestine, like most of its counterparts, easily resisted London's first tentative calls for colonial labour supervision. In 1935, however, pressure from Geneva coincided with heightened interest in London. In June, as already noted, the Permanent Mandates Commission (PMC) requested a response to a proposal for a single agency responsible for all labour concerns. In November, the Colonial Office, alarmed by the Northern Rhodesian copper strike of the previous May, sent out a circular dispatch strongly encouraging colonial governments throughout the empire to take up some responsibilities for labour administration.

Painfully aware of the inconvenient militancy of the Histadrut, the London bureaucrats expected the mandate government to be eager for help with labour relations. High Commissioner Arthur Wauchope surprised his correspondents by rejecting as unnecessary the establishment of a labour department. He did, however, see the need to coordinate the workplace health and safety responsibilities spread among the departments of public works; railways, post, and telegraph; health; and police. The 1935 report to the PMC noted that the government of Palestine had decided to institute "some form of centralised control" over its labour supervision activities.² In March 1936, Wauchope asked the Colonial Office to recommend "if possible a fully qualified

and experienced British Factory Inspector," to be attached to the Palestine Health Department.

Rapid industrial development had made safety and health inspection an increasingly pressing concern in Palestine. The mandate government had originally designed the machinery of inspection to enforce the Industrial Employment of Women and Children Ordinance, 1927 (see chapter 4). Under this plan, the "inspectors" were the head of the Immigration Department, the welfare inspector, the district administrative officers (in whatever time they were able and willing to commit), and certain immigration officers. By 1932, Palestine's Labour Legislation Committee was recommending that more factory inspectors be appointed to enforce the rules protecting all workers.³ In 1933 the government responded, after a fashion; it allotted the welfare inspector a part-time assistant to work in the burgeoning Jaffa - Tel-Aviv industrial region (covering, in addition, "the surrounding villages"). "This," the 1933 Report to the PMC asserted, "has greatly facilitated the inspection of the continually growing number of factories and workshops in this area and gives the Inspector a wider field of surveillance."⁴ The inadequacy of that meagre supplement had apparently become evident by the spring of 1936, when Wauchope made his request for a British factory inspector.

Almost immediately, as the Colonial and Home Offices were negotiating the salary for the official whom Wauchope

had requested, the Arab boycott initiated three years of revolt. The high commissioner asked that action on his proposal be deferred. Further Colonial Office circulars on labour supervision, in August 1937 and September 1938, received no response from Palestine.⁵

The London government found it less easy than its local affiliate to set aside the issue of inspection in Palestine. The TUC, probably in coordination with the Histadrut, reminded Parliament of the need for a more effective inspection system. In January 1938 the M.P. George Hicks, a leader in the building trades union, questioned the colonial secretary about the appointment of a factory inspector for Palestine. The minister replied, Hicks told the TUC's international committee, that the problem was essentially financial. Coordination was needed, but the expenses of suppressing the current revolt took budgetary precedence. The TUC accepted this position.⁶

Settler Workers: An Urgent Need for Labour Administration

The settler character of the Palestine mandate furnished the final impetus for the government of Palestine to establish a formal labour administration. By February 1940, just two months after the most recent Colonial Office circular urging labour supervision, a heightening in inter-Zionist tensions brought High Commissioner Harold MacMichael to reverse his predecessor's decision. MacMichael in fact pressed the Colonial Office not simply for the inspector Wauchope had envi-

sioned, but for a labour adviser.⁷ By early 1939, British troops, many of them released from European alert by Prime Minister Chamberlain's September 1938 pact with Hitler, had suppressed the Arab revolt. Now, barely a year later, MacMichael believed that rivalry among Zionist labour organizations was threatening the yishuv -- and perhaps all of Palestine -- with a new civil war.

The apparent issue was job distribution. This was, for differing reasons, an issue of vital concern to workers, political and labour organizations, and the government. Unemployment was high. Among manual labourers, the government Office of Statistics calculated that it had risen from 5,000 in January 1939 to 14,000 in January 1940.⁸ Although the objective importance of job allocation was clear, however, the high commissioner felt strongly that even clashes that began as economic disputes were sharpened and transformed by conflicts among parties and ideologies. The repeated violent clashes between members of different labour federations appeared to be labour disputes, but because of the turmoil in yishuv politics, MacMichael found them cause for alarm.⁹

The connection between labour and politics was direct and immediate. Rival Zionist political factions sponsored federations of labour unions to protect their members' jobs and working conditions. They also sought to use control of jobs, and of workers' housing, to recruit newly arriving settlers to their organizations. An immigrant who owed his

or her job to a party would feel both loyalty and obligation.¹⁰ The Histadrut, closely connected with the Mapai (Labour) Party, overshadowed, but could not eradicate, its competitors: the large National Labour Organization (NLO) of the ultra-nationalist Revisionist Zionists; the employer-friendly Central Zionist Labour Union; the religious Orthodox Eastern Workers (Hapoel Hamizrachi, founded in 1921); and, from 1940, a tiny Sephardic Labour Organization.

To control and distribute jobs, the larger rival federations operated their own labour exchanges, even though the Histadrut had the power to offer far more jobs, and enroll far more workers, than its competitors. Each exchange shared out its available jobs to make sure that most of its party's adherents had at least some work every month. Despite this competition, the Histadrut had by early December 1939 established in five strategic locations what it called "united" labour exchanges. The Revisionists' NLO at once belied the name by a boycott.

The NLO had also instructed its citrus workers to accept lower pay than the rate negotiated by the federations in previous seasons. Employers were ready to oblige, offering the less expensive Revisionist and unorganized workers up to 50 percent of jobs rather than the 25 percent which the federations had previously agreed on. The Histadrut resisted. Late in 1939, as the citrus harvest opened, the competing labour factions began attacking one another, even

bringing in "toughs" to intimidate workers from rival organizations.¹¹

The issue was not new to Palestine: job allocation had been creating discord there for almost a decade. As early as 1931, the NLO had directed members to work for less pay than the Histadrut demanded for its adherents. Then, as later, the policy set off conflict among the Histadrut, the NLO, and employers. The government believed contention over job allocation to be largely responsible for a wave of strikes, reporting at the time that employers had contributed to almost half of the year's labour disputes by refusing to employ union labour, hiring non-union workers, and giving preference to NLO members.¹²

In late 1939, the rivalry again became acute. According to High Commissioner MacMichael, even originally peaceful pickets invariably descended into brawls and serious disorders that caused personal injuries and, often, property damage. Such clashes had elicited intervention by the police -- even, at the community of Rishon-le-Zion, by the army. MacMichael regarded these apparent labour disputes as tests of strength between the major federations. If the contending factions brought the well-publicized Zionist weapons caches into play, another civil war -- this time within the Jewish community -- could break out. At the same time, MacMichael emphasized, symptoms of economic suffering, such as hunger and the "enforced leisure" of unemployment, were increasing

the tensions. Here he arrived at his primary apprehension: Jewish factional violence could draw in the Arabs (as indeed it had in April 1920). In that case, he warned, it might become necessary to call in the army to impose general order under the Emergency Regulations, repeating its task of the preceding three years.¹³

A short-term solution -- forceful suppression -- would hardly solve the problem.¹⁴ A long-term solution -- economic development to reduce unemployment -- was beyond the immediate fiscal capacity of the mandate government, although the onset of the Second World War was beginning to have precisely that effect. MacMichael's solution fell in the medium term. He proposed to give more attention to labour issues in several ways: first, a thorough survey of labour conditions in Palestine; eventually, an "administration," most likely a department, to deal with labour matters; further, according to a Colonial Office minute, the establishment of publicly run labour exchanges.¹⁵ Palestine was to take the first two steps, in parallel with many other colonies; unlike many other colonies, it would not take the third.

Struggle for a New Agency

MacMichael's proposal reached the Colonial Office just two weeks after the Social Service Department's labour officer, J. G. Hibbert, had submitted a lengthy memorandum outlining the history of labour policy in Palestine. Hibbert suggested asking the high commissioner to reconsider the earlier re-

jection of a labour officer. One bureaucrat immediately warned that in Palestine every labour issue was politicized: a labour department would face political pressures over every decision.¹⁶ The authorities at the Colonial Office had already decided against Hibbert's suggestion when MacMichael's dispatch reopened the discussion.¹⁷

The tone of bureaucrats' opposition to MacMichael's proposal often revealed some degree of anti-Semitism, and sometimes a startling level of open prejudice. One official opposed government embroilment in "these internecine feuds which have been a characteristic of Jewish history since Cain killed Abel." He attributed the clashes between unions to "the natural instinct of the Jew for intrigue." The British would be wise, he urged, to remain aloof.¹⁸

Other objections rested on the simple untimeliness of establishing a new social service agency in a Middle Eastern colony at the moment when the Germans were taking possession of Paris. Expression ranged from the tentative ("Personally, though it is not my affair -- I feel that this is no time to initiate new depts, however desirable, in Pal") to the absolute ("In present circumstances it is impossible to consider this proposal").¹⁹

Hibbert vigorously contested these objections with the familiar argument that the work of a labour department would actually aid the war effort by fending off disaffection in the colonies. Although himself highly skeptical about the

ability of a labour adviser to save Palestine from civil war, Hibbert did think one would be helpful. In the end, he deferred, in good Colonial Office tradition, to the judgment of the man on the spot, "who surely must know better than any of us here what is needed."²⁰ This severely limited optimism, in essence, became the Colonial Office position on the possible value of a Palestine labour adviser.

The Labour Adviser

The decision once made to appoint a labour adviser for Palestine, the high commissioner and Colonial Office faced the problem of securing a suitable candidate. Both regarded Palestine as one of the few colonies where labour matters would require a seasoned professional labour officer, not simply a Colonial Service administrative officer. The government's 1935 report to the PMC had included a job description for such an official: to supervise conditions in workshops and factories; serve as secretary to the Labour Legislation Committee; work with the government statistician to collect industrial and labour data; and possibly conciliate labour disputes.²¹ The first two duties were at the time among those assigned the welfare inspector.

By 1940 the expanding responsibilities of the job reached well beyond the limits of record keeping and workplace health and safety. The labour adviser would be expected to plan and establish an "administrative service" to supervise "conditions governing the employment of labour,

such as the regulation of trade union activities, conciliation in industrial disputes, wage regulation, factory inspection and control, labour legislation, etc."²² -- that is, a labour department.

Given the responsibilities of the position, the usual recruiting procedures, which drew candidates from among a colony's current local administrators, clearly would not do. At the same time, even Hibbert specified that here, as in other colonies, experience of the natives was indispensable. Anyone not already familiar with "Orientals" would require a year or two to understand the local situation and people; language, too, would be a problem.²³

Hibbert's caution proved irrelevant. When High Commissioner MacMichael proposed the idea of a labour adviser, he already had a candidate in mind.²⁴ Richard Massie Graves had begun his career in the Levant Consular Service in 1903 as an attache, then acting consul, in Constantinople and Salonika. Posted to Egypt in 1910, he worked in the Ministry of the Interior until November 1930, when he became founding director of the Labour Office (from 1936, the Labour Department).²⁵ In 1939, as he prepared to retire from this post, Graves had written to MacMichael to offer his services as labour officer for Palestine, should such a position come to exist.

The Foreign Office gave Graves a good recommendation. Late in June, Sir John Shuckburgh, colonial deputy un-

dersecretary, reported to his chief, Cosmo Parkinson, that the Foreign Office offered little detailed information about officers in the Egyptian Service. The information available on Graves was uniformly favourable: he had a good record and a strong reputation for ability.²⁶

Foreign Office approval reflected Graves's demonstrated competence in the enduring major aim of colonial labour policy: preventing disorder. Graves had done this, moreover, in accord with the most up-to-date principles of colonial labour supervision: rather than resort to repression, he had combatted unrest by improving conditions for workers. In January 1936 Sir Miles Lampson, Britain's ambassador to Egypt, forwarded a report which Graves had recently written on labour disturbances. Reading it, a Foreign Office official noted both Graves's approach and his accomplishment: the Labour Office had done good work on both "the suppression of abuses" and "the damping down of unrest." Lampson himself firmly supported Graves's proposal for social insurance (a proposal which Graves would reiterate for the rest of his career), although he considered Graves "unduly optimistic."²⁷

The good opinion of the Foreign Office and its ambassador did not signify that Graves had avoided controversy. In 1935, his modern approach figured prominently in a dispute over government response to native unions. The Labour Office had opened in 1930 as a section of the Public

Security Department of the Ministry of the Interior -- that is, as an arm of the police apparatus. Alexander Keown-Boyd, Graves's superior in the Ministry, advocated crushing native unions and replacing them with employer-dominated organizations. Graves, who spoke Arabic fluently and enjoyed dealing with Arab workers, took an opposing position, which he would maintain throughout his work in Palestine. He argued that well-run, nonpolitical native unions would serve as interlocutors for government and employers, reducing chances for misunderstanding and conflict. Supportive guidance, not suppression, was the best means of maintaining order.

Though repression would continue to form one instrument of labour policy in Egypt, the Foreign Office preferred Graves' position, in part because Egyptian workers explicitly condemned compliant unions, the alternative proposal.²⁸ When, the following year, the Labour Office became a separate labour department, Graves expressed great relief at the formal distance placed between labour administration and policing: the previous connection had deterred workers from turning to the Labour Office.²⁹

Graves believed that workers deserved fair treatment and often did not receive it. In his 1941 report on labour in Palestine, he would observe that familiarity with the needs of workers was likely to breed "not contempt but sympathy," converting "many a hardboiled reactionary" into a progressive.³⁰ At the same time, Graves believed strongly

that unions of colonized workers must be carefully sheltered from "political" influences. In a relatively undeveloped country like Egypt, allowing a political party to take trade unions under its protection would, he felt, be a serious mistake; any law governing unions should absolutely forbid their affiliation to political parties.³¹

Graves regarded government action on behalf of workers as doubly beneficial. While responding to labour concerns, it could also reduce the expression of political discontent. Native labour organizations had started to recognize that Egypt's labour department was concerned for workers' welfare and would attempt to redress proven grievances. Labour Department policy, he asserted, had established an incentive for unions to avoid anti-government activity.³²

Although he had begun his career thirty-five years before, Graves clearly adhered to the school of "modern" colonial administrators who sought alliances with the growing colonial working class. In him, the government of Palestine would acquire an adviser dedicated to defending the acknowledged rights of employers and the capitalist economic system against what he considered overly assertive or political labour organizations, but also, uncompromisingly, to securing workers' rights as liberal opinion understood them.

The Colonial Office accepted MacMichael's recommendation. Its own labour adviser, Granville Orde-Browne, even

worried about whether the pay offered would be sufficiently attractive to Graves. On 10 July 1940, the Colonial Office and Treasury exchanged notes in which the Treasury agreed that Graves could be offered the position, with the compensation of a head of a minor department. In August, Graves accepted the appointment;³³ the following month he arrived in Palestine and commenced his investigations.³⁴ He had just passed his sixtieth birthday.

Graves set out energetically to familiarize himself with the enterprises and organizations that made up Palestine's labour relations landscape. Within a few months, he visited more than a hundred industrial workplaces.³⁵ On a trip to Haifa in late October, he visited five enterprises and the Histadrut's Haifa Labour Council.³⁶ A few weeks later, traveling with David Horowitz of the Jewish Agency's Economic Research Institute, he inspected in a little more than twenty-four hours four kibbutzim, the town of Tiberias, an electric power station, and a cement plant.³⁷ During the tour Graves discussed with Horowitz and with their hosts a range of sensitive issues involving the government and the Zionist organizations, from the legality of strikes in wartime to Arab and Jewish standards of living and government responsibilities for social services and for labour organizing.³⁸

Graves would also, though not voluntarily, gain first-hand experience of the Zionists' inter-party struggles. In

May 1941, an official of the Revisionists' NLO sent two newspapers an unauthorized account of an unofficial meeting which Graves had chaired.³⁹ Graves vigorously and publicly reprimanded both the official and the newspapers, both of which had printed the article. At the same time, he pressed for cooperation among the competing organizations.⁴⁰ Contention among the Zionist labour organizations already figured prominently in Graves's report on labour in Palestine.

Graves submitted his report in April 1941. The comprehensive account drew on his observations and discussions, and on statistics from both the Jewish Agency and the mandate government. It provided a detailed description of the employment and organization of Palestine's workers. Early in April the high commissioner forwarded the document to the Colonial Office.

The situation in which administrators and bureaucrats read the report differed markedly from that in which MacMichael had issued his call for a labour adviser more than a year previously. Palestine's economy had begun to respond to the demands of the European war. Britain was transforming the country into a centre for production, troop concentration, and supply; both industry and farming required more workers. Between half and a third of Arab working-age men would soon be working for wages.⁴¹ Still, economic recovery was far from balanced. While employment rose, real wages fell behind the rapidly increasing cost of living. In Decem-

ber 1940, the Histadrut had negotiated cost-of-living adjustments with the Palestine Manufacturers Association, the major organization of Jewish employers; it would do so twice in the following year.⁴² As the economy grew, so did the potential for conflict.

Graves's established views on workers and employers shaped his report. The wartime economic situation had not changed the basic positions on labour organizations that he had expressed during his Egyptian posting. Neither had the presence in Palestine of organized settler workers.

Graves showed little sympathy for recalcitrant bosses, whether Arab notables or "reactionary" industrial entrepreneurs.⁴³ From "old-fashioned" employers such as these, unions deserved protection. At the same time, colonial administrators had no more right -- or responsibility -- than employers to form or organize labour unions of native workers, despite the hopes of advocates and fears of employers.⁴⁴ Here Graves expressed a common view of the role of government. The Northern Rhodesian administration was typical in proposing to "support development along the right lines, where the workers were ready; where they were unprepared, no undue encouragement would be given."⁴⁵

Once native unions formed, Graves held, government did have the charge of overseeing them. Members would need administrators' vigilance to shield them against their own officials. Specifically, groups of workers who were not fully

literate were vulnerable to embezzlement or misappropriation.⁴⁶ Here again, Graves' assessment would find an echo in African labour supervision. Five years later a consultant to the Northern Rhodesia Labour Department was predicting that individuals would set up unions as "personal enterprises"; such entrepreneurs would lack both any sense of responsibility to members and -- a particular concern for administrators -- the ability and will to control them.⁴⁷

Above all, Graves believed, government must work to make sure that labour organizations were primarily economic, not political, in aim. Wise -- and firm -- official guidance must protect native workers from the blandishments of nationalist politicians. Political parties in "young states" commonly enlisted unions' support in elections, then, after winning, ignored them.⁴⁸ Graves spoke from experience. As labour director in Egypt, he had watched the nationalist Wafd Party vigorously courting unionists in anticipation of the May 1936 elections. The dominant labour federation had supported the Wafd, but on winning the election, the party leaders, bent on negotiating a new treaty with the British, abandoned workers' interests. An alarming wave of strikes had resulted.⁴⁹

As Graves became familiar with Palestine, he would have learned about notables' 1934 attempts to organize Arab workers into support bases. He accordingly warned that in Palestine, politicians might persuade workers to support

policies that were not in their own interests. The government, he insisted, was responsible for using both legislation and advice to protect unions from such exploitation.⁵⁰ Relations with political factions would continue to mark unions in Palestine, as in Western countries. Graves's specific concern for Arab workers, however, would prove unnecessary. Palestine would never have elections.

In the case of settler workers, class, rather than nationalism, was the political commitment that Graves considered the most likely to divert unions from their economic mission. Around the time he issued his report on Palestine, he wrote the Colonial Office labour adviser, Granville Orde-Browne, "I believe Government Officials are not supposed to have any political views, but I suppose I may be allowed to say that I detest the idea of class warfare or the domination of the population by any 'class'." He urged that the mandate government and Colonial Office adopt a modern, assertive labour policy. Their stance should show the Jewish Agency, the Jewish Labour Party, and the Histadrut that while they would help workers protect and further their legitimate interests, they would not let these organizations intimidate workers or harass well-behaved employers.⁵¹

Graves's report portrayed very different levels of labour development in Palestine's Arab and Jewish communities. The labour adviser had devoted more of his attention to Arab workers than might have been expected, given

the disproportionate political and economic strength of the Zionist federations. As he had in Egypt, he aimed to examine Arab workers primarily as workers, assuming that their attributes, like those of their European counterparts, were shaped by their economic and political circumstances. In his Palestine report, he had the opportunity to elaborate his earlier views.

The Arab community's lack of both manufacturing enterprises and trade unions Graves attributed in part to Ottoman laws and practices, in part to the presence of settlers. Settlers had brought rising wages and nationalist preoccupations; both, Graves argued, had deflected Arab workers from attempting to improve their condition. Although he considered Arabs "more primitive peoples" subject to "fatalism," he explicitly rejected a cultural explanation for their supposed preference for temporary employment. Rather, he noted that European workers, by bargaining for increased leisure time, were moving toward a similar position.⁵²

Graves did not, like many administrators in Africa, consider the natives he supervised unsuited to skilled work. He did, however, share the belief that native workers were incapable of independent initiative or of responding to unforeseen situations. He also believed that Arab workers needed help from government in defending themselves. Their adversaries included not only unscrupulous employers and self-serving union leaders, but rural landlords. In Egypt,

these had opposed the introduction of legislation to protect farmworkers, Graves noted. In Palestine, they were urging that government ignore urban workers; as in Egypt, they argued that the way to help peasants was to support agricultural development.⁵³

Graves shared the prevailing Colonial Office viewpoint that the Palestinian economy was unsuited to minimum wage legislation, although he expressed the rationales in noticeably different terms. In a minute of 8 February 1940, H. F. Downie, colonial assistant secretary for the Middle East, argued that imposing a nationwide minimum wage at the Jewish level would break smaller, notably Arab, employers; raise the cost of public works; and speed "the deplorable drift" of Arab cultivators off of the land, "making it all the easier for the Jews to dominate the country."⁵⁴

In his report a year later, Graves ignored the political issue that Downie had raised in such stark terms but echoed the concern about public works expense.⁵⁵ Most significant, however, was his conviction that a minimum wage would reduce, not increase, Arab employment. In this he shared the view of employer bias that Northern Rhodesia's commission on the 1940 disturbances had expressed. Not natives' willingness to accept waged work, but employers' unwillingness to pay them at the same rate as settler workers, would determine the level of their participation in the labour force.⁵⁶ To Graves, unlike Downie, Arab wage labour

was desirable, deserving of encouragement rather than restriction. He represented the new view that a stable urban workforce benefited a colony, rather than the old one that urbanized natives threatened order. On the minimum wage issue, both positions led to the same negative conclusion.

Along with the sympathetic analysis Graves devoted to Arab workers in his report, the labour adviser gave the Jewish Agency and the Histadrut the careful examination suitable to their sweeping influence. He rejected the apparently self-evident notion that "industrial or craft unions [were] important or powerful factors in Jewish labour." Actual power, he believed, rested in "political labour organizations." The illusion arose because some of these powerful bodies included trade unions within their structures.⁵⁷

In the absence of a government labour department, the political labour organizations held complete power over everyone connected with the labour market in Palestine: neither workers nor employers had any recourse from decisions of the Jewish labour organizations and the Jewish Agency (which generally backed the Histadrut).⁵⁸ Given Graves's views on the political role of unions, this absolute power made the settler labour organizations not only a threat to the authority of government, but an alarming example for their native counterparts. He warned that Arab unions had no "satisfactory local model" to follow.⁵⁹

Although appalled by the sheer political force of the Zionist labour federations, Graves was not only aware, but deeply respectful, of their social service programs. His report gave special attention to the health insurance plan, the workers' housing program, the cooperatives, and the labour exchanges.⁶⁰ Graves severely criticized the Zionist exchanges (see chapter 9). At the same time, he gave apprehensive, albeit admiring, attention to the range of social services that the Histadrut provided. The very sophistication and elaboration of the organization's program, he argued, showed the necessity of government action on social issues. Filling the vacuum left by the lack of a labour department, the settler group threatened to take over the functions of government -- to the extent that it had not already done so. Graves warned that the longer the government delayed taking action to supervise the Histadrut's social service agencies "in the best interests of the community," the more difficult effective action would become.⁶¹ Once a labour department had been authorized, Graves would pursue this argument in regard to the Zionist infrastructure in general. After the war, he hoped, the London government would encourage the mandate administration to bring in social reforms "instead of leaving all the initiative to the Jews" (emphasis in red, apparently added at the Colonial Office).⁶²

Discussing the Histadrut's health insurance program, Graves expressed his misgivings more directly. He acknowledged that the conglomerate's assumption of a responsibility that properly belonged to the state might have been helpful to the mandate government when money and staff were short. At the current stage, however, this economic convenience could easily lead the administration to political irrelevance.⁶³

In urging government action on labour concerns, Graves was taking up a challenge which the Histadrut had issued him a few months into his assignment as labour adviser. In late 1940, an article in the Histadrut periodical Co-operative Economics had outlined the conglomerate's position on government involvement in labour supervision. The writer acknowledged that the state could have a role in organizing labour relations, but asserted that the Histadrut had done more for industrial relations than any colonial administration could achieve through standard colonial approaches to work and social relations. It challenged the authorities to demonstrate both their intentions and their capability.⁶⁴

Offering the Histadrut as a model for the government's labour adviser in dealing with both Jews and Arabs, the article suggested several appropriate activities for this official. None concerned the relations of Jewish employers to their employees. In his work in the Jewish sector, the labour adviser should build on the Histadrut's activities;

for his work in the Arab sector, he should use them as a model. He should also concern himself with the situation of government employees and of workers in facilities of internationally owned corporations, where working conditions were deplorable.⁶⁵

After drawing to the labour adviser's attention the areas in which the Histadrut considered that he might make himself useful, the article closed with a reminder that the yishuv's most powerful organization would be watching his performance. Labour legislation could "level" either upwards or downwards. The labour adviser's choice of direction would indicate the authorities' general social attitude. This, in turn, would determine the position of the organized labour movement towards the government's labour policy.⁶⁶

At the next stage of government labour activity, the 1942 establishment of a labour department, the Palestine Post, which commonly presented the mainstream Zionist viewpoint, would elaborate on the Co-operative Economics article in both its recognition of Histadrut accomplishments and its prescription for government action. Palestine enjoyed relative freedom from "class struggle," the Post asserted, because of the early establishment of a labour organization that was both strong and entrepreneurial. Organized labour had taken authority by laying the foundations of Palestine's recent economic development; its power had made unnecessary the kind of acute class struggle found elsewhere.⁶⁷

Like the Histadrut magazine, the Post would go on to suggest some new functions for the government. Its proposals concerned not simply labour relations, but the safety and welfare issues for which the government had shown so little enthusiasm. Palestine's advanced development, the Post commented, pointed up its lack of the supervision that had long protected workers in Western countries. The state should be regulating factory conditions, securing worker's compensation, and overseeing dispute settlement, as well as addressing the peculiar problems of the war economy. In providing guidance in these areas, the Labour Department would need to carefully adapt Western models to local conditions.⁶⁸

Finally, like Co-operative Economics but in a less menacing tone, the Post let readers know that the government's labour activities would not go unobserved. The work of department staff in setting up labour legislation and supervision would "be watched with sympathetic concern."⁶⁹

Faced with the Zionist challenges to government autonomy, Graves adopted the established official distrust of the Zionist labour organizations as extremely leftist forces. Given that Graves mistrusted any type of political commitment on the part of unions, the nature of the Histadrut's commitment disturbed him profoundly. He suspected the conglomerate (which he described, portentously, as "organized on the basis of 'one big Union'"⁷⁰) of harbouring revolutionary political aims. It was "a socialist

organization determined to maintain class consciousness among the Jewish 'proletariat'. . . . From this sort of class consciousness to class warfare is a very short step." Although the Soviets had outlawed Zionism, Graves believed, the Russian Jews who predominated in the yishuv leadership remained true to their indoctrination in "class warfare and the eventual elimination of the 'bourgeois'."⁷¹

Graves nevertheless saw grounds for hope in the current situation. In the two decades of the mandate, immigration and experience had begun to alter the social composition of the yishuv. Graves had both the statistics and the perception to note that not every Jewish worker in Palestine was committed to the Histadrut's expressed ideals. Many had been employers before immigrating. The various minority labour organizations advocated "a social and economic order in Palestine which shall put into practice the statutes of the Torah and the ideals of the Prophets" (Hapoel Hamizrachi); "dislike[d] socialism and condemn[ed] class warfare" (the federations of the General Zionists and Revisionists); or simply "[were] making determined efforts to establish an equal share of occupation with other Jews" (Sephardic Labour Organization).⁷²

Graves conceded the popularity of the Histadrut's social and economic programs. The Histadrut's political aims, however, had stimulated the development of its rivals because many workers held other ideals.⁷³ Graves observed with

evident relief that in this regard, at least, the Histadrut's political involvement had proven a mistake.

The labour adviser's report concluded that Palestine's labour legislation and its government services to workers were seriously underdeveloped. Contending that any jurisdiction with a developed labour force needed both adequate labour legislation and a department dedicated to enforcing it, Graves applied that premise to Palestine. Detailed proposals for legislative reform and for establishment of a labour department accompanied the main report.⁷⁴

As usual, the arguments specific to Palestine largely concerned the needs and capacities of the country's two communities. Salient in regard to labour were the sophistication of the Histadrut and the relative underdevelopment of the Arab unions. As an arbiter of disputes, Graves argued, a labour department would provide an alternative to the current monopoly of the Histadrut. Here he introduced a major theme that would characterize many of the proposals he made as labour adviser and later as labour director. The government, he argued, must take up responsibility to balance the Histadrut's monopoly on power in order to give a fair chance both to employers and to those workers, Arab and Jewish, who were not Histadrut members. Appreciation of this redress, he suggested, might bring the government some political credit in the Arab community.⁷⁵

As a consistent partisan of the emerging social services school of colonial administration, Graves argued that a labour department was an important part of up-to-date colonial thinking and practice. More broadly, as a mechanism for protecting Palestine's least privileged people, a department would contribute to carrying out the expressed purpose of British government leaders (soon to be given broad currency in the Atlantic Charter) to redress inequalities after the war. Finally, tacitly acknowledging the absolute power of the Treasury over all proposals, Graves crowned his argument with the assurance, supported by a preliminary budget, that a labour department would cost less than many minor government departments.⁷⁶

By the time Graves submitted his report, the metropole had undergone the Battle of Britain and the Blitz; the Battle of the Atlantic was at its height. Money and attention for social services, especially in the colonies, were in shorter supply than ever. By the same token, however, the reasons behind the Colonial Office's original concern about colonized workers -- notably the needs for public order and reliable production -- were more compelling than ever. Graves's report received immediate and serious consideration in Jerusalem, and then in London.

At the beginning of June 1941, the Palestine Executive Council accepted the report's recommendation to establish a labour department.⁷⁷ The endorsement had little immediate

effect. In its 1940 report to the Permanent Mandates Commission, the colonial government had looked forward to the operation of a labour department in the autumn of 1941.⁷⁸ Yet in the summer of 1941 the London government still hesitated. In the event, the agency would not officially begin operations for another year.

Both the Colonial Office and the Treasury contributed to the delay. In the Colonial Office, an influential bureaucrat expressed strong reservations about a minor aspect of the proposal which, he asserted, could open the way for international intrusion. Graves believed strongly in the partnership of government, employers, and workers in building strong and peaceful labour relations. Accordingly, he had recommended that Palestine send delegates to the ILO's International Labour Conferences. The experience, he suggested, would develop skills of compromise in both worker and employer delegates. His elaboration of this point neatly expressed his view of the function of government in labour relations: at the conferences, he said, government representatives not only presented official positions on proposals but mediated between employers' and workers' groups, as they would in their own countries.⁷⁹ Graves also suggested that the proposed department's inspectors should have had experience "in a British Government Department, in a Colonial Administration or in the International Labour Office," and

that an ILO Recommendation (No. 20 of October 1923) offered some useful ideas about labour inspectorates.⁸⁰

When Graves wrote the recommendation, he was aware that the International Labour Organization might be controversial. He carefully qualified his recommendation of its conferences: "(which, I should say by way of reassurance, are absolutely non-political)." This precaution was insufficient. Geoffrey Hibbert, labour officer of the Colonial Office Social Services Department, was so nervous about international cooperation that he misread Graves's emphasis. Labelling the labour adviser "evidently an ardent admirer of the International Labour Office," he proceeded to object to "his idea of having persons who have had experience of labour matters in that estimable institution as Inspectors of Labour in the new Labour Department."⁸¹ The ILO had been the last of the three possible sources that Graves suggested.⁸²

Despite his reservations, Hibbert concluded his commentary with an unexplained concession: if anyone were to ask him "whether there was any Colonial Dependency where the appointment of I.L.O. personnel as Labour Officers would be more suitable than others, I should at once say 'Palestine'."⁸³ In fact, Hibbert, along with Stephen Luke of the Colonial Service, praised Graves's report overall. In late July 1941, the Colonial Office generally endorsed Graves's recommendations, subject to Treasury approval.⁸⁴

The Treasury resisted.⁸⁵ Its officials did not share Hibbert's view of the strategic value of social services. In early December, they were still finding reason to wrangle over the department's budget. One discussion exemplifies the clashes between the Colonial Office, conscious of specialized local knowledge, and the Treasury, conscious of its charge to protect the purse of the British taxpayer. Graves had earlier provided Hibbert an argument for hiring British inspectors: "good men from home with brains and knowledge of theory and practice in the labour world" [emphasis in red, apparently added in the Colonial Office]. Such officers would provide the "professional self-confidence" required to deal with "the local labour experts."⁸⁶ A Treasury official nevertheless argued, citing expense, against employing experienced British inspectors. Surely some Palestinian Jews, "whose employment would be less expensive," could be trained as labour inspectors. Intercommunal rivalries would present no obstacle, he felt, since "Jews and Arabs are at least agreed in wanting us to win the war" -- a view which one Colonial Office minuter described with some understatement as "a fundamental misunderstanding of the country."⁸⁷

Although the Colonial Office won this contention, selecting and recruiting the staff of the new agency would occupy the spring and summer of 1942. The good men (and woman) from home would arrive in Palestine in September 1942.

Notes

¹"Decline in Wage Rates Arrested: Effect of Cost of Living Allowances," Palestine Post, 15 July 1940, 3.

²Colonial Office, Report on Palestine for 1935, 121. The report attributes the question from the Permanent Mandates Commission to the Minutes of the Twenty-Seventh Session, 69.

³Colonial Office, Report on Palestine for 1932, 81.

⁴Colonial Office, Report on Palestine for 1933, 103.

⁵Hibbert memo, 1 February 1940, PRO, CO 859/28/10.

⁶W. Ormsby-Gore to George Hicks, MP, 6 January 1938, MRC, MSS 292, 956.9/1; minutes, fourth 1937-38 meeting, TUC international committee (25 January 1938), item 29.

⁷MacMichael to MacDonald, 15 February 1940, PRO, CO 733/423/18, 7.

⁸Colonial Office, "Report on Palestine for 1940," PRO, CO 733/441, 2. At the same time, wages had continued to fall since the high point of 1935. *Ibid.*, 8.

⁹MacMichael to MacDonald, 15 February 1940, PRO, CO 733/423/18, 5, 1.

¹⁰On the symbiotic relationship of the Jewish Agency and the Histadrut in financing, contracting, and building workers' housing, see Zeev Rosenhek, "The Historical Roots of the Israeli Welfare State and the Zionist-Palestinian Conflict," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Israel Studies, 1996.

¹¹MacMichael to MacDonald, 15 February 1940, PRO, CO 733/423/18, 2, 6.

¹²Colonial Office, Report on Palestine for 1931, 73.

¹³MacMichael to MacDonald, 15 February 1940, PRO, CO 733/423/18, 2, 5, 6.

¹⁴MacMichael did, however, propose to ask the General Officer Commanding to warn the Zionist leaders that the government would respond militarily to continued clashes. This step, he believed, would prevent the yishuv from claiming ignorance of the consequences of settling their disputes by violence. MacMichael to MacDonald, 15 February 1940, PRO, CO 733/423/18, 6.

¹⁵"[Because of the rivalry among the Zionist federations], the Palestine Government feel, however, that there may be some case for the establishment of impartial labour exchanges, and that on this question technical advice may be required." Downie to Shuckburgh, 25 March 1940, PRO, CO 733/423/18. For further discussion of this point, see chapter 8.

¹⁶H. F. Downie minute, 8 February 1940, PRO, CO 859/28/10.

¹⁷Hibbert memorandum, 18 June 1940, PRO, CO 733/423/19.

¹⁸D.O.A. [unidentified], minute, 3 April 1940, PRO CO 733\423\18.

¹⁹T. I. Lloyd (assistant secretary for personnel, Colonial Service), minute, 18 June 1940; S. E. V. Luke, minute, 17 June 1940, PRO, CO 733/423/19.

²⁰Hibbert memorandum, 18 June 1940, PRO, CO 733/423/19.

²¹This would be the factory inspector that Wauchope had requested. Colonial Office, Report on Palestine for 1935, 121.

²²"Particulars of the office of labour officer now vacant in the government of Palestine" (form printed 22 June 1939), PRO, CO 859/28/10.

²³Hibbert memorandum, 18 June 1940, PRO, CO 733/423/19.

²⁴MacMichael to Lloyd, 20 May 1940, PRO, CO 859/28, 3-4.

²⁵"Labour Adviser for Palestine," Palestine Post, 18 October 1940, 1. In the fall of 1935, the Labour Office, originally a part of the Ministry of the Interior, was transferred to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The following January, Graves successfully proposed that the office be redesignated as the Department of Labour. R. M. Graves, "Note on Labour Developments in Egypt during 1935," in Lampson to Eden, 23 January 1936, PRO, FO 371/20098 J 1043/2/16.

²⁶Shuckburgh to Parkinson, 22 June 1940, PRO, CO 733/423/19.

²⁷Lampson to Eden, 23 January 1936, PRO, FO 371 20098 (J 1043/2/16), J. S. Somers-Cocks, minute, 12 February 1936; Lampson to Eden, 1. Graves also asked for an expert in industrial hygiene -- a request he would repeatedly, and unavailingly, repeat in Palestine (Graves, "Labour Developments in Egypt," 5, in Lampson to Eden).

²⁸FO 371/19069, minutes signed by Somers-Cocks, quoted in Ellis Goldberg, Tinker, Tailor, and Textile Worker: Class and Politics in Egypt, 1930-1952 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 200. Somers-Cocks referred to Keown-Boyd's solution as "unions on the line of U.S. company unions."

²⁹Graves, "Labour Developments in Egypt," in Lampson to Eden, 23 January 1936, PRO, FO 371/20098 J 1043/2/16.

³⁰Graves, "Labour in Palestine," 3 April 1941, enclosure I, MacMichael to Moyne, PRO, CO 859/55/4, 11.

³¹Graves, "Labour Developments in Egypt," in Lampson to Eden, 23 January 1936, PRO, FO 371/20098 J 1043/2/16, 3. Graves did not record his opinion of such a relationship in a Western country -- for example, the United Kingdom.

³²Ibid., 4.

³³Hibbert was jubilant, seeing in this result a triumph for the Social Services Department and the whole new approach to colonial administration. In itself, the appointment showed that the European crisis had not prevented the British government from attending to its responsibilities to workers. Properly publicized, he thought, it might even strengthen Britain's position with the Roosevelt Administration in the United States -- a vital but anti-colonialist potential ally as Nazi forces assaulted Britain and consolidated their grip on Western Europe. Hibbert minute, 15 October 1940, PRO, CO 733/423/19.

³⁴MacMichael to Colonial Office, 11 October 1940, PRO, CO 859/28/10.

³⁵"Report on Palestine for 1940," 15.

³⁶"Labour Adviser Visits Haifa Industries," Palestine Post, 3 November 1940, 3.

³⁷Horowitz was well-connected with the British Left. In 1938 he had been co-author with the Fabian Rita Hinden of an Economic Survey of Palestine, with Special Reference to the Years 1936 and 1937 (Tel Aviv: Economic Research Institute of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, 1938). In 1940 Hinden established the Fabian Colonial Bureau, which attracted several of the leftists who would be influential in setting British colonial policy after the war, including a future colonial secretary, Arthur Creech-Jones.

³⁸David Horowitz, "Confidential Report on the Trip made with Mr. Graves, Labour Adviser to the Palestine Government, on

the 20th and 21st of November, 1940, to the Neshar Cement Company Ltd., Mishmar Haemek, Nahalal, Tiberias, Degania A', Afikim, Naharyim Electric Power Station," CZA, S25 7212.

³⁹The account concerned an NLO meeting with an official of the Vaad Leumi, the yishuv's internal council. Graves was outraged both because the account was inaccurate and because the meeting had concerned an unresolved dispute.

At issue, in all probability, was job allocation and, in particular, labour exchanges. These were a sore point in the spring of 1941, as the Jewish Agency was seeking to establish a nonpartisan exchange network.

⁴⁰Graves to Shostak, 20 May 1941; Graves statement to press; Graves to Katznelson, 20 May 1941, CZA, S25 7212 (LAB/28/40).

⁴¹Using figures from the Histadrut, the Labour Department, and P. J. Loftus' National Income of Palestine, Taqqu calculated that Arab employment reached some hundred thousand at its peak, around 1943 ("Arab Labor," 168-70). Roughly thirty-five thousand settled in the coastal cities, where the Arab unions of the 1930s had been based, or nearby in large army production camps. Most, however, remained in the countryside, working on farms or rural construction projects, in transport or the police, or in the many small army production camps in isolated rural sites.

Taqqu considers a hundred thousand to be a third of adult male Arabs; Carmi and Rosenfeld regard it as half. Taqqu, "Arab Labor," 159; Shulamit Carmi and Henry Rosenfeld, "The Origins of the Process of Proletarianization and Urbanization of Arab Peasants in Palestine, City and Peasant: A Study in Sociocultural Dynamics, Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, Vol. 220, Article 6 (New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1974), 182.

⁴²Colonial Office, "Report on Palestine for 1940," 10, PRO, CO 733/441; Colonial Office, 1941 report to the Permanent Mandates Commission, 5, PRO, CO 733/457/18.

⁴³Graves to Orde-Browne, 9 May 1941, PRO, CO 859/55/4, Item 16.

⁴⁴Graves, "Labour in Palestine," enclosure I in MacMichael to Moyne, 3 April 1941, 11-12, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

⁴⁵Memo of 28 December 1943 and notes of 22 April 1944, Northern Rhodesia Archives, Ass. 52/17, quoted in Hooker, "Labour Department," 16. Blaming the victim, M. A. Bevan, a Ministry of Labour employee on loan to Northern Rhodesia in 1946, judged that "as Africans had not formed a stable work force, there was little demand for a union." Africans, ac-

ording to Bevan, had "no settled occupation, no civic sense, no community of interests as workers, no real understanding." 13 May 1946, Northern Rhodesia Archives, Sec./Lab./125 and Acc. 52/17, quoted in *ibid.*, 16, 17.

⁴⁶Graves, "Labour in Palestine," enclosure I in MacMichael to Moyne, 3 April 1941, 11-12, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

⁴⁷13 May 1946, Northern Rhodesia Archives, Sec/Lab./125 and Acc.52/17, quoted in Hooker, "Labour Department," 17.

⁴⁸Graves, "Labour in Palestine," enclosure I in MacMichael to Moyne, 3 April 1941, 11-12, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

⁴⁹See Goldberg, 103-4; Joel Beinin and Zachary Lockman, Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism, Islam, and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882-1954 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 210-13.

⁵⁰Graves, "Labour in Palestine," 11-12, enclosure I in MacMichael to Moyne, 3 April 1941, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

⁵¹Graves to Orde-Browne, 9 May 1941, PRO, CO 859/55/4, Item 16. At the end of the paragraph, a Colonial Office minuter added, "Hear! hear!"

⁵²Graves, "Labour in Palestine," enclosure I in MacMichael to Moyne, 3 April 1941, 2-3, PRO, CO 859/55/4. This argument echoes Orde-Browne's discussion of African workers (see chapter 3). *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 3.

⁵⁴H. F. Downie, minute, 8 February 1940, PRO, CO 859/28/10.

⁵⁵The Histadrut had proposed 200 mils a day for unskilled labour for the Army or Public Works Department.

⁵⁶Graves, "Labour in Palestine," enclosure I in MacMichael to Moyne, 3 April 1941, 8, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 13.

⁵⁸Graves, "Proposals for the Creation of a Government Department of Labour," 3 April 1941, enclosure III in MacMichael to Moyne, PRO, CO 859/55/4, 1.

⁵⁹Graves, "Labour in Palestine," enclosure I in MacMichael to Moyne, 3 April 1941, 12, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 12, 22-27, 29-32.

- ⁶¹Graves, "Proposals for . . . [a] Department," 3 April 1941, enclosure III in MacMichael to Moyne, 1, PRO, CO 859/55/4.
- ⁶²Graves to Orde-Browne, 9 May 1941, PRO, CO 859/55/4, Item 16.
- ⁶³Graves, "Labour Legislation," 3 April 1941, 10, enclosure II in MacMichael to Moyne, PRO, CO 859/55/4.
- ⁶⁴"Editorial Note: Appointment of Labour Adviser," Co-operative Economics (Histadrut bi-weekly magazine), no. 17-18 (31 December 1940), mandate government translation, 5 January 1941, ISA, 258/22.
- ⁶⁵Ibid.
- ⁶⁶Ibid.
- ⁶⁷"Social Reform," Palestine Post, 21 July 1942, 2.
- ⁶⁸Ibid.
- ⁶⁹Ibid.
- ⁷⁰Graves, "Labour in Palestine," enclosure I in MacMichael to Moyne, 3 April 1941, 14, PRO, CO 859/55/4.
- ⁷¹Ibid., 34.
- ⁷²Ibid., 35, 28.
- ⁷³Ibid., 27.
- ⁷⁴Graves, "Labour Legislation," 3 April 1941, enclosure II in MacMichael to Moyne, PRO, CO 859/55/4; idem, "Proposals," 3 April 1941, enclosure III in MacMichael to Moyne, PRO, CO 859/55/4.
- ⁷⁵Graves, "Proposals for . . . [a] Department," 3 April 1941, 1, enclosure III in MacMichael to Moyne, PRO, CO 859/55/4.
- ⁷⁶Ibid., 2. Graves went on to describe in detail the structure, functions, and costs of such a body. Along with a department, he recommended the establishment of an advisory labour council and a smaller legislative committee. These were to design reforms in the labour law, presumably along the lines Graves was suggesting in his legislative proposal. Each body was to be composed, on the model of the International Labour Organization, of representatives of employers, workers, and government. Graves also recommended that a _____
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British industrial health expert be employed and attached to the Health Department. Graves, "Labour Legislation," 3 April 1941, 11-12, enclosure II in MacMichael to Moyne, PRO, CO 859/55/4; idem, Graves, "Proposals for the Creation of a Government Department of Labour," 3 April 1941, 3-4, enclosure III in MacMichael to Moyne, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

⁷⁷Executive Council Minutes, 863rd meeting, 3 June 1941, PRO, CO 814/37. The council postponed establishment of the labour advisory council and legislative committee and authorization of the industrial health position that Graves had proposed. The postponements turned out to be permanent.

On the difficulties of recruiting an industrial health specialist, see Colonial Office minutes, June-July 1942, PRO, CO 733/441/19.

⁷⁸Colonial Office, Report on Palestine for 1940, 15.

⁷⁹MacMichael to Colonial Secretary, enclosure I, R. M. Graves, "Survey of Labour in Palestine," 3 April 1941, 35, 36, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

⁸⁰Graves, "Proposals for . . . [a] Department," 5, 3 April 1941, enclosure III in MacMichael to Moyne, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

⁸¹Minute by J. G. Hibbert, 11 July 1941, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

⁸²To Hibbert, the word "international" apparently signalled danger regardless of context. Graves had proposed including on the Advisory Labour Council representatives of international firms such as Shell -- which, he had explained, operated in Palestine -- and of their employees (a workforce comparable in skills and composition to that of the Palestine Railways). Hibbert, who had evidently not read the report carefully, expressed alarm that appointing "representatives of 'International employers' and of 'International workers'" might well bring Palestine "some very nasty and dangerous bits of work." Minute by J. G. Hibbert, 11 July 1941, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

⁸³Minute by J. G. Hibbert, 11 July 1941, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

⁸⁴Stephen Luke, minute, 26 July 1941, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

⁸⁵E. B. Boyd, minute, 25 August 1941 (inter alia), PRO, CO 733/441/18; Hibbert to Luke, 23 September 1941, and MacMichael to Moyne, 8 October 1941, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

⁸⁶Graves to Orde-Browne, 9 May 1941.

⁸⁷Hardie [Treasury] to Luke, 2 December 1941, PRO, CO 733/441/18.

Chapter 6 Palestine's Modern Agency

As the London bureaucrats wrangled, Graves continued to address Palestine's labour issues singlehanded. He could well expect to deal with these indefinitely; he was the natural choice for director of the new department. His proposal had laid out a taxing list of responsibilities for the post. The labour director would, among other duties, hire and supervise staff, consult with other agencies on labour policy and legislation, maintain contact with workers and employers organizations, work with other officials to resolve labour disputes, and prepare information for workers as well as the government and the League of Nations Permanent Mandates Commission.¹ Any nominee who lacked Graves's exceptional combination of experience in the Middle East and in labour supervision would face an enormous challenge.

The Colonial Office took the obvious course. Although Graves passed his sixty-first birthday in September 1941, officials reasoned that the selection of a suitable deputy would allow him to set up a department, train a successor, and retire once again. The colonial secretary agreed to this plan, and in July 1942 Graves at last settled into the Jerusalem offices assigned to the nascent agency and began work as its director.²

In addition to Graves, the British staff of the new department was to consist of a male deputy director, who would serve as chief inspector; three male regional

inspectors; and a woman inspector, who was to work in all three regions with enterprises employing women or children. Before recruiting for these posts began, the high commissioner and Colonial Office staff agreed that Palestine required labour officers drawn from different sources, and selected on different principles, from those of other colonial labour departments. Normally, a governor would staff a new labour department with Colonial Service officers already working in the colony as local administrators. Hibbert, as labour officer in the Social Services Department, noted the perceived advantages and actual deficiency of this expedient. District officers already working with the natives knew their languages and ways of life, but handling labour problems required different skills.³

At this time, many colonial governors and local administrators remained untouched by the shifts in attitude towards natives in general and native workers in particular that began during the 1930s (see chapter 2 and in particular chapter 3). Rather, they continued to consider "native" rather than "worker" the dominant identification of native workers. In fact, they argued, native workers were so different from their British counterparts that expertise in Western labour relations would be worse than useless: it would lead to drastic misunderstandings. In their view, tribal and family considerations, familiar to established

local administrators, were far more important than working-class interests.

Offered a trade union official to serve as a labour officer (see further discussion below), the governor of British Guiana was blunt. His labour commissioner felt that union experience would be useless without familiarity with local people and conditions.⁴ Although Cypriot workers were already unionized, the governor of Cyprus took the same position. Cypriots were "fundamentally and temperamentally opposed" to collective bargaining, preferring strikes; though self-proclaimed trade unionists, they were ignorant of the basic principles of unionism. Only someone familiar with the local language and culture could effectively explain these principles.⁵

The case of Northern Rhodesia's labour department shows how this view worked out in practice. The territory established its department in the early 1940s, at about the same time as Palestine. Orde-Browne, still the Colonial Office's labour adviser at the time, recommended that the staff comprise a commissioner and eight labour officers.⁶ Pleading not only poverty but also district officers' right to run their districts without interference, the colonial government responded with a commissioner and two labour officers. Like most of their counterparts across the colonial empire, these had been local administrators, expected to know something of native culture and speak at least one lo-

cal language.⁷ In their new positions, they would deal only with people who had left their villages to become miners or urban African workers. They would thus pose little threat to district officers, who concentrated their attention on rural Africans. Furthermore, as one official pointed out, a labour officer who expected to return to serving as an administrative officer under the local provincial commissioner would take pains not to annoy that official.⁸

What saved Palestine and, to a limited extent, a few other colonies from the application of the standard pattern was the presence of a sophisticated and militant labour organization.⁹ As noted above, Palestine was endowed with several of these, engaged in keen competition for settler workers. The collaboration of Britain's Trades Union Congress and Labour Party with the Histadrut and Labour Zionists had, furthermore, been conspicuous. Hibbert vividly presented the situation:

Palestine, of all Colonial Dependencies, is the one where the Labour Department must be provided with officers who are already experts in the duties which they are called upon to perform, because the Jewish organisations already have experts of their own. It would be a fatal mistake to appoint Administrative Officers from other Colonies, ex-Governors' aide-de-camps, or candidates of the "jolly-good-fellow-who-can-adapt-himself-to-anything" type.¹⁰

Bureaucrats in the Social Services and Middle East sections of the Colonial Office could not help recognizing that relationships among the Zionist unions, employers, and the government differed little from those among their

counterparts in Britain. They therefore found it reasonable to accept Graves's advice and turn to the Ministry of Labour and National Service for volunteers to staff Palestine's labour department.

London bureaucrats and Jerusalem administrators concerned to challenge the Zionist settlers' labour organizations showed little interest in the other major segment of Palestine's workforce: native wage earners. Most officials apparently continued to regard Arab workers as an irregular and rudimentary labour force closely resembling those they perceived in other colonies. Secretariat reports and Colonial Office dispatches had occasionally mentioned them, but almost exclusively in connection with migrancy and village ties, or with their participation or nonparticipation in the revolts of 1936 and 1937-39.

Graves himself expressed some exasperation with Palestine's Arabs in general. "They ought to rouse themselves, form associations and try to improve their standards both of work and of life." Instead, "they are frightfully apathetic and seem to take no interest in anything except race politics."¹¹ For the Arab labour unions in particular, however, Graves showed some sympathy. Because they were so small, they were too weak to bargain contracts, but simply offered a few benefits. Although governments had no business organizing unions, the question -- which would increasingly perplex the makers of colonial labour policy -- remained:

how far should a government go to arouse public interest in labour issues?¹²

This sense of an organizing mission, tentative though it was, along with the unexpectedly high proportion of Arab workers that Graves found in "international" enterprises such as the Haifa refineries, apparently convinced him that British labour relations experts should expect to work with wage-earning Arabs also. He, in turn, convinced decision makers in Jerusalem and London to share his position.

Bureaucrats, administrators, the high commissioner, and the labour adviser agreed, then, that for Palestine, labour officers would need both sophistication in labour relations and readiness to confront a population of workers prepared to be organized. This shared recognition allowed Palestine's labour department to be unique. It could begin with a British staff innocent of Colonial Service experience.¹³ Its British officers would be people accustomed to deal, not with natives, but with British workers. Their experience would therefore presumably incline them to deal with Arab and Jewish workers as workers rather than as anthropological curiosities. They would be expert in caring for workers' safety and health and their negotiations, rather than for their village customs and traditional authorities. If these regional labour inspectors might risk the mistakes of overlooking workers' cultural backgrounds,

they would be equipped to avoid those of overlooking the facts of wage earners' working lives.

In the event, the first of the British officers to take up his duties, the labour inspector for the Jerusalem-based Central Region, would reach Palestine through an even more exceptional initiative. He would be, not a government factory inspector, but a trade union official. In the spring of 1941, while Graves was writing his labour department proposals, Hibbert brought forward an innovative proposal of his own. If accepted, the plan would break the empire-wide monopoly of "jolly good fellows" on contact with colonized workers. Hibbert asked every colonial governor whether he was willing to accept a skilled British union official to work with native wage earners. The purpose of this, as of most colonial labour projects of the early 1940s, would be to regulate labour relations, maintaining, to the extent possible, labour peace during the war. Hibbert pointed out that the Colonial Office and colonial governments were "naturally anxious to encourage the settlement of disputes by peaceful means in every possible way, more especially during the present critical period." To that end, the Colonial Office was exploring the idea of appointing British unionists or dispute settlement experts as colonial labour officers.¹⁴

In asking nongovernmental organizations for help in recruiting, Hibbert elaborated on the specific duties that the unionists would, as labour officers, perform. Of the

four activities he mentioned, two directly involved the protection of labour peace. A labour officer would inspect workplaces and collect statistics on wage levels and the cost of living -- activities which reinforced labour peace only insofar as they improved workers' lives. More directly, however, the officer would investigate and attempt to settle disputes; he (at that point, the labour officer was invariably a man) would also report to his supervisor "any circumstance which in his opinion is likely to endanger harmonious relations between employers and workers."¹⁵

Since the aim of the appointments was to guide colonial unions away from the path of the political, the Colonial Office was keenly aware that the wrong British unionist could do far more harm than good. As recruitment began, Hibbert took every precaution to avoid setting the colonial thatch alight with a British firebrand. Where unions were growing quickly and showed signs of "developing on the wrong lines" because of "inexperienced and often politically minded" leaders, any unionist sent must be very carefully selected and trained.¹⁶

As it turned out, such men (no female applicants are mentioned, and probably none were envisioned) were plentiful. By early fall, one of Hibbert's colleagues responsible for the Colonial Service could assure the governor of British Honduras that, surprisingly, sensible unionists -- men

who could restrain any impulses they might feel towards rabble rousing -- were indeed available.¹⁷

Despite the gratifying abundance of suitable potential recruits, potential recipients were disappointingly few. Governors' responses to Hibbert's suggestion expressed colonial administrators' reluctance to embrace the new theories of colonial governance that had been developing in the Colonial Office from the early 1930s. Less than a handful accepted the offer at once; eventually, six colonies would receive the first cohort of unionists in this project.

The reasons administrators gave for rejecting the offer illustrate the concepts of labour supervision common among their peers at the time. Several officials had seen no sign of class consciousness among colonized workers and feared that a British unionist would create trouble -- if not from workers, then from employers -- where none currently existed. The chief secretary in the Nyasaland government was among those who feared the reaction of this group. Many settlers, he reported, considered labour inspection unnecessary. They asserted that, except for a few "misfits," harmonious relations prevailed between employer and employee. His own officials, for their part, feared that bringing in a unionist would arouse not only hostility to inspection but suspicion that the government planned to regulate recruitment of native labour, still a sensitive issue.¹⁸

According to the governor of British Guiana, his officer in charge of labour relations feared that if a unionist were employed to advise local unions, he himself would be considered biased in favour of labour -- a charge which he had already encountered.¹⁹ The governor of Malaya feared that the presence of a British unionist would unsettle not employers, but workers, by raising unrealistic expectations. When illiterate native workers were disappointed, disaffection (and presumably disorders) could result.²⁰

The explicit designation of an experienced unionist in itself apparently frightened some officials. The labour commissioner of British Guiana, while fearing that the introduction of a new post specifically for a unionist would alarm employers, had no objection to the appointment of a unionist to an existing post.²¹ Similarly, the governor of Malaya would welcome a visit by an experienced unionist to observe conditions and advise on policy -- but the T.U.C., rather than the government, must initiate any such visit.²²

Palestine was among the colonial governments which the Colonial Office categorized as "were expected to say 'No' and have said 'No'."²³ Against expectations, however, High Commissioner MacMichael himself emphasized that the refusal was temporary. Labour issues in Palestine were saturated with politics, particularly those of the politically affiliated and sophisticated Zionist labour organizations. At

some future time, he thought, a carefully selected British unionist might be helpful "if he could avoid being nobbled by Jewish labour bosses."²⁴ At that point, in February 1941, MacMichael was waiting for Graves's recommendations, which he expected would include the creation of a labour department. In that setting a British unionist -- particularly one trained in factory inspection -- might be of use.²⁵

Graves enthusiastically supported the idea of including a unionist in the labour department staff. His proposal for a department, which appeared six weeks after MacMichael's dispatch, included a detailed description of the assignment he envisioned for this officer. The proposal expressed both Graves's organizational acumen and his sensitivity to Treasury concerns. If the unionist were assigned as inspector for the Jerusalem region, he noted, both the labour director and the other inspectors could benefit from his special expertise. The unionist would not be adjunct to the department staff, but a part of it, and should be prepared to undertake factory inspection and all other tasks of a regional labour inspector.²⁶

Given Graves's strong backing for the idea, Palestine duly applied for a unionist; the Colonial Office in response selected Palestine -- along with Nigeria (which also had originally refused), Sierra Leone, Gold Coast, Trinidad, and (despite its hesitation) British Guiana -- to receive one of the first half-dozen labour officers.

From among the applicants, Harold Ernest Chudleigh was, in the fall of 1941, designated for Palestine.²⁷ Though Chudleigh came to Palestine from the often radical Amalgamated Engineers Union (AEU), he also came with a strong endorsement from Hibbert at the Colonial Office: "He has impressed all of us here who have seen him as being most level-headed, sound [emphasis in original] and sensible."²⁸ Chudleigh had left government school in Southampton in 1920, at the age of 16, to work as an apprentice in motor engineering. At 26, he secured a diploma in public administration; in the following year, 1931, he won a grant to work with the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., on a study of labour relations on the U.S. railroads. He later attended the University of Southampton and went on to the London School of Economics. At the time he applied for the Colonial Office assignment, he was a branch secretary of the AEU.

Interviewed in mid-August 1941, Chudleigh was accepted, and designated for the Palestine position, in October.²⁹ The following month he, like the other unionists recruited, began a special three-month course in factory personnel management and welfare supervision, designed for Labour and National Service staff, at Edinburgh University.³⁰ In the spring of 1942 he continued with the special training important to the high commissioner, in inspection of dangerous machinery and fencing.

In June 1942 Chudleigh reached Jerusalem, where, as Graves had proposed, he was based as labour inspector, Central Region. He took up his assignment with energy. Chudleigh would remain in Palestine, although not in the Labour Department, throughout the Mandate; in July 1946 he transferred to the fledgling Department of Social Welfare as deputy director.³¹

While the trade unionist for Palestine had been selected in the summer of 1941, the new agency's other British staff members remained to be found. In the winter of 1941-42, the Colonial Office appealed to the Ministry of Labour and National Service for four factory inspectors for Palestine. Of these, one was to be a woman; another, suitable for appointment as chief inspector and deputy director of labour.

The search appeared difficult, for both external and inherent reasons. In the first half of 1942, good workers for civilian positions were in short supply. In addition, the war in the Mediterranean was not going well for Britain, and in North Africa German general Erwin Rommel was leading his tank corps, with apparent invincibility, towards Cairo. Besides the shortage of manpower and critical stage of the war, the positions themselves were demanding. Graves was asking for two recruits who could take responsibility for the northern and southern regions of Palestine, with offices based in Haifa and in Tel Aviv, respectively. They were --

like Chudleigh in the Central Region -- to inspect health and safety conditions; record the pay, working conditions, and union affiliations of workers in each enterprise; and both report and conciliate labour disputes.³² They were to become proficient in Arabic or Hebrew, or both. For all this, they would be paid £700 a year.

The woman inspector was to be familiar with the problems of working women and children and would, with her Arab and Jewish staff, be responsible for inspecting every enterprise in Palestine that employed women or children. The women officers were also to study workers' domestic economy and social welfare and to collaborate, "as far as they have time to do so," with voluntary social service workers. The British woman inspector would be paid £600 a year.³³ The new deputy director and chief inspector was to depute for the director, supervise the inspectors and Palestinian sub-inspectors, and annotate field reports. He was also to be an expert in industrial safety and health and a capable conciliator.³⁴

Given the restrictions and demands of the positions, the Colonial Office recruiting team were pleasantly surprised by both the quantity and the quality of responses to their call for applicants.³⁵ Thirty inspectors had shown interest in a change of assignment.³⁶ In April 1942 Hibbert wrote Graves that he had selected four excellent candidates.³⁷ All had qualified as engineers.

The accomplishments of the Palestine Labour Department, and the reputation it established, would bear out Hibbert's claim. After their service in Palestine, each of Hibbert's candidates would spend two further decades in responsible posts in the Colonial Service. Administrators in African colonies apparently came to consider the Palestine assignment good preparation for top positions in labour supervision.

In 1942 A. H. Couzens, the deputy director-designate, was 40 years old. He had attended the University of London, then had gained a dozen years' experience as a factory inspector.³⁸ Couzens would succeed Graves as director of labour in 1946. After leaving Palestine in 1948, he would become commissioner of labour in Nigeria.

C. E. Cousins, who was to work out of Haifa as inspector for the Northern Region, was a 36-year-old Welshman who had first worked as a surveyor in London and India, then become a district engineer and, in 1936, a factory inspector. On leaving Palestine in 1948, Cousins would become commissioner of labour and mines in Northern Rhodesia, remaining in charge of labour issues in that colony until his retirement in 1962.

K. L. Sanders was 33 years old. Trained as an engineer, he had worked for Imperial Chemical Industries before becoming a factory inspector in 1936. In two years in the military, he had reached the rank of captain. Sanders

was assigned as labour inspector for the Southern Region, based in Tel Aviv. He would leave Palestine in 1946 to become labour commissioner for Gibraltar; he took the same post in Tanganyika in 1952, remaining in the service of the Tanganyikan government until 1962.³⁹

The woman inspector, Sheila Ann Ogilvie, had graduated in 1931 from the University of Edinburgh with a double first in French and German. Failing, in the depths of the Depression, to find congenial employment, she had taken an evening course in engineering and spent five years as a factory inspector. When she left Palestine in 1947, Ogilvie would become assistant labour adviser in the Colonial Office, a post which she held through 1961, when the Colonial Office eliminated most its adviserships. In 1955 her male junior was appointed deputy labour adviser; Ogilvie continued pursuing her specialization, being seconded first to Bamako, French West Africa, then to the International Labour Office in Geneva as an expert on the working conditions of African women. She took early retirement in 1969 in order to translate art books from the German.⁴⁰

Informed in spring 1942 that the Colonial Office had found him a full complement of experienced factory inspectors, Graves frankly expressed his relief. He reiterated the reason that had originally justified the exceptional staffing formula: the difficulty of dealing with Palestine's settler unions. British labour relations professionals would

bring the resources he needed to counter the Zionists' daunting sophistication, which had put the government at a disadvantage.⁴¹

The four recruits reached Jerusalem on 8 September 1942.⁴² There they found the core of what would be a continually growing group of Jewish and Arab men and women recruited as "sub-inspectors" or "assistant inspectors." Perhaps because of the importance that he assigned to organizing Arab workers, Graves had concluded that in Palestine, unlike other colonies, not only settlers, but natives should from the very beginning fill the ranks of assistant inspectors. These were the staff members assigned to carry out the bulk of the inspections and facilitate the bulk of negotiations.

Graves had originally proposed that this body consist of five officers distributed according to regional employment patterns. The majority of employers in the Central Region were Arab, while the Southern Region was centred on Tel Aviv, with its Histadrut headquarters and concentration of Jewish manufacturers and citrus groves. The Northern Region concentrated international and government enterprises with a relatively high proportion of technical workers, who were predominantly Jewish.⁴³ In distributing his assistant inspectors, Graves designated a male and a female Arab staff member for the Jerusalem regional office, male Jewish staff

members for Tel Aviv and for Haifa, and one female Jewish staff member for those two offices.⁴⁴

As early as July 1942, when he had recruited just three of the assistant inspectors originally authorized, Graves was proposing to the Colonial Office the employment of an additional sub-inspector, another Arab. This man would be specially qualified to help Chudleigh with Arab unions. High Commissioner MacMichael, in support, associated Graves's request with the powerful goal of preventing politicization of unions: the new man would "assist Chudleigh in development and guidance of Arab trade union at present in embryonic stage, to whose progress on sound lines I attach great importance."⁴⁵ Graves had a specific candidate in mind: Abdul Hamid Yasin of the government translation bureau. Yasin came well recommended: "intelligent," "remarkably well informed," "seriously interested in social service questions," and "considered . . . an outstanding personality."⁴⁶ The London government granted Graves's request. By the time the department officially opened in October, Graves's inspection staff, British, Arab, and Jewish, numbered eleven.⁴⁷

The Labour Department would continue to define assistant inspectors' positions according to gender and community. As the numbers of assistant inspectors grew, the British regional inspectors were increasingly occupied with administration. At its height, in late 1947, the Arab and

Jewish inspection staff numbered twenty-two -- twelve Jewish men, four Jewish women, and six Arab men (the department had not replaced two Arab women officers who had left the staff).⁴⁸ Graves would afterwards recall that no national animosity prevented staff members from working comfortably together and in some cases forming social friendships.⁴⁹

In the autumn of 1942, then, the initial staff of the department assembled to begin work. Chapter 7 will show that they would quickly establish a reputation in both London and Jerusalem for effectiveness. At the same time, the department, with its strict rejection of explicit political commitment, would convince both Jews and Arabs, workers and employers, of its fairness. Yet, largely because of external factors -- primarily the sharpening of the national question in Palestine and the lack of funding from London for public employment or development -- Palestine's labour department would be frustrated in the pursuit of that labour peace which was its primary reason for being.

Notes

¹Graves, "Proposals for . . . [a] Department," 2-3, 3 April 1941, enclosure III in MacMichael to Moyne, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

²The Labour Department was, however, officially established only as of February 1943, and Graves was not then officially appointed its director, remaining simply "labour director," a position he had assumed the previous September. Two years later, the oversight caused consternation. Realizing that nothing Graves had done -- including his enforcement of the controversial Trade Disputes Act, 1942 (see chapter 7) -- had been official, the mandate government hastily made his appointment retroactive. Memorandum, J. G. Griffin [attorney

general of Palestine], "Department of Labour (Amendment) Ordinance, 1945," 24 August 1945, PRO, CO 859/97/4.

³Hibbert to Hodges [Industrial Relations Division, Ministry of Labour and National Service], 19 August 1941, PRO, CO 859/59/10. Roberts points out that the initial colonial labour department staffs were generally former administrators transferred or seconded to serve as labour officers. Many labour commissioners, for instance, were former provincial commissioners. Roberts, Tropical Territories, 214.

⁴Governor, British Guiana, to Colonial Office, 18 February 1941, PRO, CO 859/59/10.

⁵Governor, Cyprus, to Colonial Office, 18 February 1941, PRO, CO 859/59/10.

⁶Four on the Copperbelt and one in each of four other centers, including Southern Rhodesia. G. St. J. Orde-Browne, Labour Conditions in Northern Rhodesia, Colonial No. 150 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1938), 86. Considering pay to be sufficient, the labour officers would concentrate on studying working and living conditions and trying to win the confidence of both workers and employers. Elena Berger, Labour, Race, and Colonial Rule: The Copperbelt from 1924 to Independence, Oxford Studies in African Affairs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 78-80.

⁷The labour officers often returned to district administrative posts after a posting. Similarly, as late as 1964, new recruits to the labour department had to spend "a considerable period" as rural assistant district officers before beginning the work for which they had been engaged. Roberts, Tropical Territories, 214.

⁸D. J. Jardine [chief secretary, Tanganyika Territory] to H. C. D. C. MacKenzie-Kennedy [chief secretary, Northern Rhodesia], 27 November 1930, SEC/LAB/35, quoted in Berger, Labour, Race, 76.

⁹Besides Palestine, experienced inspectors from the Ministry of Labour and National Service went to Jamaica, British Guiana, and Trinidad in the West Indies; Nigeria and Sierra Leone in Africa; and Malta and Cyprus in the Mediterranean.

¹⁰Hibbert minute, 30 October 1941, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

¹¹Graves to Orde-Browne, 9 May 1941, PRO, CO 859/55/4. Graves noted that advance job applications for the proposed labour department had come in from at least fifty Jews, but only one Arab.

- ¹²Graves to Orde-Browne, 9 May 1941, PRO, CO 859/55/4.
- ¹³Many British administrators in Egypt, where Graves had gained his experience, expressed attitudes towards their mission and the natives much like those of Colonial Service officers. Graves largely avoided those assumptions.
- ¹⁴Hibbert, draft letter to Miss Taylor and Miss McAdam [Ministry of Labour], 19 May 1941, PRO, CO 859/59/8.
- ¹⁵Hibbert to Miss Taylor and Miss McAdam and to Dr. John Thomas [Co-operative Wholesale Society], asking for help in recruiting, 19 May 1941, PRO, CO 859/59/8.
- ¹⁶Hibbert to Sir Harry Lindsay, Imperial Institute, 3 January 1941, PRO, CO 859/29/10.
- ¹⁷C. J. Jeffries to Sir Alan Hunter (Governor, British Honduras), 23 September 1941, PRO, CO 859/59/10.
- ¹⁸Chief secretary, Nyasaland, to E. B. Boyd, 24 February 1941, PRO, CO 859/59/10.
- ¹⁹Governor, British Guiana, to Colonial Office, 18 February 1941, PRO, CO 859/59/10.
- ²⁰Governor, Malaya [n.d.: February 1941?], PRO, CO 859/59/8.
- ²¹Governor, British Guiana, 18 February 1941, PRO, CO 859/59/10. This tactic apparently proved feasible: as noted below, British Guiana received one of the first half-dozen unionists.
- ²²Governor, Malaya [February 1941?], PRO, CO 859/59/8.
- ²³Northern Rhodesia was among the other colonies that refused the trade unionist at this point, as were Fiji, Gambia, Kenya, Malta, Nigeria, Nyasaland, Tanganyika, Uganda, and the Windward Islands (PRO, CO 859/59/8). Five years later, however, Northern Rhodesia entered the program, appointing unionist William Comrie a labour officer in 1947 (Ian Henderson, "Labour and Politics," 218).
- ²⁴MacMichael to Colonial Office, 21 February 1941, PRO, CO 859/59/10.
- ²⁵Ibid.
- ²⁶Graves, "Proposals," 5, enclosure III in MacMichael to Moyne, 3 April 1941, PRO, CO 859/55/4.
- ²⁷Hibbert to Luke, 15 September 1941, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

²⁸Hibbert to Graves, 20 April 1942, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

²⁹Hibbert to Tovey, 16 October 1941, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

³⁰PRO, CO 859/59/9.

³¹Government of Palestine, Department of Social Welfare, Annual Report 1944 (No. 8 of 1945) (Jerusalem: Government Printer, 1945) ISA I/Lab/34/43.

³²Graves, "Proposals," 5, enclosure III in MacMichael to Moyne, 3 April 1941, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

³³Ibid., 6. In the event, the men were hired at £700 and the woman at £550, despite protests from both the Ministry of Labour and the Council of Women Civil Servants.

³⁴Ibid., 3.

³⁵Hibbert to Graves, 20 April 1942, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

³⁶Hibbert to Boyd, 30 June 1942, PRO, CO 733/441/19.

³⁷Hibbert to Graves, 20 April 1942, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

³⁸Hibbert to Graves, 20 April 1942, PRO, CO 859/55/4. Hibbert thought he had "picked a winner" in Couzens: he definitely had initiative and seemed to have "latent originality."

³⁹Kirk-Greene, Biographical Dictionary, alphabetized entries; Palestine Post, "New Inspectors for Labour Dept.," 16 September 1942, 3.

⁴⁰Anne Thurston, Records of the Colonial Office, Dominions Office, Commonwealth Relations Office and Commonwealth Office, Sources for Colonial Studies in the Public Record Office, Vol. I (London: The Stationery Office, 1995), 99-106.

⁴¹Graves to Hibbert, 18 May 1942, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

⁴²Palestine Post, "New Inspectors," 16 September 1942, 3.

⁴³Graves, "Proposals," 2, enclosure III in MacMichael to Moyne, 3 April 1941, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

⁴⁴Ibid., 5.

⁴⁵MacMichael to Cranborne, 6 August 1942, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

⁴⁶Graves to chief secretary, 27 July 1942, ISA, I/LAB/31/42. Chudleigh's Arab assistant was, among other tasks, to interpret for Chudleigh, lecture and broadcast on union matters, and audit unions' books. After two and a half years with the Labour Department, Yasin would move on to the Office of the Registrar of Cooperative Societies. ISA, I/LAB/34/43.

⁴⁷Department of Labour, Palestine, Annual Report for 1942, PRO, CO 859/56/10, 2. Seven sub-inspectors are listed in a January 1943 department tally. PRO, CO 859/55/4, 5.

⁴⁸ISA, I/LAB/34/43. The British labour inspectors still numbered four; in addition, the Petah Tikvah and Haifa police had lent two officers as "temporary assistant inspectors of explosives."

⁴⁹Graves, Anarchy, 52.

Chapter 7
Palestine's Model Colonial Labour Department
Initial Successes, 1942-1943

Chapter 6 showed that the Palestine Labour Department differed in significant ways from its counterparts. Its British staff held qualifications very different from those of most colonial labour officials. Their training, experience, and values inclined them to try to bring working conditions in the colony closer to those of the metropole -- to deal with native workers more as workers than as natives. The labour director had, atypically, employed subordinate staff members, not only from among the country's settlers, but even -- and on equal terms with the settlers -- from among the native population. Finally, the men and women of this exceptional staff faced a situation that, like themselves, differed conspicuously from colonial norms.

The overall aims of the department's planners in the Colonial Office and mandate government, however, were the same as those of their counterparts elsewhere at this stage of colonialism: to maintain labour peace in the interest of war production and colonial stability, and to develop native workers into a nonpoliticized and stable labour force. These aims the labour officers would pursue explicitly, through specific programs, but also implicitly, through their routine tasks of workplace inspection and dispute resolution.

Everyday Tasks

The staff of the new department began work in circumstances which had changed sharply in the eighteen months since Graves had issued his report as labour adviser. The German blockade in the Mediterranean and the war in North Africa had created massive demands for workers to perform a broad range of new tasks. Various government agencies needed to replace goods formerly imported; to supply the front-line troops; to feed, clothe, and house troops stationed in Palestine; and to move troops and equipment around the country. Workers congregated in the port facilities and factories of Jaffa and, even more, of Haifa, as well as in military production camps spread across the coastal plain.

As the British army joined the mandate government in sharply expanding the workforce, unprecedented numbers of Arabs found waged work.¹ Military enterprises were actively recruiting Arab women.² By November 1942, the controller of manpower, Edwin Mills, would report that the military's recent labour demands had absorbed Palestine's available labour supply. Among Arabs, the only potential recruits remaining were teenaged boys and men over fifty.³

The growth of the wartime economy had eased the central economic problems of the Great Depression, not only in the Arab population, but throughout the mandate economy. Unemployment was no longer widespread; pay was rising. Between January 1940 and September 1942, according to official fig-

ures, employment by the mandate government and British army nearly quintupled; employment in manufacturing and utilities enterprises and in municipal agencies also was rising sharply.⁴

Still, the growing job market had not completely overcome the problems of the Depression, while rapid economic growth brought its own difficulties. In some sections of the economy, unemployment persisted. At the same time, the government calculated that between the end of August 1939 -- the last month of peacetime -- and December 1941, the prices of "essential provisions" had risen 196 percent in Jewish markets and 260 percent in Arab markets (where the base level had been lower). Among industrial and building workers, the gap between rising prices and relatively stagnant pay had created a 30 percent drop in real wages since the last year of the peace.⁵

Workers complained vigorously, and with some result. The Histadrut's 1940 and 1941 cost-of-living agreements with the Palestine Manufacturers Association (see chapter 5) set a pattern. Some other large employers followed the example, agreeing to increases of as much as 30 percent above prewar rates. In April 1941, the mandate government, too, instituted temporary cost-of-living adjustments; six months later, it added family allowances.⁶

One group of workers was consistently excluded from this relief. In army installations, pay scales for civilian

employees were only about ten percent higher at the end of 1941 than when the facilities opened in 1940; they still fell short of the prewar union level.⁷ In late January 1942, War Department employees in the Haifa area appealed to the mandate government for help -- either cost-of-living allowances or free or subsidized food.⁸ Despite such entreaties (as well as recurring widespread strikes) the British army would continue to subject its thousands of civilian employees to exceptionally low pay, punitive supervision, and unhealthful working conditions until it ultimately dismissed them after the war.

In the other sectors of the economy, the cost-of-living adjustments had apparently established a measure of the labour peace which the British so determinedly sought. Measured by the number, size, and length of work stoppages, worker unrest had decreased from the levels of previous years. The number of strikes had fallen from the 1939 tally of 103 to 85 in 1940 and 80 -- mostly over demands for cost-of-living adjustments -- in 1941.⁹

Labour peace in the physical sense -- avoidance of police and army confrontation with strikers -- also had increased. The government attributed the relative tranquility to a lowering of those tensions between competing Zionist federations that had so alarmed the high commissioner at the end of 1939. The simultaneous increases in employment and the cost of living had turned workers' concern from the

divisive issue of job allocation to the unifying one of overall wage levels. By the end of 1941, administrators could report that disputes over the employment of non-union workers or over job distribution among the labour federations had become rare.¹⁰ After years of turmoil, the war effort had removed, at least temporarily, a stubborn government problem. Strikers were contending directly with employers rather than with other workers.

In this changed situation, of high employment, lagging purchasing power, and relative labour peace, the newly assembled inspectors of the Palestine Labour Department officially took up their tasks in October 1942. Within weeks, the agency that Hibbert and Graves had so carefully designed and staffed was fulfilling expectations in the performance of its routine tasks. The department's primary stated responsibility was to regulate both terms of employment and health and safety conditions in individual workplaces.¹¹ The arrival of the British inspectors and recruitment of the full complement of Palestinian assistant inspectors had sharply expanded the agency's ability to carry out this charge. Until July, Graves had been the only person in the government of Palestine responsible for labour issues; from then until the other British inspectors arrived in September, he and Chudleigh, with an initial nucleus of local assistant inspectors, constituted the entire Labour Department staff.¹² Whereas labour officials had investigated six work-

place accidents from January to mid-October 1942, the full staff investigated sixty-four in the remaining ten weeks of the year.¹³ In the first part of the year, inspections of thirty-one enterprises had produced thirty-one notices of violations of labour regulations; the full team of inspectors, once installed, issued 677 such contravention notices to 260 enterprises by the end of December.¹⁴

Graves insisted that his staff respect the importance of workplace inspection, pressing them to make repeated unannounced visits and to insist on compliance with their directives.¹⁵ Safety was a growing concern. The accident rate had risen steadily since 1938. Inspectors traced many problems to such wartime factors as urgent orders, overcrowding of workshops, employment of untrained workers, and night work. Still, they considered many of the accidents avoidable. In dealing with dangerous machinery and chemicals, the most common causes of serious casualties, employers had failed to provide proper equipment and procedures. Workers, for their part, reportedly disregarded many safety recommendations. According to the labour officers, employers and workers alike paid even less attention to the risks of occupational disease than to accident hazards.¹⁶

Beyond promoting the safety and health of workers in general, labour inspectors were responsible for enforcing the specific standards of employment of women and children. These primarily concerned hours and days of work (as noted

in chapter 4). They also addressed the difficulty or danger of specific tasks assigned these specially protected groups.

The immediate and explicit goal of inspection, then, was to protect workers. To Graves, however, it offered further possibilities. The protection of workers was in turn a means of consolidating labour peace. Each workplace visit also offered a chance to imbue employees with a sense of responsibility and shared purpose: the safeguards that the law required of their employer could be effective only with their help.¹⁷

The labour director was pointing out such subtle approaches to workplace harmony in the context of a direct effort to prevent or curtail strikes and lockouts. In 1942, the department's inspectors kept track of 109 work stoppages and forty-one other disputes, commonly concerned with compensation. They went on to intervene in twenty-eight of the stoppages and nineteen other cases.¹⁸ Generally, an inspector would begin by attempting informal mediation or, if necessary, formal conciliation; these processes succeeded in "a fair number" of cases.¹⁹ If the inspector could not resolve a dispute at this stage, the high commissioner might assemble an arbitration board to hold hearings on the case -- a procedure formalized during the year under the Defense (Trade Disputes) Order (see below). In 1942, fourteen disputes proceeded to arbitration.²⁰

Under pressure to accomplish both workplace inspection and dispute resolution, each regional inspector divided staff time according to the local economic structure, job markets, and labour relations. The Southern Region held a combination that had already proven explosive: the Histadrut headquarters; Jewish-owned citrus groves seeking to keep costs down by employing Arabs; and a rapidly growing sector of Jewish-owned factories and workshops. Here conflict resolution took precedence over workplace inspection; contravention notices were likely to concern violations of work stoppage regulations rather than health and safety infractions.²¹ Inspectors in the Northern Region, centred on Haifa, had far fewer disputes to address and therefore greater opportunity to examine actual workplaces.²² Site of international petroleum firms, Palestine Railways workshops, and several advanced manufacturing enterprises, the region brought together a high proportion of skilled workers. At the same time, construction and port contractors, quarries, and tobacco and box factories employed large numbers of low-paid and easily replaced workers.²³ This region produced the greatest numbers of contravention notices concerning employers' elementary responsibilities: sanitation; the fencing of dangerous machinery; and the filing of workmen's compensation returns. The Jerusalem Region, where many Arab workshops were located, produced high proportions of offenses regarding child workers, notably failure to register

employed children and excessive working hours.²⁴ Within three months of commencing operations, all three regional inspectors were calling for more staff because of their workloads.²⁵

As the regional labour officers carried out inspections and tackled disputes, the Labour Department's central office took up one further responsibility. From the time of the earliest reports to the Permanent Mandates Commission, officials responsible for Palestine's labour supervision had assigned considerable importance to the collection of information. When the Labour Department recruited its chief research and intelligence officer, L. I. Schneider, from the Office of Statistics, he brought with him an existing responsibility for collecting accident and worker's compensation reports from nearly a thousand employers.²⁶ This mandate the department expanded, taking on the additional tasks of discovering unreported accidents and investigating whether injured workers had received the legally required levels of compensation. To this end, it also, in its first year, drafted a Notice of Accidents bill.²⁷

As the research and intelligence officers began collecting statistics, they also set out to disseminate information and propaganda. One medium was an ever-increasing range of posters and leaflets advocating safety and health practices. These were commonly borrowed or adapted from British originals; many eventually appeared with their word-

ing translated into Arabic and Hebrew. The posters addressed workers; the department sold them to employers as means of maintaining their workforces and sustaining productivity.

Late in 1942, the Labour Department initiated a more ambitious enterprise. It issued the first of what would eventually be a series of twenty quarterly bulletins, which commonly ran to twenty or twenty-four pages. The publication's editorial aims appeared to be to indoctrinate workers and managers in approved safety and labour relations practices -- and incidentally to lay the department's accomplishments before officials in Jerusalem and London. Its content reflected the stated emphases of the agency's work: in that first issue, the largest number of articles concerned safety questions, ranging from the effect of citrus on the skin to safety organization in factories. Another piece chronicled the year's labour disputes; yet another dealt with job training.²⁸

The new publication attracted attention both locally and in Britain. The Palestine Post (probably working from a press notice) informed readers of the publication's release, with a description of the "valuable information" it contained.²⁹ The bulletin's appearance was apparently a notable event in British left circles as well: Empire, the journal of the Fabian Colonial Bureau, reviewed the first issue.³⁰ Subsequent numbers were even more ambitious, as the editors included material likely to broaden readers' viewpoints,

frequently reprinting articles on labour relations in the United Kingdom, research on productivity and safety, and International Labour Organization deliberations.

Through signed articles in the bulletin, Graves explicitly presented his modern, internationalist views. Progressive countries, he asserted in 1944, "fully accepted" collective bargaining as "the best means of attaining industrial power."³¹ In his final article as labour director, published amid the rising civil strife of 1946, he looked past the current upheavals. Carefully specifying that this was his "personal hope as an individual," he suggested that a consultative council on labour affairs composed of government, labour, and employer representatives -- the ILO pattern -- might compensate to some extent for Palestine's lack of representative government.³²

Graves took the occasion of the 1942 inaugural bulletin to publicize the burden of work facing colonial labour departments. They were charged, he wrote, with inspection of workplace health and safety conditions, vigorous conciliation efforts, special concern for women and children, introduction of standards for labor unions, establishment of public labour exchanges, modernization of labour laws, the collection of labour statistics, and a determined attack on unemployment. The labour director then made his underlying point explicit: it was "clear that the future of the Department will be one of constant effort."³³

By the end of 1942, the Labour Department staff were carrying on nearly the entire range of activities that would occupy them for the next five years -- that is, throughout the agency's effective life. In January 1943, the deputy director, A. H. Couzens, formally laid this program before the public. In a press conference at the government's Public Information Office, Couzens set out the eight tasks that Graves had put forward in the department bulletin.

In reporting Couzens' presentation, the Palestine Post, voice of the settler establishment, chose to emphasize one aspect in particular: a commitment to consultation with settler organizations. The subtitle of its report on the event proclaimed, "No Legislation without Discussion." After listing the department's stated aims, the Post devoted the balance of its article to discussing this vital point. Its heading for that discussion, "Existing Bodies," reflected the question likely to be uppermost in its readers' minds: how will this plan affect relations between the government and the Histadrut, economic engine of Labour Zionism? According to the Post, Couzens had reassured questioners that the government would consult with everyone concerned before issuing important ordinances. He insisted that the department intended to work with the existing labour organizations. At the same time, he had issued a warning about these bodies' "existing Sick Funds and similar organisations": in

future, such agencies would have to fit into the government's corresponding systems and meet their standards.³⁴

The various Zionist organizations had in the 1930s shown their readiness to fight one another over absolute control of at least one such institution: labour exchanges. Graves, for his part, had sharply criticized fundamental features of these exchanges. Without basic compromises on either side, eventual confrontation over exchanges was certain.

The Model Department

As the Palestine Labour Department began its work, it seemed assured of Colonial Office support in any controversy that might arise. The staff of the Social Services Department (itself only in its fourth year) already looked on the new agency as exemplary in both staff and approach. When the Labour Department issued its first quarterly bulletin, the bureaucrats met this initiative with similar enthusiasm.

In particular, Colonial Office officials welcomed Graves's exposition of the responsibilities of his department. Earlier in the year, the Fabian Colonial Bureau had issued a publication alleging Colonial Office indifference towards labour issues.³⁵ Setting even higher standards than this document (which Graves would probably have seen), Graves's catalogue would have served to combat the allegation. The following year a Colonial Office booklet, Labour Supervision in the Colonial Empire, presented his descrip-

tion as "true of virtually every other Labour Department in the Colonial Empire at the present time."³⁶ Social Services labour officer J. G. Hibbert cited the quarterly bulletin itself as a model, hoping that other colonial governments would follow Palestine's example.³⁷ Within Palestine, the publication enjoyed a popularity that soon proved embarrassing: in less than a year, the department was deploring its inability to meet requests for Arabic and Hebrew editions.³⁸

Like the quarterly bulletin, the department's 1942 annual report won the respect of the colonial authorities. High Commissioner MacMichael forwarded a copy to the colonial secretary, Oliver Stanley, with an emphatic tribute.³⁹ Stanley (who had himself served as Britain's minister of labour for a year beginning in June 1934) apparently agreed: he asked the high commissioner for copies of the report to send to other colonial labour departments.⁴⁰ The Colonial Office also sent copies to several international agencies, as well as to its own newly established Colonial Labour Advisory Committee.⁴¹

The Labour Department's good reputation continued to grow, in both Jerusalem and London. By the time the staff had completed a year's work of inspection and conciliation, the high commissioner was lyrical in his praise:

I consider that the work already done against great difficulties reflects much credit on the officers of the Department. Starting from zero they are gradually clearing away the scrub and weeds from the lower slopes and letting in light and air to the darker areas ahead.⁴²

At the Colonial Office, labour adviser Orde-Browne agreed: "The Labour Dept has clearly been doing very good work in most unpromising circumstances."⁴³ Among these, some of the most unpromising had involved the goal of labour peace, as the mandate government sought the power to impose it through compulsory binding arbitration.

Effective Labour Pacification

Despite the recent reductions in strikes and in violent confrontations, a perpetual aim behind all of the Labour Department's efforts -- workplace visits as well as dispute resolution -- remained the stabilization of labour peace. A contemporary Rhodesian example (described below) indicates just how far a colonial government could be willing to go in abandoning principle in order to maintain wartime production. Although the Palestine Labour Department, too, was concerned for production, its approach to maintaining output levels differed from the customary combination of appeasement and repression of workers. Stubbornly anomalous among colonial administrators, the department staff announced, through an article in a 1945 quarterly bulletin, "Good industrial relations do not necessarily mean industrial calm." Far from being a realistic aim in industrial relations, "a state of placid contentment" was not even desirable. In explaining this assertion, the article prescribed a state of labour relations that remains, as a general rule, ideal

rather than real, in Palestine or anywhere else: one characterized by --

A proper spirit of tolerance, a willingness on each side to see the other's point of view, a capacity to differ without loss of temper, and a sincere desire to find settlements which take account of the interests of all parties.

In short, "industrial relations are good, not only when there are no disputes, but also when the differences that exist are composed in a decent and orderly manner."⁴⁴

To foster such relations, Graves encouraged his staff to take all opportunities to promote cooperation and contentment on the part of employees and an enlightened attitude on that of employers. At the same time, caution was necessary: in the delicate wartime situation and volatile intercommunal conditions of Palestine, an overenthusiastic official could precipitate disaster. The labour director admonished: "In controversial public questions, an Inspector will avoid as far as possible the expression of partisan opinions."⁴⁵

By the time Graves uttered this hope, however, labour peace had itself become controversial. The government was attempting, against strong opposition, to carry out an ordinance regulating trade disputes.

The contest over the content and enforcement of the Defence (Trade Disputes) Order, 1942, was an initial display of the strengths and weaknesses of the agencies that would, through the remainder of the mandate, contend for power over

labour in Palestine. The same agencies -- some British, some Zionist, some Arab -- would in the next few years repeatedly confront one another over control of the labour force, the labour market, and labour relations. Their interplay, and the fluidity of their composition and relative strength, resembled those of administrators, settlers, and natives in other colonies; the Northern Rhodesian contention over the closed shop (discussed below) was a conspicuous instance of the general pattern.

When the Labour Department began its work, the existing benchmark for the maintenance of labour peace was successful enforcement of the 1942 Defence (Trade Disputes) Order. The intent of the regulation, as of a similar British law, was to prevent work stoppages in occupations considered necessary to the war effort or to civilians' basic needs.⁴⁶ The order prescribed mediation as a first step in resolving disputes.⁴⁷ If the dispute persisted, officials could invoke binding arbitration by a board of employer and employee representatives, with the labour director as chair.⁴⁸

The order had been difficult even to enact; the necessary negotiations had given Graves an intensive and protracted experience in dealing with obstruction from the Zionist establishment. As early as March 1941, the Palestine Executive Council had directed the labour adviser (as Graves then was) to discuss draft legislation with the Jewish Agency and the main labour and employer organizations.⁴⁹ The

Histadrut quickly confronted the issue. In May Graves reported to Orde-Browne at the Colonial Office that a Histadrut leader had issued "a warning against [anti-strike legislation] and against enforcement if legislation is passed."⁵⁰ By July, the Palestine Executive Committee was suggesting to the colonial secretary, Lord Moyne, that the proposed legislation be modified "in order to meet opposition." The government in fact made two changes that Graves believed could calm the fears of labour organizations. Arbitration boards were now to take into account existing agreements, and, as in the UK, labour and employer organizations were to share in choosing the members of each arbitration board.⁵¹ The revisions, that is, protected the achievements and the power relations of the settler institutions.

Graves then met with the district commissioners and with representatives of employers and labour organizations, who proposed further amendments.⁵² The Histadrut, in particular, demanded four further changes, including the preservation of existing closed shop agreements and the stipulation that the labour organization with the most members in an enterprise would represent all the employees in any arbitration.⁵³ These demands bore directly on the contentious issues of job allocation and of Histadrut power over non-members. In the autumn of 1941, a committee of mandate officials, including Graves and the financial secretary, considered possible amendments.⁵⁴ The committee recommended yield-

ing on three of the Histadrut's four demands, including both the closed shop and majority representation.⁵⁵

This surrender had a recent, and further-reaching, precedent that deserves examination in this context. A few months previously, the Colonial Office and Northern Rhodesian administration had yielded to the European Mine Workers Union (EMWU) in a dispute over the closed shop. In the process, they had abandoned their previous categorical rejection of a colour bar. Through its contracts, the EMWU could now exclude natives from jobs defined as skilled or, in many cases, as semi-skilled. Government officials explained this repudiation of internationally recognized responsibility as necessary to the war effort.⁵⁶

Mining company officials felt that the settler miners, who already in effect held almost all the skilled jobs in the mines, were taking advantage of the pressure of war to make exaggerated demands.⁵⁷ For the copper companies, opposition to the closed shop brought together a tangle of moral and economic concerns. The union, which bargained for skilled mineworkers, did not admit natives. Granting the closed shop would automatically establish a colour bar for skilled jobs, which the settler miners had long sought. At the same time, employers have almost universally opposed closed shop provisions, which by definition strengthen the position of the unions they face. In this case, the closed shop also would prevent the mining enterprises from employ-

ing skilled natives at low wages. In their discussions with the Colonial Office, the copper companies understandably emphasized the connection of the closed shop to the establishment of a colour bar rather than its implications for their own power and payrolls.

Still, mining executives did not trust the government to support them if they refused the union's demand.⁵⁸ Local managers of one company told their provincial commissioner, "if Companies granted closed shop now it would be tantamount to Companies dictating the native policy for the territory." The managers, that is, made explicit to the provincial administration the significance of the closed shop for the government's stand against the colour bar (although they refrained from pointing out that it was actually the EMWU which would be dictating native policy). They concluded that "as a matter of expediency and to further war effort it would seem that the granting of closed shop is necessary however much we dislike doing so."⁵⁹

At the Colonial Office, the developing consensus with the mining companies alarmed Hibbert. He was working on his project of deploying British unionists to move colonial labour relations closer to the British model. A new colour bar in Africa would increase the differences to overcome. Hibbert warned that the EMWU was taking official fears of a stoppage as their chance to settle the issues of the colour bar and the closed shop together in their favour. If the

companies, with the government's complicity, yielded the closed shop demand, any natives doing skilled work would lose their jobs. Hibbert argued that government must not permit this to occur. If the union struck, he believed, it could not hold out for long enough to damage the war effort, and the failure would keep it quiet for the duration.⁶⁰

Ultimately, the government left to the copper companies the explicit capitulation on the closed shop issue. At the beginning of June, the colony's chief bureaucrat reported to London that the mine managements had offered the union the closed shop.⁶¹ The union accepted the offer, including a proviso crucial to the government: it would make no further wage demand during the term of the contract.⁶² By the beginning of 1942, labour and management had signed a two-year agreement.⁶³ Within the month, the EMWU raised fresh wage demands, extending turmoil through most of the year.

In the Palestine negotiations over dispute arbitration, the mandate government took a somewhat less abject position than its Northern Rhodesian counterpart had done in the closed shop controversy. While agreeing to the Histadrut's demand that the largest organization in an enterprise bargain contracts for all the workers, it stipulated that the interests of the majority organization must not conflict with those of other worker groups. This limitation served to render the Histadrut at least ostensibly vul-

nerable to objections from minority, particularly Arab, workers.⁶⁴ On the main point, however, officials felt they had no choice but to yield. Graves, who strongly emphasized the importance of securing the Histadrut's agreement to the arbitration boards, regarded this last provision as key to the settler conglomerate's consent. High Commissioner MacMichael yielded the point, but explicitly as a final offer.⁶⁵ The Histadrut would have to commit itself to provide a panel of representatives from whom the government would choose members for the arbitration boards.⁶⁶ At the end of May 1942, MacMichael was able to inform the colonial secretary, "This at last they have agreed to do, albeit very grudgingly."⁶⁷ The conglomerate had held out for its demands for some fifteen months.⁶⁸ Once committed, however, it did, unlike its Rhodesian analogue, adhere to its agreement.

In Northern Rhodesia, the enactment of an order similar to Palestine's concerning dispute regulation had not aroused similar opposition. In November 1941, the governor had issued an order establishing a tribunal to settle trade disputes. The copper companies could in theory refer a dispute to the governor, who could order a hearing "whether the Union liked it or not." At that point, the EMWU had just won its struggle for the colour bar; perhaps in light of that defeat, the government apparently considered its disputes order unenforceable in the colony's major industry. A Colonial Office bureaucrat noted that executives and officials

were, wisely, reluctant to apply the order: "Obviously however in present circumstances recourse to the Order is to be avoided: its use would exacerbate [sic] the miners and would be likely to produce 'non-cooperation.'"⁶⁹

The government of Palestine, in contrast, insisted that its moderate, patient methods had led in the end to an agreement that would actually take effect. In July 1942, the chief secretary, Sir John Macpherson, reported to the Colonial Office on the completed negotiations. Macpherson emphasized the colonial government's willingness to indulge the Histadrut. Writing halfway through the first year of the Trade Disputes Order's effect, Macpherson found it possible to boast, "The Histadruth leaders are not insensible to our willingness to meet all the proposals that they have been able to justify." They and their Zionist allies, he implied, had no reasonable basis for further complaint.⁷⁰

The government of Palestine, although it had yielded to the settler conglomerate in the contention over closed shop and majority rights, had, through a combination of circumstances, betrayed native workers to a far lesser extent than had its counterpart in Northern Rhodesia. The settler agencies aimed to secure for settler workers not just all skilled jobs (as in Northern Rhodesia) but as many as possible of all jobs. Yet they had been unable to secure closed shop agreements in government enterprises, by far the greatest employer of natives, or to exclude native workers,

skilled or unskilled, from large international concerns. In general, then, by agreeing to protect existing closed shop clauses, the mandate government affected only settler enterprises that employed settler workforces. Most hurt were settler workers who resisted joining the dominant bargaining party -- that is, in most cases, the Histadrut. The settler unions had developed other means, such as picket lines, to remove native labourers from settler-owned groves, quarries, and construction sites.

More potentially harmful to Arab workers, because of Palestinian unions' effective segregation by nationality, was the concession of majority union representation. The Histadrut would be empowered to negotiate for all workers in any enterprise where its affiliate was larger than any Arab union. In practice, outside the government (which operated under separate regulations), mixed bargaining units were sufficiently uncommon, and mutual accommodation sufficiently developed, that this concession never became the subject of visible widespread contention.

In the short term, the government's accommodating stance brought only limited practical benefits. Despite the Histadrut Council's ultimate acquiescence to the Trade Disputes Order in the late spring of 1942, the organization's previous agitation had prejudiced its members against the legislation. The chief secretary reported that these were likely to resent and in some cases defy the order, as they

had been doing since it came into force at the beginning of the year.⁷¹ Application of the Trade Disputes Order in its first six months was in fact limited; binding arbitration, almost never invoked. In mid-September, Graves, now labour director, informed the chief secretary about the forty-one labour disputes that district administrators had reported to him from January through June.⁷² He had chosen to apply the order in eighteen cases; nineteen cases had resulted in work stoppages. The Arab and Jewish sub-inspectors who made up his staff at the time had informally facilitated settlements in some others. Only three had gone to arbitration, and the parties had settled one of these before its board ever met.

Despite Graves's best diplomatic efforts, then, the Trade Disputes Order had little effect during its first six months in force. Most visibly, as Graves reported, it brought about arbitration in only two of the forty-one reported disputes.⁷³ The order most certainly did not establish a general condition of orderly labour relations. In industries that fell outside its scope, two massive work stoppages -- a strike by diamond workers and a lockout of restaurant and cafe workers -- caused a loss to the economy of 86,500 work days during the same six-month period.⁷⁴

In July 1942, more than six months after the Trade Disputes Order had officially taken effect, the Palestine Executive Council adopted principles for enforcing the legislation. The guidelines reflected Graves's pragmatic

stance: although the authorities should generally be firm in enforcing the anti-stoppage legislation, they should also distinguish between basic principles and details on which they could apply tactical considerations.⁷⁵ As a precaution, the Council directed that district commissioners not initiate prosecutions under the order without consulting the labour director. Graves would retain supreme authority over the government's labour supervision activities.

The Histadrut and other labour organizations gradually became reconciled to the Trade Disputes Order. In February 1943, Deputy Director Couzens described to the chief secretary an evolution in the attitude of the Zionist labour press regarding the order. Reports had noted that arbitration awards commonly favoured workers and had pointed out that the order gave unions the advantage of legal standing in disputes. The tone of the articles indicated to Couzens that Histadrut leaders, giving up their "misapprehension" that the order was simply "anti-strike legislation," had developed what he considered "a more sober attitude."⁷⁶

Once firmly established, the arbitration process apparently continued to gain respect. In March 1943, MacMichael forwarded a report on the effects of the Trade Disputes Order to E. B. Boyd, assistant secretary for the Middle East at the Colonial Office. The report, MacMichael noted with evident relief, showed that through 1942 the law had been "far more successful . . . than could have been

anticipated at the time of its introduction."⁷⁷ From late 1942 through 1943, administration of arbitrations under the order achieved even greater success in terms of proportion of disputes resolved. During this period, arbitration boards dealt with seventy-eight of the 266 reported disputes. The parties involved or official conciliators resolved the rest.⁷⁸

As expected, the Trade Disputes Order had somewhat raised the level of labour peace. In addition, however, the increase in use of the arbitration procedure brought growing disappointment among employers. It also brought both administrative and cultural problems -- the slowness of the process and the relative failure of conciliation.

The arbitration results that reassured the Histadrut alarmed employers. In its 1942 report, the Labour Department calculated that workers had won forty-eight disputes, compromised in forty, and lost only fifteen.⁷⁹ By late 1943, the Palestine Manufacturers' Association was complaining that the panels were biased in favour of labour.⁸⁰

A second new difficulty appeared as arbitration became familiar. The system was proving ponderous. Because the board members donated their time, meetings were hard to schedule; boards took much longer to make their awards than the legislation had envisioned.⁸¹

Finally, while growing resort to arbitration showed increasing confidence in the fairness of the panels, it also

revealed that attempts at official conciliation, intended to make arbitration unnecessary, were far less successful than arbitration itself. In 1943 such conciliation led to settlement of nine out of twenty-eight disputes in the Central, four out of fifteen in the Northern, and just twenty-five out of two hundred twenty-three in the Southern Region -- a total of thirty-eight, as against the seventy-eight cases that went on to arbitration.⁸² While rejecting the formal process, however, adversaries often reached agreement through informal conciliation; if the labour director ratified such an agreement, it had the same force as an arbitrated settlement.

Graves's endorsement of such informal agreements was far from automatic: often, the points at issue involved his most rooted beliefs. Most notably, the labour director routinely rejected any contract that contained higher wages or workmen's compensation than the law allowed. This insistence on sustaining existing legislation would be a continuing preoccupation of the department. In fact, Graves explicitly gave law precedence over justice: "though there are good reasons for thinking the scales laid down in the Ordinance to be inadequate, it is not proper to impose legally enforceable rates higher than those provided by the law."⁸³ The Labour Department would defend workers with energy and enthusiasm, but it would not test the formal limits set by the mandate's central administration.

As the foregoing discussion suggests, the formulation and administration of the Trade Disputes Order from early 1941 through 1943 measured the resolve of the London and Jerusalem governments as well as of the Histadrut and other labour bodies. The immediate stake -- the right of the state to limit strikes and lockouts -- bore directly on the government goal, considered desirable in peacetime and vital in wartime, of limiting (and if possible eliminating) work stoppages. Contention over the order mobilized the greatest diplomatic and legal resources the governments could locally deploy, met by the full propaganda and lobbying resources of the Histadrut.

The result of the struggle could give some satisfaction to each side. To a limited extent, government success was clear. The Histadrut had acquiesced to the Trade Disputes Order and agreed to suggest potential members for arbitration panels. Once enforced, furthermore, the order did reduce strikes and lockouts: for the four years it was in effect, the frequency of work stoppages continually decreased in enterprises that it covered. The Histadrut, for its part, could claim to have influenced the effects of the order in several ways. It had succeeded in excluding from arbitration awards all existing labour practices and contract clauses, specifically including the closed shop; in securing the right of consultation on the naming of arbitration pools; and, most significantly, in securing the right

of the largest labour organization in any enterprise to represent all workers in arbitration.

Though enforcement met less resistance than officials had feared and the awards commonly satisfied the workers involved, the Trade Disputes Order was far from a panacea for labour unrest. In its 1942 report, the Labour Department admitted that relatively few of the country's workers came under the order, while "considerable discontent prevailed amongst the great mass of working people." Even more alarming, this discontent had begun to spread from the Jewish to the Arab workers.⁸⁴

Setting aside such broader considerations, Graves at the end of 1943 summed up the second year of Palestine's experiment with the Trade Disputes Order as a success. Overall, the order had proven "a steadying factor in industrial relations." He also appreciated the body of precedents that the arbitration awards were establishing.⁸⁵ In London, Colonial Office bureaucrats readily accepted the opinions of the man on the spot.

Until near the end of the war, the level of labour peace in Palestine followed the trends established in 1942 and 1943. In war-related enterprises, the Trade Disputes Order apparently limited disputes with growing effectiveness until its abrogation in June 1946.⁸⁶ The number of work stoppages within its scope fell from fifty-five in 1943 to forty-one the following year and twenty in 1945.⁸⁷ At the

end of 1946, six months after the government rescinded the order, the department gave a final judgment in its annual report. Despite initial resistance to conciliation, the staff now judged that the order had made a lasting contribution by setting an example and collecting experience in settling disputes primarily through conciliation, with arbitration as a last resort.⁸⁸ As chapter 8 will show, this contribution would not outweigh the forces making for disorder.

Arab Organizing, 1942-1945

In approaching its charge to maintain labour peace, the Labour Department undertook to deal with the whole range of Palestine's employers and workers. It sought to regulate the labour practices of both Arab and Jewish employers, as well as of international firms and of public employers, including the British Ministry of Defence. It sustained contact with both Arab and Jewish labour organizations. For reasons of both equity and stability, however, the department also took care to give particular attention to the organizing of Arab unions. This emphasis, though based in local conditions, typified one stream of empire-wide policy.

The proliferation of colonial labour departments early in the Second World War reflected the growing conviction in the Colonial Office that the tranquility and productivity of colonial labour were of vital strategic importance. In the relatively few colonies where significant bodies of settler workers were organized, a labour department might devote

considerable attention to maintaining labour peace with these powerful groups. Across the colonial empire as a whole, however, the central purpose of the new departments was to shape the rapidly stabilizing native workforces. In Palestine and in Northern Rhodesia, labour departments served both purposes. In both territories, settler workers had built strong organizations -- in Palestine since 1920, and in Northern Rhodesia since 1936. Both established labour departments in 1942. In both, British officials organized natives not only as a means of controlling them, but as a counterbalance to organized settler labour.

In Northern Rhodesia, as in many other colonies, the concept of native workers as essentially native and only contingently workers survived the creation of a labour department. Severely understaffed (as noted in chapter 6), the department at first relied on the government administrators of the mining districts to work with mine compound administrators towards maintaining labour peace and decent living conditions. The district administrators were, after all, the experts in native language and culture; the few designated labour officers had come from the same background.

Outright unionization of Africans seemed unwise to the colony's officials. Heeding anthropologists' warnings, they feared the consequences of disrupting African culture with alien forms of organization. They therefore sought a way to establish "responsible" interlocutors without confer-

ring added strength on the intrinsically formidable mass of workers. The government accordingly supported first "tribal" non-union organizations which the companies had invented, then non-union organizations with elite workers -- "boss boys" -- as leaders. As for native workers themselves, for the next half-dozen years few showed much interest in establishing European-style unions.

In Palestine, where native workers had more than fifteen years' experience in unionizing, the Labour Department set out from the beginning to encourage them to build up unions. In July 1942, Graves laid out the importance of this task: without "permanent and well constructed Arab Unions," Arab workers would remain at a disadvantage in relation to both employers and well-organized Jewish workers.⁸⁹

The power of the settler presence brought British officials and Arab unionists closer together. The assertiveness of the Histadrut unions animated both British official support for Arab unions as a counterweight and Arab workers' ambition to achieve similar power in the workplace (and, eventually, in politics). In the broader national political context, although Arabs generally blamed the British government for Zionist immigration, many still looked to the British to help prevent formation of a Zionist state in their country.

Graves's commitment to the fostering of strong (and nonpolitical) Arab unions began taking effect even before

the formal inauguration of the Labour Department. Graves assigned to Harold Chudleigh, the trade unionist appointed as labour inspector for the Jerusalem region, primary responsibility for supporting Arab workers' efforts to unionize. On arriving in Palestine in June 1942, Chudleigh at once set about visiting existing Arab and Jewish unions and meeting with unorganized workers. By the end of the month, he reported to Hibbert at the Colonial Office, he had visited the cities, most of the major towns, and eight or ten kibbutzim and moshavim, as well as meeting numerous employers' representatives and trade-union leaders. The issues he had encountered ranged from trade disputes to the cost of living to labour supply.⁹⁰

At this point, Chudleigh had serious reservations about Arab organizing potential. Arab workers, he reported, lacked "a tradition of collective action"; Arab industry, a perceptible social conscience.⁹¹ In fact, however, the Arab work force, so conspicuously growing in size, was already growing in organization as well. As Graves and Chudleigh began the work of the new Labour Department, Arab workers were rapidly organizing themselves. Conditions favored unionization: both their numbers and their grievances were increasing sharply. As wartime inflation intensified, Jewish workers could look to the Histadrut to defend their standard of living, as indeed it did.⁹² Arab workers had entered the period with no such champion; now some leaders, including

some experienced unionists from the previous decades, had begun to establish or rebuild Arab unions.⁹³

By the time the Labour Department began work, the original Arab federation, the Palestine Arab Workers Society (PAWS), had begun to recover. In 1941 Graves had estimated the size of the PAWS's only surviving chapter, in Haifa, as some 700 carpenters, stone-cutters, and cigarette and other factory workers, of whom perhaps 60 were paying regular monthly dues.⁹⁴ Even that shrunken figure probably represented the beginning of a recovery from the low point of 1939, which followed the Arab Revolt. In addition, independent unions of Arab workers had come into existence in several of the large international firms.

Despite his initial skepticism, Chudleigh turned his full energy to studying the Arab labour organizations. By late July, he had met with the Haifa headquarters chapter and new Jerusalem branch of the PAWS and the independent Arab Labour Society at Nablus, as well as the Haifa chapter of the Palestine Labour League, the Histadrut's vehicle for organizing Arab workers.⁹⁵ By September, when the four new British inspectors arrived, he had apparently established strong cooperation with Arab labour leaders. In the course of this work, he had also become a strong advocate for the dissemination of information about Arab workers to potential advocates in Britain, particularly the TUC.⁹⁶

Graves, too, was active that summer on behalf of Arab organizing. He persuaded the colonial government to promote the effort by mandating that the public works department and military authorities give union members preferential treatment in hiring.⁹⁷ He also persuaded the chief secretary to authorize the employment of an Arab assistant for Chudleigh (see chapter 6).

Through the autumn, Chudleigh vigorously promoted Arab unionizing. Early in October, he addressed 200 workers attending the founding meeting of a Jaffa labour society.⁹⁸ Later that month, the Palestine Post quoted a labour officer (very probably Chudleigh) as saying that one of the department's primary aims was to encourage Arab workers to organize. If the workers could raise their living standards closer to Jewish levels, he argued, better Arab-Jewish understanding would result.⁹⁹ Already, reported the Post, Arab labour organizations -- affiliated with the PAWS or independent -- were active in Jaffa as well as Haifa, Nablus, and Jerusalem; Arab workers were forming unions in Nazareth and Bethlehem and preparing to do so in Acre and Gaza. The Haifa parent branch of the PAWS claimed 1,000 paying members and operation of several producers cooperatives.¹⁰⁰ The Jerusalem branch claimed 450 members.¹⁰¹ In the next few months, the Labour Department helped Arab workers organizing in Nablus, Nazareth, and Ramallah.

The activities of the Labour Department probably stimulated at least two apparently unprecedented organizing efforts that began in November: those of a union of Arab women workers and of a second Arab union federation. For some years, rural women had worked in family groups constructing local roads for the mandate government, but Arab women workers had no record of unionization. Now, with Labour Department encouragement, a group of urban Christians in the Haifa area took a first step. The Palestine Post reported that Regional Inspector C. E. Cousins attended the first meeting of a union based on some fifty Army workshop employees.¹⁰² No record of this union's further activities appeared.¹⁰³

The same month the women's union met, a second Arab union federation, the Federation of Arab Trade Unions and Labour Societies (FATULS), appeared as a competitor for the PAWS, making its presence felt by submitting to the government's Wages Commission a vivid and eloquent account of the economic hardships of Arab workers.¹⁰⁴ The new federation enjoyed support from the Labour Department staff, who regarded the PAWS as a conservative union hampered by ties to traditional Arab authorities. The new organization, closer to familiar European models, was from its inception a clear favourite. The group that organized FATULS was the Labour Affairs Committee of Haifa's Rays of Hope Society, an association of Arab Communists and other leftwing Arab

workers and intellectuals characterizing itself as "anti-fascist."¹⁰⁵ Chudleigh had addressed the society a month earlier.¹⁰⁶ He was probably also the labour officer who had attended meetings where the Labour Affairs Committee received representatives of railway, refinery, and port workers.¹⁰⁷

The Labour Department's solid support for FATULS and other Arab unions did not pass unquestioned by longer-established agencies of the mandate government. The modern-minded department's concept of the rights of native workers often collided with traditional colonial nervousness about organized natives. What would become perpetual disagreements began barely a month after the labour inspectors officially took up their posts.

The first report of friction with other government agencies concerned a confrontation with the security services. In November 1942, Couzens, in his capacity as chief labour inspector, found it necessary to warn the regional inspectors that an intelligence agent had come to one of the regional offices to question the inspector about his official activities. The inspector had rightly refused to cooperate. Couzens directed that in any such situation, labour officers refer the agent to him or to Graves.¹⁰⁸

By the time the Labour Department held its first full staff conference at the end of 1942, it was explicitly confronting the issue of freedom of organizing. The occasion

was the nomination of worker representatives for the arbitration panels, from which the board for each dispute would be selected. Chudleigh complained that out of four people that the Jerusalem chapter of the PAWS had nominated, the government had rejected three, reportedly after receiving comments about them from the district commissioner and the police. He feared that unjustified rejections could hamper the department's organizing efforts, since labour officers had assured the Arab unions of the government's sympathy. Worse, the police objected mainly to the candidates' political activities rather than to any unsuitability for service on arbitration boards. The conference endorsed Chudleigh's position.¹⁰⁹

Graves, as labour director, fully supported the stand his staff was taking. He apparently did not restrict to labour organizations his objection to the mixing of political and labour activities. Government, too, should refrain from using labour activities to further a political program. Graves had maintained this position throughout his work as labour director in Egypt, as when he obtained the transfer of labour supervision from the security services to an independent agency (see chapter 5). In Palestine, he never explicitly accused the government of applying its political views to labour issues, but he did consistently take initiatives to counter this kind of manipulation. Thus he offered to present the issue of the arbitration panels to the chief

secretary and seek a reversal of the rejections. At the same time, he told the staff conference that the department's credibility was at stake not only with the Arab unions, but with the mandate secretariat. The department staff should make sure that anyone they recommended for the arbitration panels was actually appropriate.¹¹⁰

By this time, the security concerns of district commissioners and police were clearly affecting not only membership on arbitration panels, but registration of trade unions. When district commissioners received registration applications, they were reportedly asking the police to investigate the listed executive committee members. The minutes of the staff conference commented stiffly, "It was thought undesirable that persons should be deprived from becoming members of such Committees because of adverse reports of their political antecedents."¹¹¹

Once again, Graves took on responsibility for separating the government's political from its labour program, committing himself to look into district commissioners' registration practices. He also promised to investigate another use of registration forms which related more to the security of employers than to that of the state. The police were routinely informing a company whenever a union's registration application listed one of that company's employees as an executive committee member.

For a long-term solution to the problem of interference from the security services, the departmental conference looked to enactment of a trade union ordinance defining unions' status and giving legal sanction to their activities. As the department's own policy, the assembled staff confirmed that they would not interfere with Arab unions' decisions, including their choice of affiliation.¹¹² The security agencies, for their part, continued to intrude in Arab union matters, despite Labour Department protests.¹¹³

In their persistent suspicions of organized native workers, the mandate government's security agencies resembled counterparts elsewhere. Here again, Northern Rhodesia furnishes an instance. Half a decade after the discussion described above, the African colony's labour department would face a situation similar to that in Palestine. In 1949 the department directed its staff to

studiously avoid conveying the impression to the public that they have adopted the "security approach" of the Police towards labour problems, that they regard workers' organizations as potentially criminal or spy upon them, or that they use other than direct, [sic] open approach.

The police, labour officers claimed, had been "almost creating scares of industrial unrest."¹¹⁴

While categorically rejecting administrative and security agencies' hindrance or surveillance of unions' political activities, Palestine's labour department also disapproved of union connections that could be considered criminal. A memo from Graves to the chief secretary, written

in mid-1943 to accompany Chudleigh's report on FATULS, was characteristically modernist and pragmatic. An administrative officer had informed FATULS that three workers had criminal records and should therefore be excluded from membership. Graves's comment in effect protested total -- though not partial -- government control of unions: to exclude criminals from leadership positions "might be reasonable," but to exclude them from the organization entirely -- as the district officer sought to do -- did "not reflect the attitude of modern Government towards trade unionism."¹¹⁵

At this point, FATULS reportedly volunteered a suggestion for restraining the security agencies -- one that reinforced (or perhaps echoed) that of the departmental conference. Since that conference, the department had secured an assignment to draft the trade union ordinance which its staff had recommended, but overwork had brought delays. Now, according to Chudleigh, "The federation urge the early promulgation of a Trade Union Ordinance legalising the status of Trade Unions in Palestine."¹¹⁶ Such enabling legislation was common in colonies with unionized workers: Nigeria, for instance, had received its version four years earlier. Palestine's ordinance was drafted in mid-1943 and circulated to interested bodies for comment.¹¹⁷ The department hoped that the bill's restrictions on government incursions into existing organizations would limit resistance,

allowing rapid enactment. In mid-1946, however, the department staff admitted with evident resentment that "Pressure of work and the need for keeping legislation output within certain limits dictated by the possibility of enforcement has retarded the enactment of this measure."¹¹⁸ The ordinance would never take effect.

The Labour Department's support of FATULS against the police manifested an exceptional tolerance by an official agency for an avowedly leftist organization. To most functionaries in the mandate government, leftist clients were both unfamiliar and unwelcome. Before June 1941, no government agency could have blandly acknowledged cooperation with an offshoot of the Rays of Hope Society. The situation changed somewhat when Hitler launched his drive to the East and Britain's Conservative prime minister unhesitatingly declared support for the newly embattled Soviet Union. Yet the Palestine government's acceptance of Communist allies was never wholehearted; as the threat of Nazi victory receded, it would weaken.

Graves, firm opponent of the blending of unions and politics, might logically have shared this position. As noted in chapter 5, he profoundly distrusted the Histadrut because of its self-proclaimed commitment to socialism. Yet he expressed no similar reservation regarding FATULS. The department could report without evident alarm, "Politically, the Federation is Socialist, with some tendency towards

syndicalism." Left-leaning unions were familiar to the labour officers: Chudleigh, after all, had come from such an organization. The specific character of FATULS further justified official nonchalance: despite its antecedents and its ideological commitment, the new federation professed "a considerable sympathy with the methods and aims of the British Trade Unions," expressing an intention to affiliate with the T.U.C. and the International Federation of Trade Unions.

FATULS also enjoyed the benefit of a set of goals extraordinarily well suited to the aims of the department itself. In July 1943, a department memorandum listed the federation's main aims as improvement of members' wages and working conditions; support for the war effort and discouragement of strikes; equality of wages between Arabs and Jews; an end to discrimination against Arabs in military camps and workshops; establishment of public labour exchanges; trade union recognition; and cooperation with the Labour Department. The federation crowned its congeniality with a disciplined mode of operating that, according to at least one employer, had benefited employers and reduced labour unrest by establishing a systematic basis for negotiations.¹¹⁹

As the new federation consolidated itself, the long-established PAWS, though still maintaining its allegiance to traditional elites, was developing rapidly. In January 1943 its forceful young secretary, Sami Taha, convened represen-

tatives of its four main chapters to discuss pay, conditions for army camp workers, and relations with government departments. Labour Department officials attended.¹²⁰ By September, Chudleigh would be able to report that the federation had some 9,000 paid-up members, more than twice as many as when the conference was held.¹²¹

The Labour Department's program of organizing native workers was working precisely as intended. The leaders of FATULS were expressing the modern concepts of labour relations that guided Labour Department policy, while the PAWS had been reinvigorated. For the remainder of the mandate, the Labour Department would continue to be concerned with the development of the Arab federations; their relations with one another and with the Histadrut; and the fluctuations in class solidarity among them. Increasingly, the central mandate government shared this interest, though in the perspective of its own preoccupations with both Arab and Palestinian political prospects. At the same time, as the Allies anticipated victory, the resulting economic and political changes began to erode the commonality of interests between the mandate's government and its Arab workers and, in consequence, the mutual confidence of the Labour Department and its native constituency.

Notes

¹Graves, "Report: Survey of Labour in Palestine," 3, enclosure I in MacMichael to Moyne, 3 April 1941, PRO, CO 859/55/4. J. C. Hurewitz estimated for 1942 some 85,000 to 100,000 manual and 30,000 other Arab workers, some 35,000 to 37,000 of the total being permanently urbanized. Hurewitz, Struggle, 121.

²Ellen Fleischmann, The Nation and Its "New" Women: The Palestinian Women's Movement, 1920-1948 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 197.

³Edwin Mills, Report of the controller of manpower, 28 November 1942, ISA, I/LAB/91/44, item 2, 1. Heightening Mills's sense of acute labour shortage was his impression that "Arab adolescents are . . . unreliable workers."

⁴Department of Labour, "Annual Report for 1942," 6. Employment had risen in government and the army by 478 percent, in manufacturing and utilities enterprises by 162 percent, and in municipal agencies by 144 percent.

⁵Colonial Office, Report on the Administration of Palestine for 1940, 14, PRO, CO 733/441, 5.

⁶Ibid., 5, 6.

⁷Ibid., 5.

⁸Letter in English and Arabic, apparently from Haifa-area workers to D.A.D.P.L., Northern L. of C. Dist., 29 January 1942, CZA, S. 25, 7170.

⁹Department of Labour, "Annual Report for 1942," PRO, CO 859/56/10, 8. A strike against seventeen diamond-cutting plants accounted for about a fourth of the workdays lost.

¹⁰Colonial Office, "1941 report to the Permanent Mandates Commission," PRO, CO 733/457/18, 9.

¹¹Recent developments would have increased alert administrators' awareness of the importance of this responsibility, as Britain's 1937 Factories Act had apparently brought about the reduction of an appalling accident rate.

¹²Department of Labour, "Annual Report for 1942," PRO, CO 859/56/10, 2.

¹³Ibid., table 1, "Action Taken by Inspectors as a Result of Visits to Industrial and Business Undertakings 1942."

¹⁴Ibid., 2.

¹⁵"Director's General Instructions, Duties of Inspectors," n.d., ISA, record group 13, box 1426, A/4, 5, 6.

¹⁶Government of Palestine, Department of Labour Bulletin 5 (October-December 1943), MSS Brit. emp. s. 365 (Fabian Colonial Bureau papers), Rhodes House Library, Oxford University, box 176, file 2, 13, 15; Department of Labour, Annual Report for 1943, No. 10 of 1944 (Jerusalem: Government Printer, Palestine, 1944), PRO, CO 814/16, 8-9; Department of Labour, "Annual Report for 1942," table 2, "Contravention Notices Issued by Regional Inspectors during the Period 18.10.42 to 31.12.42," 15.

¹⁷"Director's General Instructions, Duties of Inspectors," n.d., ISA, record group 13, box 1426, A/4. Graves noted in the same memorandum that inspections offered the chance not only to contribute to workplace harmony, but to invite information about illegal operations.

¹⁸Department of Labour, "Annual Report for 1942," PRO, CO 859/56/10, 12; *ibid.*, 10-11 (3, however, gives a figure of 107 for "labour disputes . . . dealt with").

¹⁹The procedure itself was not new to Palestine; the Jewish Agency's labour department had occasionally attempted conciliation. Colonial Office, 1941 report to the Permanent Mandates Commission, PRO, CO 733/457/18, 9; Department of Labour, "Annual Report for 1942," PRO, CO 859/56/10, 11.

²⁰Department of Labour, "Annual Report for 1942," PRO, CO 859/56/10, 9.

²¹Department of Labour, "Annual Report for 1942," PRO, CO 859/56/10, table 1, "Action Taken by Inspectors as a Result of Visits to Industrial and Business Undertakings 1942."

²²Graves attributed the relatively peaceful nature of labour relations in the Northern District to personal rather than structural factors: the leaders of the local Jewish labour and employers' organizations were personal friends. R. M. Graves, "Report on Administration of the Defence (Trade Disputes) Order, 1942, during the Period 15.11.42 - 15.12.43," PRO, CO 733/459/5, 2.

²³For a detailed analysis of employment patterns in Haifa a few years earlier, see Bernstein, Constructing Boundaries, 77-79.

²⁴Department of Labour, "Annual Report for 1942," PRO, CO 859/56/10, table 2, "Contravention Notices Issued by Regional Inspectors during the Period 18.10.42 to 31.12.42."

²⁵To these pleas, Chief Inspector Couzens responded that no increases were possible until the new budget year. In the event, only late in 1943 did the department secure the required authorization and hire additional assistant inspectors, two Jews and two Arabs. By then, the need had grown still greater. ISA, record group 13, box 1426, file A/3; PRO, CO 859/55/4, 5; Palestine Labour Department agendas and minutes, departmental conference 3 (5-6 January 1944), MSS Medit. s. 16 (A. H. Couzens papers), Rhodes House Library, Oxford University.

²⁶Department of Labour, "Annual Report for 1942," PRO, CO 859/56/10, 1, 15.

²⁷Ibid., table 2, "Contravention Notices Issued by Regional Inspectors during the Period 18.10.42 to 31.12.42," 15, 16.

²⁸Department of Labour, "Annual Report for 1942," PRO, CO 859/56/10, 3.

²⁹"Labour Department's First Bulletin," Palestine Post, 7 January 1943, 3.

³⁰C. A. Grossmith, minute, 22 August 1943, PRO, CO 859/56/10. The Fabian Society (along with, among others, the Labour Party and the T.U.C.) was on the mailing list for the bulletin.

³¹Government of Palestine, Department of Labour Bulletin 8 (July - September 1944), MSS Brit. emp. s. 365 (Fabian Colonial Bureau papers), Rhodes House Library, Oxford University, box 176, file 2, 8.

³²Government of Palestine, Department of Labour Bulletin 16 (July - September 1946), MSS Brit. emp. s. 365 (Fabian Colonial Bureau papers), Rhodes House Library, Oxford University, box 176, file 4, 3.

³³Colonial Office, Labour Supervision, 10.

³⁴"Labour Department 8-Point Programme: No Legislation without Discussion," Palestine Post, 12 January 1943, 3.

³⁵Fabian Society, Labour in the Colonies, 15-17. Like Graves, the Fabians included in their list the establishment of public labour exchanges.

³⁶Colonial Office, Labour Supervision, 10.

³⁷J. G. Hibbert, minute, 20 April 1943, PRO, CO 859/55/6. Explicitly defying wartime paper restrictions, the Colonial Office authorized press runs of 650 copies for subsequent issues. Four hundred copies were designated for colonial labour departments, along with other government agencies in Palestine and elsewhere; the rest were available for purchase. Department of Labour, Annual Report for 1943, 4.

³⁸Labour Department agendas and minutes, departmental conference 2 (1 to 4 July 1943), MSS Medit.s.16 (A. H. Couzens papers), Rhodes House Library, Oxford University; Department of Labour, "Annual Report for 1942," PRO, CO 859/56/10, 3. The department overcame this shortcoming only in the spring of 1945. By mid-1943, the department was issuing all of its posters and leaflets, most of which dealt with occupational health or safety issues, in Arabic, Hebrew, and English. Government of Palestine, Department of Labour Bulletin 4, July - September 1943, MSS Brit. emp. s. 365 (Fabian Colonial Bureau papers), Rhodes House Library, Oxford University, box 176, file 2. No. 11, however, was the first trilingual issue of the bulletin itself. Government of Palestine, Department of Labour Bulletin 12 (July-September 1945), MSS Brit. emp. s. 365 (Fabian Colonial Bureau papers), Rhodes House Library, Oxford University, box 176, file 3, 18.

³⁹MacMichael to Stanley, 12 July 1943, on "Annual Report of the Director, Department of Labour, 1942 and 1943," ISA, I/LAB/44/42 (258/9), Vol. I, item 36.

⁴⁰"Annual Report of the Director, Department of Labour, 1942 and 1943," ISA, I/LAB/44/42 (258/9), vol. 1, item 1. In this case, as in that of the quarterly bulletins, the wartime paper shortage occasioned plaintive telegrams between Jerusalem and London. By August 1943 the copies had been obtained and sent. Lamb to Orde-Browne, n.d. [August 1943], PRO, CO 859/56/10.

⁴¹A copy went to the London office of the ILO; others, to the League of Nations (PRO, CO 733/441/17). The CLAC copies were apparently diverted from the consignment intended for the League (PRO, CO 859/56/10).

⁴²MacMichael to Stanley, 13 April 1944, PRO, CO 459/75430, 16.

⁴³Orde-Browne, minute on Graves, "Report on Administration," PRO, CO 733/459/5.

⁴⁴"Post-War Industrial Relations," Department of Labour Bulletin 12 (July-September 1945), 2.

⁴⁵"Director's General Instructions, Duties of Inspectors," n.d., ISA, record group 13, box 1426, A/4.

⁴⁶Department of Labour, "Annual Report for 1942," PRO, CO 859/56/10, 16.

⁴⁷Graves, "Report on Administration," PRO, CO 733/459/5, 2. The district commissioners originally responsible for mediation turned over administration of the order to the Department of Labour on 17 December 1942.

⁴⁸Within three weeks, the high commissioner (later, the chief secretary) could refer it to binding arbitration. The chief secretary (later, the labour director) would then choose, from permanent lists of potential members, an arbitration board: two representatives of employers, two representatives of employees, and one member selected as impartial. The labour director would chair each board. PRO, CO 733/441/16 [1941]; Taqqu, "Arab Labor," 198; Department of Labour, Annual Report for 1944, No. 1 of 1946 (Jerusalem: Government Printer, 1946), 7.

⁴⁹Executive Council minutes, 1941, 858th meeting (10 March), PRO, CO 814/37. A separate regulation would specifically address disputes involving any level of government (ibid.).

⁵⁰Graves to Orde-Browne, 9 May 1941, PRO, CO 859/55/4, item 16. In the message, Secretary David Remez of the Histadrut Executive Committee argued, among other points, that the war had not diminished strikes in Britain (Graves, "Labour in Palestine," 32-33, enclosure I in MacMichael to Moyne, 3 April 1941, PRO, CO 859/55/4). Graves thought it likely that although strikes in Britain might be frequent, their commencement elicited the immediate appointment of an arbitration board and issuance of an interim back-to-work order. He pressed Orde-Browne to report on the actual situation (Graves to Orde-Browne, 9 May 1941, PRO, CO 859/55/4).

⁵¹Executive Council minutes, 1941, 858th meeting (10 March); 867th meeting (23 July), PRO, CO 814/37.

⁵²Macpherson to Boyd, 17 July 1942, PRO, CO 733/441/17.

⁵³MacMichael to Cranborne, 15 July 1942, PRO, CO 733/441/17, 1.

⁵⁴Macpherson to Boyd, 17 July 1942, PRO, CO 733/441/17. At that point, officials believed that Graves's tactful approach was winning over the Histadrut (S. E. V. Luke, minute, 11 November 1941, PRO, CO 733/441/16).

⁵⁵MacMichael to Cranborne, 15 July 1942, PRO, CO 733/441/17, 1.

⁵⁶In addition to the objective need, current copper production levels were reportedly unsatisfactory to some in the United States, which was still considering whether to enter the war. C. G. Lambert to Beckett, 17 September 1941, PRO, CO 795/122/14.

⁵⁷Lambert to Boyd, report on conversation with S. S. Taylor, 4 April 1941, PRO, CO 795/122/14.

⁵⁸Parker [Rhodesian Selection Trust] to General Manager, Roan Antelope Copper Mine, Ltd, Luanshya, 8 May 1941, PRO, CO 795/122/14.

⁵⁹Peterson to Rhodesian Selection Trust, 12 May 1941, PRO, CO 795/122/14.

⁶⁰In response, A. J. Dawe, undersecretary of state for East and West Africa, brought forward a new worry: strikes in Northern Rhodesia had set off "inter-racial rioting" in 1940 and would probably do so again. Neither South African settler nor Rhodesian native troops could be relied on to control their own "compatriots" (Hibbert, minute, 14 May 1941; Dawe, minute, 15 May 1941, PRO, CO 795/122/14).

⁶¹The African workers had, he believed, been successfully bought off: "I am advised that wages scale improvements have been very well received by natives." In any event, they could be easily restrained in the unlikely event that they grasped what was actually happening: "Suitable action can be quickly taken if it transpires that acceptance of closed shop is interpreted by natives as a set-back to their aspirations." Lambert minute, 3 June 1941, and OAG [Officer Administering Government] to colonial secretary, 1 June 1941, PRO, CO 795/122/14.

⁶²OAG to colonial secretary, 1 June 1941, PRO, CO 795/122/14.

⁶³Waddington to Moyne, 6 January 1942, PRO, CO 795/122/15.

⁶⁴Macpherson to Boyd, 17 July 1942.

⁶⁵MacMichael to Cranborne, 15 July 1942, 2.

⁶⁶Macpherson to Boyd, 17 July 1942, PRO, CO 733/441/17. Both of the Arab federations had agreed to supply panel members (Department of Labour, "Annual Report for 1942," PRO, CO 859/56/10, 28).

⁶⁷MacMichael to Cranborne, 15 July 1942, PRO, CO 733/441/17, 2.

⁶⁸Macpherson to Boyd, 17 July 1942, PRO, CO 733/441/17.

⁶⁹C. G. Lambert, minute, 27 November 1941, PRO, CO 795/122/14.

⁷⁰Macpherson to Boyd, 17 July 1942, PRO, CO 733/441/17.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Graves to Macpherson, 16 September 1942, PRO, CO 733/441/17. Evidently another twenty-two disputes, mostly brief, were reported only after the parties had settled independently.

⁷³It did have some judicial impact: one employer and five bodies (fifty-seven individual officials) representing workers were convicted of breaching the order by illegally striking or locking out (Department of Labour, "Annual Report for 1942," PRO, CO 859/56/10, 12, Table 8). A strike or lockout under the Trade Disputes Order was legal only if those taking part had reported the dispute to the director of labour and received either his decision not to intervene or, later in the process, the chief secretary's decision not to refer the dispute for arbitration. Department of Labour Bulletin 10 (January - March 1945), MSS Brit. emp. s. 365 (Fabian Colonial Bureau papers), Rhodes House Library, Oxford University, box 176, file 3, 13.

⁷⁴Graves to Macpherson, 16 September 1942, PRO, CO 733/441/17. A third of the disputes that fell under the order were in metal and mechanical works and another third in food, beverage, or shoe factories. The rest were divided among other military and support industries.

⁷⁵Minutes of Palestine Executive Council, 895th meeting, 18 July 1942, PRO, CO 814/38.

⁷⁶Couzens for labour director to chief secretary, 3 February 1943, PRO, CO 733/441/17.

⁷⁷MacMichael to Boyd, 25 March 1943, PRO, CO 733/441/17.

⁷⁸Graves, "Report on Administration," PRO, CO 733/459/5, 1, 3.

⁷⁹Department of Labour, "Annual Report for 1942," PRO, CO 859/56/10, table 4, "Classification of Labour Disputes in Progress by Their Causes and Final Results, 1942," [35].

⁸⁰Graves, "Report on Administration," PRO, CO 733/459/5, 4. In an attempt to secure greater balance on the boards, the department sought an administrative solution, categorizing each member of the panel of potential board members as "NL (neutral left)" or "NR (neutral right)."

⁸¹Ibid., 3. Fortunately for the government, it was alone in fretting about the accumulation of unsettled disputes: neither workers nor employers commonly registered complaints about the delays.

⁸²Ibid., 6.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Department of Labour, "Annual Report for 1942," PRO, CO 859/56/10, 8.

⁸⁵Graves, "Report on Administration," PRO, CO 733/459/5, 10. See also Couzens (for labour director) to chief secretary, "Trade Disputes in 1943," 16 March 1944, PRO, CO 733/459/5, 29-30.

⁸⁶Department of Labour, Annual Report for 1946 (Jerusalem: Government Printer, 1948), PRO, CO 814/40, 13.

⁸⁷Department of Labour, Annual Report for 1943, No. 10 of 1944 (Jerusalem: Government Printer, Palestine, 1944), PRO, CO 814/16, 15; Department of Labour, Annual Report for 1944, No. 1 of 1946 (Jerusalem: Government Printer, 1946), 22; Department of Labour, Jerusalem, Annual Report for 1945, No. 10 of 1946 (Jerusalem: Government Printer, 1946), 28. In 1942, when for most of the year the order was only nominally in force, and 1946, when the order was in force for only the first half of the year, the department reported thirty-five and fourteen stoppages, respectively, within the scope of the legislation. Department of Labour, "Annual Report for 1942," PRO, CO 859/56/10, table 7, "Account of the Operation of the Defence (Trade Disputes) Order, 1942, During the Calendar Year, 1942"; Department of Labour, Annual Report for 1946 (Jerusalem: Government Printer, 1948), PRO, CO 814/40, 139.

⁸⁸Department of Labour, Annual Report for 1946 (Jerusalem: Government Printer, 1948), PRO, CO 814/40, 8.

⁸⁹Labour director to chief secretary, 27 July 1942, ISA I/LAB/31/42, 1.

⁹⁰Chudleigh to Hibbert, June 1942, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

⁹¹Chudleigh to Hibbert, June 1942, PRO, CO 859/55/4. Chudleigh balanced this observation by pointing out that while the settlers were, in contrast, highly organized, their concern for "the social conditions of people outside their own community" was "perhaps insufficient."

⁹²As noted above, in December 1941 the federation negotiated with the Palestine Manufacturers Association the first of a series of cost-of-living increases; some other employers followed suit.

⁹³As early as March 1940, the weavers of Majdal had formed a union "with the object of raising the standard of living among Arab workingmen, defending their interests, and regulating and improving labour conditions" ("Arab Labour Association," Palestine Post, 18 March 1940, 3). Although the group claimed that many workers had applied for membership, its organizing effort apparently failed to achieve its aims: a year later the Majdal weavers were still earning what Graves in his 1941 report characterized as "the lowest wages which I have yet encountered" (Graves, "Labour in Palestine," 7, enclosure I in MacMichael to Moyne, 3 April 1941, PRO, CO 859/55/4). Regardless of their level of success, however, this particularly destitute group of Arab workers had been convinced that a union offered the best hope of improving their situation.

⁹⁴Graves, "Labour in Palestine," 3, enclosure I in MacMichael to Moyne, 3 April 1941, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

⁹⁵Graves to MacPherson, 27 July 1942, ISA, I/LAB/31/42 (box 258/7).

⁹⁶H. E. Chudleigh, "Invitation to Prominent British Trade Unionist to visit Palestine as Guest of the Department of Labour," 16 September 1942, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

⁹⁷Graves to Macpherson, 27 July 1942, ISA, I/LAB/31/42 (box 258/7); chief secretary to director, public works, 14 August 1942, ISA, I/LAB/31/44.

⁹⁸"Arab Workers' Bank Planned," Palestine Post, 6 October 1942, 3.

⁹⁹"Arab Labour Organizations," Palestine Post, 13 October 1942, 2.

¹⁰⁰Government of Palestine, A Survey of Palestine, prepared for the information of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry (three vols.) (Jerusalem: Government Printer, 1946-1947), 764; H. E. Chudleigh, "Progress of the Palestine Arab Trade Union Movement during 1943," 13 September 1943, in labour director to chief secretary, 19 September 1943, PRO, CO 859/93/3, 2.

¹⁰¹"Arab Labour Organizations," Palestine Post, 13 October 1942, 2.

¹⁰²"Arab Women Form Unions," Palestine Post, 10 November 1942, 3.

¹⁰³In 1946, PAWS would try to establish a women's affiliate in Haifa based on Arab women working in the Royal Navy. A preparatory committee called on women working in government and in international and local firms to participate in planning. Beyond plans to elect a board and rent a building, the proposed organization left no more record than had its predecessor (Fleischmann, "New" Women, 196-97).

¹⁰⁴Federation of Arab Trade Unions and Labour Societies (FATULS), memorandum to Wages Commission, 31 December 1942, MRC, MSS.292/956/3.

¹⁰⁵Musa Budeiri, The Palestine Communist Party, 1919-1948: Arab and Jew in the Struggle for Internationalism (London: Ithaca Press, 1979), 141, 150. According to Budeiri, the Society's stated aims were greater democracy for Palestine and organization for Arab workers.

¹⁰⁶"Arab Workers' Bank Planned," Palestine Post, 6 October 1942, 3.

¹⁰⁷Department of Labour, "Note on Federation of Arab Unions and Labour Societies," 15 July 1943, ISA, I/Lab/31/42.

¹⁰⁸Couzens, chief inspector, to Sanders, inspector of labour, Southern Region, "Police Inquiries," 26 November 1942, ISA, record group 13, box 1426, file A/4.

¹⁰⁹Palestine Labour Department agendas and minutes, departmental conference 1 (31 December 1942, 1 January 1943), MSS Medit. s. 16 (A. H. Couzens papers), Rhodes House Library, Oxford University.

¹¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²Ibid.

¹¹³"The Federation [FATULS] still complain of undue policy [sic] surveillance," reported Chudleigh in mid-1943. Chudleigh, "Progress," 13 September 1943, in labour director to chief secretary, 19 September 1943, PRO, CO 859/93/3, 2.

¹¹⁴Northern Rhodesia Archives, Box 419, Ha/1, Kitwe, 16 September 1949, cited in Hooker, "Labour Department," 18, note 2.

¹¹⁵Labour director to chief secretary, 19 September 1943, PRO, CO 859/93/3; ISA, I/Lab/31/42, item 14.

¹¹⁶Chudleigh, "Progress," 13 September 1943, in labour director to chief secretary, 19 September 1943, PRO, CO 859/93/3, 2.

¹¹⁷Department of Labour, Annual Report for 1943, No. 10 of 1944 (Jerusalem: Government Printer, Palestine, 1944), PRO, CO 814/16, 10. The ordinance was in draft by April 1943. It followed the British law and an existing model for colonies, requiring the registration of trade unions and providing registered unions with immunity from civil lawsuits (MacMichael to Stanley, 4 January 1944, PRO, CO 859/93/3, item 1).

¹¹⁸Department of Labour Bulletin 16, 20. By early 1945, Palestine was isolated -- in the company of Bermuda, Gibraltar, Tonga, and Trans-Jordan -- as a colony ineligible for development grants because it lacked the required trade unions legislation ("Extract from notes for S of S's speech on the new CD&W Bill," in Stanley to Gort, 9 March 1945, PRO, CO 859/93/3, item 9).

¹¹⁹Department of Labour, "Note on Federation of Arab Unions and Labour Societies," 15 July 1943, ISA, I/Lab/31/42.

¹²⁰"Arab Workers Hold First Conference," Palestine Post, 24 January 1943, 3.

¹²¹Chudleigh, "Progress," 13 September 1943, in labour director to chief secretary, 19 September 1943, PRO, CO 859/93/3, 1, 2.

Chapter 8 Growing Obstacles to Modern Labour Supervision, 1944-1947

After a brief recovery from the turmoil of 1943, labour relations in Palestine worsened as war's end brought economic upheaval. At the same time, differences persisted between Palestine's modern-minded labour department and its security-minded secretariat. Disagreements were especially conspicuous in official attitudes and actions affecting two overlapping groups: the Arab labour federations and public employees. As political conditions in the territory moved towards the anarchic end which no one yet imagined, the department, despite its early optimism, competence, and good reputation, proved unable to buttress stability.

The "Difficult Period"

In its wartime and postwar labour upheavals, in its conflicts between labour officers and administrators, and in its attention to native labour issues, Palestine resembled many British colonies during the period. Some causes of postwar labour unrest -- inflation, continuing austerity, competition for jobs -- were common to the Allied states and their colonies. Work stoppages shocked the war's sole victorious power, the United States, as some 3.5 million workers in 1945 and 4.6 million the next year demanded a better share of growing profits. Within the British empire, cities from Bombay to Lagos erupted in massive strikes.

British officials had long foreseen that the end of the war would bring labour unrest throughout the empire; this apprehension had been one rationale for the appointment of Chudleigh and other unionists to colonial posts in 1941. Officials expected the unionists' experience in adversarial negotiations to be valuable to colonial governments not only for the duration of hostilities, but throughout a "difficult period" which the war's end was expected to bring.¹

When the war in Europe ended in the spring of 1945, the "difficult period" was already under way. Acute postwar economic pressures on workers exacerbated the chronic shortcomings of colonial labour policy in both budget priorities and attitude. By the mid-1940s, the combination was undermining colonial experiments in labour control. In addition, the growing nationalist ambitions of both settlers and natives affected those workplaces where the interests of settlers, natives, and rulers collided.

In Palestine, the combined irritants would expose tensions at many levels: between mandate officials and the British War Department, between the Labour Department and other parts of the mandate government, and between all these agencies and both Arab and Jewish workers -- including the Labour Department's own employees. The ensuing disruptions of labour peace and denials of labour justice would leave all sides embittered.

An increase in work stoppages reflected the heightening of economic pressures. Although the Defence (Trade Disputes) Order, 1942, apparently exercised a restraining influence on enterprises under its jurisdiction, department staff were dissatisfied with the trend in illegal stoppages -- those over which officials had not formally foregone jurisdiction -- under the order. As an absolute preventive, they later acknowledged, sanctions under the order had proven ineffective, though they might have reduced the number of stoppages.²

Changes in the economic structure affected both the location and the causes of labour unrest. The wartime shift of economic activity from the building to the manufacturing sector transferred the preponderance of strikes along with that of employment.³ Similarly, the causes of labour disruptions changed with the new strains on workers. In 1942, confronting the high labour demand and rapid inflation of the burgeoning war effort, workers had concentrated on increasing their pay rather than securing their jobs. A year later, as work stoppages reached their wartime peak, most still concerned wages and benefits. Strikes over hiring practices, which had decreased between 1939 and 1942, almost vanished after the Jewish Agency established an officially non-party labour exchange early in 1943.⁴ At the same time, however, strike issues were starting to reflect a new economic trend. Employment not only had ceased to grow, but was beginning to

shrink. The end of the North Africa campaign and anticipation of the close of hostilities in the eastern Mediterranean brought layoffs in defense industries.⁵ For workers, the importance of basic wages began to decline; that of layoff policies and separation pay, to increase. For employers, the tightening job market offered an opening to raise issues of productivity and discipline.⁶

As the war ended, discontent grew among workers in all areas of the economy. Discussion of public sector unrest appears below. In the private sector, many of the postwar work stoppages affected small businesses with few employees, who typically remained off the job for only a short time. The diamond industry was perennially turbulent, repeatedly producing the bulk of annual workdays lost to stoppages. With the end of wartime restrictions came strikes in such large undertakings as the international petroleum corporations in the Haifa area.

The Workers Divided

More and more as time passed, divisions among workers complicated -- sometimes beneficially -- the Labour Department's efforts to establish formal labour calm. Rivalries could cause strikes, but also could limit their scope. By the mid-1940s, political conflict was sharpening between Arabs and Jews, between the two Arab union federations, and between Arab elite politicians and increasingly powerful

union leaders. Although the Arab federations and Arab left professed class solidarity with Jewish workers, their relations with the Histadrut would relax only tactically, for specific job actions. At the same time, the competition between the two major Arab federations grew increasingly bitter.

Despite rivalries between communities and federations, London's priorities and prejudices occasionally provoked Palestinian workers to united action. When they did not believe their competing national interests to be at risk, even native and settler could cooperate to defend the interests they shared. At the workplace or individual union level they increasingly joined together, though often uneasily, in job actions. As postwar economic pressures intensified, this solidarity rapidly strengthened.

A vivid example comes from the unions of low-level public employees, which organized the bulk of the Arab and Jewish workers who belonged to mixed unions. In April 1946, a six-day general strike of these unions closed down the postal service, the telegraph system, the broadcasting services, the railroads, and the ports. The strikers enjoyed the support of left Arab and Jewish political and labour organizations. Their leaders emphasized class solidarity across national and religious boundaries. The job action echoed the major labour protests taking place around the empire and the world; it also exemplified what Arab and

Jewish workers could accomplish together when they did not fear losing some national right.

Given the heightening contentions for dominance, even the successful collaboration of the general strike did not establish firm relations of mutual trust, either between nationalities or among federations. Through the next year, solidarity sporadically overcame political and organizational rivalries. Then, on 31 August 1947, the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine issued its partition recommendation, and all cooperation ended.

The Rulers Divided: on Native Unions

The increase in labour tensions during and after the war exposed dissension within not only Palestine's working class, but its colonial government, as administrators with conflicting viewpoints sought to define the mandate's postwar identity. The Labour Department's sharpest disagreements with other agencies concerned native wage earners. This group's increasing numerical, economic, and political strength made it an object of heated contention.

The tensions and policy fluctuations concerning the affairs of native workers affected, and were affected by, both the Labour Department's attitudes and its ability to act on them. The attitudes were, as described above, generally guided by the prejudices and priorities of the modern school of labour supervision. The ability was limited by

those of other parts of the mandate government. Thus, though the department could require employers to meet certain safety and health standards, it was unable to protect workers from layoff. In some cases, particularly in government employment, it could not curtail inequities in pay and working conditions. When civil servants or camp workers struck, the mandate government referred the issues -- pay, working conditions, job security -- not to its labour specialists, but to the London government, which was reluctant to release either money or government prerogatives. Since the Zionist federations provided their members with powerful support, the department's limitations primarily affected Arab workers, precisely the group for whom the staff considered themselves especially responsible.

In particular, the department remained at odds with the secretariat regarding the two Arab federations. While Labour Department staff maintained their partiality to successive left-led federations, the mandate secretariat remained suspicious. Some British officials would term the Arab Workers Congress (AWC), which succeeded FATULS in 1945, "the Arab TUC," presumably considering it closer than the PAWS to the model of Britain's Trades Union Congress. The less modern organization, however, was the one for which the mandate government would find political use.

As Allied forces advanced, steadily reducing the fear of Nazi victory, the London and Jerusalem governments

retracted their tolerance of left-led native unions. By January 1945, with military triumph in sight, Chief Inspector Couzens found it necessary to explain to Palestine's chief secretary why the Labour Department worked with FATULS: department staff believed that this federation could furnish other Arab unions an example of effectiveness, efficiency, and customary trade union practice.⁷ The following month, the British government apparently colluded with the PAWS to exclude FATULS from representative status at the organizing meeting for the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), held in London.⁸ A year later, mandate government censors suspended the AWC newspaper, Unity, charging the publication with propagating anti-British content. Nor was Arab Communist opposition to the government simply a stereotype. Despite the Labour Department's support for their development, FATULS and its successor federation maintained the common Arab left position identifying the British, not the settlers, as the main obstacles to Arab self-determination.

As the government of Palestine pulled away from the Labour Department's commitment to the AWC, it turned to the PAWS, not as an alternative "Arab TUC," but as a potential Arab labour party. Despite defections from its left to the AWC in 1945, the PAWS had continued not only to grow in membership, but to develop as an organization, gradually adopting attitudes and aspirations characteristic of a modern labour federation. Steered by its secretary, the thirty-

year-old Sami Taha, the PAWS was moving towards working-class political commitment and away from unhesitating adherence to the decisions of elite national leaders. In late 1945, the government (in a report probably drafted by the Labour Department) characterized the PAWS as "the right wing of Arab labour [which] has maintained contact with the traditional national parties."⁹ The following year, those elite contacts -- joined with the PAWS' aspiration to form a political party -- were making that "right wing" of labour politically useful in British eyes.

New forces propelled the Colonial Office's postwar quest for agents of modernization to replace native elites in indirect rule. Worldwide, colonial philosophy was shifting: official policy now generally favoured participation of non-elite groups in native ruling bodies. In Britain, the Labour Party had formed a government for the first time in fifteen years. At the metropolitan centre, officials who relied on union support were now directing policy. Britain was about to quit India, officially separating from what had been its most prized colony. At the same time, the Cold War was already in progress, declared by former Prime Minister Churchill in his Fulton, Missouri, speech of 5 March 1946. Taken together, these factors suggested a unionist from the political centre as the British government's new native leader of choice.

In this context, the London and Jerusalem governments apparently regarded Sami Taha and his PAWS federation as a potential corrective to the power monopoly of Palestine's nationalist elite. Officials presumably looked to worker representation to have the same venting effect in the nationalist movement as they expected of it in the workplace. They may also have expected it to leaven the traditional loyalties that gave the elite political leaders their base.

In August 1946, the government found an opportunity to promote an Arab labour leader. The Arab Higher Committee (AHC), an uneasy coalition of Palestine's leading notables which the British had dismantled in 1937, had been revived in November 1945. Now both the Colonial Office and High Commissioner Sir Alan Cunningham joined the Arab League in urging the AHC to include several middle-class figures in its activities. In a turn which would become almost normal as Britain shifted responsibility to modern colonial leaders, they also proposed a man whom the mandate government had detained for six months in 1937 on allegations concerning explosive materials. Cunningham pressed the AHC to admit Sami Taha to membership. The AHC complied, briefly -- from April to June 1946.¹⁰ During this period, the district commissioner for Jaffa reported that the PAWS chapter and six other local groups that supported the AHC's dominant faction were all bitter rivals -- a rivalry the administrator hoped would prevent united anti-government protest.¹¹

In November 1946, Taha asserted his federation's autonomy from the AHC, refusing to involve the PAWS in the notable body's annual one-day strike commemorating the issuance of the Balfour Declaration. Days earlier, Palestine's high commissioner had noted "growing dissatisfaction" with the AHC among younger Arabs. These commonly (and, he thought, justifiably) regarded AHC members as "relics of the Turkish regime" and "reactionaries interested in politics to the exclusion of social issues."¹² One dissident faction had recently announced the formation of an Arab socialist party. At this point, in place of the day-long AHC strike, Taha called on workers for a half-hour strike and a contribution to Arab industry. In contrast, the AWC -- more nationalist and less leftist than its predecessor, the FATULS -- joined the AHC strike.¹³

As Taha was emphasizing the independent power of his federation, both the London and the Jerusalem governments were pressing the AHC to include non-notables in its delegation to the London conference of 1946-47. Taha was among five Palestinian Arabs whom the London government itself invited to the conference; after much negotiation, he actually served on the AHC delegation.

The results of the government experiment in proletarian leadership were never to transpire. In the fall of 1947, both of the Arab federations suddenly vanished, victims of political events. In September, Taha was mur-

dered. Contemporary observers and historians alike have suspected that al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni, exiled leader of the Palestinian Arab national movement, ordered the execution to prevent Taha from bringing support to a rival faction -- or even acting on the vision of an independent labour party.¹⁴ The PAWS passed into the hands of a Husayni supporter; its activity virtually ceased. At the end of the year, as civil war broke out, the leaders of the surviving Arab federation, the AWC, split over whether to follow the lead of the Soviet Union and accept partition. A few months later, the British were gone; Palestine's Arab wage earners, concentrated in the coastal strip that became part of the new state of Israel, were left without the support of either a government agency or their own recently powerful organizations.

As the PAWS and the AWC followed their postwar courses, several new factors were turning the Palestine Labour Department away from its earlier enthusiastic organizing support and advocacy for the Arab labour federations. Most obviously, by the mid-1940s the federations were organizing themselves and operating not only independently, but sometimes defiantly. They had mastered, and were utilizing, whatever elements of the British trade union tradition they found useful.

The PAWS was developing beyond the Labour Department's sphere of influence. The mandate government and Colonial Office were taking a lively interest in its unfolding politi-

cal potential and ambitions. In contrast, the FATULS, which had received the department's concentrated attention, in 1945 dissolved into the increasingly nationalist and vocally anti-British AWC.

In addition to the changes in the Arab federations, a the postwar period brought a shift in the Labour Department's own responsibilities. In early 1945, the department's deputy director, A. H. Couzens, became director of the government's veterans resettlement program; in September 1946, he succeeded Graves as labour director. Together, these two changes turned the department's attention to the resettlement effort, particularly the need for job placement mechanisms. The Palestine Labour Department became less conspicuously active in organizing and supporting either of the Arab federations. Its advocacy for workers took other forms.

Faced with the Labour Department's inability and, in certain circumstances, its refusal to support them, the "sound" government-backed Arab unions of 1942 strained in the mid-1940s to protect workers' interests and to maintain their own positions. Their leaders now based strategies on considerations inconsistent with the department's theories of modern labour relations. In 1946 Arab unions held twenty-five reported strikes, more than double the 1943 wartime high of eleven; the issues were the very basic ones of job security, severance pay, and cost-of-living increases. In its report for that year, the Labour Department would com-

ment that the government employees' strike in April had caused both public and private workers to "take stock of their own position." What the report termed "the consequent unrest" was most notable in enterprises with predominantly Arab workforces.¹⁵ The relationship between the Labour Department and the Arab unions was departing radically from the early pattern of paternalistic officials and responsive native workers. The agency's fostering relationships could not survive the double burden of workers' accumulation of grievance and mistrust and government responses to the resulting postwar strikes.

The Rulers Divided: on Public Employee Rights

As the concerns of the colonial state gave Palestine's labour department a particular interest in native workers and their organizations, the structure of work in Palestine involved the department most deeply with workers in one particular sector. The British War Department and the mandate and local governments employed the mass of Palestine's wage earners. Among enduring labour disputes, the largest involved public workers. Through low pay, overwork, and bad working conditions, public employees paid much of the price for wartime endeavours which the British and the Palestine governments regarded as vital, but which they considered themselves unable to afford. Despite the March 1943 recommendations of a government wages committee, cost-of-living

adjustments to public employees' pay continued to lag behind inflation. Because of wartime manpower regulations, dissatisfied employees in many enterprises or government departments could not choose to give notice and look for work elsewhere.

The general deprivation of public employees coincided with specific grievances of Arab public employees. The mandate government was in 1944 still basing pay scales for its Arab workers on the enormous "market volume" of Arab labour power, along with the perennial perceived differences in both productivity and cost of living.¹⁶ Among Palestinian public workers, status often coincided with race -- and status discrimination was not merely open, but official. The preponderance of lower-level civil servants were Arabs, while nearly all upper-level civil servants were British.

The London and Jerusalem governments offered a range of rationales for their treatment of their employees. Central among these were lack of money, the necessities of war, and the pressures of the postwar economy.

State poverty was a fact, and was actually understated to protect morale, but within its limits the governments' budgetary decisions were often less than far-sighted. In theory, passage of the 1940 Colonial Development and Welfare Act had sealed a shift in financial policy. The doctrine of colonial self-sufficiency had given way to that of British government responsibility for certain colonial expenditures.

In practice, the costs of the war immediately took budgetary priority. When the war ended, colonies remained at a disadvantage in the competition for funds; they now confronted the requirements not only of the metropolitan population but also of the immense war debt. In those early postwar years, the Treasury insisted that most of the funds available for the colonies go to projects that would produce income in the relatively short term, not to the longer-term investment in human capital that social services represented. Funding of colonial estimates was insufficient to sustain even a basic level of social services, or of pay for public employees. The mandate government maintained that it could neither increase taxes nor reduce other spending to make up the difference. Public employees remained underpaid for workloads increasingly heightened by a shortage of staff which the government would not pay to relieve.

The numbers of public employees and the importance of their work gave urgency to their grievances. Of necessity, then, Palestine's labour department continually concerned itself with public employees. At the same time, while the attitudes and decisions of government agencies regarding labour issues affected all workers, public employees were particularly vulnerable to official decisions. Their responses consequently reflected government attitudes and actions most directly. The Labour Department's concern for public employees often set it at odds with other government

agencies that made or executed labour policies. Labour officers quickly found that in the public, even more than the private sector, their effectiveness depended on the attitudes of administrators, some of whom regarded their employees as adversaries to overcome.¹⁷

Except at the very highest, predominantly British, levels, the mandate's civil servants themselves were consistently underpaid. In May 1943, the mixed Arab and Jewish Second Division Civil Service Association held a nationwide sit-in protest.¹⁸ Some seven thousand government employees (about five thousand of them Arabs) took part. On the first day of the planned two-day sit-in, troops expelled the civil servants sitting in at their desks. The protest did achieve something for the workers: a cost-of-living increase, which inflation rapidly eroded.¹⁹ The Second Division Association held a sixteen-minute strike in December 1944, one-hour and two-hour strikes in February 1945, and a twenty-four-hour strike in March.²⁰ By this time, its members' purchasing power had sunk to forty percent of its prewar level. Norman McLeod, the commissioner appointed to investigate civil service salaries, recommended reasonable increases -- for the (mostly British) First Division, already the highest paid.²¹ In May, Second Division employees again protested, this time threatening a day-long work stoppage. A succession of short nationwide strikes that spring brought civil servants no

definite concessions. They did prepare Second Division workers for the general strike of the following year.²²

Far more vulnerable than the civil servants were the civilians employed in the British War Department's production camps. In the military production camps, as many as sixty thousand civilian workers put in long hours under military discipline in unwholesome living and working conditions for exceptionally low pay. Roughly one hundred camps employed about thirty-five thousand Arabs, most of them in manual jobs, and fifteen thousand Jews, about two thirds of them in skilled, semi-skilled, or clerical positions. Of the Jewish employees, most were marginal members of the yishuv: young, recent immigrants from Arab countries.²³ In 1943 War Department officials flatly refused to grant these civilian workers the Wages Committee's recommended increases. In May 1947, employees at one camp complained that despite their importance to the war effort, they had received "no war bonuses like government workers."²⁴ In addition, like other public employees, they were subject to job insecurity.

The desperate need of the War Department's civilian employees was already clear when the Labour Department began its work. A shortage of food was causing rising dissatisfaction among essential workers; feeding the population had become a serious government concern. Late in 1942, Manpower Controller Edwin Mills observed that although workers in war service occupations complained about their wages, their main

concern was the lack of good food on the open market and their inability to pay for it on the black market.²⁵ The War Department's civilian employees had presented this problem in January, when those in the Haifa area issued their plea for food (see chapter 7). By autumn -- still more than a month before Mills issued his report -- the situation had united camp workers from all ethnic groups to put pressure on the government. In mid-October, the Palestine Post reported that a deputation of Jewish, Arab, and Armenian camp workers had visited the district commissioner to call for "more bread and cheaper bread."²⁶

As the region's need for wartime production eased, camp workers' concerns, like those of the workforce in general, shifted to the issues of retrenchment: layoffs, notice of layoffs, and severance pay. The military camps employed fifty thousand civilians in October 1943; by March 1944 they had reduced their workforce to less than forty-four thousand.²⁷ As the war ended, in the first ten months of 1945, they laid off twenty thousand workers.²⁸ British administrators, as usual, feared unrest among the colonized, particularly among unemployed urbanized natives. They apparently hoped that if released gradually, laid-off Arabs would return quietly to the villages they supposedly still regarded as home. Consequently, new "amenities" projects in the military camps revived the workforce, though only partially and temporarily.²⁹ In April 1946, the camps were

employing some twenty-two thousand Arabs and eight or nine thousand Jews;³⁰ a year later, on 20 May 1947, a reported forty thousand camp workers were holding a countrywide protest strike. The immediate issue was layoffs; at the same time, the district labour inspector drew attention to long-standing grievances in the camps.³¹

In defense of the camp workers, the Labour Department throughout its existence engaged the military on issues it considered basic to modern labour relations. The three to which the department devoted the greatest attention were workplace inspection, worker's compensation, and worker representation. On none of these was it able to achieve a clear success.

Inspection was a source of friction from the beginning. The regional inspectors who had served as Ministry of Labour factory inspectors were aware that the military posture in Palestine deviated from that in Britain. In the metropole, government factory inspectors visited "without question" any military camps and workshops that employed civilians. In Palestine, camp authorities strongly resisted labour officers' attempts to visit their workplaces. The inspectors rejected discrimination between workers in Britain and their counterparts in Palestine.³²

In December 1943, after a six-month delay, representatives of the mandate government and the War Department met to seek an arrangement for empowering labour inspectors to

visit the army's civilian work camps. The process was completed only in May 1944.³³ Throughout the negotiations, the civilians took pains to avoid insulting the military, emphasizing that they were in no way "imputing to service installations any backwardness in . . . conditions." They only wanted, through the Labour Department, to offer cooperation and advice.³⁴

Cooperation and advice were, indeed, all that the civilian authority was empowered to offer the military, on conditions or any other matter. The attorney general had rendered an opinion that regarding the installations of the armed forces, the Labour Department could function in an advisory capacity only. The armed forces were not liable to prosecution for failing to carry out Labour Department orders: diplomatic sanctions were the only ones to which they would be subject.³⁵ The labour inspectors thus had no power to resolve civilian workers' disputes with the military. Though the department's annual reports noted any large job action at the production camps, they accordingly excluded such actions from their statistics. When the forty thousand camp workers struck in May 1947, the regional labour inspector could do nothing.³⁶

A second basic source of tensions between the Labour Department and the military hierarchy was workers' compensation. War Department officials refused to comply with Palestinian law requiring certain levels of compensation for

workers injured on the job. By the beginning of November 1942, soon after the Labour Department began full operation, Graves had fought and lost a campaign on this issue. Citing Treasury concerns, the mandate government granted the military's request for legislation excluding its civilian workers from workmen's compensation coverage. Rather than pay weekly compensation to permanently disabled workers, the War Department insisted on lump sum payments "in order to put an end to their obligations as soon as possible." Graves settled for some improvements in benefits.³⁷ The Labour Department's annual report for 1942 put a brave face on the compromise. Civilian employees of the military were left outside the coverage of the workers' compensation ordinance, it noted, but some had eventually gotten increased compensation.³⁸

Acknowledgement of workers' right to represent themselves to management was a third aim of Labour Department pressure on the military. In this effort Graves achieved even less, and apparently with less support from the mandate government, than in the cases of inspection and compensation. Characteristically, Graves did not express his position simply in terms of the interest of workers. Applying the tripartite ILO pattern which he so strongly favoured, he emphasized the practical advantages to employer and government of empowering workers to advocate for themselves. Referring in 1943 to a demand by workers and unions that the

military authorities recognize workers committees, he offered evidence that such committees promoted both productivity and labour peace. Officers supervising some military establishments had recognized such committees; they reported that the move had increased production by improving morale. The committees had also saved supervisors' time in dealing with individual complaints. ³⁹

The officers' views did not convince military policymakers. Only in the summer of 1947, a week before the United Nations report that signaled the close of the mandate, would the War Department agree to recognize workers representatives -- and even then only in future. The British military's treatment of civilian workers, which had quickly become a continual source of unrest, would remain so throughout the last years of British Palestine.

The Rulers Divided: on Economic Planning

Although the most visible, Britain's War Department was far from the only official opponent of the Labour Department's attempts to establish modern rights and working conditions for Palestine's workers. The colony's central authorities also presented obstacles. In Palestine as elsewhere, executive hesitations and reservations, both fiscal and ideological, hampered Labour Department efforts to maintain labour peace through strong unions and good-faith bargaining.

When the mandate government began planning its postwar policies, the Labour Department learned -- if it did not already know -- that despite the praise that the London and Jerusalem governments had showered upon it, it could expect important parts of the administration to starkly oppose its modern viewpoint. Labour and secretariat officials expressed widely diverging approaches to planning for the postwar economic structure. Policies on unemployment and wages, two closely related factors in workers' well-being and power, quickly became central topics of contention.

As reductions in military production began to idle Palestinian workers, the Labour Department proposed a program of economic development designed on lines that were increasingly popular among Colonial Office planners in London. Instead, the mandate government moved towards restoring the prewar economic structure. Its decision echoed the fear, once common throughout the colonial empire, of a stabilized native urban working class, with the concomitant danger of unemployed masses. To administrators, the safer course was to send laid-off Arab workers back to their villages.

In early 1944 the labour adviser to Britain's minister resident in the Middle East, an economist from the University College of Nottingham, was working on a regional forecast on the postwar economy, to be completed in six months. His initial findings concerning Palestine so alarmed him, however, that in March he issued a special preliminary

report on the territory. This document spread his apprehension to bureaucrats both in Jerusalem and in London. The adviser, a Prof. Peers, noted that high wartime wages could have disastrous effects on Palestine's postwar ability to export its products. Although the successive wartime pay increases had been driven by temporary cost-of-living allowances, they would, bureaucrats feared, prove difficult to reverse in the interests of competitiveness.⁴⁰

Graves himself shared this apprehension; it underlay his refusal to allow contractual pay increases that exceeded official limits (see chapter 7).⁴¹ The terms in which Graves acknowledged the problem, however, emphasized his department's distinct, and most up-to-date, position on workers' welfare. He began by pointing out that the department advocated good wages, high safety and health standards, and "modern conditions" in such areas as sick leave and holidays. Only then did he warn that these conditions were possible only when industry prospered; progress could not surpass economic development.⁴² While regarding the labour relations problem from the common government viewpoint, the Labour Department used its own lens.

In proposing solutions, too, the labour officials' perspective differed from that of the secretariat. Maintaining their long-term, modern approach, they proposed to make Palestine competitive by increasing productivity. Given the official fear of inflation, higher pay was hardly a suitable

incentive; instead, the department suggested more comfortable working conditions and stronger welfare provisions.⁴³

The secretariat's response to the threat of economic competition illustrated the differences in viewpoint that increasingly divided officials. Despite initial layoffs from the military camps, unemployment had remained low through 1943 -- too low for some.⁴⁴ Assistant Secretary Montague Brown, a certified accountant, was among those concerned for entrepreneurs rather than workers. In March 1944, Brown suggested that "a modest reservoir of unemployment in the future may be helpful in reducing wages and the price level." The comment of Deputy Labour Director Couzens claimed both the moral and the practical high ground: "Neither his humanity nor his economics is impeccable."⁴⁵

As workers struggled to keep up with inflation, Brown warned against protecting them too vigorously. The Labour Department's reputation was evidently such that Brown chose to take issue with its goals through acknowledging its effectiveness:

The Department of Labour is not only very efficient but is in danger of becoming too efficient and going ahead too quickly. I have the impression that there is a tendency to over-import legislation on the lines of that in U.K.

Brown claimed to "have every admiration for the excellent work being done by this newly created and highly efficient Department of Labour." He acknowledged that modern labour legislation could increase productivity as well as workers'

health and standard of living. Yet he could not, he said, help feeling that "over-doing it . . . may do more harm to the country than good."⁴⁶ Six months later, Brown was expressing open opposition to the department's efforts to support workers' incomes, complaining that "in many ways what this Govt tries to do with its right hand to lower the cost of living, the Dept of Labour undoes with its left hand!" In support, he cited a Palestine Post piece (by "Businessman") calling for a lowering of both pay and the cost of living to prepare for postwar "rehabilitation."⁴⁷

This basic opposition between central administrators and labour officers placed Palestine once again in the mainstream of colonial labour administration. In other colonies, however, the friction was more likely to concern race than class. In March 1947, five years after Palestine had accepted the union official Chudleigh for assignment to the Labour Department, Northern Rhodesia accepted William Comrie, another union activist, assigning him to Kitwe, on the Copperbelt, to deal with African workers. According to an official estimation, Comrie "had great success in this post, and earned the trust of the Africans whom he dealt with. He was however suspected, probably unjustly, by certain employers of a pro-African political bias."⁴⁸

Taking a different view of native workers than its counterpart in Palestine, the colonial government sharply rebuked the labour officer for encouraging Africans to form

unions. By March 1952, when Comrie's contract was due for renewal, relations had so deteriorated that he refused a transfer to the capital to serve as adviser on union matters -- refused, in fact, to work for the Colonial Office anywhere in the world. The Northern Rhodesia government recommended that any successor to Comrie give more attention to developing African unions that were not on the Copperbelt.⁴⁹

In Palestine, the friction between Labour Department and secretariat did not reach the point of open breach. As in other colonies, however, the discord kept labour officers from being as effective as they might otherwise have been. The department's attempts to advocate for workers, already limited by the stubbornness of the British military and by the government's budgetary priorities, met determined opposition to its basic principles within the Jerusalem bureaucracy. Equally damaging, however, would be the limitations, ideological and fiscal, of the department itself.

Limitations of the Labour Department

Soon after the Palestine Labour Department began full functioning, its limitations began to appear. As discussed above, the agency was unable to protect workers from government budget or policy decisions limiting their pay, working conditions, or right to represent themselves. Beyond that, some of its own rulings were based on principles that workers rejected. The mandate government's budget limita-

tions and its priorities limited the department's staffing levels and pay structure, increasing the workload and depressing the morale of its staff -- who were, after all, themselves public employees. In this situation, labour officers had little chance of showing workers that entering into modern, orderly industrial relations would protect them and their standard of living.

Labour Department policies, largely based on principles of the International Labour Organization but also on received economic theory, often diverged from workers' perceived rights. Disagreements with the Histadrut were the most conspicuous, but far from the only, examples. As noted above, Graves insisted on observance of the mandate regulation restricting pay increases, disallowing frequent attempts by employees to extract, and by employers to grant, pay increases beyond the current legal maximum. Beyond their formal legitimacy, he insisted, the pay limits were necessary barriers to inflation. Workers regarded the regulations he upheld as barriers to a barely decent standard of living.

Besides making unpopular decisions of its own, the Labour Department was increasingly involved in administering a set of highly unpopular administrative orders. In 1942, the mandate government established a wartime workforce control policy through a set of Defence (War Services Occupations) Regulations. This legislation was intended to keep workers from leaving jobs considered necessary to the war

effort.⁵⁰ Orders under the regulations covered both skilled and unskilled workers in eighteen work locations, including those of five government departments: railroad, post and telegraph, Haifa Harbour, printing, and public works. They also covered petroleum workers and every skilled and semi-skilled worker in the British military installations, as well as in fifty-five industrial enterprises engaged mainly in fulfilling war contracts.⁵¹ Other orders controlled fourteen specific occupations, from scientific research to chartered accountancy. By the end of November 1942, Controller of Man-Power Edwin Mills (formerly a government statistician) estimated that the regulations were keeping some fifty thousand workers in War Department installations, and about seven thousand in industry, in their jobs despite the availability of higher pay elsewhere. At the same time, Mills admitted that wage levels affected the supply of labour for the listed jobs and the growth of that supply.⁵²

When the workforce control regulation came into effect in the autumn of 1942, Mills, who was responsible for its enforcement, encountered immediate and vigorous resistance from the Histadrut.⁵³ The conglomerate, he complained, refused to take part in his government-labour-employer advisory committee on the grounds that the government should have consulted it before adopting the regulation. The Histadrut also complained that the regulation did not require the high commissioner to take "fair conditions of

labour" into account before designating a war service occupation.⁵⁴

In fact, no argument or gesture of the manpower controller could render tolerable to workers their confinement in jobs which were in many cases -- especially in the military work camps -- underpaid, unwholesome, and harshly supervised. Protest of the manpower control regulations continued throughout the course of the war. Taqqu argues further that, by enforcing a stabilization of groups of colleagues in the same workplace and occupation, the regulation nurtured worker militancy.⁵⁵

Although the initial administration of the workforce control ordinance did not fall to the newly opened Labour Department, department officers were increasingly implicated in its operation.⁵⁶ As Mills described his task, it bore directly on working conditions. The administration of the ordinance was to keep workers in essential enterprises "where conditions of wage and work [were] suitable." It was further "to bring within the jurisdiction of the controller certain classes of industrial offences." Both assignments brought the Labour Department into the deliberations of the manpower controller.⁵⁷

From the beginning, Graves was one of three members of the panel hearing appeals from Mills's decisions; Chudleigh assisted Mills on vocational training matters. The first deputy controller of manpower, appointed in 1943, was Deputy

Labour Director Couzens.⁵⁸ Department staff foresaw increasing involvement as the order came to regulate conditions of employment, wages, and safety and welfare.⁵⁹ The following year, Graves himself replaced Mills as controller,⁶⁰ a position he held along with his Labour Department post. The regional inspectors of labour were then assigned to function as regional controllers of manpower; the public thus identified the department with the hated regulation, although the inspectors reportedly disliked the measure as much as workers did.⁶¹

Besides the department's lack of power within the government and its association with unpopular policies, budgetary constraints limited its capacity to help workers. The manpower regulations did not protect the Labour Department. The availability of more attractive jobs combined with a perpetual shortage of positions to keep department employees at all levels overworked and underpaid.

Almost as soon as the staff began operations, the regional inspectors began asking for more assistants. As early as December 1942, K. L. Sanders inaugurated a long series of staffing complaints to Couzens, as chief inspector. Disputes were so frequent in his Southern Region, he said, that he and his staff had no time to devote to their major assignment, workplace inspection. Nor could they keep up even with the disputes. Of seventeen reported in their six-week existence, they had been able to deal with

barely a third in any way whatsoever. At the same time, new enterprises had created a need for more women's workplace visits. He urgently needed another Arab male and another Jewish female assistant inspector, as well as more clerical staff.⁶² Despite Sanders' pleas and the similar complaints of his colleagues, Couzens refused even to ask for more staff in the agency's first months. At last, the following autumn, the Labour Department engaged four new sub-inspectors.⁶³

Within a year, citing increased responsibilities, Sanders made an ambitious request for new staff for the fiscal year beginning in the spring of 1945. The Labour Department's reputation for energy and efficiency had attracted new assignments: responsibility for administration of the worker mobility regulations, new on-the-job accident and occupational disease reports, and new regulations on working conditions of women and young people. Sanders asked for two more assistant inspectors.⁶⁴ In addition, he could barely keep his regional office open: he needed three more support workers. To recruit secretaries at the authorized rates of pay, or even to keep them, was proving impossible. The few who accepted positions soon left -- some in less than a week -- for better jobs.⁶⁵

Rather than offer its employees competitive salaries, the mandate government took administrative measures to address their practical difficulties. In the autumn of 1945,

the chief secretary offered to ease conditions for hard-pressed staff members. His rationale was not overtly financial: public transit, he noted, was scarce; footwear and raincoats, both scarce and expensive; and standard time was about to return, sending workers home after nightfall. In response, he proposed an experiment in discontinuing afternoon hours, instead opening offices from 7:30 to 14:10 with a twenty-minute break.⁶⁶

Sanders apparently rejected this suggestion on behalf of the Southern Region office, for the Tel Aviv office staff quickly protested, in terms that laid bare the real benefit of afternoon closures. Nine clerical workers signed a memorandum asking that the office observe the new hours. They needed this change, they said, because they had to work at other jobs in the afternoon in order to make up for their low pay. Coming back to the office would, in addition, require them to pay extra transportation costs.⁶⁷

The employees partly achieved their aims. They were perhaps fortunate that at that moment Chudleigh was acting as regional inspector in Sanders' absence. The former union official conceded that the office could open "with skeleton staff a couple of afternoons a week."⁶⁸

The general unrest among the mandate's civil servants had reached the department staff as early as May 1943, when the Second Division Civil Service Association held its first nationwide sit-in (see above). In the Southern Region of-

fice, Sanders wrote to five members of his staff. Professing some sympathy with the civil servants' current pay claims, he pointed out that the government had not yet decided on its response. He therefore warned his staff against taking part in what he called "a stay-in protest strike," arguing that given the department's "peculiarly close relations . . . with regard to labour and conditions of work," its employees' participation in "action involving strike" was "highly undesirable."⁶⁹

Reminding their chief that a sit-in is not a strike, the staff collectively retorted: "The Department of Labour, whose intention is to promote labour conditions in this country (wages etc.), should have seen to it that its clerical staff be treated in the same manner." They would, they said, abide by the decisions of their union.⁷⁰

When, two years later, Second Division employees of the Labour Department joined their union's threat of a one-day strike, Graves attempted to dissuade them. The colonial secretary was studying a report on pay, he said, and was aware of the union's warning. The high commissioner was sympathetic but regarded the threat as ill-timed. Graves himself felt that it could not benefit the workers and might affect the high commissioner's goodwill towards them, which he considered "very genuine."⁷¹ The civil service union found the responses of the colonial secretary and high com-

missioner unsatisfactory; the following spring, civil servants joined the public workers' general strike.

Ultimately, neither policy disagreements nor budgetary stringencies but nationalist politics and the violence it evoked proved the insurmountable hindrance to the Labour Department's work. In August 1947 and again early in 1948, terrorist actions forced the agency's central and regional offices in Jerusalem to find new locations.⁷² By December 1947, the regional labour inspectors were informing district commissioners that Palestine's civil war was preventing them from carrying out inspections in many areas of the country. In fact, some enterprises had closed because their employees could not reach them safely.⁷³ The situation steadily worsened.⁷⁴ After the Northern Region report for February 1948, the record of liaison between the regional inspectors of labour and the district commissioners ceases.⁷⁵

By May the Palestine Labour Department was distributing its office furniture and trying to maintain contact with its local staff as the fighting dispersed them. The outcome of the department's contentions with the secretariat, the security services, the military enterprises, the settler conglomerate, the native labour federations, and the civil service unions was simply that as the department disappeared, almost all of its local adversaries disappeared with it. The Histadrut alone remained.

Notes

¹Jeffries to Richards, Jamaica, 22 November 1941, PRO, CO 859/59/10.

²"Trade Disputes in Palestine during the War," Department of Labour Bulletin 10, MSS Brit. emp. s. 365, Rhodes House Library, Oxford University, 13.

³Ibid., 11.

⁴According to the Labour Department, the Joint Jewish Rural Exchanges had had an even more dramatic effect: agricultural strikes had virtually ceased since 1940, when the exchanges took over recruiting for the citrus belt (ibid.).

⁵"Labour Disputes in Palestine in 1943," Department of Labour Bulletin 6 (January - March 1944), MSS Brit. emp. s. 365 (Fabian Colonial Bureau papers), Rhodes House Library, Oxford University, box 176, file 2, 2.

⁶"Trade Disputes in Palestine during the War," 12.

⁷A. H. Couzens, "Arabs and Communism," 26 January 1945, ISA, 65:3695, cited in Taqqu, "Arab Labor," 209.

⁸Government of Palestine, Survey of Palestine, 765-66; Budeiri, Palestine Communist Party, 190-94; and Gabriel Baer, "Jewish and Arab Workers: Divided or United?" Towards Union in Palestine: Essays on Zionism and Jewish-Arab Cooperation, ed. Martin Buber, Judah Magnes, and Ernst Simon (Jerusalem: IHUD [Union] Association, 1947); reprint, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1972), 78-79.

⁹Government of Palestine, Survey of Palestine, 955.

¹⁰Issa Khalaf, Politics in Palestine: Arab Factionalism and Social Disintegration, 1939-1948 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 122-23. The AHC later included Taha on a constitutional drafting committee.

¹¹District Commissioner's report, Jaffa, 3 May 1946, PRO, CO 537/1707.

¹²High commissioner to colonial secretary, 5 November 1946, PRO, CO 537/1708.

¹³Taqqu, "Arab Labor," 309.

¹⁴Graves, then serving as appointed mayor of Jerusalem, believed that the direct cause of the murder was a speech in

which Taha said, "Whether the Jews in Palestine are going to be many or few, we shall have to collaborate with them, and we had better make up our minds to that from now on." Graves, Experiment in Anarchy, 84.

¹⁵Palestine Labour Department, Annual Report for 1946, PRO, CO 814/40, 8, 9.

¹⁶Vincent Glenday, "Conditions of Arabs and Jews," 11 May 1944, PRO, CO 733/206/87253.

¹⁷At the Labour Department's July 1943 staff meeting, Chudleigh complained about the attitude of the Jerusalem district administration and municipal government. A recent strike of city employees was still festering because the other agencies involved had prevented him from securing a truly satisfactory outcome. Palestine Labour Department agendas and minutes, departmental conference 2 (1-4 July 1943), MSS Medit. s. 16, Rhodes House Library, Oxford University.

¹⁸According to Taqqu, the Second Division grew between 1938 and 1947 from more than five thousand to more than ten thousand employees. In 1946 its classified staff -- clerical, technical, and a few mid-level administrative employees, about three-fourths of them Arab -- constituted about nine-tenths of the classified civil service. Below the classified civil servants were a larger number of unclassified employees, or "subordinate staff." Taqqu, "Arab Labor," 251-52.

¹⁹Lockman, Comrades and Enemies, 333, 412-13; Taqqu, "Arab Labor," 250-69.

²⁰Taqqu, "Arab Labor," 269.

²¹L. J. Fuleihan, "Memorandum by the Palestine Civil Service (Second Division) Association on the Inadequacy of the High Cost of Living Allowances Paid to Second Division Officers," 26-page booklet (the Association, 4 June 1945), PRO, CO 733/457/15, ff. 82-96. McLeod, who visited Palestine in February 1945, was labour director for the Admiralty (*ibid.*). In 1942, the First Division was made up of 222 men and seventeen women, all British; the Second Division, of some three thousand employees. Department of Labour, "Annual Report for 1942," PRO, CO 859/56/10, 29.

²²Lockman, Comrades and Enemies, 333.

²³*Ibid.*, 292.

²⁴Levantfair Camp Arab and Jewish workers' protest committee to TUC, telegram, 9 May 1947, MRC, MSS 292/956.9/4.

²⁵Edwin Mills, report of the controller of manpower, 28 November 1942, ISA, I/LAB/91/44, item 2, 2. Mills naturally saw the problem in terms of labour supply: given the impossibility of importing food for the foreseeable future, farming had to be not only maintained, but increased.

²⁶The deputation had asserted that the price of bread had risen by 125 percent while cost-of-living allowances had raised their pay by only 25 percent, and that workers and their families could not live on the present bread rations. Besides better pay, the deputation asked for weekly supplies of basic foods -- meat, vegetables, legumes, rice, burghul, and oil -- at fair prices. "Army Workers Ask More Bread: Present Rations Insufficient," Palestine Post, 14 October 1942, 3.

²⁷In July 1943 the department believed that the camps and supporting private industries employed between fifty and sixty thousand Arab civilians. Palestine Labour Department agendas and minutes, departmental conference No. 2, MSS Medit. s. 16, Rhodes House Library, Oxford University.

²⁸Lockman, Comrades and Enemies, 336.

²⁹As early as the spring of 1944, the military authorities were absorbing some construction workers, and expecting to spend up to a million pounds, in a program to improve accommodations in the military camps. They warned, however, that the program would not offset the effects of the end of wartime construction projects. "Minutes of a conference on employment problems in Palestine held at the office of the Minister Resident in the Middle East, Cairo, on Friday, 14th April, 1944, at 10.00 hours," PRO, FO 922/12.

³⁰Lockman, Comrades and Enemies, 336.

³¹Inspector of labour, Southern Region, to district commissioner, Jaffa, Tulkarm, 6 June 1947, ISA, record group 13, box 1434, file Eb/6/1, item 37.

³²Palestine Labour Department agendas and minutes, departmental conference No. 2 (July 1943), MSS Medit.s.16, Rhodes House Library, Oxford University. Conferees noted that such resistance posed a threat not only to labour peace, but directly to production: reports from Haifa indicated that in that region "the state of affairs was likely to lead to a general withdrawal of married women from army employment."

³³Graves to chief secretary, 3 March 1944, ISA, I/LAB/20/44, item 2; chief secretary to general officer commanding, Palestine Base and L. of C. Area, 15 April 1944, ISA, I/LAB/20/44, item 7; Graves to chief secretary, 19 May 1944, ISA, I/LAB/20/44, item 11; defence security officer to chief secretary, 27 May 1944, ISA, I/LAB/20/44, item 13. Even after the military issued the initial set of passes, securing documents for a newly appointed inspector could take as long as six months.

³⁴Acting chief secretary to general officer commanding, 24 December 1943, ISA, I/LAB/20/44.

³⁵Acting chief secretary to general officer commanding, 24 December 1943, ISA, I/LAB/20/44.

³⁶Inspector of labour, Southern Region, to district commissioner, Jaffa, Tulkarm, 6 June 1947, ISA, record group 13, box 1434, file Eb/6/1. The annual statistics also excluded some large strikes in the Jewish sector, such as the diamond workers' strikes of 1943 and 1944, as well as strikes of teachers in the Va'ad Leumi schools.

³⁷[Acting] chief secretary to Boyd, "Application of Workmen's Compensation Ordinance to Civilians employed by the Forces," 9 November 1942, ISA, box 260, I/LAB/75/44, item 259a. In Egypt, the British embassy had mediated an agreement that the military's civilian employees would receive the compensations provided by Egyptian law. The military in Palestine refused to meet the mandate's more generous standard.

³⁸Palestine Labour Department, "Annual Report for 1942," PRO, CO 859/56/10, 19.

³⁹"Annual Report of the Director, Department of Labour, 1942 and 1943," section 54, ISA, I/LAB/44/42 (258/9), Vol.I.

⁴⁰R. Peers, labour adviser to Minister Resident, "Interim Report -- Palestine; Employment Problems in Relation to Present Military and Political Trends," PRO, FO 922/12 (see also "Note on Policy Questions which Will Arise on the Report of the Labour Adviser to the Minister Resident [M.E.] on the Disposal After the War of Labour at Present Employed in Connexion with the War FRE," PRO, CO 733/459/6); "The Basic Wage," Department of Labour Bulletin 6 (January-March 1944), MSS Brit. emp. s. 365, Rhodes House Library, Oxford University, 4.

⁴¹Early in 1945, he warned that the level of disputes and stoppages the previous year presaged trouble for the coun-

try's economy once its greatest customer, the British military, had vanished. "The Department of Labour in 1944," Department of Labour Bulletin 10 (January - March 1945), MSS Brit. emp. s. 365, Rhodes House Library, Oxford University, 3.

⁴²"Current Activities of the Department: Labour Legislation Contemplated," Department of Labour Bulletin 16 (July - September 1946), MSS Brit. emp. s. 365, Rhodes House Library, Oxford University, 20.

⁴³F. J. Burns Morton, "The Future Conditions of Employment," Industrial Welfare and Personnel Management, Journal of the Industrial Welfare Society, January - February 1945, (extract) in Department of Labour Bulletin 14 (January - March 1946), MSS Brit. emp. s. 365, Rhodes House Library, Oxford University, 6-7.

⁴⁴Department of Labour, Annual Report for 1943, PRO, CO 814/16, 5.

⁴⁵AHC [Couzens] to director, 30 March 1944, ISA, record group 13, box 1452, file CL/83-Me/1.

⁴⁶M.B. [Montague Brown] to Evans, "Annual Report of the Director, Department of Labour, 1942 and 1943," 16 May 1944, ISA, I/LAB/44/42 (258/9), vol. I, minute 51.

⁴⁷Brown to RAS [Robert Scott], 6 November 1944, ISA, I/LAB/44/42 (258/9), vol. 1, minute 60.

⁴⁸"Note on Mr. W. McL. Comrie," n.d. [July 1952], PRO, CO 1015/338.

⁴⁹Comrie stayed in Kitwe as a manager of brickfields; the governor eventually appointed him to represent employers on the African Labour Board. "Draft paragraph for a letter to Mr. James Griffiths," n.d. [after July 1952], PRO, CO 1015/338.

⁵⁰"Brief Survey of Labour Legislation Enacted and Published as Bills in 1943," Department of Labour Bulletin 6, MSS Brit. emp. s. 365, Rhodes House Library, Oxford University, 9; "The Department of Labour in 1945," Department of Labour Bulletin 14, MSS Brit. emp. s. 365, Rhodes House Library, Oxford University, 3.

⁵¹Taqqu, "Arab Labor," 232.

⁵²Edwin Mills, Report of the controller of manpower, 28 November 1942, ISA, record group 2, I/LAB/91/44, item 2.

⁵³Department of Labour, "Annual Report for 1942," PRO, CO 859/56/10, 26.

⁵⁴Mills, Report of the controller, ISA, record group 2, I/LAB/91/44. Couzens asserted that in carrying over its opposition from the Trade Disputes order to the War Service Occupations order, the Histadrut extended workers' aspirations from pay to working conditions. Couzens to chief secretary, 3 February 1943, PRO, CO 733/441.

⁵⁵Taqqu, "Arab Labor," 233.

⁵⁶Department of Labour, "Annual Report for 1942," PRO, CO 859/56/10, 6.

⁵⁷Mills, Report of the controller, 28 November 1942, ISA, record group 2, I/LAB/91/44, 1.

⁵⁸Graves to Hibbert, 9 August 1943, PRO, CO 859/55/6; "Brief Survey of Labour Legislation," Department of Labour Bulletin 6, MSS Brit. emp. s. 365, Rhodes House Library, Oxford University, 9.

⁵⁹Palestine Labour Department, agendas and minutes, departmental conference 2, MSS Medit. s. 16, Rhodes House Library, Oxford University.

⁶⁰"The Department of Labour in 1944," Department of Labour Bulletin 10, MSS Brit. emp. s. 365, Rhodes House Library, Oxford University, 3.

⁶¹When the workforce control measure was at last rescinded in September 1945, the department reported "the great relief of the Controller and the Regional Controllers, while no signs of mourning were noticed on the faces of workers and employers." "The Department of Labour in 1945," Department of Labour Bulletin 14, 3.

⁶²Sanders had earlier reported that during one week in October, his typist had worked fifty-one hours and his clerk fifty-eight -- and the office was still behind in its correspondence. Sanders to Couzens, 26 October 1942, ISA, record group 13, box 1426, file A/3, item 1. See also Sanders to Couzens, 1 December 1942, "Staff - Southern Region Office," ISA, record group 13, box 1426, file A/3.

⁶³Graves, "Report on Administration," PRO, CO 733/459/5, 10.

⁶⁴Sanders to chief inspector [A. H. Couzens], 30 October 1944, "Draft estimates 1945-46," ISA, record group 13, box 1426, file A/3, item 59.

⁶⁵Sanders to chief inspector [Couzens], 14 November 1944, 27 October 1944, 1 December 1944, 18 March 1945, "Draft estimates 1945-46," ISA, record group 13, box 1426, file A/3. On 14 November 1944, Sanders reported that Thea Levit had agreed to take a position in his office. Within three days, according to a note on the November file, Levit had withdrawn her application. Four days after that, the office's only Arab typist resigned. In December, Sanders reported that, given the local labour market for English-Hebrew shorthand typists, he had no hope of hiring anyone competent on the authorized terms. In March 1945 he secured the services of an eighteen-year-old typist. After eleven days on the job, she resigned to take a better-paying position.

⁶⁶Chief Secretary J. V. W. Shaw, "Office Hours," General Circular 54, 22 October 1945, ISA, record group 13, box 1426, file A/5 [1945-1946].

⁶⁷[From nine staff members] to acting regional inspector [H. E. Chudleigh], Southern Region, n.d., ISA, record group 13, box 1426, file A/3, item 83.

⁶⁸H. E. Chudleigh, acting inspector of labour, Southern Region, to all clerical, 6 November 1945, ISA, record group 13, box 1426, file A/5, item 85. Chudleigh also offered the employees some advice about the phrasing of appeals such as theirs. Supplementary employment, though understandable and unofficially acceptable, was officially forbidden. "It is just as well," he cautioned, "not to mention such employment in an official memorandum."

⁶⁹Sanders to Mr. Ur, Mr. Ben-Haim, Miss Loubman, Miss Luria, Mr. Simhon, "Protest Stay-in Strike, 24-25 May 1943," 24 May 1943, ISA, record group 13, box 1426, file A/3, item 24.

⁷⁰M. Ur, Zilla Louban, S. Ben-Haim, T. Luria, Joseph Simhon to Sanders, "'Stay-In' Protest, 24-25 May 1943," 24 May 1943, ISA, record group 13, box 1426, file A/3, item 25.

⁷¹Graves, "Notice to Second Division Staff of the Department," 19 May 1945, ISA, record group 13, box 1426, file A/3.

⁷²A. H. Fish, inspector of labour, Jerusalem Region, to district commissioner, Gaza, 5 September 1947; Sheila Ann Ogilvie, inspector of labour, Jerusalem Region, to district commissioners, Jerusalem, Samaria, and Gaza, 6 July 1947; Fish to district commissioner, Jerusalem, 6 September 1947 and 21 January 1948, ISA, record group 13, box 1434, file Eb/6/1.

⁷³Inspector of labour, Southern Region, to district commissioners, Lydda and Tulkarm, 11 January 1948; W. R. C. Keeler, inspector of labour, Northern Region, to district commissioners, Galilee and Haifa, 6 January 1948, ISA, record group 13, box 1434, file Eb/6/1.

⁷⁴Fish to district commissioners, Jerusalem, Samaria, and Gaza, 21 January 1948; Keeler to district commissioner, Galilee, 5 February 1948, ISA, record group 13, box 1434, file Eb/6/1.

⁷⁵M. E. Bell, inspector of labour, Northern Region, to district commissioner, Galilee, 11 March 1948, ISA, record group 13, box 1434, file Eb/6/1.

Chapter 9 The Struggle for Labour Exchanges, 1940-1947

The course of one British initiative illuminates the interests and strengths of the parties contesting labour policy in mandate Palestine. For seven years, various British authorities sought to establish a system of government-run labour exchanges to bring together jobseekers and jobs. Unlike similar attempts in other colonies -- here again, Northern Rhodesia furnishes an example -- this effort was protracted, and ultimately failed.

In Palestine, the conflict over job allocation aroused not only determined contention between settler institutions and colonial authorities, but dissension first among those institutions and later among those authorities themselves. It evoked a range of tensions: between the ideals of Britain's perceived "equal obligation" under the mandate and some anticipated political consequences of acting on those ideals; between the British government and the Zionist government-in-waiting; and between competing theories of colonial economic management. It drew in Arab organizations, keenly aware of the significance of the issue, but unable to determine the outcome. The intensity of the clash reflected the political and economic importance of the topic on both the practical and the ideological levels.

Importance of Job Allocation

Paid employment is centrally important to the lives of most people in capitalist economies. The kind of job available to a worker sets upper limits on both the household's material standard of living and the worker's satisfaction in daily activities. The prerogative of deciding who gets a job, and what kind of job it is, thus brings enormous power. In the mid-twentieth century, international, state, and organizational agencies openly acknowledged this power.

In the early 1930s, the International Labour Office (ILO) suggested some effects of this power at the state level as it reported on a multinational study of job allocation systems. Responding to the widespread unemployment brought by international depression, the ILO put its primary emphasis on the economic benefits of good employment exchanges. Although exchanges alone could not create jobs, they could reduce unemployment by matching workers with vacancies. At the same time, the ILO recommended placement systems as more than mere palliatives for unemployment. By organizing the labour market, such systems could help establish and maintain economic "order and stability," in the agency's phrase.¹ Order and stability were central aims of many governments during the 1930s; the ILO was thus identifying job allocation as a vital state concern.

Order and stability were certainly central aims of British colonial governments during the 1930s. As the Second

World War opened, some of these governments came to regard labour exchanges as instruments to their ends. By 1943, the governments of ten colonies -- heavily concentrated in West Africa and the West Indies -- had established at least the rudiments of exchange systems. These pioneers were colonies where employers required substantial numbers of native workers for unskilled labour; they also had no sizable bodies of settler workers.²

In Palestine, the contention over job allocation reflected the broader contest between the British claim of responsibility for natives and settler state-building intentions. From the beginning, Zionist agencies provided labour exchanges, for Jewish workers only. The Arabs, who had not been in the job market in great numbers before the First World War, established exchanges only in the mid-1940s, and then attracted too few employers. The Labour Department and other proponents of a public system repeatedly pointed out the government's obligation to end this imbalance. The Jewish Agency and the Histadrut repeatedly responded not with any rebuttal, but with an assertion that the establishment of public exchanges would threaten their power and they would not agree to it.

The Labour Department was the most determined advocate of state control over this pivotal function. The agency was in effect committed to government-run exchanges even before it officially took form. Richard Graves, the first labour

director, was (as discussed in chapter 5) an enthusiastic supporter of ILO principles. Possibly as a result of this organization's expressed concerns, as well as of Palestine's 1930s turmoil over job distribution, he began in 1941, when still labour adviser, to envision the establishment of a government-run exchange system in Palestine. The report he wrote at that time thoroughly explored the precedents and practices of labour exchanges in Palestine.³

Graves's conclusion foreshadowed the protracted struggle with the Histadrut and Jewish Agency that was to follow; this, in turn, would form a component of the power struggle between British and Zionist authorities. In Palestine, Graves asserted, the Histadrut not only controlled the labour exchanges but used them in ways alien to their original (and, in his view, their only legitimate) purpose. His observations became the basis of mandate government and Colonial Office objections both to the Histadrut exchanges and to the Jewish Agency system that superseded them in 1943.

Graves's criticisms largely rested on standards that the ILO had set forth in its 1933 report on exchanges. The central criterion was impartiality between the interests of workers and those of employers.⁴ Both should be represented, formally or informally, in the supervision of exchanges. Britain's public employment exchanges met this standard; British labour officials considered it natural to expect

similar conditions in a developed colony like Palestine.⁵ In the Histadrut system, Graves noted, employers were most certainly not represented.

The ILO urged that any fee-charging exchange aimed at profit making be abolished as rapidly as practicable; nor, ideally, should nonprofit exchanges charge fees. Here again, the international norm excluded the Histadrut system, which charged fees to jobseekers who were not union members.⁶ The ILO prescribed that private exchanges be made complementary to the public system -- a requirement that the Histadrut and Jewish Agency were to resist with all their power.⁷

Graves's report noted a further deviation of the Histadrut system from international norms: its exchanges were closely associated with trade union activities -- that is, they either engaged in or benefited from collective bargaining. The rural exchanges actually bargained contracts. In cities, where Histadrut unions did the bargaining, contracts often required employers to hire Histadrut members, through Histadrut exchanges, for all or most positions.⁸ The exchanges insisted that employers meet certain standards before they would provide workers; this, in Graves's view, amounted to a sort of tacit, one-sided collective bargaining. Where unemployment was high, the exchanges rationed jobs, dividing them up among the unemployed on their rolls, a practice that to Graves would have seemed socialistic. In fact, Graves had recently commented to the

Jewish Agency that in identifying its proposed exchanges with trade unions, it was endowing them with "a competence neither claimed nor possessed by them in any other country in the world," except possibly Mexico and the U.S.S.R.⁹

Finally, the labour adviser deplored labour organizations' use of exchanges to build up their own memberships.¹⁰ Like MacMichael in 1940, Graves in 1941 regarded the exchanges as sources not only of service but of tension. He assigned them a major responsibility, second only to ideological differences, for the strife among the Zionist parties' labour affiliates.¹¹

Graves ended his 1941 analysis of labour exchanges with a caution. The mandate government had a much better chance of persuading the Histadrut to modify its system, "which after all has probably done more good than harm," than of replacing the existing system with its own exchanges and getting the unemployed to use them against the will of the Histadrut.¹² The high commissioner's 1944 recommendation of an exchange plan would include a similar warning, with the additional note that abolishing and replacing the Jewish Agency system would require a "heavy increase in expenditure."¹³ Whatever the mandate government might do to allocate jobs, the Zionist exchanges would maintain their exceptional power over Jewish workers and their employers. This concession of Zionist compartmentalization would, with rare

deviations, characterize the British stand on exchanges throughout government discussions of the issue.

By 1941 the threat to civil order that MacMichael had perceived in 1939 had passed; the issue of job distribution was no longer of vital concern. The labour adviser's recommendations on existing and proposed labour legislation made no mention of exchanges -- in the event, no ordinance on the subject would ever be enacted. Nor did the recommendations mention the establishment of a government-run system.

Although hesitant to antagonize the Histadrut and Jewish Agency, mandate administrators considered labour exchanges important potential instruments of peace and prosperity. One of three reasons the mandate government had established its short-lived sub-department of labour in December 1921 had been to benefit employers by providing the services of labour placement.¹⁴ By the 1940s, both Labour Department officials and bureaucrats in the secretariat and Colonial Office with similar views on workers considered job allocation a long-term means of maintaining order. In the 1940 discussion of the need for a labour adviser, one bureaucrat had noted that such an official could provide technical advice for the establishment of a system of "impartial" exchanges, which the mandate government thought might help counteract the rivalry among Zionist federations.¹⁵ By mid-1944, unemployment and discontent among

Arab workers were expanding the context of the argument for establishing exchanges in the interest of security.

The mandate government was also sensitive to the concerns of Jewish employers outside of the Histadrut structure, since it relied on them for much of Palestine's economic development.¹⁶ This group now felt a need for publicly run exchanges that went far beyond their original desire to identify suitable workers: they sought to limit the Zionist institutions' power over them. The new arbitration boards instituted under the Trade Disputes Order were commonly requiring employers to recruit between 75 and 90 percent of their workers through the Jewish Agency exchanges, which had replaced most party-run systems in 1943. In his 1943 report on the operation of the order, Graves noted that both the Palestine Manufacturers' Association and individual employers objected to this stipulation. They argued that they had no part in administering the exchanges and charged that these "[were] not usually interested in supplying employers with the type of workers they want."¹⁷

Workers unaffiliated with the Histadrut also complained about the Jewish Agency exchanges: these, they said, did not offer them a fair chance for jobs in Histadrut enterprises, and workers who were unaffiliated with any union had to pay fees. As late as July 1944, the National Labour Organisation (Revisionist Zionists) and the business community's General Zionist Organisation were still operating

exchanges outside the Agency system.¹⁸ At the same time, Graves reported that several other small Zionist unions, notably the Sephardic and Oriental Workers Union, had joined the Jewish Agency exchanges only because they considered this step necessary to secure jobs for their members.¹⁹ The discontent of the small labour organizations reminded British authorities of the turmoil of the late 1930s. Regarding the requirements that employers use the Agency exchanges, Orde-Browne at the Colonial Office warned, "Even with a small percentage allowed for men from other sources, this is very like a monopoly; with the political background of Palestine, this must act as a constant irritant."²⁰

British bureaucrats and administrators thus saw several advantages to establishing a system of government exchanges, particularly in the context of the postwar economy as they foresaw it. By benefiting -- and pacifying -- workers, it might help reduce the cost of security.²¹ By supplying reliable countrywide statistics on unemployment, it could inform the mandate government on the extent and location of the problem, giving a more solid basis to economic planning.²² By filling available jobs, it could (as the ILO had pointed out) limit unemployment, such as that which had exploded in Palestine in the mid-1930s and would doubtless explode again as wartime industries laid off workers. In postwar conditions, a comprehensive, efficient exchange system would give private employers the personnel

to expand their enterprises to the limits of their markets. It would thus help develop the whole economy of Palestine, incidentally bringing about increases in both government revenue and public order. A system of government-operated labour exchanges offered many incentives to the occupying power.

Arab workers, too, recognized the benefits a government exchange system could offer. Beginning in the 1920s, as Palestine developed a wage economy and cities and industries grew, access to jobs was increasingly important to Palestinian Arabs. The land available for farming was shrinking, by foreclosures, by division among heirs, and by landlords' sales of villages and fields. Many men (and some women) had to turn to paid labour in order to support their families. Despite the rapid economic growth of the mid-1930s, only in the early years of World War II, from 1941 to 1943, did the number of available jobs approach the number of Arab jobseekers.

The Arab press expected the Labour Department to distribute jobs to Arab workers. When the agency officially opened, Jaffa's Filastin asserted that rather than limit its interest in labour to calculating how many immigrants the job market could absorb, the government would now, through its new Labour Department, study the organization of labour and improve workers' standard of living. The department would, Filastin optimistically expected, discover the number

of workers in Palestine and the occupation of each, then distribute them among enterprises.²³

Availability of jobs was important not only to the workers themselves, but to the unions that hoped to recruit them. Through the 1920s and 1930s, finding jobs for members was one of the major purposes of Arab unions and their precursor organizations.²⁴ In July 1942, as Chudleigh embarked on his efforts to encourage Arab organizing, Graves asked the chief secretary to help. Any closed shop would be out of the question, but the military and the Public Works Department could further the government's aims in fostering Arab unions by giving "favourable consideration" to at least a quota of job applications coming from those unions. The chief secretary could request such consideration.²⁵

Graves here departed significantly from the general government insistence that Arab unions be cut to the pattern of mainstream unions in Western countries. Even more significantly, he was in effect proposing that the Labour Department collaborate with other government agencies to operate a limited de facto labour exchange on behalf of Arab workers and Arab unions -- that is, supply a service analogous to that which the Zionist federations, supported by the Jewish Agency, were providing to their members. The following month the government endorsed this proposal by issuing the desired request to the military authorities and Public Works Department.²⁶

As World War II ended and layoffs threatened more and more workers, the PAWS and other Arab groups called publicly for government exchanges.²⁷ At the same time, the PAWS itself tackled the problem of distributing the available jobs by setting up a labour exchange of its own.²⁸ This was an important gesture in view of Arab workers' definition of the function of unions. At a Labour Department meeting at around this time, Southern Region Inspector Sanders found it necessary to remind workers that employment exchanges did not create employment.²⁹ In fact, the PAWS exchange had few jobs to provide. Arab employers were slow to see any advantage in using the exchange instead of the traditional village work gangs or the developing class of mass labour contractors.

To British administrators, labour exchanges were useful agencies; to Arab unions, important assets. To the Zionist institutions, the economic patronage inherent in job placement represented a means to political power.

Here the position of Palestine's settler workers differed from that of their counterparts in Northern Rhodesia. The European Mine Workers Union had not faced competition for the allegiance of settler workers; it dominated the industry that dominated the Rhodesian economy and, through that domination, could intimidate the colonial power. With this capability to dominate and intimidate, it had secured for its members a colour bar that guaranteed them a near-

monopoly on skilled and many semi-skilled jobs. Unskilled jobs they were willing to leave to Africans.

When an exchange proposal arose in Northern Rhodesia, it met with resistance, but not from the settler union. Its adversary was the colony's governor. In February 1942, the board concerned with African labour recommended that the Labour Department, working with the relevant provincial commissioners and with the board member representing African interests, set up experimental exchanges in a few selected administrative centres.³⁰ In early June, the governor, Sir John Waddington, informed the colonial secretary that in his opinion, the extra work involved in operating rural exchanges would outweigh any potential benefits.³¹ When the board met in mid-August, the labour commissioner announced that the government lacked the staff to set up exchanges.³²

Normally, the opinion of a colonial governor would close any discussion in London. In this case, Colonial Office bureaucrats, especially the labour specialists, strongly deplored the governor's position.³³ In succeeding years, change of circumstances and of governors, combined with the persistence of both London officials and advocates within the colony, gave new impetus to exchange proposals. Finally, in its report on 1946, the Northern Rhodesia Labour Department could list among the year's activities the establishment and operation of exchanges.³⁴ Unlike the colour bar and the unionization of Africans, the idea of government employ-

ment exchanges for natives in Northern Rhodesia involved solely administrative concerns. Within the settler union, it aroused little interest. Eventually, it was realized.

In Palestine, in contrast, the prospect of a system of government-operated labour exchanges presented the Histadrut and the Jewish Agency with a double threat. As noted earlier, the Zionist project required a supply of unskilled as well as skilled jobs, both to attract prospective immigrants and to win the political loyalty of settlers. Exchanges offering jobs at any level to natives would threaten the first goal; public exchanges serving Jewish jobseekers would threaten the second.³⁵

As was discussed in chapter 5, labour exchanges had further political importance, on a smaller scale than the overall interests of the Zionist project. Even after the presumably impartial Jewish Agency set up its "general" exchange system in 1943, the Zionist parties' labour federations vied for the power that job distribution conferred. Like the Jewish Agency, they looked ahead to the future Jewish state, but their interest was in the eventual distribution of political power among them.

The determined efforts of one obscure Jewish organization exemplified the importance that the competing Zionist organizations accorded to exchanges. An S. Schlouger, representing a "League for the Equal Right to Work for Every Jew," maintained a correspondence on the subject first with

Graves as labour adviser, then with Sanders as Southern Regional Inspector. Schlouger's consistent theme was the unfairness of the Histadrut labour exchanges and consequent need for a government-run system. At last, in February 1945, Sanders was able to direct him to the Labour Department's published program, which announced the government's intention to set up an exchange system in the near future.³⁶

Despite this firm expression of intent and similar statements by other branches of government, the interests of the parties contending for control of job allocation -- Arab unions as well as branches of British government and Zionist agencies -- remained both urgent and entrenched. Throughout the remainder of the mandate, Zionist control of job allocation for Jewish workers would never again go unchallenged. Nevertheless, in the spring of 1948 the existing, limited system dominated by the Histadrut passed undefeated into the service of the state of Israel. The rest of this chapter will describe (although not completely explain) how this came to be.

A Five-Year Suspense Story

Again and again, success seemed assured for the Labour Department's attempt to establish a government-run system of labour exchanges. Picking up the recent suggestions of the mandate government, the Colonial Office, and Graves himself, the department maintained the effort for virtually its

entire existence. Its first report, for 1942, noted that it was "seriously considering" the organization of employment and the establishment of public labour exchanges, along with a system for supervising the existing exchanges.³⁷ Near the end of the mandate, in October 1947, A. H. Couzens, by that time its director, was still pursuing this goal, even though the British were at that point committed to leave Palestine the following September.³⁸

Twice, in the spring of 1945 and again a year later, the proposal seemed on the verge of acceptance. Twice, Colonial Office officials set it aside. Never explicitly rejected, the plan for government-run labour exchanges encountered delays that postponed implementation. Ultimately, the Labour Department itself involuntarily helped to render the proposal irrelevant in the eyes of decision makers.

Forerunners

Even before Graves became labour adviser, two settler agencies had tried to establish exchanges outside the Zionist party framework. In 1937 the Tel Aviv municipal government set up an exchange to allocate jobs on the city's public works. Contending that they could offer too few positions for the demand, the exchange administrators refused to enroll non-union workers or members of one recently formed workers' federation. Then, in late 1939, as rising tensions among labour organizations were alarming the high com-

missioner, the Jewish Agency began establishing rural "joint labour exchanges." Within a year, these reached twenty-two villages and signed up, according to British figures, more than ten thousand workers. The Agency then tried to set up joint exchanges in towns and cities, but failed to secure the necessary agreements among the rival organizations.³⁹

During the spring of 1942, after Graves's report but before the Labour Department began operation, the mandate government found an opportunity to foster establishment of labour exchanges unaffiliated with any of the settler political factions. When the Tel Aviv city council voted to set up a municipal nonparty exchange, High Commissioner MacMichael greeted the initiative warmly. He considered local government exchanges the best solution for the shortcomings of the Histadrut system (although only in the absence of government exchanges, "which for technical reasons would be very difficult to constitute and operate"). Most local councils, MacMichael thought, included representatives of the major groups concerned with labour. Because councils were also under the mandate government's authority, officials should be able to make sure that the exchanges operated "on the right lines."⁴⁰

The government's local district administrator favoured the proposal. Graves saw in it a move to end the Histadrut system of quotas for the various Zionist parties "and generally to put labour exchanges in Palestine on a proper foot-

ing." MacMichael urged that the government approve Tel Aviv's proposal and open the possibility for other cities.⁴¹

Colonial Office bureaucrats heartily approved the idea. Tel Aviv's creation of a non-party exchange would not only help place workers, Stephen Luke noted, but also provide experience from which the mandate administration could benefit when its labour department began operations and considered setting up exchanges of its own.⁴² A month later, Hibbert, busy recruiting staff for the new department, also endorsed the idea of municipal exchanges. He, like his colleague, considered them a temporary substitute: "the next best thing" to a government system.⁴³ In late June, the mandate government, moving quickly to authorize the project, enacted the Municipal Corporations (Amendment) Ordinance, empowering city governments to "establish, maintain and regulate one or more Labour Exchanges."

The municipal exchange proposal was not to fulfill the colonialists' hopes. It had passed the Tel Aviv Council by the slimmest possible majority, of eight votes to seven.⁴⁴ Luke noted ominously, "The Labour minority on the Council seems to have voted solidly against the proposal"; Graves predicted that the Histadrut would strongly oppose the initiative as an assault on its virtual monopoly.⁴⁵ Indeed, the Tel Aviv Council suddenly abandoned the idea. In mid-August the chief secretary considered it prudent to warn Graves, "It is not for the Department to stimulate the Coun-

cil into greater activity than it was itself disposed to show." No other city took up the legal authorization.⁴⁶

Department Initiative, Mandate Support, 1943-1945

A few months after municipalities gave up the idea of establishing non-party labour exchanges, the Labour Department was considering proposals of its own. At the department's first staff conference, on 31 December 1942, Chudleigh led a detailed discussion of the idea. Regarding the failure of the Tel Aviv proposal, the conference minutes record a terse explanation that the project "clashed with various interests and gave rise to political rivalry." The department staff anticipated a crisis in unemployment when the war ended. By that time, they agreed, the government should be operating a network of exchanges that recruited all employees for government agencies and military plants. Graves warned that among other likely difficulties, the proposal would probably meet strong opposition from the Histadrut. He assured his staff that the government would not allow the project to drop.⁴⁷

As mentioned in chapter 7, both Graves in the department's first bulletin and Deputy Director Couzens in a January 1943 press conference listed the establishment of public labour exchanges among the department's eight major aims. While assuring hearers that government would consult all relevant parties, Couzens had noted that "existing Sick

Funds and similar organisations" would have to meet established standards.⁴⁸ Two weeks later, Chudleigh, the unionist responsible for Arab organizing, presented an even less accommodating outlook to a meeting of the Palestine Economic Society. Public labour exchanges, he postulated, are "inevitable in a modern industrial community." Currently, unions operated rival systems, while private exchanges and foremen exploited workers who were not members of the big Zionist federations. Evoking the fate of the Tel Aviv initiative, Chudleigh asserted that municipal exchanges could be no solution, since political agencies could prevent their establishment. Rather, the mandate government should administer the system as a general good, though it might call on the experience, even some officials, of existing exchanges. Chudleigh asserted that a public exchange system was in high demand; the government would enact enabling legislation "possibl[y] in the near future." Though admitting that the issue remained controversial, he claimed to anticipate no sustained opposition from the federations because of the benefits and protection the system would offer workers.⁴⁹

Early in April 1943, Graves presented to the chief secretary a proposal for a robust exchange system operating three regional offices, each with a qualified British director.⁵⁰ Each office would employ a Jewish inspector to supervise the Jewish-run exchanges outside the government system as well as "Jewish sections" of government exchanges. Anoth-

er inspector in each office would supervise the Arab exchanges in the government system.⁵¹ At the end of June, the mandate's executive council endorsed the establishment of government-run exchanges, with the aim of serving workers and employers from "sections of the community not already enjoying such services." To that end, the chief secretary and labour director were to explain the government's intention to the Jewish Agency and elicit the Agency's reaction, in the hope of working out any major disagreements. Next, the Labour Department's invaluable Bulletin could inform the labour organizations and the public about the accepted principles of exchanges and the government's plans.⁵²

By the time the Labour Department's second staff conference met, in July 1943, the lack of comprehensive exchanges was affecting the agency's work. Inspectors complained that they were spending valuable time helping individuals locate jobs. While they and their assistants deplored the need for this use of their capability, they found that given the lack of public exchanges, they could manage a certain amount of such activity.⁵³

Since the radical wartime economic growth had eased unemployment, participants in the July 1943 staff conference discussed exchanges primarily as means to provide for those left out of the Zionist systems. Arabs could justifiably turn to the department for help in finding work; unorganized Jewish workers, who allegedly were paying sizable fees to

use the Jewish Agency's general exchange in Tel Aviv, also needed government help.⁵⁴

At this point the prospect for public exchanges was encouraging. Graves assured the staff meeting that the mandate government had given the department's proposal a sympathetic hearing; he hoped that discussions would soon begin with the relevant agencies.⁵⁵ In the meantime, the Bulletin's July-September 1943 issue made its contribution to the campaign, describing the basic principles of public exchanges and Palestine's need for such institutions.⁵⁶

Despite this hopeful beginning, Graves was in late October still seeking the mandate government's endorsement of the plan. Responding to a request for an analysis of veterans' needs after the war, he proposed, among other measures, the establishment of registers of veterans seeking work and of employers, public and private, seeking workers. In this context, Graves pressed for a decision on his proposal of six months before. Without a system of government-run employment exchanges, he believed, carrying out his suggestions in any effective way would be nearly impossible. The yishuv's exchanges could address the problems of demobilization, but they would presumably retain their familiar objectionable features. To eradicate these, the Jewish Agency exchanges should become part of a comprehensive system. "Such integration," Graves noted carefully,

"would not be designed to destroy the individuality of the Jewish exchanges."⁵⁷

By early December 1943, wartime financial priorities had apparently taken their toll on the exchange proposal's progress. Graves asked the chief secretary for authorization to continue discussions with the relevant groups. That functionary apparently answered that the mandate government would not proceed with any proposals which would involve increased spending, especially if they were politically sensitive. A few months later, Prof. Peers, labour adviser to the minister resident in the Middle East, summarized this correspondence in his March 1944 interim report on Palestine's postwar economic prospects (see chapter 8). Peers assumed that the mandate government had never sent the exchange proposal to the colonial secretary. The failure shocked the adviser; he considered it "hardly possible now to conceive of any civilised industrial country in which [exchanges] are not part of the normal machinery of Government."⁵⁸

In Palestine, Peers believed, a system of exchanges was vital to organize labour for expected drastic shifts in the job market. He criticized the recurring fallacy that Arab workers laid off from wartime jobs would simply go back to their villages and be "reabsorbed" into farming. On the contrary, Peers maintained: Arab jobseekers not only existed, but were forced to deal with private employment agen-

cies. He cited one, in Haifa, which for a job placement charged at least 60 percent of a day's pay.⁵⁹

Peers urged the government to give the exchange proposal immediate high priority. Meanwhile, it should begin registering the civilian workers in military workshops and installations and in private companies with military contracts. It could also ask the Jewish Agency for the use of its relevant records. Optimistically, Peers also recommended negotiations to include, "if possible," the existing Agency exchanges in any government system. Convinced that a serious unemployment problem would appear as soon as the war ended, Peers urged the government to begin these preparations without delay. He proposed that the Labour Department, which he regarded highly, help prepare for the coming crisis. Its district offices could begin registering workers whose jobs would probably end with the war. These records would be useful to the government exchanges (which he did not envision placing under the department's administration), once they came into being.⁶⁰

Through the spring of 1944, the stalemate between fiscal concerns and postwar planning apparently persisted. Finally, in July, the high commissioner forwarded to the colonial secretary the proposals Graves had submitted in April 1943.⁶¹ In the accompanying message, he explicitly rejected the idea of competing with the Jewish Agency exchanges or of "challenging their legitimate interests." Rather, the

government system and existing network were to be complementary -- a plan that would also avoid considerable expenditure. The high commissioner suggested the procedure that his Executive Council had proposed a year earlier: the chief secretary and Graves would explain the government's intentions to the Jewish Agency, discover the Agency's response, and attempt to remove any major objections.⁶²

Colonial Office bureaucrats understood the need for a government system. They saw three disadvantages in the Jewish Agency exchanges: they left out part of the population; they were essentially political; and they used methods that the government could not sanction.⁶³ In mid-August 1944, the Colonial Office approved Palestine's employment exchange proposal -- but on the condition that two other, powerful agencies also consent. Minuting the proposed expenditure of £35,000 a year, one bureaucrat pointed out that in the uncertain eventuality that talks with the Jewish Agency went well, Treasury approval would be necessary.⁶⁴

In late August, Jewish Agency representatives met with Graves and the chief secretary to hear the government's aims. They agreed that the head of their labour department would meet with Graves to discuss the proposal in detail. Early in October, before those discussions proceeded, the Jewish Agency sent the government a warning: no publicly operated exchange system was to serve Jews. Its own exchanges were open to all Jewish workers, regardless of party or fed-

eration. For government exchanges to serve Jewish workers could arouse the "industrial unrest" whose prospect so frightened colonial administrators.⁶⁵ In mid-November, the Agency wrote to Graves reiterating the point:

It would not be expedient for the Government labour bureaus to deal with Jewish workers. If they did the result would be competition that might endanger the existence of our labour bureaus and give rise to incessant disputes. . . . Government should agree that only our bureaus should deal with Jewish workers and with Jews seeking employment.⁶⁶

Within a few weeks, discussion between government and Agency broke down. In a secret dispatch of 31 December 1944, High Commissioner Gort reported that talks had ended without result. The rupture, he said, arose primarily from the Agency's insistence on total control of a social service with "considerable political potentialities." The government, for its part, demanded that the Jewish Agency exchanges conform to six principles, based on ILO conventions, which required equity, openness, avoidance of union functions or control, and service without fee. Clearly, he commented, the Agency was so dominated by the Histadrut that it had neither the power nor the authority to make its exchanges comply.⁶⁷

According to Gort, the Agency registered no objection concerning fees, union functions, or accessibility to all. It flatly rejected demands for employer participation in exchange administration and government access to its exchanges' records. Government and Agency also reached impasse

over contract clauses specifying use of particular exchanges. Contracts covering Jewish workers generally required employers to hire between 80 and 90 percent of their workforce through the Agency's exchanges. Losing this near-monopoly on jobs would limit the power of the Histadrut, which Gort believed held overriding influence over the Agency exchanges. Here the high commissioner invoked the principle of freedom of conscience: Agency exchanges required every registrant to accept Jewish Agency authority and Histadrut discipline, regardless of personal principles. He also recognized the government's interest in this issue; exchange requirements in contracts could constitute a boycott of the planned government system.

Facing the apparent impossibility of reaching any agreement with the Jewish Agency, the high commissioner (with the support of his Executive Council) defied the settler bodies. As soon as possible, they urged, the government should set up a British-style public employment exchange system to help all employers and workers, Arab or Jew. Nonprofit exchanges could continue to operate if they carried out no trade union functions or contract relations and kept statistics available to the government. Gort foresaw that the small Arab union exchanges would close as soon as the new system opened. The National Labour Organisation (Revisionist) exchanges also would probably close after a dignified but brief delay. Eventually, Gort supposed, the

Jewish Agency exchanges might either meet the government's standards or be absorbed into the public system.

In support of his proposal, Gort invoked the employment crisis consequent on the war's end (now plainly near at hand) which Prof. Peers had forecast the previous spring. The government must set up exchanges immediately, for soon the military would be laying off about 110,000 direct or contracted employees. Employment exchanges, the high commissioner concluded, were "a necessary and an integral part of Government administration."

News reached labour officers at their February 1945 staff meeting that the mandate government intended, if the London government agreed, to set up a nationwide system of labour exchanges. These were not to "interfere with any existing non-profit making exchange" -- that is, the Zionists' exchanges. Unlike the Zionist system, however, the government's exchanges would provide their services to anyone who wanted to use them.⁶⁸

The following week, High Commissioner Gort wrote to Colonial Secretary Oliver Stanley to explain the new services Palestine required for postwar readjustment, which appeared in the draft estimates for the 1945-46 budget year. Of these, he considered the system of government-run labour exchanges the most urgently needed; he asked for a quick decision on funding for it. A total of £50,000 was to cover initial costs, the first year's operation, and a £10,000

subsidy for the complementary Jewish Agency system. Gort's rationale for this priority was that in the postwar period the Labour Department would become more and more important, both in reducing unemployment and in re-establishing demobilized veterans in civilian life. "It is essential," he concluded, "that the reinforcement from the United Kingdom be obtained with a minimum of delay."⁶⁹

Detention in the Colonial Office

At the Colonial Office, avoiding delay on this issue was not a major preoccupation; the file containing the high commissioner's request disappeared for nearly two months, apparently misfiled among postwar economic projections. Received at the beginning of 1945, it occasioned heated discussion, but not until late April and May. Bureaucrats acknowledged the need for a public exchange system, but discovered a severe financial obstacle. One official familiar with applicants from the Labour Ministry was positive that three qualified regional exchange managers could not be found for the salary offered "unless women were taken."⁷⁰ Another, apparently oblivious to the proliferation of colonial labour exchanges (noted above), regarded the project as an instance of the special programs that Palestine's government habitually demanded.⁷¹

In this as in other situations, the Colonial Office bureaucrats were shying away from conflict with the Trea-

sury. Customarily, however, they were equally reluctant to confront organized settlers in any "white man's country." In Northern Rhodesia, the resistance of white miners, with their power to cut off copper supplies, sufficed to keep the Colonial Office from making a stand against the colour bar. Policy making in Palestine had followed the same pattern. The Jewish Agency, with its political supporters in Britain and America, was a formidable antagonist. In relation to labour exchanges, the mandate government had taken care to require that any public system explicitly renounce competition with the Zionist exchanges.⁷² Graves had taken similarly conciliatory positions in his report as labour adviser.⁷³

This discretion apparently satisfied Colonial Office bureaucrats' customary timidity in face of organized settler workers, for in the spring of 1945, they seemed willing to support the mandate government's exchange proposal. One official warned of the Histadrut's power within the Jewish Agency and the political hazards -- especially at this time and on this issue -- of any attempt to limit the influence of these two bodies. Yet he saw in Gort's proposals no "declaration of war" on either of them. Other officials, too, while respecting the importance of settler reaction, apparently believed that in this instance the government could overcome it. C. A. Grossmith of the Social Services Department reminded his colleagues of the Jewish Agency's earlier warning that it "would view with grave concern the inclusion

in the proposed Government employment exchange of any section for dealing with Jewish labour," and its accompanying threat of "friction and [very likely] industrial unrest." Like Gort, he counselled defiance: "Clearly the Government scheme must be without regard to race or religion and should cater for such Jews who might wish to take advantage of it." In any event, he predicted, the Jews among the more than 100,000 workers who would need jobs at war's end would overwhelm the Agency exchanges.⁷⁴ Similarly, C. G. Eastwood, the assistant secretary for the Middle East, was not ready to start a fight over the Jewish Agency exchanges but believed that the government's proposal would not do so.⁷⁵

Still, the need for exchanges was less evident to bureaucrats as the war closed in April and May 1945 than it had been to Gort the previous December. One official noted both the expense and the lessening urgency of establishing government exchanges; he nevertheless anticipated that "as so often in Palestine, politics will mainly determine the decision." It would, he believed, "be very hard to avoid providing for the Arabs at Govt. expense a service with which the Jews provide themselves."⁷⁶ A second bureaucrat pointed out that Palestine was encountering far fewer postwar economic problems (with "political complications") than either Peers, the economics consultant, or the Colonial Office had expected. This official recommended conferring with Peers (who had returned from his Cairo mission) on

Gort's proposal in light of these changes before presenting the proposal to the Treasury.⁷⁷

Peers, when consulted, maintained his vigorous advocacy of the public exchange system, but on new grounds. The rationales he now offered were independent of postwar unemployment levels. In emphasizing issues of equity and authority, he took up themes that the Labour Department and high commissioner had employed from the beginning, and to which they were about to return.

Peers rested his primary arguments on the need to curb the power of the Histadrut in several ways. First, workers should be able to seek jobs without compromising their freedom of conscience or of association. In addition, no private entity should have the power to coerce workers and employers by controlling both jobs and labour supply. Nor, finally, should the mandate government be in the "undignified and improper" situation -- made worse by the urgent need for postwar planning -- of getting its unemployment statistics from the Jewish Agency, which in turn got them from the Histadrut. Peers believed that these bodies concealed unemployment figures "for political reasons" (presumably to increase immigration quotas). As for expense, Peers pointed out that the proposed Palestine system would cost no more than that of the district of Nottingham, which had a comparable workforce.⁷⁸

On receiving this firm endorsement, Eastwood concluded that, although he personally had misgivings, the Colonial Office should approach the Treasury about the plan, and he recommended asking the Ministry of Labour whether it could offer potential recruits.⁷⁹

To the new deputy colonial under-secretary, the weight of politics seemed actually to favour the proposal. Arthur Dawe picked up a recurrent theme of two decades of debate over mandate administration: the need to support "the legitimate government of the country" against the overgrown Zionist apparatus so that it could "discharge the proper functions of administration." To Dawe, the strong case for ending the monopoly of the Agency exchange system made this an appropriate instance for "making a push" to support the high commissioner.⁸⁰

The day after Dawe urged acceptance of the plan, settler opposition, repeatedly noted and discounted in the Colonial Office debate over exchanges, suddenly reappeared as the decisive factor. In a minute addressed to the colonial secretary, Sir George Gater, the permanent under-secretary and Dawe's superior, cited this opposition as sufficient reason to dismiss the project altogether. For government exchanges to serve Jews as well as Arabs "would constitute a challenge to the existing Jewish exchanges." Like his colleagues, Gater considered the moment ill-chosen for a confrontation with the settler bodies. Reading Gort's

account of discussions with the Jewish Agency, he concluded, unlike the others, that the settler institutions would mobilize to head off this challenge. He did not, he emphasized, condone the stand of the Agency exchanges: it was "quite monstrous and indefensible." He nevertheless offered a further double argument, based on circumstances, against the government's plan: the time was inopportune either to approach the Labour Ministry in search of suitable staff from exchanges in Britain or to increase the cost of mandate administration.⁸¹ The following week, the colonial secretary told the high commissioner that the exchange project was not politically, administratively, or financially feasible at that time.⁸²

Persistent Advocacy

Despite this rebuff, the mandate government continued to consider the project. In early July, a month after the colonial secretary's apparently final dispatch on the matter, the Labour Department staff conference heard that that dignitary had also accepted the question of national employment exchanges "in principle."⁸³ Around the same time, Graves told K. L. Sanders of the Southern Region that he was preparing to undertake official discussions with the Histadrut on the issue of public exchanges.⁸⁴

Toward the end of August, Britain's National Council for Civil Liberties reported complaints from an unnamed

group in Palestine that a single private exchange system controlled job distribution there.⁸⁵ Officials designed a response to forestall a question on the subject in Parliament: "These exchanges do not cater for Arabs and Mr. [Colonial] Secretary Hall is aware of the desirability of instituting exchanges with a wider scope when circumstances permit."⁸⁶ Mr. Secretary Hall, in fact, may have brought a new perspective to the issue: veteran of the South Wales Miners' Union and a quarter-century in Parliament, he had taken office in late July upon the electoral victory of Britain's Labour Party.

Proponents of the government scheme could cite a certain amount of support within the yishuv, where opinion on the public exchange proposal remained split on party and class lines. In his 1941 report as labour adviser, Graves had set forth in detail, and apparently endorsed, both employers' complaints and the minority federations' allegations of unfairness.⁸⁷ Four years later, representatives of the Revisionists' National Labour Organization and of the Manufacturers' Association had told Graves once again that the Jewish Agency exchanges were unfair to employers and to workers who did not belong to the Histadrut. They also alleged that Histadrut leaders, "the absolute masters in the politics of employment exchanges," regarded control of employment as one of their strongest weapons, but one which required total authority over any labour exchange serving

Jewish workers and employers. They warned that both Jewish Agency and Histadrut leaders would therefore stubbornly resist any attempt by mandate or municipal governments to operate exchanges serving Jews.⁸⁸

To help him prepare for his Histadrut discussions, Graves asked Sanders to send a labour officer to one or more exchanges to investigate actual conditions; the Histadrut's Golda Myerson (later Meir) had offered to tell the exchanges to cooperate, provided that they had advance notice. Graves clearly expected the visits to provide arguments he could use in presenting the idea of government-run exchanges.⁸⁹

At the end of July, a Southern Region sub-inspector, Otto Ehrenwerth, interviewed leaders of minority Zionist labour federations and the Palestine Manufacturers Association and paid an announced visit to the Tel Aviv general exchange. He soon reported informally that in neither the interviews nor the exchanges had he found anyone who wanted to complain. The representatives of the minority federations had said that their previous complaints were no longer valid, and they had no relevant statistics.⁹⁰ One had offered that the current labour shortage had eased competition for jobs. Similarly, the Histadrut enterprises that Ehrenwerth visited insisted that they hired applicants who were not affiliated with the Histadrut, "incl even workers with revisionist affiliations."⁹¹

By November, when the overworked Ehrenwerth sat down to compose a formal report on his visits, Graves told him it was no longer needed.⁹² Lacking willing witnesses to systematic unfairness at the Tel Aviv general exchange, the department was reversing its recent turn to arguments of discrimination and authority. According to the high commissioner, talks with the Jewish Agency had, once again, broken down because of Histadrut intransigence. Colonial Office minutes suggested that the mandate government carefully watch employment trends, along with probable attitudes of the Jewish Agency and Histadrut towards exchanges.⁹³ Months after the war in Europe ended, advocacy of a government-run system of labour exchanges was once again resting on the need to settle displaced war industry workers.

Early in September 1945, Chudleigh, as acting Southern Regional inspector, issued a forceful call for a system of labour exchanges to help with veterans resettlement. Unemployment was quickly becoming severe. In the three days since he had taken up his assignment, the military had laid off more than nine hundred civilians. Every morning, as many as two hundred gathered outside the army's employment bureau in Tel-Aviv. The officer in charge was willing to register all the laid-off workers, but expected to re-hire only a few. In addition, a considerable number of veterans were looking for work. Since the resettlement program was to establish an employment register, Chudleigh had begun asking

employers to give priority to veterans (a practice which had proven helpful in his own Central Region). Still, the general population increasingly needed exchanges.⁹⁴

Two months later, notices of the planned government exchanges appeared in two leading Zionist newspapers, the General Zionists' Haboker and the independent Haaretz. Both made three main points (probably drawn from a government press release): the government planned to establish a system of exchanges; recognition of the Jewish Agency exchanges was subject to conditions; and if the Zionist exchanges met these conditions, the government would contribute to their budget. The conditions were familiar from the ILO standards: exchanges must give employers equal authority with workers in their administration; deal exclusively with distribution of work, not with wages, working conditions, or politics; and charge no fees.⁹⁵

Palestine's budget estimates for the three years from 1 April 1945 through 31 March 1948 traced the postwar course of the exchange proposal. The 1945-46 estimates, in line with the Colonial Office's tentative approval of the project in early 1945, allocated a total of £P50,000. Some £P10,000 would set up the system, and another £P30,000 would operate it through the year. The final £P10,000 was earmarked for a subsidy to the Jewish Agency exchanges on the supposition that they would choose to operate as a complementary part of comprehensive countrywide coverage.⁹⁶ The estimates for the

year that began 1 April 1946 provided the same amounts; the system, announced in the press in November 1945, had not yet been established, but the mandate government expected to carry out the proposal during the year.⁹⁷

The expectation would prove groundless. The Labour Department's annual report for 1946 (published in 1948) admitted cryptically that although the need for a system of government-run employment exchanges had not lessened, "it proved to be impossible" to take advantage of the allocated funds.⁹⁸ Easier to decipher was the elaboration that followed. The Labour Department was already operating an employment register as part of its veterans resettlement program. The veterans placement service had functioned "very successfully" throughout 1946, and it had enjoyed "the benefit of the cordial cooperation, in its special work, of the General Jewish Labour Exchange."⁹⁹

Employment Exchanges or Resettlement Register?

The decision of the General Jewish Labour Exchange to cooperate with the employment register of the veterans resettlement program had evidently been well-advised. The register's effectiveness, magnified by the absence of obstruction from the General Exchange, apparently weakened the arguments for the projected government exchange system. By the spring of 1947 the exchange proposal had lost significant support -- in fact, half of its funding. The 1947-

48 estimates included only £P25,000 for a government-run system, on the self-fulfilling rationale that plans had not been finalized and "it is improbable that the full programme will become operative during the financial year 1947/48."¹⁰⁰ Treasury officials went still further, interpreting the delay in implementation as proof that the system was unnecessary. "Palestine has regularly put in provision of this nature which does not appear to have been needed. We wonder whether, in point of fact, the provision thus made this year will be needed."¹⁰¹

Despite the unquestioned success of the Labour Department's resettlement project, the mandate government had reduced the 1947-48 budget for that work by an even greater proportion than that of the exchange system: from £P250,000 to £P100,000. Apparently 1946-47 had been, as the government had predicted in its estimates for that year, the period of peak expense for resettlement. The 1947-48 estimates prudently warned that no accurate budget was possible because economic factors were unpredictable.¹⁰² Actual expenditure would be £P432,103. The final estimates, for April and May 1948, still included £P22,500 for resettlement, although only to cover tuition for veterans taking courses. They had at last ceased even to mention exchanges.¹⁰³

Long before that admission of abandonment in the last months of the mandate -- by late 1946, in fact -- the employment register operated by the Labour Department's

resettlement section had helped the mandate government to pass without upheaval through the long-dreaded demobilization of 25,000 veterans. The labour market had also apparently absorbed the projected layoff of 110,000 civilians employed on military projects, partly through public works initiated for the purpose.

The government had laid the groundwork for this success in 1943 by establishing a resettlement program for veterans, with Deputy Labour Director A. H. Couzens at its head. The program was to provide hostels, job retraining when necessary, living allowances when absolutely necessary, and loans to start businesses when proven feasible. The resettlement committee also provided job placement, though consistently mentioning the need for a regular system of labour exchanges. Its first formal monthly report, for March 1945, noted the intention of setting up some temporary mechanism to meet that need.¹⁰⁴ Through the spring, the demand for job placement grew; employment was the most common requirement of applicants to the resettlement committee.¹⁰⁵

By June 1945, the burden of jobseekers on an agency designed to meet all the practical needs of the veterans was extremely troublesome. Beyond calling on "existing private placing agencies" (a term often applied to the Jewish Agency system), resettlement officers were directly seeking jobs for many applicants. To bring order to this work, they had begun designing a formal system to connect suitable ap-

plicants and job vacancies. The planned system would, that is, fulfill the major function of a labour exchange.¹⁰⁶

As plans for a resettlement employment register progressed, the number of jobseekers continued to increase; a simultaneous decrease in the number of job openings heightened the threat of significant unemployment.¹⁰⁷ In December 1945, the register at last began full operations; the following month it began issuing statistics. Taking those figures for the veterans' registry as indications of overall postwar demand for job placement services -- as British administrators would have done -- leads to the conclusion that by the autumn of 1946 the need for exchanges was easing.

In its first month, the registry placed 280 applicants. By February 1946, the active register held 3,105 jobseekers. In July, both the number of new applicants (1,804) and the total number of active jobseekers (4,784) reached their highest point. The following month, the numbers of new registrants (1,606) and active jobseekers (4,535) remained high. The same month, however, the military reported that only a thousand troops remained to be demobilized. In September, the figures both for new applicants and for total jobseekers fell by about five hundred. By October, the number on the active register dropped by more than thirteen hundred, to 2,657. With three minor exceptions, it continued to fall every month thereafter.

Similarly, by August 1946, a total of 11,292 applicants had registered and the registry had placed a total of 2,199; the remaining eighteen months of the registry's operation raised the total of registrants by little more than 4,138, though the number placed more than doubled, to 5,417. After November 1947, only the Southern Region reported new registrants -- a total of fifteen as three months of increasing civil disorder brought the registry to a close. In February 1948, the military reported only twenty-five Palestinians remaining in uniform. More than a year before this final collapse, however, by November 1946, figures on applicants and placements clearly showed that the registry had carried out the greater part of its task.

This seems likely in practice to have extended well beyond the registry's explicit constituency of veterans. Both the committee and the mandate administration repeatedly gave the figure of 25,000 for Palestinian troops to be demobilized. Of these, the vast majority were Jewish and would normally have turned to the Jewish Agency exchanges for placement. The more than 15,000 applicants who passed through the resettlement committee's registry would thus have been mainly Arab, many of them civilians. Similarly, after August 1946, fewer than a thousand troops were demobilized, but more than four thousand jobseekers registered. Either three thousand veterans released earlier had put off registration, or some of these registrants were

civilians.¹⁰⁸ The great mass of laid-off Arabs, who were not military veterans but civilian employees of the War Department or its suppliers, had no official recourse in seeking jobs. The resettlement offices would naturally have attracted them; the registry staff, if they followed the practice of the regional labour offices with which they were affiliated, would have quietly tried to find them work. After veterans were placed, however, few openings remained.

The resettlement committee's registry, along with such other factors as War Department "amenities" projects, apparently helped the country pass through the demobilization or layoff of a projected 135,000 people without threat of disruption by the unemployed. The threat having passed, the establishment of government-run labour exchanges ceased to seem a matter of urgency. The proposal's moment had been in 1944 and early 1945, when the mass of layoffs lay ahead and, beyond it, unknown perils of unemployed Arab masses. The summer of 1946 brought an apparent turning point; by 1947, the perils were no longer unknown, and the solution no longer seemed to lie in labour.

At the end of September 1947, some six weeks after India left the British empire, the British government announced that it would not attempt to impose on Palestine's natives and settlers any resolution to their conflict that either party did not accept. Rather, the British would withdraw from Palestine at an early date (later set for Septem-

ber 1948). The task of resolving the continuing struggle fell to a United Nations committee. Couzens, who had duly succeeded Graves as labour director, apparently remained undeterred by these developments. At the end of October 1947, he was asking his staff to collect evidence of a need for government-run labour exchanges.¹⁰⁹

Exactly a month after Couzens began building his case, the United Nations Security Council voted to divide Palestine. The industrialized coastal plain, with its ports of Haifa and Tel Aviv and its concentration of waged labour, fell within the territory allotted to the Jewish state. As the British prepared to evacuate Palestine four months ahead of schedule, talk of government-run labour exchanges finally ceased.

Notes

¹International Labour Office, Employment Exchanges: An International Study of Placing Activities, Studies and Reports, Series C (Employment and Unemployment) No. 18 (Geneva: ILO, 1933), 1. The agency also noted that filling certain vacancies might allow projects to go forward which would require additional workers.

²Colonial Office, Labour Supervision, 8. These were Barbados, British Guiana, Ceylon, the Gold Coast, Jamaica, Mauritius, St. Christopher and Nevis, St. Vincent, Sierra Leone, and Trinidad.

³Graves's report noted that in the relevant British law, passed in 1909, an employment exchange was designed to help both employers and workers; it registered vacancies and applications and communicated them to anyone seeking workers or jobs. After the First World War, the Weimar government of Germany expanded this charge, allowing exchanges to bargain wages and working conditions for the workers they placed.

⁴International Labour Office, Employment Exchanges, 24.

⁵Each British exchange had a Local Employment Committee, appointed by the Minister of Labour; at least two-thirds of its members were to be employer and worker representatives in equal numbers; the rest were local officials and resource people. International Labour Office, Employment Exchanges, 26, 31-32.

⁶Palestine Labour Department agendas and minutes, departmental conference 2, MSS Medit. s. 16, Rhodes House Library, Oxford University.

⁷International Labour Office, Employment Exchanges, 29-30, 227-231. In the year the ILO published its report, the related International Labour Conference (ILC) adopted a draft convention and recommendation calling on states to do away with private, fee-charging agencies; it assumed the existence of a system of public exchanges.

⁸Graves, "Labour in Palestine," enclosure I in MacMichael to Moyne, 3 April 1941, PRO, CO 859/55/4, 29-30.

⁹Graves made his remark in January 1941, in response to a draft constitution for the "general labour exchange" which the Agency was planning as a replacement for the Histadrut system. Graves to Meerovitch, Jewish Agency, 24 January 1941, CZA, record group S25, file 7212. A year later, MacMichael forwarded to the colonial secretary the Agency's revised proposal. Besides distributing jobs, the exchanges were to maintain suitable working conditions, "strengthen organized labour in every branch of occupation," "complement the activities of trade unions," and "assure each Jewish workman his share in government and municipal undertakings." MacMichael to Cranborne, 11 March 1942, enclosure I, "An amended Proposal for the constitution of the general labour exchanges in the villages and towns of Palestine," PRO, CO 733/441/19. Colonial Office labour adviser Orde-Browne commented that the proposal combined "the worse [sic] features of both German and Russian organisation of labour." Orde-Browne, minute, 7 April 1942, PRO, CO 733/441/19.

¹⁰Colonial Office, "Report on Palestine for 1940," 11, PRO, CO 733/441.

¹¹Graves, "Labour in Palestine," 28-29, enclosure I in MacMichael to Moyne, 3 April 1941, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

¹²Ibid., 31.

¹³MacMichael to Stanley, 8 July 1944, PRO, CO 733/459/6.

¹⁴Government of Palestine, Report on Palestine Administration, July, 1920 - December, 1921, 128-29. The other main tasks assigned the sub-department were to gather statistics to support decisions on immigration, to provide arbitration, and to "deal with" working conditions.

¹⁵Downie to Shuckburgh, 25 March 1940, PRO, CO 733/423/18, 2.

¹⁶Several scholars, among them Barbara Jean Smith, Niall O'Murchu, and Michael Shalev, have emphasized the mandate government's economic dependence on Jewish enterprise. Smith made a strong case that concern to foster Zionist enterprise had a determinative effect on mandate economic policy before 1929. The Roots of Separation in Palestine: British Economic Policy, 1920-1929 (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993). O'Murchu extended through the interwar period the study of how fiscal reliance on revenue from Jewish immigrants and capital imports affected economic and political policy. "Labor, the State, and Ethnic Conflict: A Comparative Study of British Rule in Palestine (1920-1939) and Northern Ireland (1972-1994)" (Ph.D. diss, University of Washington, 2000). Shalev linked fiscal dependency specifically to labour policy, arguing that need for revenue created "indirect but significant British interests in defending Jewish employers -- and the Zionist movement's longer-term prospects of attracting private investment -- by supporting disciplined industrial relations." Labour and the Political Economy in Israel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 149.

¹⁷Graves, "Report on Administration," 9-10, PRO, CO 733/459/5.

¹⁸MacMichael to Stanley, 8 July 1944, PRO, CO 733/459/6.

¹⁹R. M. Graves, "Labour Exchanges," MacMichael to Stanley, 8 July 1944, enclosure I, PRO, CO 733/459/6.

²⁰Orde-Browne, minute, 3 July 1944, on Graves, "Report on Administration," PRO, CO 733/459/5.

²¹Political scientist Niall O'Murchu is among those who argue that growing unemployment arising from the autumn 1935 recession was a major factor leading to the Arab boycott and revolt that broke out in the spring of 1936. O'Murchu also acknowledges the inflammatory role of the Histadrut's renewed drive for "Hebrew labour" in response to the recession. "Labor, the State, and Ethnic Conflict," 216.

²²In his March 1944 report on Palestine's postwar economic prospects, Prof. R. Peers, the economist who had served as labour adviser to the minister resident in the Middle East (see chapter 8 and below), emphasized the limitations of the existing reporting system. Only the Jewish Agency kept unemployment statistics, and it excluded both Arabs and those Jews who were unwilling to use official Zionist facilities. "Situation report on Palestine," 18 March 1944, PRO, FO 922/12.

²³"Labour Department," Palestine Post, 4 August 1942, 2.

²⁴Colonial Office, Report on Palestine for 1930, 106.

²⁵Graves to chief secretary, 27 July 1942, ISA, I/LAB/31/42.

²⁶Chief secretary to director of public works, confidential memorandum, 14 August 1942, ISA, I/LAB/51/42.

²⁷An example is the telegram, headed "Representations by the Palestine Arab Workers Society regarding unemployment," from Rashid Al-Habbab ("Chairman of the Meeting, Jaffa") to the chief secretary, 2 May 1945, ISA, record group 2, box 260, I/LAB/1/45, item 10. The telegram cites the PAWS May Day declaration of 1945.

²⁸A December 1944 report to the Economic Board for Palestine, a British Zionist group, noted that "the Palestine Workers' Society (Arab)" was reportedly opening a labour exchange in Jaffa. The writers believed that it would be the first one for Arab workers. MSS Brit. emp. s. 365 (Fabian Colonial Bureau papers), Rhodes House Library, Oxford University.

²⁹Palestine Labour Department agendas and minutes, departmental conference 6, July 1945, MSS Medit. s. 16 (A. H. Couzens papers), Rhodes House Library, Oxford University.

³⁰PRO, CO 795/122/10, folio 76.

³¹Waddington to Cranborne, 5 June 1942, PRO, CO 795/122/10.

³²W. F. Stubbs, Chair's report on actions pursuant to second meeting, 11 August 1942, PRO, CO 795/122/10, item 13. Col. Gore-Browne, representing native interests, urged that the government make strenuous efforts to find the necessary staff as soon as possible; the board agreed that exchanges would be desirable if practicable.

³³Some three weeks after Waddington wrote his dispatch, C. E. Lambert was describing the exchange proposal as "of some

interest." Minute, 23 June 1942, PRO, CO 795/122/10. Hibbert in Social Services expressed regret at the governor's position. Minute, 24 June 1942, PRO, CO 795/122/10. Orde-Browne agreed, arguing that simple exchanges could be set up informally in local administrative centres. Minute, 24 June 1942, PRO, CO 795/122/10. As late as November, Lambert minuted that clearly the exchange proposal had not been abandoned. 3 November 1942, PRO, CO 795/122/10.

³⁴Northern Rhodesia, Labour Department, "Annual Report for the Year 1946," CSB 314/50, British Library, 6. Two years later, labour officers were opening exchanges to use as distribution sites for rationing coupons, which they accompanied with news about available jobs. According to the Labour Department, the system proved efficient, winning approval from both Africans and employers. Northern Rhodesia, Labour Department, "Annual Report for the Year 1948," CSB 314/50, British Library, 4.

³⁵In fact, the mandate and municipal governments -- as well as most employers outside the Jewish sector -- generally recruited employees without consulting the Jewish Agency exchanges. Graves, "Labour Exchanges," PRO, CO 733/459/6.

³⁶ISA, record group 13, box 1442, file Mb/1, n.d. Schlouger sent Sanders leaflets in Hebrew on, inter alia, exchanges and "Is the Histadrut a Trade-Union?," then invited him to address the League (as "Mr. Chudley" did Arab workers) in December 1942 and again in January 1943, when the Jewish Agency inaugurated its new "general" system. Schlouger to Sanders, 9 October 1942; Sanders to League, 29 December 1942; League to Sanders, 3 January 1943; Sanders to Schlouger, 14 February 1945, ISA, record group 13, box 1442, file Mb/1, item 22.

³⁷Department of Labour, Jerusalem, Annual Report for 1942, abridged edition, No. 11 of 1943 (Jerusalem: Government Printer, 1943), 8.

³⁸Cousins for director, Department of Labour (A. H. Couzens), to inspector of labour, Jerusalem Region, 29 October 1947, ISA, record group 13, box 1426, file A/19, Ab/3/1.

³⁹Colonial Office, "Report on Palestine for 1940," 11, PRO, CO 733/441.

⁴⁰MacMichael to Cranborne, 11 March 1942, PRO, CO 733/441/19.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²S. E. V. Luke, minute, 11 March 1942, PRO, CO 733/441/19.

⁴³J. G. Hibbert, minute, 11 April 1942, PRO, CO 733/441/19.

⁴⁴MacMichael to Cranborne, 11 March 1942, PRO, CO 733/441/19.

⁴⁵S. E. V. Luke, minute, 11 March 1942, PRO, CO 733/441/19.

⁴⁶Peers, "Situation report on Palestine," March 1944, section 38, PRO, FO 922/12.

⁴⁷Palestine Labour Department, agendas and minutes, Departmental Conference 1, MSS Medit. s. 16, Rhodes House Library, Oxford University.

⁴⁸"Labour Department 8-Point Programme: No Legislation without Discussion," Palestine Post, 12 January 1943, 3.

⁴⁹H. E. Chudleigh, "Labour Problems (5th lecture, XXII Season, 1942-43, Palestine Economic Society, Jerusalem, 25th January, 1943)," MSS Brit. Emp. s. 365 (Fabian Colonial Bureau papers), Rhodes House Library, Oxford University, box 176, file 2, item 7, 11-12.

⁵⁰Peers, "Situation report on Palestine."

⁵¹K. L. Sanders, "A Proposed Scheme of Public Labour Exchanges," 28 March, 1943, PRO, CO 733/459/6.

⁵²Palestine Executive Council, minutes of 916th meeting, 30 June, 1943, PRO, CO 814/39.

⁵³Palestine Labour Department, Agendas and minutes, departmental conference 2, MSS Medit. s. 16, Rhodes House Library, Oxford University.

⁵⁴Palestine Labour Department, Agendas and minutes, departmental conference 2, MSS Medit. s. 16, Rhodes House Library, Oxford University. Southern Regional Inspector Sanders had not noted this aspect of the Tel Aviv exchange on a visit in May, its third month of operation. He reported that the three managers, from the Histadrut and two smaller federations, had been very cooperative and seemed to be trying not to discriminate according to federation membership. He did not report interviewing any of the job applicants at the exchange. Sanders to Couzens, 14 May 1943, "Report on Visit to Tel Aviv Joint Labour Exchange," ISA, 1442/ML 3.

⁵⁵Palestine Labour Department, Agendas and minutes, departmental conference 2, MSS Medit. s. 16, Rhodes House Library, Oxford University.

⁵⁶"Public Employment Exchanges," Department of Labour Bulletin 4, 2-5, MSS Brit. emp. s. 365, Rhodes House Library, Oxford University.

⁵⁷Graves to chief secretary, 25 October 1943, ISA, Record Group 13, Box 1452, file CL/83-Me/1, 3. Graves apparently wanted his reasoning to be familiar to the department's senior officials, for he directed copies of this message to the three regional inspectors and Sheila Ogilvie as special duty inspector.

⁵⁸Peers, "Situation report on Palestine," March 1944, PRO, FO 922/12.

⁵⁹Ibid. In 1944, according to the mandate government, the average wages of Arab manufacturing workers (given equivalence of ten mils to one piastre) ranged from 23.1 piastres a day for a cardboard box maker to 81.8 piastres for a fitter. Government of Palestine, Survey of Palestine, 735. In agriculture, the wage averaged 40 piastres for a male labourer in both citrus and tobacco; the corresponding figures for women were 30 and 25 piastres. Ibid., 737. In construction, pay for unskilled building and road labourers (October 1943) averaged 45 and 43 piastres respectively, while the daily wage of a building tradesperson ranged from 70 to 110 piastres. Ibid., 741. According to Peers, the "Anglo-Arab Labour Exchange (Shayoun Co.)" in Haifa charged unskilled workers 25 to 35 piastres, skilled ones, 75 to 100 piastres for a job placement. Peers, "Situation report on Palestine," March 1944, PRO, FO 922/12.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹"A Proposed Scheme of Public Labour Exchanges," enclosure 2, MacMichael to Stanley, 8 July 1944, PRO, CO 733/459/6.

⁶²MacMichael to Stanley, 8 July 1944, PRO, CO 733/459/7. In making this recommendation, MacMichael was proposing to the colonial secretary the same approach, in much the same phrasing, that his Executive Council had approved more than a year before. Palestine Executive Council, minutes of 916th meeting, 30 June, 1943, PRO, CO 814/39.

⁶³C. G. Eastwood, minute, 8 August 1944, PRO, CO 733/459/7.

⁶⁴W. O. B. [William Battershill?] to G. Gater, 14 August 1944, PRO, CO 733/459/6.

⁶⁵Gort to Stanley [a response to Stanley's dispatch to MacMichael of 17 August 1944], 31 December 1944, PRO, CO

733/459/7.

⁶⁶Ibid., 7.

⁶⁷Ibid., folio 7, on item 12.

⁶⁸Palestine Labour Department, Agendas and minutes, departmental conference 5, 8-9 February 1945, MSS Medit. s. 16 (A. H. Couzens papers), Rhodes House Library, Oxford University. Diverging from the recommendation of the Middle East labour adviser, Peers, the mandate government intended to place the exchange system under the administration of the Department of Labour.

⁶⁹Gort to Stanley, secret dispatch, 15 February 1945, PRO, CO 733/459/7.

⁷⁰C. A. Grossmith, minute, 22 May 1945, PRO, CO 733/459/6.

⁷¹[illegible], minute, 20 April 1945, PRO, CO 733/459/7.

⁷²See, for example, PRO, CO 733/459/6; Graves' proposal to the chief secretary, 25 October 1943, ISA, record group 13, box 1452, file CL/83-Me/1, item 5; and Graves to Edwin Mills, 29 August 1944, ISA, record group 13, box 1452, file CL/83-Me/1, item 39 (on the memorandum at item 26).

⁷³Graves, "Labour in Palestine," enclosure I in MacMichael to Moyne, 3 April 1941, 25, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

⁷⁴C. A. Grossmith, minute, 23 April 1945, referring to Gort to Stanley, 31 December 1944, PRO, CO 733/459/7.

⁷⁵C. G. Eastwood, minute, 19 May 1945, PRO, CO 733/459/7.

⁷⁶E. C., minute, 23 April 1945, PRO, CO 733/459/7.

⁷⁷[illegible], minute, 20 April 1945, PRO, CO 733/459/7.

⁷⁸Peers to Eastwood, 17 May 1945, PRO, CO 733/459/7.

⁷⁹Eastwood, minute, 19 May 1945, PRO, CO 733/459/7.

⁸⁰Arthur J. Dawe had most recently served for several years as assistant under-secretary for East and West Africa, then for the Middle East. He was appointed deputy colonial under-secretary in April 1945. Minute, 28 May 1945, PRO, CO 733/459/7.

⁸¹George Gater, minute, 29 May 1945, PRO, CO 733/459/7. Gater specified that the financial argument alone was not

important enough to decide the issue; it merely added to the list of disadvantages.

⁸²Stanley to Gort, 4 June 1945, PRO, CO 733/459/7.

⁸³Palestine Labour Department, Agendas and minutes, departmental conference 6, MSS Medit. s. 16, Rhodes House Library, Oxford University.

⁸⁴Graves to Sanders, 5 July 1945 (confidential), ISA, record group 13, box 1442, file Mb/3, item 33.

⁸⁵National Council for Civil Liberties to Hall, 28 August 1945, PRO, CO 733/459/7, item 12.

⁸⁶Eastwood to Gen. Secy, National Council for Civil Liberties [Elizabeth A. Allen], PRO, CO 733/459/7, on item 13.

⁸⁷Graves, "Labour in Palestine," 31, enclosure I in MacMichael to Moyne, 3 April 1941, PRO, CO 859/55/4.

⁸⁸Graves to Sanders, 5 July 1945, ISA, record group 13, box 1442, file Mb/3, item 33.

⁸⁹Graves to Sanders, 5 July 1945, ISA, record group 13, box 1442, file Mb/3, item 33.

⁹⁰Sanders to Graves, "Investigation: Operation of Joint Jewish Employment Exchanges," 21 August 1945, ISA, record group 13, box 1442, file Mb/3, item 35; Otto Ehrenwerth, "General Labour Exchanges of the Jewish Agency" [handwritten], 2 August 1945, ISA, record group 13, box 1442, file Mb/3, item 36.

⁹¹Otto Ehrenwerth, Report of visits to worksites [handwritten], 22 August 1945, ISA, record group 13, box 1442, file Mb/3, item 37.

⁹²Otto Ehrenwerth, "Labour Exchange Enquiry [handwritten]," 9 November 1945 (Ref. R.I.s instructions at 21 August 1945), ISA, record group 13, box 1442, file Mb/3.

⁹³Unsigned minutes on items 11 and 12, PRO, CO 733/459/7.

⁹⁴Chudleigh to Couzens, "Labour Exchanges," 7 September 1945, ISA, record group 13, box 1442, file Mb/1, item 22.

⁹⁵ISA, record group 13, box 1442, file Mb/3, items 38 and 39, "extract from Haboker of 6.11.45," and "extract from Haaretz of 13.11.45." The two newspapers differed in empha-

sis: Haboker, organ of the employer-based General Zionist Party, mentioned that government would include representatives of employers and workers in the exchanges' administration, while Haaretz noted that the government wanted to recognize the Jewish Agency exchanges "in order to obviate the idea of rivalry in the Jewish sector."

⁹⁶"Palestine Estimates, 1945-46," PRO, CO 733/472/1. "Demobilization" was to receive £P100,000. The only explanation of the appearance of these two items, which had not figured in the 1944-45 estimates, was a reference to Gort's February dispatch.

⁹⁷"Palestine Estimates, 1946-47," PRO, CO 733/472/1, 47. The estimate for "Resettlement" (formerly "Demobilization") was increased from £P100,000 to £P250,000.

⁹⁸Department of Labour, Annual Report for 1946, PRO 814/40, 7.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰"Palestine Estimates, 1947-48," PRO, CO 733/472/1, 48, 23.

¹⁰¹W. Russell Edmunds, Treasury, to J. Gutch, Colonial Office, 19 September 1947, PRO, CO 733/472/1.

¹⁰²"Palestine Estimates, 1947-48," PRO, CO 733/472/1, 48, 23.

¹⁰³Palestine Estimates, April-May 1948, 46-47, PRO, CO 733/472/2.

¹⁰⁴"Reports: Resettlement of Ex-service Personnel," MSS Medit. s. 16 (A. H. Couzens papers), Rhodes House Library, Oxford University.

¹⁰⁵By June, most government departments were maintaining contact with the regional labour offices about employing veterans. Ibid. Resettlement officers took every opportunity to publicize the need for a labour exchange system. For example, see Couzens' remarks in a speech describing the Resettlement Committee's work to an employers' organization. A. H. Couzens, "Address by Director, Department of Labour to Palestine Manufacturer's Association, Tel Aviv, in April 1945," MSS Medit. s. 16 (A. H. Couzens papers), Rhodes House Library, Oxford University.

¹⁰⁶"Reports: Resettlement of Ex-service Personnel," MSS Medit. s. 16, Rhodes House Library, Oxford University.

¹⁰⁷In October, the staff described the country's overall employment situation as "satisfactory," but complained of difficulty finding work for most of the veterans, in their view the most important part of resettlement. By that time, they had set up the employment register and were planning to appoint employment officers to operate it. Ibid.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

¹⁰⁹Cousins for director, Department of Labour (A. H. Couzens), to inspector of labour, Jerusalem Region, 29 October 1947, ISA, record group 13, box 1426, file A/19, Ab/3/1. In the context of other government initiatives, Couzens' persistence was not exceptionally unrealistic. In December 1947 -- after the outbreak of civil war -- the government approved establishment of industrial wage courts, intended to hold down inflation. The government's Wages Committee had recommended these in its March 1943 report, and the attempt to establish them had begun in February 1944. Industrial Courts Ordinance, 1947, ISA, Record Group 2, Box 258, I/LAB/14/44.

Chapter 10. The Palestine Labour Department: How Exceptional?

In this dissertation, I have attempted to situate Palestine's labour department among others that British colonial governments established during the early years of the Second World War. To this end, I first traced the evolution of British colonial labour policy as an aspect of overall British colonial policy from the end of the First World War to the early 1940s. Then, throughout the discussion of the structure and activities of Palestine's department, I have included, as continuing points of reference, relevant developments in labour administration in Northern Rhodesia -- a colony where, as in Palestine, strong organizations spoke for settler workers. By these means I have identified some salient attributes in which Palestine's department resembled or differed from those of other British colonies in general and of proletarian settler colonies in particular.

Same Parade: Obstacles and Goals of Colonial Labour Departments

Many obstacles and goals were common to Palestine's labour department and its counterparts. In fact, these obstacles and goals, were, in varying degrees, common to colonial agencies in all social service fields. They were common, too, to modern-minded colonial officials, in whatever agencies they served.

Obstacles to modern labour administration arose, both within and outside of government, at every level. In the colonies as well as in London, executives and administrators were subject to political and economic pressures from local, metropolitan, and international interests and institutions, from business groups to missionary societies to organizations of nation-states. Every colonial government and metropolitan agency felt pressure to limit expenditures -- pressure originating with the Treasury but magnified by other London departments' reluctance to challenge that institution. Approval for long-term social investment was particularly difficult to obtain. To varying degrees, security and administration claimed the greatest part of both attention and budget in the colonies and the metropole. In the years immediately following the Second World War, Britain's growing economic troubles further limited colonial initiatives, even as the distant prospect of decolonization heightened the need.

In addition to external pressures, the ideologies of officials, both in London and in colonial capitals and administrative centres, affected labour supervision policies and their implementation. Basic were individual and agency stances on questions of political economy: perceptions of the relation of pay rates to inflation, opinions on the desirability of full employment, preferences regarding government priorities. Such positions exerted contending

pressures on fiscal, legislative, and administrative decisions that set the boundaries of labour departments' work. Positions similarly diverged on the broader issue of whether governments -- metropolitan or colonial -- would be wiser to listen to workers' concerns or to suppress them. Regarding natives, officials' viewpoints ranged from entrenched gradualism to increasingly influential "modern" views. Their positions affected whether colonial governments would treat native workers as the subjects of "tribal" dignitaries whom the British had designated "traditional" or would deal with them as wage earners and potential community leaders. These kinds of ideological positions affected not only decisions on labour departments' proposals but definitions of departments' aims and responsibilities.

Not all of the adversaries of labour departments' initiatives came from within governments. In colonies with organized settler populations, these presented obstacles to any agency that sought to protect native workers. Settler employers commonly maintained pressure to secure an unfailing supply of low-paid labour. Where a large and well-organized body of settler workers existed, its aims further complicated a labour department's work. Palestine was among the colonies where settlers took both roles. Throughout the mandate period, administrators and Colonial Office bureaucrats routinely discussed Palestine as a special case; they regarded its highly organized, internationally based,

ideologically driven settler community as unique. The yishuv certainly did have political, and often financial, advantages that other settler populations could not claim. At the same time, any labour department in a colony with well-organized settler workers felt pressure from settler unions as well as from broader settler organizations. These groups customarily sought to gain settler workers special privileges, notably preference in hiring and separate mechanisms for labour supervision.

Many British administrators responded to organized settler workers or farmers with contempt and apprehension; they often referred to them in terms connoting class, evoking a stereotype of ignorant, bigoted louts. In Northern Rhodesia, officials regarded the settler workers' organization from a political viewpoint as well, as a subversive Communist front. In Palestine, similarly, settler organizations' expressed political orientation, in this case socialist, perturbed bureaucrats. Here, however, ethnicity (or "religion," depending on the observer's definition of Jewishness) in some cases joined class and politics as a source of unease. Many British officials despised and feared the Zionists, not only as lower-class and radical, but as Eastern European and Jewish.

Contemptuous attitudes towards settlers did little to prevent the dominant officials in the London government, and in many of its colonial analogues, from appreciating -- and

in some cases overestimating -- settlers' ability to harm Britain's perceived national interests. Officers concerned with labour shared to some extent in this official intimidation; to a greater extent, their programs suffered from it. Organized settlers who had established strong strategic positions could block or delay any colonial labour department initiative they considered undesirable.

Settlers' means of intimidation ranged from simple physical force to political or economic pressure. The government of Northern Rhodesia, for example, considered its armed force inadequate to control settlers.¹ Turmoil among settlers could ignite native unrest, posing a threat of more massive violence than settlers alone could undertake. Both Northern Rhodesia and Palestine had seen such contagion in the 1920s and 1930s; in Palestine, the possibility of a recurrence sparked by settler unions' rivalries had prompted the high commissioner's 1940 request for a labour adviser.

Physical violence was rarely settlers' weapon of choice. More commonly, they turned to economic or political pressure. In a resource-rich colony such as Northern Rhodesia, a white union federation could secure its aims by threatening to cut off production of raw material -- in this case, copper -- that was vital to the war effort. In Palestine, too, settler organizations generally preferred to avoid physical force when their goal was to affect labour policy.² There, however, the settler labour organizations

had no vital resources to withhold. Rather, the Histadrut threatened economic disruption and -- with the backing of the Jewish Agency -- repeatedly demonstrated an ability to mobilize pressure on the London and Jerusalem governments from labour and left groups in Britain and the United States.

As colonial labour departments faced the common obstacles of antagonistic government positions and, in some cases, settler organizations, they pursued several common goals. Governments founded these agencies primarily as means of establishing orderly labour relations. In settler colonies with organized workers, the sophistication and militancy of their organizations demanded government attention in the pursuit of this aim. At the same time, the prevailing definitions of the colonial mission -- which included trusteeship or, increasingly, partnership with colonized peoples -- tended to focus a labour department's efforts on native workers. The preponderance of native workers in the typical colonial workforce exerted pressure in the same direction. An important task in the establishment of labour peace was therefore to shelter native workers from exploitation -- even, where possible, to secure them decent working conditions and standards of living. Where circumstances required, labour officers might also make efforts to protect native wage earners from the exclusionary demands of settler workers.

Different Drummer: The Modern Attitude

The obstacles and goals of the Palestine Labour Department could, then, at least fit into the same categories as those of other labour departments in British settler colonies. At the same time, the peculiarities of Palestine's economic and social development gave its department some additional, distinctive tasks. Not only was the colony's settler community unusually well-organized, but its dominant political grouping was unusually concerned with working-class interests. In addition, Palestine's relatively high level of industrialization presented the Labour Department with a large number of factories to inspect. Finally, the presence of two wage-earning populations with different perceived requirements for a decent daily life complicated officials' concepts of possible wage and work-week regulation.

These anomalies of Palestine's economic and social landscape led to an anomaly in its labour department: the composition of the department's staff, both British and non-British, was unique. The British labour officers did, inevitably, bear some resemblance to their peers in both policy and attitude. Because of the paternalism of the Colonial Service, some other colonies had protective labour policies which, although not based in ILO theories of labour supervision, resembled those of Palestine's modern, internationalist department. Conversely, a background in the Labour Ministry or a trade union might not completely free a Brit-

ish colonial labour inspector from the paternalistic viewpoints which animated many Colonial Service officers.

Despite such occasional points of commonality with Colonial Service labour officers, Palestine's British labour officers set the mandate's labour department apart from its counterparts in both outlook and operation. To the extent that circumstances permitted, the officers defined and conducted their tasks as they had in English workplaces. In particular, they were free of many Colonial Service assumptions about "natives." Industrial relations theory, combined with experience as factory inspectors or union officials, shaped their attitudes and informed their policies regarding native workers. They also showed few traces of the common Colonial Office consciousness of bringing British standards to primitive or degenerate foreigners.

The relative freedom from condescension among the British officers was consonant with another anomaly in the composition of the Labour Department's staff. In general, colonial labour departments introduced native officers very gradually and cautiously, if at all. Palestine's department opened, and continued, with the employment of labour officers -- both women and men -- from both the settler and the native communities. Further, probably as a result of working with assistant inspectors all of whom were either Arabs or Jews, the British inspectors manifested no trace of the ethnic prejudices and anti-semitism that marked some of

the mandate's other British officials. In 1947, again working in Jerusalem but surrounded by increasingly bloody intercommunal conflicts, Graves looked back at his experience in the Labour Department and "remember[ed] no instances of disagreements between [Arab and Jewish] officials on racial grounds," but rather family visits among Jewish and Arab staff members and "expressions of solidarity and good-fellowship" at departmental conferences. Thus not only the approach to the work but the relations among colonialist, settler, and native staff officers distinguished Palestine's department.³

An Unresolved Struggle

One initiative of the Palestine Labour Department casts light on both the agency's similarities to its counterparts and its differences from them. The effort to establish a system of government-operated labour exchanges demonstrated salient aspects of the departmental culture. It also brought into play central interests of other agencies and organizations, both local and metropolitan.

Two of the stated major aims of the proposed Palestine exchange system resembled those of exchanges in other British colonies. Up-to-date administrators expected that in helping native workers find jobs, exchanges would serve a double purpose: while giving employers access to desired supplies of native labour, they would forestall the ac-

cumulation of masses of unemployed natives. At the same time, Palestine's proposal differed from its analogues in one important respect. Officials had an additional goal for this system: to rectify what they considered the unfair disadvantage of those Jewish and Arab workers who did not belong to unions or who belonged to unions other than the Histadrut. The government further anticipated that breaking the virtual monopoly of the Jewish Agency exchange system would limit the political and economic power of the Histadrut and the Agency, thereby strengthening the colonial administration's authority vis-a-vis the settler institutions.

This probable result, clearly visible to the Histadrut and Jewish Agency, set the Palestine proposal on a different trajectory than similar initiatives elsewhere. Labour departments in other colonies had little or no trouble setting up exchanges; what opposition they encountered generally came from governors or administrators who still feared the social consequences of stabilizing a native workforce. In Palestine, the highest government authorities had embraced the Labour Department's proposal and were actively seeking to establish exchanges. The opposition came from the settler organizations, whose distinctive political and economic needs aroused them to regard the exchange proposal as a deadly menace.

The Histadrut and Jewish Agency had shown their powers of obstruction in their successful effort to revise the Trade Disputes Order of 1942. In face of the labour exchange initiative, they insisted that government exchanges serve no Jewish workers: the monopoly of the Jewish Agency system must stand. The mandate government maintained with equal determination -- and in full awareness of the implications for Histadrut and Jewish Agency power -- that public exchanges must serve all workers, regardless of what it defined as their "religion." London bureaucrats wavered.

External factors joined with the official vacillations to effectively doom the exchange project through delays that outlasted the mandate. During the years of hesitation, shifts in economic and political conditions eroded official support for the project. In the late wartime years, circumstances were favourable. Fearing massive unemployment and unrest consequent on postwar demobilization, administrators and bureaucrats were prepared to invest in labour exchanges and in experienced British officials to operate them. Then, as the war ended, with spending authorized and the unemployment crisis presumably imminent, the colonial secretary suddenly told the high commissioner that the proposal was too politically dangerous to carry out at that time. Palestine's 1946-47 budget retained full funding for an exchange system. By the autumn of 1946, however, no perceived mass of unemployed civilians had formed, while veterans' demand for job

placement had begun a sharp decline. The resistance of the Zionist agencies, along with economic and political changes during the delay they created, had impeded the establishment of labour exchanges until the crisis that was to justify them had clearly failed to appear.

The task which Palestine's expert labour officials would find difficult, and in the event impossible, less experienced officers in other colonies accomplished easily -- or at least successfully. In Northern Rhodesia, Colonial Service administrators serving -- sometimes temporarily -- as labour officers set up exchanges quite casually, in the course of issuing ration cards. Settler worker organizations offered no resistance.

The difference in response did not indicate a difference in power between the organized Zionists and the Rhodesian settler miners. When they considered revising the Northern Rhodesian labour department to deal with settler as well as native workers, British bureaucrats discussed the selection of a director in terms no less agitated than those characterizing the quest for labour officers for Palestine. Bureaucrats feared organized, sophisticated, and possibly disaffected settlers, wherever they were.

The difference between the two colonies lay in the interests of their settler organizations. In Northern Rhodesia, the issue was natives' access to well-paid jobs, most notably in the mines. Because it effectively controlled

the empire's copper supply, the settler miners' union was able, in the tense early days of the Second World War, to impose a contractual colour/bar limiting this access. When the colony eventually began operating labour exchanges, the only mining positions they could offer natives were those considered unskilled. In Palestine, because the aim of the settler community was to take over the territory, the settler organizations required a monopoly on jobs at all levels in order to attract as many immigrants as possible, regardless of their skills. In view of this aim, any government labour exchange would have constituted a serious threat. Settlers in the two territories responded so differently to the prospect of public exchanges because exchanges' significance to the two groups differed so greatly.

The course of the contention over government-run labour exchanges thus illustrates two of the obstacles which the Palestine Labour Department shared with its counterparts in other colonies, but also one important way in which its circumstances were exceptional. The obstacles were the timidity of colonial administrators and Colonial Office bureaucrats in face of organized settler resistance and the reluctance of London government agencies to confront the Treasury. The atypical factor was that in Palestine the labour exchange proposal was controversial rather than, as in other colonies, almost a matter of course.

Although these common and exceptional factors ultimately prevented implementation of Palestine's labour exchange proposal, they were not in themselves invincible. The modern, professional culture of the Labour Department repeatedly secured a hearing for the agency's viewpoints in mandate government deliberations; eventually, Jerusalem's support for the proposal survived the disapproval of the colonial secretary. Even the halving of the funds approved for the system in the 1947-1948 budget did not appear final to contemporaries -- certainly not to the labour director as he prepared support for the exchange proposal in the autumn of 1947. The evidence thus suggests that in early 1948, when the proposal vanished from the budget estimates, it had not been irreversibly defeated by opposing forces. Simply, as the mandate collapsed, all proposals became irrelevant.

Past Failure, Future Success

The legacy of any enterprise commonly affects later evaluations of its success. The Palestine Labour Department clearly left to its former territory a sum of lasting achievements slighter than those of most of its counterparts. This relative poverty did not, however, result from departmental choices and actions. Both common and distinctive characteristics of the mandate limited what the Labour Department was able to achieve and determined which of its achievements would survive. Similarly, the department's

enduring accomplishments took on greater significance from developments in the decade that followed its dissolution.

In Palestine as a whole, decolonization, like many aspects of colonialism, deviated from the imperial norm. It came relatively early -- within months after decolonization of India, Burma, and Ceylon and before that of any African territory -- and was relatively violent. The disposition of the territory after decolonization, too, set it apart. On leaving a colony, the British typically handed over administration to members of a native elite; in Palestine, settlers attained power. This postcolonial disposition, along with the continuing struggle that resulted, entrenched Palestine's reputation as a special case.

The settler succession in Palestine foreclosed all possibility that any of the Labour Department's achievements would endure in institutional form. Indeed, the most visible enduring legacy of the mandate itself was the body of defense regulations which the state of Israel would selectively apply in the name of its own security. Native elites succeeding to power elsewhere might retain policies, programs, practices, even some staff, of colonial agencies. Not so the successor settler regime in Palestine. When the British withdrew, the yishuv already possessed not only the immense entrepreneurial and labour engine of the Histadrut, but even an official labour department, that of the Jewish

Agency. The settler institutions' authority over labour affairs completely replaced that of the colonial department.

Not only all traces of the Palestine Labour Department, but most of its primary constituents, were eradicated from the territory's labour affairs with the end of British administration. In its organizing tasks, the department had primarily served the community of Palestinian Arab workers. These now either fled from their homes or survived under repressive martial law. In labour, as in general administration, decolonization brought Palestine the dismantling not only of the colonial apparatus, as in all colonies, but of organized native society as well.

In retrospect, these disappearances can give the Labour Department an air of failure. Furthermore, the establishment of enduring structures and practices was only one of several major goals which the department never attained. Despite early successes in reducing labour upheavals, during the turbulent postwar years it failed conspicuously in this primary responsibility of all labour departments. Nor did it succeed in securing modern trade union, minimum wage, or workers' compensation regulations -- elementary legislation which labour departments in other circumstances (for example, in Northern Rhodesia) were able to establish.

Like the specific failure to set up government labour exchanges, these conspicuous failures in the department's overall mission had both common and distinctive bases in co-

lonial administration. Obstructions arose from both general government attitudes and the specific Palestine labour market. Government attitudes, widely shared across the colonial empire, in themselves put labour peace beyond reach in both the private and the public sectors. A view of unemployment as an economic tonic often combined with a failure of government agencies to keep their own and their contractors' pay rates level with inflation. As for modern labour legislation, it remained unattainable as long as accepted opinion divided the Palestinian workforce into two distinct species of workers whose needs and expectations differed sharply but whom any law must address equally.

Yet, despite its lack of success in either establishing stable labour peace or securing standard labour legislation, the Palestine Labour Department furnished Colonial Office labour officials a model for its counterparts in several aspects of its work. The department's most successful efforts aimed towards two goals: improving workers' health and safety and building their trust in collective bargaining and in modern dispute resolution mechanisms. The means it most commonly employed, and in which it made its reputation, were workplace inspection and popular publications.

These goals and techniques reflect the nature of the Palestine Labour Department's inherent distinction from its counterparts in other colonies. Its officers were not colo-

nial administrative officers on temporary assignment, but specialists, or "experts," adhering to modern, internationally established standards. In its most successful work, the Labour Department operated as a technical unit. As such, it would soon prove to have been a pioneer. Technical agencies in British colonies never established actual authority over local administrators. As the end of the mandate was putting an end to the Labour Department, however, economic development and social service agencies staffed by specialists were about to come into positions of influence across the colonial empire.

The new staffing emphasis reflected a shift in the aims of colonial policy that responded to several new forces. In the late 1940s, the United States and other countries were eager to increase their commercial and political influence in Africa and Asia. Western-educated natives who spoke for colonial liberation movements were publicizing injustices and repression and pressing for more representation, even outright independence. Both developments exerted strong pressure on imperial policy makers to prove the value of British colonial rule. Proof often took the form of preparing colonies for steps toward limited forms of self-government (still commonly envisioned as far in the future).

At the Colonial Office, the concept of partnership (though still of junior colonized and senior colonizing) had for a decade been superseding that of trusteeship. Now the

Colonial Office and colonial authorities initiated further changes which, they hoped, would make British administration look more justifiable to both rival powers and dissatisfied natives. To this end, newly appointed Colonial Office advisers and colonial government technical officers began providing more services in fields that represented long-term economic and social development, from agriculture to education to health care to marketing.

In their own time, Palestine's labour experts were different drummers among colonial staff members (even among colonial labour officers). They were no more aware than their counterparts of the enormous changes about to take place in the colonial empire. Yet, by the time the Labour Department, and the Palestine mandate, dissolved, the whole colonial parade was about to change its rhythm. Within half a decade, technocrats of economic and social development were setting the pace as colonial administrators began, not always reluctantly, marching to the beat that had recently distinguished the Palestine Labour Department among its peers.

Notes

¹Henderson, "Labour and Politics," 114, 117.

²When, after the Second World War, some Zionist organizations turned to widespread terrorism, labour policy was not the issue, nor were the Histadrut or Jewish Agency officially involved.

³Graves, Experiment in Anarchy, 52.

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