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A LONG SLOW TUTELAGE IN WESTERN WAYS OF WORK:
INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION AND THE CONTAINMENT OF NATIONALISM IN
ANGLO-IRANIAN AND ARAMCO, 1923-1963

by

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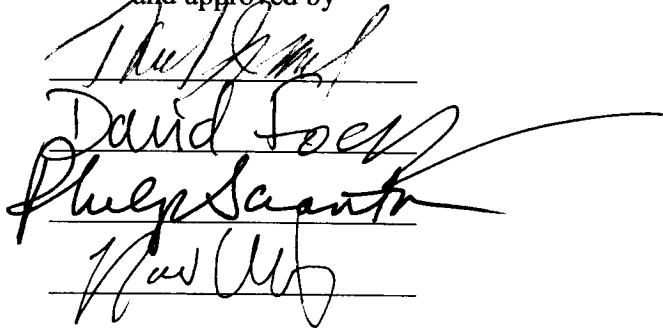
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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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By MICHAEL EDWARD DOBE

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Paul Israel

This dissertation examines the historical processes through which two global petroleum companies developed a wide range of training and education programs within their concessions to enable the replacement of imported expatriate labor with skilled host country nationals. Whereas company historians and annuitants would later portray these programs as examples of wisdom and generosity, this study demonstrates that corporate agendas for human resource development were reactive and represented the companies' efforts to minimize capital outlays while retarding the growth of labor activism within the concessions. The British Petroleum Company, known first as the Anglo-Persian and then as the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC), produced oil in commercial quantities within its Persian concession for an entire decade before initiating formal education and training programs for Persian staff in 1923. The Arabian American Oil Company (Aramco) began commercial oil production within its Saudi Arabian concession in 1939 but only embarked upon an intensive training program for Arab labor ten years later. The rise of political nationalism in combination with labor activism compelled both companies to establish, or financially

support, dedicated training institutes for host country nationals along with elementary schools for the children of local employees and expatriate staff.

Taking these gross similarities between AIOC and Aramco programs as a starting point for further comparative analysis, this study attempts to explain the timing, influences, institutions and effects of these programs as they evolved within the local contexts of Southern Persia and Eastern Saudi Arabia. As the first study to take an explicitly comparative approach to the history of education and training in the petroleum industry, this dissertation makes a unique historiographical contribution to the study of commerce on the global mineral frontier. Bringing to bear previously unused archival materials from participants in the ARAMCO training and education programs, and taking a fresh look at archival materials from the AIOC programs, it argues that the programs in AIOC and Aramco are two instances of a more general phenomenon in which global corporations were compelled by the politics of emergent nationalism and labor activism to develop human capital within their local operating environments.

Acknowledgements

I conducted the research for this comparative history of industrial education in the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company and Aramco, beginning in the spring of 2004 and concluding in the summer of 2007, while working full-time as a University administrator in the United Arab Emirates. As an expatriate senior staff member in the same Gulf Region I write about in these pages, I benefited from many of the perquisites of that status while conducting research for this project. Where else but in the UAE would an American graduate student in the early 21st century have at their disposal the services of a driver, a groundskeeper, a fulltime maid and a steady stream of office helpers at work to make photocopies and bring coffee and tea? Experiencing the labor hierarchies of the Gulf Region first hand, while immersed in the archival record of two of history's major petroleum enterprises, provided many occasions for flashes of recognition across the divide of time. Ironically, it was the very inequitable treatment afforded senior American staff that made it possible for me to do research on two continents while living and working on a third. During business trips and leave periods away from my day job, I slowly assembled the evidentiary base for the analysis in this work. While I am tempted to claim my research was self-funded, upon reflection it seems to have been enabled by the political economy of oil.

During the course of these three years of research, I have met many helpful people and made use of a wide range of primary and secondary resources. This work would not have been possible without access to a number of excellent libraries, both online and offline. At the start of my research SUNY Albany Library provided background materials on the Middle East and the petroleum industry. Rutgers University's Library System provided remote

access to an amazing array of online resources, sustaining my research from start to finish. I also took full advantage of the collections at Georgetown University's Lauinger Memorial Library and Stanford's Green Library during my summer visits to the special collections and archives there.

My search for Aramco History took me first to the Princeton University Libraries and Special Collections in the spring of 2004, where Nancy Shader and the Special Collections Staff provided me important assistance in working with the William Eddy and Karl Twitchell Papers. That spring, I also worked in the William Mulligan Papers in Georgetown University Special Collections, where I enjoyed the hospitality of Nicholas Sheetz. Nick introduced me to Frank Fugate and Joe Mahon, both Aramcons with experience in managing personnel and developing national staff. A phone interview with Frank Fugate helped generate useful leads. Joe Mahon generously shared copies of documents from his work as a manager with Aramco. Nick also suggested I contact Joy Viola, who has proven to be an indefatigable correspondent. I am grateful to Joy for her willingness to share her personal diaries and research notes. Copies of her book on workforce development in Saudi Arabia and Wallace Stegner's Aramco book were most helpful as well.

After starting work in the UAE, I made an abortive attempt to gain access to Saudi Archives. Contacting the King Abd Al-Aziz Foundation for Research and Archives in Riyadh, Dr. Fahd Al-Semari sent me a copy of his tribute to Americans working in Saudi Arabia and a tribute to the Founder of Saudi Arabia. He advised me that they wouldn't have anything dealing with work in the petroleum industry. Calls to Saudi Aramco went unreturned. Given political conditions, access to archives in Iran would have been exceedingly difficult. My research

was thus confined to archives in the United States for the Aramco case and in the United Kingdom for the AIOC case.

The American Heritage Center at the University of Wyoming provided a stipend in the summer of 2004, which assisted in defraying the costs of working with the Richard C. Kerr and C. Stribling Snodgrass Papers. I owe thanks to John R. Waggener and the rest of the staff of AHC for their help. Several trips to California afforded me the opportunity to make use of the Harry Roscoe Snyder and Philip C. McConnell Papers in the Hoover Institution Archive. At Stanford's Special Collections, I found the George Rentz papers and helpful staff who completed photocopy requests in record time. When not staying at the Stanford Linear Acceleration Center's guesthouse, I was blessed to spend time at the Bryant Street residence of Lile Elam. An artist and friend of international scholars, Lile's hospitality sustained me on my sojourns in Palo Alto.

From 2005 to 2007, I made several trips to the British Petroleum Archive at the University of Warwick in Coventry, United Kingdom. Working at the BP Archive, with its open access and generous archive hours, was a delight. Archivist Dr. Peter Housego prepared cartloads of files for my review and his assistant archivist Ms. Joanne Burman assisted me while I was on site. While passing through London on my way to the Midlands, I took advantage of the British Library to supplement my work at the BP Archive.

Closer to home, Paul Israel has guided me through the process to successful completion in his role as committee chair. Phil Scranton's careful reading of the manuscript has improved my prose as well as the structure of my arguments. David Foglesong, whose course on comparative frontier history planted the seed, has encouraged me to look more critically at

the project of Americanization in a global setting. Gary Darden's work on race and education in the Philippines has shaped my thinking on the construction of power hierarchies along those frontiers. Other intellectual influences at Rutgers include Jim Livingston, whose PDR on American Industrialization was crucial to the formation of my thinking on the subject. Bob Vitalis gave willingly of his time as external reader, sharing his vast knowledge of Aramco history and deep familiarity with the archival sources. Through Bob, I also met Nate Citino and Toby Craig Jones, both of whom shared generously from their experience researching American involvement in Saudi Arabia.

The journey from course work to dissertation completion has been unusually long, even for a doctoral student in the humanities or social sciences. I have watched the world of Internet software from Lynx to Google Chrome. In Internet time that is an eternity. Over these years, my search for usable note taking software has led me from Scribe to Zotero. Thanks are due to the programmers at the George Mason University's Center for History and New Media for writing this code. I also owe a debt to Michael Dell, since most of this work was done on a Latitude D620, which he introduced me to in Athens as a member of his Platinum Advisory Council.

While pursuing my graduate degree in history, I have been fortunate enough to ride the Information Technology wave of the late 1990s through Y2K consulting, professional services and outsourcing to a career in university administration. Along the way, my wife and I have been blessed with four children. Having it all has come at a price, though, one that can be reckoned in missed birthday parties and family vacations without dad. Thank you, Donna, for putting up with me.

Dedication

For Donna, Michael, Emily, Sophia and Ryan

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Chapter 1: Education and Work on the Global Petroleum Frontier

AIOC, Aramco and the Global Petroleum Frontier

The Anglo-Iranian and Arabian American Oil Companies were quintessential 20th century global oil companies. Extracting petroleum from the rich fields of the Persian Gulf, these enterprises bound together remote locations of the globe as they refined, shipped and marketed oil to fuel the increasingly petroleum-dependent economies of Europe. In so doing these two companies conducted business across the commercial landscape of a worldwide frontier first brought to our attention by Walter Prescott Webb in his path-breaking 1952 study entitled *The Great Frontier* and expanded upon by William H. McNeill in his *Great Frontier: Freedom and Hierarchy in Modern Times*.¹ This work builds on Webb and McNeill by exploring the interconnectedness of expansion across a mineral frontier that extended from California to Eastern Saudi Arabia and from London to Southern Iran, encompassing many locales in between within its web of commerce. Corporate training policies shaped, and in turn were shaped by, the hierarchies of power that evolved along this global petroleum frontier.

Focusing on the evolution of corporate training and education programs for host country nationals, this study extends the more recent work in the history of American foreign relations that has critiqued American exceptionalism in new ways. Within the analytical framework of the global mineral frontier, as Nathan Citino noted recently in *Diplomatic History*, historians of American foreign policy have expanded the critique of American

¹ Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Frontier* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1952). William Hardy McNeill, *The Great Frontier: Freedom and Hierarchy in Modern Times* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983).

exceptionalism first articulated by William Appleman Williams and the New Left to encompass the analytical approaches of the New Social History and New Western History.² Following in the wake of the American Social History Project, which asked “Who Built America?,” this comparative study of AIOC and Aramco asks similar questions of the historical record.³ Returning to the official archives of AIOC and the unofficial Aramco history collections, I have approached the evidence attuned to the voices of dissent, voices that demanded the close attention of corporate managers at the time if not that of later storytellers.⁴

This study situates the formulation of human resource development policy within a discourse on labor and education in AIOC and Aramco, a discourse that was heavily inflected by western conceptions of race. In *America's Kingdom*, Robert Vitalis advanced our understanding of the dynamics of race in corporate policy formulation by locating Aramco history within the context of an unbroken frontier stretching from the mining camps of American West to the Aramco compounds in Eastern Saudi Arabia.⁵ In so doing, he illuminated the ways in which Aramco's construction of a Saudi “other” paralleled the treatment of non-white groups in the broader sweep of American continental expansion.

² An excellent summary of this general approach is available in Nathan J. Citino, “The Global Frontier: Comparative History and the Frontier-Borderlands Approach in American Foreign Relations,” *Diplomatic History* 25, no. 4 (2001).

³ “Center for History and New Media,” <http://chnm.gmu.edu/> (accessed December 30, 2007).

⁴ I am indebted to Richard White's insights into frontier culture in America. See especially Richard White et al., *The Frontier in American Culture: An Exhibition at the Newberry Library, August 26, 1994 - January 7, 1995* (Chicago, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). On noticing the voices of previously excluded historical actors in the history of the American West, see also Richard White, *“It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own”: A History of the American West* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

⁵ Robert Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).

Drawing on W.E.B. Du Bois' critique of African American education, Vitalis argued that Aramco's training policy functioned much as did the Hampton-Tuskegee model of Booker T. Washington.⁶ By emphasizing trade training over higher education, Hampton and Tuskegee Institutes inducted African Americans into industry and simultaneously preserved the racial hierarchy of Post-Reconstruction America. As Donal Lindsey has chronicled, Native Americans also received trade training at the Hampton Institute along with African Americans.⁷ Trade training was, similarly, a means of induction into industrial society for this group of non-white Americans. Latinos were treated similarly in the mining camps of the American Southwest. When mining companies provided educational opportunities, those opportunities were decidedly trade-focused and not geared towards advancing the employee towards more responsible positions within the companies. By emphasizing trade training for Arabs as a way to integrate them via a long slow tutelage into industrial ways of work, Aramco was thus carrying forward a dynamic already evolving along the global mineral frontier since the 19th century. Limiting the education of Arab employees to trades in Aramco had immediate practical results, as did the training of Mexican labor by mining interests in the American Southwest during the 19th century. Aramco created the workforce it needed and simultaneously prolonged the company's concessionary control of Arab petroleum resources. In so doing, Aramco postponed the development of what Du Bois referred to as a "talented tenth," a group that would challenge the extant hierarchical ordering of society.

⁶ For Du Bois' critique see W. E. B. Du Bois and Eugene F. Provenzo, *Du Bois on Education* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002). W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Education of Black People; Ten Critiques, 1906-1960* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1973).

⁷ Donal F. Lindsey, *Indians at Hampton Institute, 1877-1923*, Blacks in the New World (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995). For more thorough coverage of the integrationist agenda see also David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction : American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995).

Although education of non-white peoples in industrializing America proceeded along a common trajectory at home and abroad, Aramco was not merely recapitulating the American frontier story overseas. Within the context of the global mineral frontier, it was also participating in a mutually reinforcing dynamic of frontier expansion alongside the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, which had established its concession on the northern coast of the Persian Gulf several decades earlier. As a further contribution to the critique of American exceptionalism, this study examines the ways in which AIOC policy formation interacted with Aramco policy formulation.

Juxtaposing the AIOC and Aramco cases also enriches the analysis by placing it within the larger context of debates over the role of race and education in the British Empire.

Approaching this as an Anglo-American comparative exercise, it is possible to combine the methodological approaches of global frontier studies with those of post-colonial critiques of European imperialism. Edward Said's analysis of the "western gaze," which "constructed" the oriental "other," has its parallel in Du Bois' observations on race as a social construction.⁸

Though recovering authentic voices of labor is an exceedingly difficult task, given the paucity of documentary evidence in the Persian Gulf context, labor's education under industrial auspices is recoverable as a discourse on training and staff development in contemporary writings that can be studied as "orientalist" texts.⁹ In the British case, the work of J. A. Mangan is particularly helpful in understanding education as a site for the

⁸ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

⁹ The process of understanding how Persians and Arabs were trained is intended as a contribution to constructing their history. See Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982). On subaltern studies see Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

construction of the colonial “other.”¹⁰ As Douglas Little demonstrated in his deconstruction of American orientalist portraits of the Middle East in *National Geographic Magazine*, it is possible to use a wide variety of documentary evidence to mine for information about attitudes and mentalities which shaped policy formulation and delimited the options which policy-makers believed to be “realistic.”¹¹ Heeding Andrew Rotter’s call to bring Said into the analysis of American adventures overseas, this study builds on Said’s insights to enrich our understanding of both American and British corporate relations with peoples in what was once known as the “third world.”¹²

In writing a comparative history of the evolution of training and staff development on the global petroleum frontier, it is important to pay attention to political economy in charting the role of labor in Gulf markets that has largely been ignored by popular global histories of oil.¹³ I have approached this task in a manner informed by the work of Fred Halliday on the Iranian and Saudi Arabian cases.¹⁴ Laura Randall’s work on labor and education in Venezuelan oil, though focused on a later period after nationalization of that country’s oil resources, is also helpful in framing an approach to the study of education programs as regimes of labor control.¹⁵ In this sense, this study is in line with a long tradition of muckraking in the oil

¹⁰ J. A. Mangan, *"Benefits Bestowed"? Education and British Imperialism* (Manchester U. Pr., 1988). ———, *The Imperial Curriculum: Racial Images and Education in British Colonial Experience* (London; New York: Routledge, 1993). ———, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism: Aspects of the Diffusion of an Ideal, Sport in the Global Society* (London; Portland, OR: F. Cass, 1998).

¹¹ Du Bois and Provenzo, *Du Bois on Education*. On orientalist portraits of Arabs in American popular media see also Jack G. Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 2001).

¹² Andrew J. Rotter, "Saidism without Said: Orientalism and U.S. Diplomatic History," *The American Historical Review* 105, no. 4 (2000).

¹³ As others have pointed out, the most commonly cited historical surveys of petroleum history leave labor, and by implication the training of labor, entirely out of the history. See Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993).

¹⁴ Fred Halliday, "Labor Migration in the Middle East," *MEIRP Reports* 59 (1977). ———, "Trade Unions and Working Class Opposition," *MEIRP Reports*, no. 71 (1978).

¹⁵ Laura Randall, *The Political Economy of Venezuelan Oil* (New York: Praeger, 1987).

industry that traces its roots back through Anthony Sampson's account of the Seven Sisters to the work of Ida Tarbell on Standard Oil.¹⁶

Corporate Memorialists and the Disappearance of Conflict

Unsurprisingly, corporations' accounts of their own history are often celebratory and must be read critically as all such apologetics must. Henry Longhurst's *Adventures in Oil* (1959) is one such company history. This was the first official BP history of its predecessor, the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. It was written and published after the new company began participation in oil production in Iran under the consortium. Written in a year when BP was celebrating its 50th anniversary, and perhaps still recovering from the shock of Mosaddeq's nationalization of Persian oil in 1951, if read critically it yields useful insights into the company's perception of its own work and where Persians and others fit into that world view.¹⁷

In Longhurst's history, Persians recede into the background. They are set pieces in a drama featuring the legendary accomplishments of company heroes in Persia. Starting with the towering figure of the company's founder William Knox D'Arcy, Longhurst's account goes on to chronicle the exploits of George Bernard Reynolds, the pioneering oilman who first discovered oil in commercial quantities in Persia in 1909 just at the moment when the company leadership had given up hope. Another company pioneer, Charles Ritchie, oversaw the successful construction of the first pipeline. On the "desert island" of Abadan, R. R.

¹⁶Anthony Sampson, *The Seven Sisters: The Great Oil Companies and the World They Shaped* (New York: Viking Press, 1975). Ida M. Tarbell, *The History of the Standard Oil Company* (New York: McClure, Phillips & co., 1904).

¹⁷Henry Longhurst, *Adventure in Oil* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1959).

Davidson supervised the construction of the company's refinery. Davidson achieved "remarkable" results with "illiterate" labor, overcoming "delays, plagues and occasional riot" through "constant improvisation." Throughout the early period, Longhurst noted that Dr. M. Y. Young, "The Little Doctor," ensured the continuity of production operations. Dr. Young worked wonders for the health of natives, acquiring what Longhurst described as a "saintly aura." Through his application of Western medicine he secured the cooperation of both the Bakhtiari Khans, who supplied labor in grateful reciprocation at Fields, and the Sheikh of Mohammerah (known today as Khorramshahr), who conveniently ceded the Island of Abadan for company use. Yet another company pioneer appeared in the 1910s in the person of John Cadman, who as a member of the British commission of enquiry provided the technical justification Winston Churchill needed to convince British Parliament to invest in Anglo-Iranian as part of a larger scheme to move the Royal Navy from coal to oil fuel. In developing his narrative of company pioneers, Longhurst treated the theme of scientific management and "efficiency" in his coverage of the interwar years and tied the company's accomplishments to British nationalism. Highlighting the technical accomplishments of another of the company's pioneers, Mr. James J. Jameson, Longhurst noted with evident approval the replacement of "inefficient" American and Canadian drillers by "efficient" British drillers.

Longhurst pointed to the rise of the personnel office in AIOC, which was created to deal with the rapid expansion in personnel and all the issues this change brought with it. With the passing of the AIOC already five years behind it, he narrated the new British Petroleum Company's generosity in developing Persian labor as a policy of necessity as well as benevolence. *Adventures in Oil* explicitly linked the labor troubles of the early 1920s to the creation of the labor office. He recalled "the Sikhs, who were fine mechanics and had

provided so much of the skilled labor in building the refinery, went on strike in 1922 and were repatriated en masse to India. The Chittagonians¹⁸ soon follow for the same reason.” He identifies this as the moment at which "Persianization" became “the order of the day.” Due to the actions of Indian labor, “Immense sums of money and the best efforts of an increasingly large technical staff were spent over the years on training schemes at all levels from the humblest tribesman down from the hills to the aspiring graduate in the splendid technical Institute.”¹⁹

While he was able to acknowledge labor’s agency in the creation of the personnel office, Longhurst’s account remained defensive about housing provision during the interwar years. He was at pains to point out that one should not judge the amenities provided labor then by today’s standards of today. Noting that accommodations were indeed “elementary” and in need of improvement, he reminded his reader “everything could not be done at once.” Even the junior British staff who lived in the bachelor quarters know as “Slidevale” suffered with inadequate housing. And many of these former Slidevale residents were company pioneers now running the company from Britannic House in London. The cancellation of the original concession in 1932 was understandable as a “political” issue, but the politics on the ground remain unexplored. Instead, the narrative focused on how the wise leadership of Sir John Cadman and Sir William Fraser adeptly handled Reza Shah by increasing the Persian share of the revenues. In so doing, they secured a new concession in 1933, preserving AIOC’s access to Persian oil and increasing the revenue stream that would continue to support Persian national development.

¹⁸ Chittagong is a province in what is today is known as Bangladesh.

¹⁹ Longhurst, *Adventure in Oil*, 72.

During World War II, AIOC converted the refinery at Abadan for the production of aviation fuel. Unlike the earlier period, when the heroic actions of pioneering individuals seem to have determined the course of action in Southern Persia, Longhurst credited the ability to fuel yet another war to the legion of nameless Britons who “worked in Persia for six long leave-less years.” Recalling the “seven British and 150 Persians” who operated a plant where aviation gasoline was distilled, he illustrates the resourcefulness of the joint British-Persian team which ultimately provided the fuel for “spectacular exploits” like the American bombing of Tokyo.²⁰

Longhurst also retold the story of Mosaddeq’s nationalization and the resulting British “withdrawal from Persia.” Recounting the withdrawal afforded Longhurst the opportunity to celebrate the successes of industrial education and Persianization. He informed his readers that Persians were able to produce oil after the departure of the British staff precisely because the British had trained them to do this. The critical things that Persians could not do for themselves were things the British had never equipped them for through training. The Persians could neither market the oil on a global basis nor keep current with technological developments. Both of these activities required the input of Western experts. Rather than probing too deeply into the reasons why the Anglo-Iranian concession had come to an end, he noted, “on neither side does one detect any serious recrimination about events which engendered such bitter feelings at the time.” Glossing over the return of the British to Persia under the consortium, he moved on quickly to show the new British Petroleum Company exploring for oil in far away places like Papua New Guinea and subsidizing the deep-sea exploration of Jacques Cousteau. The company’s interests were evidently best served in its

²⁰ Ibid., 20, 111.

fiftieth anniversary by a history demonstrating its vitality through a tradition of adventure and exploration.

In the following decade, Aramco also sponsored the preparation of its own pioneer narrative. Wallace Stegner visited Saudi Arabia and returned to California to write the company-commissioned novel *Discovery!* Early drafts had pointed to tensions between Arab labor and the company's western managers. At the company's insistence, however, Stegner's account of Aramco's pioneers was heavily redacted before publication. Casting the story of the American oil company as the development of a "new frontier" in Saudi Arabia, the stock theme of "Saudi-American Partnership" obscured the labor-management tensions which Stegner had witnessed first hand in Saudi Arabia. His published narrative started with a "beachhead" in the Arabian wilderness and went on to trace the entertaining exploits of American wildcatters as they drilled in the Saudi desert until they struck oil in commercial quantities. He retold the heroic stories of the hundred men who stayed behind in World War II, and concluded with the return of the American wives evacuated from Saudi Arabia during the war. Throughout Stegner's tale, Aramco Americans had the full support of their Saudi "partners" as they struggled against unbelievable odds to wrest success from the hard Saudi wilderness. Though Stegner did not draw the parallel in his narrative, Aramco's history being uniquely the tale of a new American frontier, this was essentially the same narrative that AIOC had claimed as its own in the Persian concession. Thirty years before in the Persian wilderness, AIOC pioneers had also built "western civilization."²¹

²¹ On the Stegner book, its redaction and role in the creation of an exceptionalist Aramco narrative see Robert Vitalis, "Aramco World: Business and Culture on the Arabian Oil Frontier," in *The Modern Worlds of Business and Industry: Cultures, Technology, Labor* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1999). ———, "Black Gold, White Crude: An Essay on American Exceptionalism, Hierarchy, and Hegemony in the Gulf," *Diplomatic History* 26, no. 2 (2002). Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier*.

In his introduction to the 1970 version of *Discovery!*, Stegner evoked the wonders of training initiatives in Aramco to support the claim that training was the engine of progress in Aramco. In the redacted version published by Aramco, he did not address the relationship between training and labor politics. Outside of the references that Stegner makes to the industrial training program of the 1950s and the management training in the 1960s, education and training hardly fit into the body of Stegner's narrative. When recounting the geologists' approach to training Saudi workers to man the oil rigs, Stegner related that the Americans had to deal with problems of "teaching the Saudi and Bahraini workmen how not to get hurt, how to respect the machinery, how to do the job."

In the company's sanitized version of his book Stegner cast relations between Americans and Arabs as "healthy." Despite the efforts of Aramco management to ensure that Stegner's account stressed the "partnership" between Americans and Arabs, there remain traces of tensions which Stegner knew from first hand experience did in fact exist in Aramco. In one telling episode, he recounted a cautionary tale from the summer of 1935 when an American driller named Walt Haenggi lost his patience with a sullen Arab workman and – depending on which account one believes – either punched him or shook him. The local Sheik, Mohammad Tawil, became involved and Haenggi was nearly expelled from the kingdom. Though this story of discipline administered by Haenggi to the Saudi Arab gives us some insight into the day to day lives of line supervisors and their men, a more complex story of training in Aramco – and its relationship with labor struggles -- would have to await other storytellers.²²

²² Wallace Earle Stegner, *Discovery; the Search for Arabian Oil* (Beirut, Lebanon: Middle East Export Press, 1971), 69,72.

Other pioneer narratives which sought to recapture the work of Americans in Aramco's early days appeared as the aging pioneers published their own memoirs of life in Saudi Arabia. Anyone searching for an understanding of either the origins or the course of industrial education programs would learn little from these accounts. In 1979, the first such account was self-published by Larry Barnes under the title of *Looking Back Over My Shoulder*.²³ Barnes' memoir sheds little light on industrial training beyond an occasional anecdote relating to Saudi's lack of industrial knowledge. His memoir was soon joined by William McConnell's 1985 memoir entitled *The Hundred Men*.²⁴ McConnell's book was equally uninformative on the nature of industrial education in Aramco, the one exception being the unsupported claim that Aramco's labor policy was based on "the terms of the original agreement that listed one of the fundamental CASOC objectives as the employment and training of Saudis." McConnell invoked the memory of "effective training of this new workforce," which he argued was "an essential part of the operation from the start" with "obvious benefits" to both parties. Aside from one reference to CASOC staff calling Arabs "coolies," Paul Walton's *From Prospect to Prosperity: Wildcatting in Saudi Arabia and the Rockies*, published in 1994, did not consider Arab training as he recounts his exploits prospecting for oil in the United States and for the John Paul Getty in the Saudi-Kuwaiti neutral zone without mentioning either labor relations or training.²⁵

Timothy Barger, son of Aramco pioneer and company chairman Tom Barger, added to the collection of available published sources on the history of Aramco by publishing a collection of his father's letters in *Out in the Blue: Letters from Arabia, 1937 to 1940: A Young*

²³ Larry Barnes, *Looking Back over My Shoulder* (Peterborough, NH: Self Published, 1979).

²⁴ Philip C. McConnell, *The Hundred Men* (Peterborough, NH: Currier Press, 1985), 7.

²⁵ Paul T. Walton, *From Prospect to Prosperity: Wildcatting in Arabia and the Rockies*, A McMurrin-Henriksen Book (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1994).

American Geologist Explores the Deserts of Early Saudi Arabia (2000). A son's tribute to the loving relationship between his parents, this account is unfortunately not very helpful in understanding how it was that Aramco training became an "essential part of the operation." In the book's epilogue, Tim Barger included a statement that King Abd Al-Aziz signed the concession agreement "with the understanding that Saudis would be trained in the oil business." Though many at the time regarded this "proviso" on training Saudis as "mere lip service," Tom Barger "and a few others" took training Saudis seriously and viewed developing Saudis as "absolutely necessary." Tim Barger claimed that his father worked his entire career to ensure that "Aramco's Saudi employees had world-class on-the-job training and virtually unlimited access to higher education." Rather than providing details of training schemes or education plans for Saudis, the younger Barger offered the testimony of one Saudi who rose through the ranks to become Saudi Arabia's Minister of Petroleum and Minerals as "proof" of a progressive Aramco approach to the development of Saudis.²⁶

Taken as a whole, these narratives of American pioneers shed little light on the role of industrial education as a catalyst for change in Saudi Arabia. The same holds true for the Aramco pioneer narratives that continue to be published through the Aramco ExPats Website.²⁷ They chose to ignore that aspect of their own experience in retelling their Aramco stories, preferring instead to focus on happier times before "nationalism" and "race pride" led Saudi labor to become "truculent." Writing conflict out of their tales, they were also compelled to write any serious consideration of industrial education out of the history as well.

²⁶ Thomas C. Barger and Timothy J. Barger, *Out in the Blue: Letters from Arabia, 1937 to 1940: A Young American Geologist Explores the Deserts of Early Saudi Arabia* (Vista, CA: Selwa Press, 2000).

²⁷ "Aramco ExPats Online Community for Saudi Aramco Expatriates," <http://www.aramcoexpats.com/> (accessed December 31, 2007).

British Petroleum Histories and the Problem of Iranian Nationalism

Between 1982 and 2000, Oxford University Press published three linked histories of the British Petroleum Company. In the first two volumes, the Anglo-Iranian Petroleum Company figures prominently in the narrative as corporate predecessor to today's British Petroleum Company. Industrial training and education efforts are key components of these first two BP company histories. In each narrative, the nature and extent of training and education programs derive directly from company efforts to increase the percentage of Persian national staff and to decrease the percentage of expatriate staff on the payroll. The histories make clear that corporate needs to show progress in "Persianization" shaped the way in which industrial education policies evolved. The Oxford histories of AIOC go to great lengths in placing the evolution of these policies within the local context in Persia, considering the impact of politics both in Southern Iran and in the capital Tehran.²⁸

Ronald Ferrier's 1982 history, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: The Developing Years, 1901-1932*, was the first account of AIOC based on research in the BP corporate archive. Ferrier's work covered the period from the negotiation of the D'Arcy concession in 1901 to that concession's termination in 1932. Ferrier's is a substantial academic history that nonetheless continues the tradition of pioneer narrative first developed by Williamson and Longhurst.²⁹ He broke new ground by placing the pioneers like George Bernard Reynolds in the context of their times and adding many hitherto ignored characters

²⁸ R. W. Ferrier, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: The Developing Years, 1901-1932*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982). J. H. Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: The Anglo-Iranian Years, 1928-1954*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). ———, *British Petroleum and Global Oil, 1950-1975: The Challenge of Nationalism* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

²⁹ Ferrier, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: The Developing Years, 1901-1932*.

to the “narrative of progress in Persia.” His treatment of the Bakhtiari Khans and the controversy over the supply of guards for the company’s field operations, as well as is coverage of the negotiations for the town of Abadan with the Sheikh of Mohammerah, pointed to new ways in which the AIOC had emerged from its local environment. Ferrier also expanded our knowledge of the role played by the Burmah Oil Company in the early development of the company. He drew our attention to the role of the managing agents in running the company during the early years. Ferrier pointed out that Charles Greenway, one of the company’s earliest pioneers, learned the oil business while working in India for Shaw Wallace. Though perhaps assigning too much responsibility to the role of the managing agents as sole vectors for the transmission of imperial behavior from the Raj, these links to the India trade are important. From the deployment of Burmah oil staff to assist with the drilling for oil at Fields to their involvement in the construction of the Abadan refinery, the connection to the India trade is crucial to an understanding of AIOC within the regional and global contexts of the British Empire.

In recounting the history of Anglo-Persian in WWI, Ferrier pointed to the crucible of discontent in the labor camps of Abadan, where cramped conditions, relentless production requirements, and the cultural diversity of staff worked together to heighten tensions and spark conflict. We learn from Ferrier that the motivation for staff discontent could be located somewhere amongst the Indian bachelor staff living in their tents and the Persians in their own separate accommodations living along with their families. Whereas Persians were “unused to industrial work,” Indian bachelor staff was subject to “cultural claustrophobia” in

an environment that was “not always sympathetic.” Europeans, who were housed separately from the earliest days of the D’Arcy concession, fought constantly amongst themselves.³⁰

Another of Ferrier’s key contributions was his work in situating the origins of both the company’s training and Persianization efforts within the context of the British response to the two strikes of 1920 and 1922. Ferrier points out that in Abadan, where the majority of laborers were Indian Sikhs, resentment over the 1919 massacre of Indian protestors at Amritsar fueled labor unrest as WWI drew to a close. He recounted that on December 9, 1920, 3,000 Indian workers went on strike, demanding an 80% wage increase and other improvements to their working conditions. They were joined the next day in a general strike by the Persian and Arab workforce, who shared their anger over poor pay in the face of rising cost of living, inadequate facilities, and the crowded and dirty living conditions in the town of Abadan. Ferrier explained that in addition to meeting the strikers’ demands for a substantial pay increase, Managing Director H. E. Nichols also responded by launching a study of the terms and conditions of contracts in Abadan that eventually put in place a job classification and compensation system intended to address worker concerns about inequities in pay and amenities. Issues that remained unresolved, however, included “accommodation, married quarters, medical services, leisure amenities, exchange rates and the sale of discharge certificates of Indian employees.”³¹

In 1994, J. H. Bamberg’s *History of the British Petroleum: The Anglo-Iranian Years, 1928-1954* moved the narrative forward based on further research in the company archive. Recalling the pioneer narratives of Williamson, Longhurst and Ferrier, Bamberg was also

³⁰ Ibid., 262.

³¹ Ibid., 432.

writing of wonders worked by the British company in the Persian wilderness. Persia before the arrival of AIOC had been “a neglected nomadic backwater in the 19th century ... which was largely devoid of the economic infrastructure associated with more highly developed economies.” The Persian wilderness awaited the arrival of the Europeans who would bring “a vast number of services including roads, electricity, and water supplies, telephone lines, jetties, transportation, accommodation, social amenities, education and security.”³² Yet, Bamberg’s history of the later years of AIOC also brought more complexity to the narrative than any previous chronicler of that company’s development. Covering the period of BP company history from the onset of the worldwide depression in 1929 through return of the British to Iran under the consortium in 1954, he described negotiations over the new concession of 1933, examined struggles to retain the concession throughout the late 1930s and into the Second World War, and narrated the struggles to contain Persian nationalism in the last years of AIOC during the immediate post-war period.

In his account, Bamberg traced the evolution of industrial education policy in ways that tie Iranian politics to the formulation of industrial education policy in AIOC. Starting with the strike of 1929, Bamberg recounted the negotiations over the new concession of 1933, in which the British company agreed to the £10,000 per annum allocation for training. Following the negotiations over the new concession, the play of nationalist politics in Iran is at the center of Bamberg’s account of policy formulation in AIOC. Recounting the negotiation of the General Plan, in which the *Proces Verbal* specified the company’s commitment to construct the Abadan Technical Institute, Bamberg provided intriguing hints as to the operation of nationalism on the ground. In so doing, he offered a general framework

³² Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: The Anglo-Iranian Years, 1928-1954*, 63.

for further inquiry into the individuals and institutions that shaped educational policy in the local Iranian environment.

As the title suggests, the third book to appear in the BP history series, Bamberg's *British Petroleum and Global Oil, 1950-1975: The Challenge of Nationalism* explicitly locates BP's later history within the context of the world-wide nexus of petroleum exploration, extraction, refining, and marketing. Published in 2000, this history examines BP's globalism from the perspective of boardroom politics. In contrast to the earlier volume on the history of Anglo-Iranian, progressive politics and labor do not figure into this history. As a consequence industrial education is not a major component of this narrative of the later years of British Petroleum. The promising start made in the earlier volume in pointing to avenues of inquiry into the relationship between industrial education policies, labor and local politics comes to a dead end in Bamberg's latest BP history. Although the response to nationalism is a theme in the book, the book provides few insights into the way nationalism worked to shape BP policies within the countries in which it operated. Unfortunately for the purposes of this study, flying over the array of countries in which the company operated from thousands of feet above the ground does not get us any closer to an understanding of how education and training policy evolved over time.³³

Towards a Post-Exceptionist History of Saudi National Development

In contrast with the three histories of British Petroleum published since 1982, two of which treat the history of industrial education as central to the company's story, there is no

³³ ———, *British Petroleum and Global Oil, 1950-1975: The Challenge of Nationalism*.

comprehensive company history of Aramco to provide context. Though company histories based on work in the BP corporate archive may suffer from a lack of follow-up on initial insights into the role of contest and conflict in shaping policies in the local environment and opt instead to assign primary agency to the Anglo half of the Anglo-Iranian partnership, they do have the virtue of providing some initial clues. They also provide a framework in which to situate further research. Because there is no publicly accessible Aramco company archive, critical histories have been slow in coming.

The first critical account of Aramco's history was primarily an assessment of American foreign policy and petroleum's role therein. Focusing on the period of 1933 – 1950, Irvine Anderson's 1981 *Aramco, the United States and Saudi Arabia* considered the role of strategic planners, diplomats, field personnel and corporate officers in shaping Aramco's petroleum policies.³⁴ Anderson's coverage of field operations is necessarily limited by the nature of his documentation. All of his attempts to obtain company correspondence from Aramco's parent companies from the period 1933-1950 were "turned aside with great politeness." While he could use U.S. State Department records and the correspondence subpoenaed by the Senate and Federal Trade Commission in its investigation of Aramco's alleged anti-competitive practices, his account of field operations was based largely on Aramco Handbooks, Stegner's *Discovery!* and unpublished interviews that he conducted with retired executives.³⁵ Those

³⁴ Irvine H. Anderson, *Aramco: The United States and Saudi Arabia; a Study in the Dynamics of Foreign Oil Policy, 1933-1950* (Princeton U. Pr., 1981). Anderson's earlier account of Standard Vacuum in Indonesia is likewise a history with the local politics left. See ———, *The Standard-Vacuum Oil Company and United States East Asian Policy, 1933-1941* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975).

³⁵ For Example, see Arabian American Oil Company, "Aramco's Field Force: A Report by the Personnel Planning Committee," (1950). Company Arabian American Oil and Roy Lebkicher, *Handbooks for American Employees* (New York: Moore, 1952). ———, *Aramco Handbook* ([New York]: 1960). ———, *Aramco Handbook; Oil and the Middle East* (Dhahran, Saudi Arabia: 1968). Under Saudi ownership, Saudi-Aramco has published Ismail I. Nawwab et al., *Aramco and Its World: Arabia and the Middle East* (Dhahran, Saudi Arabia: Aramco, 1980). and ———, *Saudi Aramco and Its World: Arabia and the Middle East* (Dhahran, Saudi Arabia: Saudi Arabian Oil Company (Saudi Aramco), 1995)..

retired executives included Tom Barger and Floyd Ohliger. Unfortunately for the purposes of this study, Tom Barger's "proudest accomplishment," that of developing Saudi labor, received no play in this account.

Joy Viola's 1982 account of training in Aramco entitled *The Development of Human Resources: A Case Study of United States-Saudi Arabian Cooperation*, which she revised and published in 1986 as *Human Resources Development in Saudi Arabia: Multinationals and Saudization*, shifted the focus from the diplomacy of petroleum to the development of training and Saudization in Aramco.³⁶ Basing her work on Aramco's Annual Reports to the Saudi Government and extensive interviews with former employees and Saudi government officials, Viola was the first to focus attention on the study of training programs in Aramco. Her research in Aramco history, motivated by a pursuit of usable historical models, found a "model worthy of emulation by any multinational firms seeking to develop host country nationals" in Aramco's "vast training operation." Looking back on the Aramco story from a "Golden Anniversary Perspective," she provided a detailed account of education and training programs conducted by the company during the formative years of 1933 to 1955. Her narrative opens with an overview of manpower training in the early years; it moves on to cover the growth of Aramco's training centers, programs and support of Saudi government schools; and it concludes with the emergence of Aramco ancillary services.

³⁶ Joy Winkie Viola and Documentation Northeastern University. Center for International Higher Education, *The Development of Human Resources: A Case Study of United States--Saudi Arabian Cooperation* (Boston, Mass. (202 Dodge Library, Northeastern University, Boston 02115): Center for International Higher Education Documentation Northeastern University, 1982). Joy Winkie Viola, *Human Resources Development in Saudi Arabia: Multinationals and Saudization* (Boston: International Human Resources Development Corp., 1986).

While Viola's detailed accounting for actual programs is invaluable to understanding the chronology and outlines of the programs themselves, she refrained from making a definitive argument for her own periodization of training policy development. This is particularly troubling with regard to the decision to demarcate a major shift in training policy somewhere in the mid-1950s. Noting differences of opinion over "objectives of the training offered," she cited highly diverse views but refrained from making an argument of her own for the shift. On the one hand, there was the view of Harry Snyder, Aramco's training director, who seemed to indicate in her interviews with him that the shape of Aramco's programs was inscribed in their origins. Defending the training programs as the natural working out of an "enlightened business philosophy," he had explained that the training programs were designed to "prepare Saudis as rapidly and efficiently as possible to be able to eventually operate the Saudi Arab oil industry in its entirety." Viola presented Snyder's view as an apology designed to parry the criticism of those who would argue that Aramco's education policy "failed to create Saudi technocrats and bureaucrats who could hold higher positions within the company." To account for the shift in training policy, she cited a 25-year Aramco veteran by the name of Dr. Ramsey Madany who claimed that "the decision was made at levels far above those of the corporate boardroom." According to Dr. Madany, Saudi nationalism was indeed a driving force for change, but this was a nationalism bestowed from above. Sheik Yamani, and not the oil workers of the Eastern province, was responsible for the turn to Saudization in the 1960s. Left out of Madany's considerations, and therefore Viola's as well, was the impact of nationalism on the ground in motivating Saudi workers in the Eastern Province to agitate for changed conditions within the company.³⁷

³⁷ Viola, *Human Resources Development in Saudi Arabia: Multinationals and Saudization*, 20-26.

In 1998, Saudi Aramco Services Company published an official history of Aramco training entitled *Saudi Aramco and Its People*.³⁸ This account took the next step along the path that Joy Viola had trod in the 1980s in documenting the actual training programs with an immense volume of detailed information. This official Aramco Services Company history of training is also invaluable to the researcher searching for hard to find details about particular programs. Unlike Viola's account, which represents the carefully documented research of a scholar, *Saudi Aramco and Its People* was published without footnotes and presented the impression of a voluminous company policy briefing. Its only thematic unity was provided by vignettes from the lives of senior Saudi Aramco company officials who attested to the positive role of Aramco training in their own personal development. Similar in tone to mood-setting pieces intended for display on a coffee table, as for instance the Saudi Arabian Government's publication *Forever Friends*, this history of training is a testimony to an "enduring partnership" rather than a careful explanation of the evolution of training policy over time.³⁹

As the 20th Century drew to a close, the focus turned again to the high politics of oil diplomacy with Anthony Cave Brown's 1999 *Oil, God and Gold*.⁴⁰ In so far as Brown touched on labor relations in the period 1933-1945, he cited Stegner. In narrating the history of the "company town" in the period after the war, Brown considered the account provided

³⁸ Thomas A. Pledge, Ali M. Dialdin, and Muhammad A. Tahlawi, *Saudi Aramco and Its People: A History of Training* (Dhahran, Saudi Arabia and Houston, TX: Saudi Arabian Oil Company and Aramco Services Company, 1998). In what must be an attempt at humor, Tom Pledge notes in the preface "space did not allow for the inclusion of footnotes in this book." Indeed, the cost of printing hundreds of colored photographs must have been so prohibitive for this 250 plus page tome that the company couldn't afford the paper and ink for another 20 or 30 pages of footnotes.

³⁹ Michael Crocker, *Forever Friends: Americans Share Their Fondest Memories of Work Life in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 1938-1998*, ed. Fahd Al-Semmari and Jill A. Roberg (Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives, 1999).

⁴⁰ Anthony Cave Brown, *Oil, God, and Gold: The Story of Aramco and the Saudi Kings* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999). Brown explains the access that Mulligan granted to his papers in the book's acknowledgements.

by Cheney in *Big Oil Man*. Brown's narrative was the first to make use of evidence from oral history interviews given at UC Berkeley by retired Aramco executives.⁴¹ Having gained exclusive access to the papers of Bill Mulligan, a retired Aramco government relations staffer and unofficial company historian, Brown also included some interesting new evidence of tensions and conflict within Aramco camp. Drawing on the voluminous evidence in the Mulligan Papers to which he had unfettered access, Brown cited a report by Solon Kimball, professor from Columbia University, on the stresses and strains on Americans working in Saudi Arabia and the marginal living conditions of Saudi labor. He also referenced confidential labor relations reports from the Mulligan papers in support of his argument that conditions endured by Saudi workers were indeed poor. Concluding that the strike of 1953 was caused by these poor conditions, and that the outcome of the strike was Aramco's development of a "welfare state" for Saudi employees, he characterized training programs as part of this larger welfare state that resulted from the company response to the 1953 strikes.

With the donation of the Mulligan Papers to Georgetown University after his death, Bill Mulligan's personal collection of Aramco documents came to assume the role of a semi-official Aramco company archive. The first two accounts to make extensive use of this collection, housed in Georgetown's Special Collections, were Thomas Lippman's 2004 *Inside the Mirage*⁴² and Robert Vitalis's 2007 *America's Kingdom*.⁴³ Though both men benefited from their use of the Mulligan papers, the end products of their analyses could not be more divergent. Where Lippman saw a "fragile partnership" in need of nurturing by Saudis and Americans, Vitalis charted the evolution of Aramco mythology on the global oil

⁴¹ This collection of interviews was later published as Frank Jungers et al., "American Perspectives of Aramco, the Saudi-Arabian Oil-Producing Company, 1930s-1980s," (Berkeley, CA: 1995).

⁴² Thomas W. Lippman, *Inside the Mirage: America's Fragile Partnership with Saudi Arabia* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004).

⁴³ Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier*.

frontier – a mythology that needed to be exposed and opposed. Indeed, Lippman perpetuated the myth of Aramco’s exceptional benevolence that Vitalis used the Mulligan papers to deconstruct.

Rushed to press after the 9/11 attacks, Lippman’s book followed Viola in offering the Aramco commitment to training (amongst other social welfare programs) as a defense of the company’s good intentions in addressing Saudi worker discontent which was typified by the response to the strike of 1953. As was true in Tim Barger’s portrait of his father’s life work, where one might expect a detailed accounting for actual training programs Lippman substituted the testimony of Ali Al-Naimi praising the Americans for fostering his career as “proof” of the training programs’ success. Including a copy of the Aramco ID badge once worn by Abdullah Jumah, with a caption explaining that he had started as an Aramco current affairs news analyst and later became the chairman of Saudi Aramco, Lippman concluded his chapter on “Arabs and Attitudes” and rested his case for the “progressive” nature of the company’s training and employment policies in Aramco.

Vitalis’s account of training in Aramco comes from a very different place than does Lippman’s. Basing his analysis on a careful reading of the archival record over a ten-year period, Vitalis placed Aramco training programs and the related Aramco personnel policies within the larger global context of America’s history of territorial expansion.⁴⁴ He drew connections between corporate exploitation of mineral resources in the American West and in

⁴⁴Vitalis’ work on the Aramco case includes scholarly articles and a book chapter which preceded the publication of *America’s Kingdom*. See Robert Vitalis, “The Closing of the Arabian Oil Frontier and the Future of Saudi-American Relations,” *Middle East Report*, no. 204, *The Arabian Peninsula* (1997), ———, “Aramco World: Business and Culture on the Arabian Oil Frontier,” in *The Modern Worlds of Business and Industry: Cultures, Technology, Labor* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1999), ———, “Black Gold, White Crude: An Essay on American Exceptionalism, Hierarchy, and Hegemony in the Gulf,” *Diplomatic History* 26, no. 2 (2002), ———, *America’s Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007).

Saudi Arabia, expanding the horizons of the global mineral frontier along the trajectory that Patricia Nelson Limerick had described in her account of the unbroken past of the American West.⁴⁵

Pointing to commentaries made by American observers in the late 1940s, Vitalis made a broad comparison between the policies of American and British companies in the Gulf, observing that the American company lagged behind AIOC in “providing education, training and promotion to management positions.” He proceeded to explain the reasons why Aramco lagged behind AIOC by documenting in eight chapters how the Americans in Saudi Arabia constructed (and defended) a racial hierarchy that was reflected in the services provided within Aramco’s camps. The hierarchical ordering of labor, which resembled that of the “Jim Crow” system in the American South, was part of a broader strategy that worked to undermine nascent labor organization and its progressive supporters within the Saudi government. Similar camp organization, with similarly separate and unequal services, had marked the mining operations in the American West and the petroleum extraction concerns in other parts of the world in the 20th century. While this system of racial hierarchy was collapsing under increasing pressure within the AIOC concession in Iran, however, Aramco continued to defend hierarchy in its camps.

The adoption of a “taylorized” trade training program in Aramco after World War II, and the abandonment by the company of support for elementary education for the children of Saudi employees in the late 1940s, is intelligible as part of this broader regime of racial segregation within Aramco. Vitalis explained how this system of separate and unequal opportunity in the

⁴⁵ Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West*, 1st ed. (New York: Norton, 1987).

Eastern Province recapitulated the racial hierarchies built by the mining industry in the American West and other American oil settlements overseas. As Vitalis pointed out, the children of Latino workers in the mining camps of the American West were to be trained as gardeners and not as mining engineers. The trade training approach adopted by Aramco in the late 1940s is thus a continuation of America's unbroken past on its global mineral frontier. Aramco managers defended this racial order implicitly and tenaciously, as had managers of other American companies operating on the global mineral frontier stretching from the American West to the Oilfields of Mexico, South America and the Middle East. Aramco only abandoned the trade training program after a series of strikes in the 1950s had forced the hand of Aramco's managers. The activism of Saudi workers forced the re-orientation of Aramco's training program in the 1950s, not a disembodied nationalism present only at levels "above the corporate board room."

In the process of defending racial hierarchy, Aramco politics also worked to destroy the reformist allies of the nascent labor movement, men such as the Saudi Petroleum Minister Abdullah Tariki, at a time when the Saudi state was in its first stages of consolidation as a nation-state. Where William Appleman Williams drew our attention to the tragedy of American diplomacy which blinded Americans to reflections of the American Revolution in the nationalist aspirations of other peoples in the post-World War II world, Vitalis documented the tragedy of racism on the global mineral frontier. Vitalis argues that this racialized worldview blinded even the most progressive critics of Aramco's petroleum policies to the abuses of labor in Saudi Arabia during the 1950s and drove the Americans to undermine the progressive policies of King Saud in favor of an alignment with Faisal.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, 1st ed. (Cleveland: World Pub. Co., 1959).

In the chapters that follow, I build on Vitalis' insights to understand corporate efforts to develop host country nationals. I approach this as an excavation and comparison of like histories of education and work on the global mineral frontier over four decades. This study seeks to account for the lag between AIOC's construction of a dedicated training institute in 1930s Iran and Aramco's delayed support for this same approach in 1960s Saudi Arabia. To accomplish this goal, I approach training and education as an inter-related set of programs that include elementary and secondary education, trade training programs, technical education at the college and university level, and other related initiatives for the development of technical skill in indigenous staff. I deal with these developments chronologically as they unfolded over time, rather than handling each as an individual entity. The participants in these events clearly saw the range of programs as an integrated whole. Taking the approach to elementary education out of the context of corporate views of trade training, for instance, renders both unintelligible. All company-sponsored training and education programs were part of the single fabric of "industrial education" in the AIOC and Aramco cases.

Chapter 2 covers the period 1923 – 1939 and focuses on elementary education, trade training, and AIOC's Abadan Technical Institute. This was a period in which AIOC attempted to train Persians to the standard of Indian labor. The latter half of this period was marked by critical debates over the roles of trade training and academic education in the development of Persian staff. I focus on the interaction between British policy-makers and their Persian counterparts within the local context, while also considering the imperial mentalities that drove policy formulation. I have sought to show how British ideas of Persian inferiority were crucial elements in policy formulation. This chapter concludes with the creation of the Abadan Technical Institute, which was the jewel in the crown of AIOC's imperial presence in Southern Iran.

Chapter 3 covers the period 1940 – 1949, comparing and contrasting AIOC’s “Persian Development” and Aramco’s “Arab Training.” During this period, AIOC and Aramco came into extensive direct contact. The understandings which each had of the other shaped policy formulation in this period. The framework for this chapter mirrors the flow of global events by shifting progressively from an AIOC focus to a focus on Aramco managers’ formulation of training policy. This was the period in which Aramco assumed a position of global leadership in petroleum production, eventually eclipsing AIOC on the global stage through the mere volume of its production output. AIOC had progressively committed itself to a wide range of training and education programs in Southern Iran, as part of a larger matrix of corporate welfare work. Aramco’s understanding of these developments was crucial to its own policy discussions. It was during this period that Aramco made the decision to focus on trade training as opposed to the broad-ranging education approach of AIOC. In so doing, Aramco managers adopted training programs specifically designed to stunt the growth of Saudi nationalism.

Chapter 4 covers the period 1949 – 1953 and focuses on American managers, Saudi labor and Aramco’s Trade Training Program. This was the period in which American managers were aggressively indoctrinated into the methodologies of labor control in the taylorized labor training programs known as “Production Training.” In this context, Aramco cast Saudi nationalism as an unhealthy state of mind that could be remedied through proper training. Aramco managers were tasked with the remediation of Saudi deviance through the application of industrial and educational psychology. It is also the period during which Saudi workers dragged the company into the modern world of workforce development through repeated boycotts, strikes and work stoppages.

Chapter 5 concludes with the period 1954-1963 and focuses on the transition from “Arab Training” to “Saudi Development” in Aramco. Here I consider the continued Aramco resistance to developing a “Saudi talented tenth.” I argue that the Saudi founding of the College of Petroleum and Minerals is best understood within that context rather than as a teleological unfolding of a plan that was somehow present from the very start. At the end of this final chapter I offer some thoughts on the possible broader significance of my findings.

Chapter 2: AIOC and Persian Education in Khuzistan, 1923 – 1939

Origins of Persianization in the Replacement of Indian Labor

On April 13, 1919, Brigadier General Reginald Dyer, most recently commander of British Operations in South-East Persia during the Great War, led a contingent of fifty Ghurkha and Sikh riflemen to confront a crowd of 20,000 Indians who had gathered in Amritsar to protest the British government’s ban on peaceful assemblies. Upon meeting the crowd, Dyer gave his soldiers the order to open fire. They concentrated on the largest groupings of protesters in order to maximize the effects of their weapons. According to British estimates, within ten minutes the British-Indian forces had expended their ammunition and 379 protestors lay dead. The wounded -- whom Dyer would leave to their own devices -- numbered more than 1,000. Known as the Amritsar Riots by the British and the Amritsar Massacre by Indian nationalists, the events of this day in the Punjab did more to catalyze the Indian liberation movement than any event since the Sepoy Massacre of 1857.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Derek Sayer, "British Reaction to the Amritsar Massacre 1919-1920," *Past and Present* 131, May (1991).

Ronald Ferrier counted Sikh reaction to the Amritsar Massacre, in addition to anger over high cost of living and poor living conditions in the town of Abadan, as a proximate cause of the Abadan strike that began on December 9, 1920. While it may be a stretch to claim an immediate causal linkage, Sikhs from the Punjab Region of Northern India where the massacre had taken place were the highly skilled tradesmen who constructed and operated the refinery. Persian laborers also joined with their Sikh co-workers to protest poor wages, inferior housing and inadequate services in Abadan. Their joint action brought APOC management to grant an 80% pay raise and to review the compensation of all workers.⁴⁸

In May 1922, when confronted by another Sikh strike in Abadan, APOC management successfully divided Indian against Persian labor, deporting more than 2,000 highly qualified Sikhs in early 1923, and setting a course to replace Indian labor with Persian. Bohemian clerical staff and cooks from the Island of Goa would remain, but the new approach was to train Persian labor in Southern Iran to the standard of the just expelled Punjabi labor.⁴⁹ Within months of deporting the Sikhs, APOC opened its first Persian primary school in Abadan and took over the administration of another in Ahwaz. Linking involvement in elementary education to efforts to Persianize the labor force, managers saw these efforts as a complement to existing training in production shops. They would also credit the apprentice training program with reducing the company's reliance on Sikh labor, including the ability to

⁴⁸ Ferrier, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: The Developing Years, 1901-1932*, 432. In the wake of WWI, labor seemed to be playing a strong hand. Strikes in the spring of 1920 in the oil province of Baku had ended with a Bolshevik take over of those fields. See Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power*, 238.

⁴⁹ Ferrier, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: The Developing Years, 1901-1932*, 432. Longhurst's account makes mention of the 1922 strikes and observed that both the Sikhs and Chittagonians were expelled at the end of 1922. Unlike Ferrier, however, he did not attempt to tie these events to their international context. For him as for Ferrier, the 1922 strike was the turning point where the British realized they needed to train Persians to replace Indian labor which was becoming unreliable. See Longhurst, *Adventure in Oil*, 72-73.

continue production at Abadan despite another major strike in 1924, to which APOC reacted again by deporting yet another group of Sikhs.⁵⁰

AIOC's move to training and promoting Persians was part of a broader shift to a new approach within the company. During the 1920s, new managers like Sir Arnold Wilson brought an explicitly "modern" approach, replacing the antiquated 19th century system of managing agents and also by progressively eliminating the imported Indian labor upon which that system relied. The new post-WWI approach also meant replacing the highest skilled workers, largely American drillers, with a cadre of highly trained British staff. Over a five-year period from 1921 to 1926, APOC replaced much of its American-made drilling equipment. When the company was renamed Anglo-Iranian Oil Company in 1926, it had eliminated all of its American drillers.⁵¹

In the early 1920s, political conditions in Persia were in flux. Having originally conducted business in the local environment of Southern Persia without much regard for the Qajar Shah in Tehran, the company's primary diplomatic efforts had focused on the Bakhtiari Khans in the Fields area and the Sheikh of Mohammerah who controlled the Island of Abadan. By 1924, a colonel of the Cossack Guards named Reza Khan had become Persian prime minister. As he moved to build alliances and subdue recalcitrant Bakhtiari leaders by the force of arms, Reza Khan visited APOC areas in Southern Iran during 1924. Describing the Persian general for its British readers, the recently inaugurated *NAFT* Magazine cast Reza Khan as a "self-made man." At the end of World War I, Reza Khan had been "a simple

⁵⁰ Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: The Anglo-Iranian Years, 1928-1954*, 363.

⁵¹ On Arnold Wilson's role see Ferrier, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: The Developing Years, 1901-1932*, 306. Discussion of the efforts to train British drillers is in ———, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: The Developing Years, 1901-1932*, 414-17.

officer in the Persian Cossacks." *NAFT* explained to its readers that "[w]ithin six years he has risen, not through reason of birth, favouritism or chance, but solely by means of his own abilities and strength of character, to a position of supreme powers of government throughout the country to an extent unknown in the past." Reza Khan's visit to Khuzistan as commander of the Persian forces was an opportunity to educate the first high ranking official of the central government to the good work it was doing in Khuzistan. Speaking of the Persian politicians and press in Tehran, *NAFT* complained, "none has any real idea of all that the Company has accomplished and is aiming at in the development of the immense oil resources of Persia." Educating the Persian leadership would help counter negative press in Tehran and chart a course for the relationship with the people of Persia. Having turned a desolate wasteland into "a hive of industry, conducted on the most modern lines," AIOC had provided "permanent and lucrative employment to a staff of some 25,000 native employees over an area many square miles in extent, in which their forefathers had eked out a bare existence."⁵²

As the man who would be Shah toured the company areas, he saw the railroad, roads, bridges, wells, workshops, stores and hospital. Making his way finally to the refinery, though crowds of Persians "constantly casting themselves at his feet," he was given a tour of the sheds where tins for petrol and kerosene were being made. The company's hands-on training impressed him. *NAFT* observed that he "remarked to one of his fellow staff how wonderful it was that two or three Europeans could so organize and train the local Persians in what appeared to him to be difficult and complicated work."

⁵² "Visit to Khuzistan of H.H. The Sirdar Sipah," *NAFT* I, no. 4 (1924): 3-8. Sirdar Sipah is the Indian honorific title for commanding general.

The company wasted no time in enlisting the commander of Persian forces in support of British plans for remaking the Island of Abadan. They sought the general's support in clearing away local merchants and homeowners' opposition to improvements in the town's amenities. Quickly grasping the value of military intelligence, the Sirdar Sipah was "particularly interested in the aerial photographs of the refinery and village, by means of which a clear demonstration was given him of the problems involved in dealing with the bazaars and native house-owners in the carrying out of the reconstruction scheme." In capturing the Sheik in April 1925 and taking him to Tehran, where he died in captivity, Reza Khan's forces delivered a mixed blessing. Removed to Tehran, the Sheik of Mohammerah no longer bore responsibility for the conditions in the Abadan town. The company would now come under increased pressure to remedy the problem of a city that was "cramped, unsanitary, and lacking the facilities for a large and expanding population of different nationalities and creeds whose customs were not always accorded the toleration which in such a society is requisite."⁵³

Soon after Reza Khan toured Southern Persia, while the general's forces were still subduing the Sheikh of Mohammerah and the Bakhtiari Khans, the company moved to address another complaint of Persian workers by opening a dedicated apprentice training shop on Abadan in March 1925. The Abadan apprentice shop represented the first structured approach to apprentice training. This new shop was a "centralized scheme for training, testing and grading of all artisans." It formalized the existing training conducted in the production workshops to suit Persians for service in replacing the deported Indian fitters, turners, transport drivers, firemen and pump men – programs which were already in progress. By

⁵³ Ferrier, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: The Developing Years, 1901-1932*, 394-96. On the conditions in Abadan under the Sheik, see ———, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: The Developing Years, 1901-1932*, 432.

focusing on testing as a means of qualifying Persians, company officials believed the apprentice training scheme was a step forward in offering Persian labor an objective means of competing with expatriate labor. Testing was central to the training efforts that would serve as a bulwark against the need to import Indian labor again. Training programs for Persian electricians and cooks, two specialties where Indian labor had continued to occupy positions despite the expulsion of 1922, were particularly important in this effort.⁵⁴

By 1925, Persianization was a major concern of APOC management and correspondence between H. E. Nichols and management at Mohammerah in South Persia reflected a wide range of concerns about the progress of Persianization efforts. Support for elementary education, the challenges presented by stopping Indian recruiting, and the approach to moving forward aggressively with recruiting Persians were central to personnel policies. By showing progress on Persianization, Nichols hoped to garner positive public relations in Tehran. On October 8, 1925, Nichols reported that a photographer was coming to Abadan in order to make a publicity film of operations in Persia, Iraq and elsewhere. He reminded the manager at Mohammerah of "the subjects desirable for exhibition in Tehran, including the employment and training of Persian labor, education, housing etc." Nichols believed that a film series on work in Abadan could remove the negative impression gained by the imperial commissioner in his last visit to Southern Persia, when "he did not see a single Persian employed in the refinery!"⁵⁵

The company's training was specifically intended to target Persians for development, at the expense of both Indians and ethnic Armenians. While developing Persians to replace

⁵⁴ BP Group Historian and Archivist, Unpublished Research Paper Entitled Training (Dates covered from early 1920's to early 1950's), ArcRef: 135601, BP Archive. See also Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: The Anglo-Iranian Years, 1928-1954*, 94.

⁵⁵ H. E. Nichols to General Manager, Mohammerah, October 8, 1925, Letter No. 13, ArcRef: 54499, BP Archive.

Indians, they would need to guard against interference from the Ministry of Education if it were seen to be favoring Armenians. Writing on October 27, 1925, Nichols expressed his concern that "the creation of a school at Fields unlike those at Ahwaz or Mohammerah (where conditions are very different), would, we fear, invite interference from the Ministry of Education, and be liable to raise religious questions and difficulties which we have to the present happily avoided." He specifically opposed creation of this school because "the candidates for a Fields school, on the lines of those subsidized by us elsewhere, are likely to be at first mainly Armenians and Indians." A split between "academic" and "technical" education was already appearing, as Nichols worried that general education program at Fields would leave them open to criticism by Persian authorities in a way that manual training would not. This exposure was not necessary because "literary education as we consider necessary for apprentices to trades may well be given in our existing apprentice schools, with some modification of their present curriculum." Disagreements within the company over the extent and nature of educational activities outside the trade training program would be a consistent source of tension in formulating training programs.⁵⁶

Looking forward to a conference with the Persian government on the 10th of November at which a wide range of issues was to be discussed, Nichols requested that the general manager at Mohammerah telegraph him statistics on Persians trained in company shops and schools over the past four years, "with a view to demonstrating progress in the desired direction." Reporting Persianization statistics to the Persian government, he expressed concern that the company was not getting credit for Persian contract labor. In order to do so, they would move to a monthly (rather than a quarterly) reporting approach. Those reports would

⁵⁶ H. E. Nichols to General Manager, Mohammerah, October 27, 1925, Letter No. 96, ArcRef: 54499, BP Archive.

henceforth break down labor into the following categories: "Persian, European and USA, Indian, and others." The success of Persianization was thus explicitly linked to a reduction in Indian labor in a way that took into account Persian contract labor that was not directly employed on the company's roster.⁵⁷

In a November 12 confidential memorandum to the General Manager at Mohammerah, Nichols stressed the importance of technical training over "purely literary" pursuits. He reiterated his support for the government school at Ahwaz but reminded the General Manager that the subscription had to be brought up for yearly review "with other local subscriptions." He expressed concern that in Tehran, the Persian government was overlooking all the company was doing for apprentice training at Fields, Ahwaz and Abadan. "It would appear as if Tehran officials were unaware of what we have already accomplished in the training of Persian tradesman." The Persian government's suggestion that any new school at Fields "should be a technical school," fit in with Nichols's vision since "the development of educational facilities there should rather be in the direction of an expansion of our existing apprentice school than in the formation of a new school for purely literary education." Noting that Persian official Hussein Khan favored this approach, Nichols recognized that there were allies within the Persian government who were supportive of emphasizing trade training over general education.⁵⁸

Three weeks later, Nichols returned to the need to stop the inflow of Indian employees. He wrote the Shaw Wallace & Co. recruiter at Bombay notifying him that his services would no longer be needed as of January 1, 1926. The company had "decided to abolish the post which

⁵⁷ H. E. Nichols to General Manager, Mohammerah, November 5, 1925, Letter No. 135, Arc Ref 54499, BP Archive.

⁵⁸ H. E. Nichols to General Manager, November 12, 1925, Letter No. 145, Arc Ref. 54499, BP Archive.

the company now maintains in Bombay and recruitments of artisans in India." The reasons for this decision were twofold. First, the company's "labor position" was such that they anticipated lowered requirements for Indian labor. Second, they pursued this course "in furtherance of our policy of supplanting Indian labor by locally trained Persians."⁵⁹

Discussions with Eissa Khan, Persian Director of Education in Khuzistan, resulted in a decision to draft the first formal education plan for Southern Persia in November 1925. Planning for education and training initiatives in Persia involved the most senior levels of APOC management and covered a wide scope of initiatives. In late 1925, Thomas L. Jacks -- then serving as Joint General Manager of Anglo-Persian company and soon to become the Resident Director in Iran for the renamed Anglo-Iranian Oil Company -- led industrial education planning in preparation for APOC Chairman Sir John Cadman's 1926 visit. Dr. Young, who had served the Anglo-Persian Company in a government relations capacity for the previous two decades, supported Jacks in the planning effort. Young met with the Persian Director of Education to begin the discussions with the Persian government. Sir Arnold Wilson was also involved. The resulting plans encompassed primary, secondary and technical education. In primary education, APOC subsidized the school at Mohammerah and maintained one at Ahwaz, while considering setting up new schools at Fields and Abadan. Company support for secondary education already included subsidies for the Stuart Memorial College, where future company employees would obtain the equivalent of an English public school education, and subsidies for teacher training at the Danish-Pahlavi school at Ahwaz. As for technical education, there were the shops at Fields, Ahwaz and Abadan.

⁵⁹ H. E. Nichols to S. W. Boyd, Esq (Messrs. Shaw Wallace & Co. Bombay), December 3, 1925, Letter No. 209-210, Arc Ref 54499, BP Archive.

Educational work in Abadan was of particular concern at the end of 1925. APOC was expanding its apprentice training shops, shifting its focus to building skills that could be documented through trade tests. Elementary education supported the trade training process and Nichols observed that in Abadan “an efficiently managed and well constructed primary school already exists.” Nichols planned to “assist this school with building materials, rather than to institute any new school of our own.” Targeting its subsidy for school fees to “sons of deserving employees who are not in a financial position to meet these charges,” he also expected that Persian parents would contribute financially to their children’s primary education. “Particular stress should be laid,” he explained, “on the payment of some contribution by the parents in these cases, in order to ensure a fuller appreciation of the value of education for the futures of their sons with the Company.” Expanding general education at Abadan would increase the number of skilled Persians in company employ. Moreover, Nichols noted:

We fully appreciate that some degree of literacy is necessary in local employees to be trained as skilled workers to replace Indian labor. At Fields, with the provision which you have made against undue interference by the Director of Education with our schools, we ... will await the full report on a programme of educational facilities before deciding definitely as to the new school.⁶⁰

Cost was clearly a factor in Nichols’ deliberations. It may have been the key factor holding up decisions on expanding education programs. With expenditures increasing without a broader educational plan, Nichols sought to account for training and education costs as a separate budget items. He asked that the proposal to the Chairman include the cost of both current and proposed programs, “in order that expenditures on education may be considered apart from our purely charitable subscriptions.”

⁶⁰ H. E. Nichols to General Manager, Mohammerah, December 9, 1925, ArcRef 54499, BP Archive.

Industrial education was indeed more than a “purely charitable subscription.” By early 1926, it was at the heart of the renamed Anglo-Iranian Oil Company’s business in Persia. In preparation for Cadman’s, Nicholas began his overview of educational programs with a recounting of AIOC financial contributions to Persian primary education. At Fields, it was proposing to build schools at Maidan-i-Naftun and Masjid-i-Suleiman (MIS). At Ahwaz, the company was paying for the maintenance of the Khayyam School and contributing directly to the Danish Pahlavi Government School. At Mohammerah, AIOC continued its subscription to the government’s existing school. Nichols urged caution when considering the prospects of extending support at Abadan. While the firm had in 1924 funded the extension of the buildings of the Pahlavi School and paid fees for needy employees, Nichols saw “no reason to alter this ruling to cover all employees' children.”⁶¹ In his view clear limits were required on how far AIOC would go with supporting general education efforts.

In the later 1920s, AIOC management debated the relative merits of subsidies to the Stuart Memorial College and other schools versus the construction of company-run Persian schools. Nichols believed that because of the education provided at that institution in Isfahan, the nearby town of Ahwaz did not need a Secondary school in 1926. He suggested that founding a secondary school there was premature. In his view, over time, students receiving primary education in Isfahan would produce a suitable cadre to justify a secondary school at Ahwaz, where graduates of the Khayyam and Danish Pahlavi could eventually attend secondary school closer to home.

⁶¹ H. E. Nichols to Resident Director, Mohammerah, December 9, 1925, Letter 240-242, Anglo-Persian Co Letter Book No. 3, BP Archive.

At the beginning of 1926, AIOC staff in Persia focused their efforts on preparing for Cadman's visit to Persia and Iraq. Concerns for showing progress on Persianization drove this group to advocate a more aggressive approach to elementary education. On January 15, an Educational Planning Group met at Abadan.⁶² In one critical meeting, T. L. Jacks commenced with a testimonial to the company's "special regard to primary education" in training Persians. In the discussion that followed, all agreed that opening an elementary school at Fields was essential to fulfilling "a duty which we owe, due to the peculiar circumstances of the situation, the children or employees, at the same time anticipating any possible pressure which may be brought to bear by the central government." Dr. Young went even further and suggested that the company should open a secondary school in Khuzistan. Edward Elkington, special assistant to Dr. Young, became responsible for formulating a suitable scheme for education in Khuzistan. Though Jacks wanted to limit the operating budget to £10,000 per annum, he recommended that further funds be available for capital expenditures.⁶³

There was no question that support for Persian general education was a top company priority. Instead, the debate concerned the extent of that commitment. In the educational committee meeting, Jacks pointed to progress at the Khayyam School in Ahwaz, a model for the company's support to elementary education in South Persia. There, it had unfortunately been necessary to limit the number of scholars to 142, "this being the maximum number with the teaching staff can cope with adequately." At Ahwaz, the power of the government in Tehran

⁶² Minutes and Agenda of Meetings Held at Abadan, Sir John Cadman's Visit to Persia 1926, ArcRef: 71183, BP Archive.

⁶³ Ibid. The committee settled on educational subsidies of £8,750. This was in addition to the £2500 per year currently being spent on apprentice training at Fields, which the group felt would also be needed for apprentice training at Abadan. The budget recommended for school staffing was £1571, which did not include costs of housing teachers. A separate budget was drawn up for personnel to be hired at the secondary school at Ahwaz, as well as to pay teachers for teaching classes at Fields, and Abadan.

was exercised through the Ministry of Education in a manner the company approved. Jacks noted that the school gave suitable emphasis to the subject of English language. A Persian army drill instructor was also on loan, readying the youngsters for industrial work through "regular courses and physical training." Jacks commented that "the majority of them also were in uniform, and about once a week marched to the football ground; their smart appearance en route attracts quite a large amount of appreciative attention." In contrast to this company-run school, Jacks pointed to the government-run Danish Pahlevi School, which could not easily keep students enrolled. Persian students were constantly attempting to gain access to the higher-quality education at the Khayyam School. To handle the overflow of enrolments from the Khayyam School, Sir Arnold Wilson had obtained London's permission to subsidize tuition at the government school. The most successful investment by far was in the Stuart Memorial College at Isfahan, also subsidized on Wilson's recommendation. Ten Stuart graduates already held company jobs in 1926 and all were making excellent progress. £1643 of the total £3551 annual company educational expenditure for the year 1925 had gone to Stuart Memorial College. The original donation to this tutorial college had been £3000.⁶⁴

Sir Arnold Wilson opposed creation of a secondary school at Ahwaz. While he was in full agreement with a proposal for a school at Fields and the proposed expenditures on primary schools at Ahwaz, Abadan and Mohammerah, he thought it better for the company not to build a secondary school at Ahwaz. While the Stuart Memorial College at Isfahan was an Anglican missionary school and therefore beyond the oversight of the Persian government at the time, a Persian secondary school might be the site for a struggle for control between the Persian Ministry of Education and the company. He recommended instead "the excellent

⁶⁴ See A. T. Wilson to A. C. Hearn, February 23, 1926, Sir John Cadman's Visit to Persia and Iraq 1926, ArcRef: 71183, BP Archive.

work of Stuart Memorial College.” In the same vein, he advised the company against appointing an educational expert at the cost of £700 per year. He pointed out that the provincial director of education only makes about £300 a year, and the higher paid European would excite jealousy. On February 1, Jacks wrote Cadman about educational development in Khuzistan. Unlike Nichols and Wilson, who wanted the company to rely exclusively on Stuart, Jacks recommended the construction of a secondary school at Ahwaz. Although the Memorial College at Isfahan was an ideal location to prepare Persian youth for training as workmen, many parents objected to sending their children that far from home.⁶⁵

Industrial Education and the End of the D’Arcy Concession

As the Anglo-Persian Company recast itself as the Anglo-Iranian Company, the *NAFT* magazine published a steady stream of articles that charted British efforts to emphasize the compatibility of Iranian and British national interests. Through its house organ *NAFT* and other public relations efforts, Anglo-Iranian attempted to invent a role for itself in training and education that would be compatible with the new Shah’s national project and its own efforts to elude American technological dominance. As Anglo-Iranian sought to associate itself with Iranian national interest, the course of industrial education revealed the inherent tensions between British and Persian nationalisms.

In March 1926, *NAFT* reported on Sir Arnold Wilson’s appearance before the Asiatic Society where he spoke on the topic of “The Bakhtiari Tribes.” Presenting to a joint meeting of the Persia, Central Asian and Royal Asiatic Societies, Wilson praised the Bakhtiaris for their role

⁶⁵ Educational Development in Khuzistan, Sir John Cadman's Visit to Persia 1926, February 1, 1926, ArcRef: 71183, BP Archive.

in Persian history in developing the Anglo-Iranian Petroleum Company. As *NAFT* recounted:

This branch of the great Lur family has, he said, played an important part in recent history. Their actions in 1909 made the establishment of the present constitutional regime in Persia possible; the greatest oil-field in the world was in their territory, and had been worked for twenty years under the protection of guards supplied by their chiefs, and by labour drawn largely from their tribes.⁶⁶

As the Shah's government in Tehran would also argue, the Bakhtiari needed to be domesticated. Sir Arnold described the Bakhtiari as "an outdoor animal and a mountain dweller" one who was "accustomed to exercising his lungs, if occasion require, across a valley or down a hillside." When contemplating engaging in dialogue with such an animal, one had to bear in mind that the "less sophisticated tribesman is therefore apt to be a noisy companion in a drawing room."

Portraying the Bakhtiari in racial terms as loyal but simple creatures, Wilson noted that the tribesman "has the merit of articulating clearly, and the Bakhtiari dialect is in consequence not unpleasing to the ear." He noted that this dialect "has a real fascination due to its vividness and the wealth of homely imagery employed in every-day speech." In discussing the Bakhtiaris' general characteristics, he described them as "the ideal nomad grazier," as a "combination of Rob Roy and the Lowland Scottish shepherd." Noting that the Bakhtiari "has more of Rob Roy perhaps than the shepherd in him," Sir Arnold instructed his audience that the Bakhtiaris' "natural pass times when left to pursue his own courses are rather raiding and robbing than philosophic meditation." He went on to praise the Bakhtiari for whom "the manliness of the race had not yet been assailed by the debasing influences of law courts; the

⁶⁶ "The Bakhtiari Tribes," *NAFT* II, no. 3 (March 1926).

average tribesman was physically as fine a man as was to be found in any country, capable of extraordinary feats of endurance, wayward as a child, and as lovable withal, a loyal friend and a good workman." Here the efforts of Shah's government to bring the Bakhtiari into the Iranian nation, typified by the constraints of the law courts, were potentially at odds with the company's efforts to exercise its own control over the region in producing petroleum. Such potential for conflict was quickly obscured as Sir Arnold's talk was followed immediately by a film on the migration of the Bakhtiari tribesmen of Haidar Khan over the Karun River and across the Zarda Kuh Pass. Divergent interests between Persians and British were quickly set aside, as the *NAFT's* chronicler noted that the audience was "unanimous that the Bakhtiari tribesmen of Haidar Khan had eclipsed Douglas Fairbanks and his associates as film stars."⁶⁷

As Sir Arnold thrilled British audiences in London with talk of "noble savages" elevated to enviable position of film stars, he played to a sense of the far away and exotic orient which few in his audience would experience first hand. On the scene in Persia, where that contact was direct and unmediated, European workmen and managers refused to share their living and learning spaces with non-Europeans of any sort. Pointing unproblematically to a need to provide separate living conditions for different nationalities, one report to Cadman noted the agreement at Fields amongst British staff that Europeans would not share learning spaces either. Separate libraries would be necessary. As the report noted:

Armstrong is anxious that Indian clerks should be given a chance to make use of library, but I personally feel that this might prevent some of the Europeans from doing so. He advises the establishment of a small library for them, to which additions can be made of old and used books of European Library. I've discussed this with him and he agrees [it is] quite feasible.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Social spaces would also be separated by race. British notions of efficiency dictated that the best quality facilities would go to the Europeans, with hand-me-downs, like the library books, shared with lesser peoples. Armstrong, manager at Fields, was “doing excellent work, and his business arrangements were very sound and efficient.” He had already set up “two good clubs for Indians, and one of a more humble type for Armenians.” He had made an exceptional effort to “encourage support among them, with good results, especially in tennis, at which several are quite good.” The company anticipated that “some demand gradually forming for [a] club for Persian clerks, some of whom are members of Indian clubs. Small bodies so far, but this is good to bear in mind for purposes of effect in Tehran and Persians generally.” Under European guidance Persians were learning to separate themselves from fellow Indian workers. Separate Persian clubs would serve the dual purpose of stilling complaints in Tehran and keeping labor divided in Khuzistan.⁶⁸

Seeking to instill the values of industrial discipline in young Persians, AIOC would encourage the pursuit of exercise and sport, so beloved by the British expatriate staff. Through the education of young Persians in physical training and military drill, they sought to make industrial workers of the unruly tribesmen. In so doing, they also produced soldiers for the Shah’s army. The benefits of such a regimen were demonstrated in June 1926 at the Khayyam School prize giving ceremony, attended by the Governor-General for Khuzistan, two Lieutenant Colonels from the Persian Army, the Chief of Police, Directors of Telegraphs and Education, along with many noted Mullahs. Proud parents looked on as the first 8 Persian children graduated with primary certificates from the Al Khayyam Primary School. The students, wearing military uniform and badges, were drawn up by a local non-

⁶⁸ Social Services Department, April 2, 1926, Sir John Cadman's Visit to Persia and Iraq 1926, ArcRef: 71183, BP Archive.

commissioned offer for inspection by the Governor-General. After various speeches, the children performed physical drills that were "enthusiastically applauded by the audience." Drawing the ceremony to a close, one of the Lieutenant Colonels thanked the Company for "the good work done, and for opening the school." Mr. Reid, Pipeline Superintendent, and one of the invited European guests, joined the Governor-General in handing out prizes. *NAFT* illustrated its coverage of these events with a picture of an 8-year-old boy, whom they labelled "a very young but capable drill instructor," standing at attention in a military uniform.⁶⁹

As it was joining with the local Persian garrison commanders in actively supporting a specific type of elementary education, AIOC simultaneously provided a significant contribution to the United Kingdom's industrial education infrastructure. At noon on the day before the Khayyam school prize giving ceremony, the AIOC Chairman Sir John Cadman opened Birmingham University's new Petroleum and Refining Department. This new building, housing some of the world's best teaching facilities, represented the culmination of two decades of work. While serving as the University's Chair of Mining Engineering, Cadman had started a new branch of studies called Petroleum Technology. As the British petroleum industry grew, so did the Birmingham program. Sir John pointed out "one of the great difficulties in the training of men for this work has been that a very extensive and also expensive mechanical equipment is necessary." Corporate support was essential to the success of Birmingham's engineering education efforts.

It was clear as Sir John spoke that British industrial education was developing in the shadow of its American counterpart. Great Britain, not an oil country like the United States, lacked

⁶⁹ "Khayyam School Prize Giving," *NAFT* II, no. 5 (September 1926): 24-26.

the Americans' "endless opportunities for young men interested in the oil industry to acquire practical knowledge and experience." America was a land, according to AIOC's chairman, where students of petroleum engineering "could make immediate application of their scientific knowledge by simply taking up work in the nearest oil-field." In Great Britain, however, such opportunities for practical experience were hard to come by. Given this, Universities like Birmingham were compelled to create them. The larger petroleum companies, including Anglo-Iranian, had contributed to Britain's strength by endowing the department with funds to construct a new building and equip it with the latest equipment. Pointing out that this Department was the first in England dedicated exclusively to the study of Petroleum Engineering, Sir John called on the University to produce the "steady supply of technologists" the industry required. Petroleum was the field to enter because "nowhere else has the scientifically trained man such opportunities." This department would also be the destination for the vast majority of young Persians selected for training under AIOC company auspices.⁷⁰

With Anglo-Persian's renaming, *NAFT* began a series of articles that would memorialize the deeds of AIOC "Pioneers." These narratives presented not only heroic struggles against privations and the harshness of the elements in Persia but also struggles to control and shape the labor force that built infrastructure like the pipeline at Fields and the refinery at Abadan. Central to the story of pioneering in Persia was the Anglo-Persian emergence from the shadow of American technological domination. As presented in *NAFT*, the pipeline construction was not an American affair. The British imported the know how to build the pipeline from Burmah Oil Co. not Standard Oil. Looking back on events nearly two decades removed, H. M. MacIntyre recalled, "at the time pipe-line construction was considered

⁷⁰ "Birmingham University's New Oil Building," *NAFT* II, no. 4 (July 1926): 24-30.

practically an American monopoly, outside the sphere of British engineering.” Yet, as the pipeline construction in Burmah had demonstrated, British engineering could indeed tackle such a challenge. The Burmah managers chose Charles Ritchie to oversee constructing the pipeline precisely because of his experience with G. and J. Wier, of Cathcart, Glasgow, who had supplied the Burmah Oil Co. pumping plant. In building the pipeline, the Anglo-Persian Company had to rely on Canadian labor for pipe screwing, which was also a “job much beyond the capacity of the home-fed Britisher.” These North Americans had their limitations. As a result of Mr. Ritchie’s experience with American pipe-screwers’ sloppy work, he decided to bring out six British ex-Army men and retain British engineers to inspect the work of the Canadian pipe-screwing gangs.⁷¹

While AIOC celebrated the accomplishments of pioneers as a goad to British nationalism, it continued to court the favor of the central government in Tehran and portrayed contemporary school openings in Southern Iran as consistent with the Shah’s nation-building efforts. Just below the surface of these accounts lurked the fundamental contradiction between European and Persian nationalisms, a contradiction that was readily apparent within the context of AIOC operations. Technical training, for instance, continued through the late 1920s at workshops in the company centers at Fields (Masjid-i-Suleiman), Ahwaz and Abadan. The skills imparted at these training centers were not intended to ready Persians for management roles. Europeans and North Americans might contend for senior technical jobs, as they had since the pioneering days, but Persian training was part of what AIOC officials saw as a long slow process through which management would ready Persians to perform a limited subset of jobs most often performed by Indian expatriates through much of the company’s history. Relegated in the main to support roles, when they did become involved in the business of oil

⁷¹ H. M. MacIntyre, “The First Persian Pipe-Line,” *NAFT* II, no. 6 (November 1926): 7-13.

drilling, for instance, they remained under the close supervision of European staff. AIOC's message that Persians were "not ready" ran contrary to Persian nationalism.⁷²

When strikes broke out again at Abadan again in May of 1929, the contradictions within the AIOC approach to Persian staff development were once again in evidence. The company blocked access to the refinery by the strikers and called in the British sloop HMS Sacramento. Claiming that the demonstrators were communist-inspired, Bamberg noted, "nearly all local Iranian workers had shown no inclination to strike." Most of the 45 strikers arrested came from outside the company's local environs. They came, rather, from Isfahan, Shiraz, Bushire and the north. Nearly half of the strikers were from those regions where the educational preparation had readied Persians for higher skilled jobs. Those positions were not forthcoming, and neither were the amenities that accompanied senior staff positions. As in the early 1920s, these strikers sought better wages, housing and amenities in the refinery town. They wanted to be treated like Europeans.⁷³

AIOC defended its position by arguing that it was providing accommodations, pay and facilities as good as the Iranian state railway. Symbol of the Shah's overarching modernizing project for the new Iranian nation, the railway comparison provided a temporary safe haven to avoid even broader demands for fair treatment. Pressures were increasing, however. Whereas in the past, it was possible to blame the Sheik of Mohammerah for poor conditions in the town, now the firm had a more difficult time claiming that the municipal authorities alone were "responsible for the development of town, prices and bazaars, implementation and sanitary measures and enforcement of law and order." As a result of the strike of 1929, the

⁷² Chapter IV - Education and Training Schemes, ArcRef: 129346, BP Archive.

⁷³ Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: The Anglo-Iranian Years, 1928-1954*, 63, 76, and 356.

company proposed better facilities for workers to report their grievances, and sought to improve "public welfare" in "vastly improved Township conditions." Elkington believed the company should step up efforts to improve the workers' conditions so as to "encourage that sense of security which accompanies employment." Though worker grievances were "petty," in his estimate, concerns about the Shah's views were paramount. Anxious to appease the Shah, AIOC approved the increase of wages by 5%, a measure that the Shah announced during his next visit to Khuzistan.

It was not only in the area of salaries where labor unrest was forcing the company to take on greater expenditures. In several ways, cheap labor was turning out to be more expensive than the British company had intended. In the wake of the strikes, James J. Jameson expressed doubts about the cheapness of Iranian labor, calling it a "mixed blessing at times." Increased cost of production was caused by "changing conditions throughout the world, and implementation of hours, the demand for special accommodation and considerations of all kinds, our so-called cheap labor is a bit of a myth." Industrial education was another area of increasing expenses. After strikes in 1929, the company built five schools at company centers. These included the first primary school at Abadan, a primary and middle school at Ahwaz (which Sir Arnold had recommended against) and two primary schools at Fields.

During the course of the 1929 strikes, the Tehran press accused the company of racial discrimination. Foremost amongst the complaints in the Iranian press was that the company's Indian employees "ruled over" Iranians, "glorious and noble sons of Darius, who have sacrificed everything, yeah, even sons, wives, family, and all in the path of the Anglo Persian Co." The company offered the Persians "no better work to do than to carry heavy types of material on your shoulders." Writing of these events in his company history, James

Bamberg dismissed the rhetoric in the Tehran press as a “ritual prophylactic incantation against malign foreign influence.” Yet, as we have seen, the company was extremely sensitive to the portrait of its operations in the press and such complaints had an effect on the formulation of Persianization policies. Press agitation against the AIOC, an expression of Persian nationalist sentiment, motivated AIOC in replacing Indians with Persians.

As the man responsible for personnel policy, Elkington recognized that the labor problem was part of Iranian popular politics and not simply an expression of communist manipulation from the USSR. He thought that the British should give more emphasis to learning Iranian ideals and customs and should pay better attention to its Persian workers through hiring a training manager for Persian youth. This new manager, C. L. Hawker, had been a teacher at the Stuart Memorial College. Hawker would focus on nurturing Persian youth in the apprentice training hostels of Abadan. Looking back a half century later, Hawker told of his 1929 arrival in Abadan and recalled that the Sikh employees had caused the strike by blocking the progress of Persians. According to Hawker, the strike was caused by the “Indian mafia” who thought they had Abadan “sewn up” and were “freezing out Iranians.” For Hawker and his supervisor Charles C. Mylles in the personnel department, the objective of Persian training was “the progressive replacement” of Indians by Iranians.⁷⁴

Indian labor would, in fact, prove extremely difficult for AIOC to do without. This was true, even within its efforts to develop Persian labor. In addition to the manual training centers, in

⁷⁴ Hawker’s comments are recorded in Robert Brown and J. A. Bowden, Interview with C L Hawker, June 22, 1984, ArcRef: 142640, BP Archive. An account of life at the Stuart Memorial College is available online: Rev. J. R. Richards, “Project Canterbury, The Open Road in Persia (London, Church Missionary Society, 1933),” 1933, <http://anglicanhistory.org/me/ir/richards1933/06.html> (accessed July 20, 2007). See also Rev. J. R. Richards, “Project Canterbury, The Open Road in Persia (London, Church Missionary Society, 1933),” 1933, <http://anglicanhistory.org/me/ir/richards1933/05.html> (accessed July 20, 2007).

his 1930 account of AIOC operations John Williamson pointed to what would today be called “on-the-job training” for Persians in workshops and stores. It was in these locations that Indian engineers were overseeing Persian as “quasi-apprentices.” At one workshop at Fields, Williamson noted that Persians were laboring under the mentorship of some of the seventy-nine Indian engineers there. This was taking place in a workshop that had -- in addition to the Indians -- one European engineer and 30 European staff, who together controlled 420 mixed artisans (of which 300 were Persians). This particular workshop offered Persians quasi-apprentices opportunities as “fitters, turners, molders, blacksmiths, carpenters, armature winders, general repair electricians, boiler makers, welders (electric and acetylene) and instrument makers.” In testimony to the success of these less formal training efforts, Williamson noted with amazement that he saw "a Persian boy, working skillfully at a No. 4 Herbert automatic lathe, whose sole occupation, but two years previously, had been that of a nomad driving the cattle to and from the hills and the desert." As a result of the efforts of Indian labor, native Persians were able to perform tasks ranging from "the repair of delicate scientific instruments to the reconstruction of a steam tractor."⁷⁵

In describing the benefits afforded Persian labor by the training programs, Williamson also pointed out the paternal role that the company was playing in developing Persian worker consciousness. In the absence of trade unions, but under pressure from populist politics in the capital to afford Persians a more level playing field for advancement, AIOC sought to "give the workers a conscious and recognized status in the industrial scheme." With no trade unions to take responsibility for “grading of the worker” and attesting to workers’ skill level, it was left to AIOC to set up trade tests and certification programs to instill “pride for work

⁷⁵ John Woolfenden Williamson, *In a Persian Oil Field; a Study in Scientific and Industrial Development* (London: E. Benn limited, 1930), 62, 152.

and skill” in the Persians they employed. “A system ... therefore, [was] devised and has been in operation for some time. For each grade of workers there are prescribed and definite tests.” This was how the company would provide equitable treatment for workers, since “[w]hen the worker has acquired the requisite competence in any one grade and has passed the prescribed tests he is given a corresponding certificate. He can secure promotion to a higher grade only by passing the requisite tests for that grade.” It was more than just a matter of fairness, as “[t]hese certificates not only testify to the degree of skill reached by the worker but also give him a recognized status, carrying with it a corresponding standard rate of pay.” The company was also building the pool of qualified Persians available in the country as “a worker retains his certificate and, if he should leave the Company's employment for a time, to taste nomad delights of for other reasons, and then seek re-engagement, his is recognized as eligible for re-employment in his certified grade.” Likening the AIOC’s testing and certification program to the guild system of medieval Europe, Williamson concluded “the Persian workers appreciate highly the value of this system of grading and guard it jealously.” He argued that this system built self-respect and gave the Persian workforce an incentive for self-improvement.⁷⁶

Company paternalism, as exemplified by the trade tests and elementary schools, were not enough to stem the growing tide of Persian nationalism. The next major shock suffered by the AIOC in Persia, the cancellation of the D’Arcy concession in November of 1932, was again linked in the Persian press to a restoration of Persian national pride after the indignities suffered by Persians at the hands of Britain’s Indian lackeys. In Bamberg’s account, the cancellation of the D’Arcy Concession resulted from the Shah’s envy of AIOC’s success. Yet, the reaction of the Iranian press indicated a broader discontent with the British

⁷⁶ Ibid., 161-7.

concessionary power in the south. Greeting the concession's cancellation as an act of "liberation," Tehran press accused AIOC of "fabrication of its accounts," "failure to negotiate" and "*favouritism towards Indian employees.*"⁷⁷

Overcoming the need for Indian labor was still posing problems a decade after the company committed itself to that project. A local supply of properly educated Persians for the oil industry in Southern Iran still seemed far off as 1932 drew to close. According to Edward Elkington and other AIOC managers, the lack of general education was to blame. On December 4, Elkington reported to Jacks that "the middle school at Ahwaz should in two to three years time, give us a steady output of boys suitable for learning clerical work... at the same time, i.e. two to three years hence, the first of our apprentices will complete their training and those who are fit for it will carry on to be trained as foremen." In the mean time, with the Shah just having cancelled the D'Arcy concession, Elkington was anxious to add staff to the Persian complement. In Southern Iran, the company was asking existing employees to get in touch with their friends and relatives in Tehran and its environs so they could be brought down to Abadan for interviews. This approach was yielding results. He noted that "six suitable young Persians" had already been found in this manner.⁷⁸

Founding the Abadan Technical Institute

The early 1930s were times of retrenchment and cost cutting for AIOC. In the context of the global depression, it is possible to glimpse the kind of British employee that the personnel department was looking to retain in Southern Persia. Elkington wrote Jameson in January of

⁷⁷ Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: The Anglo-Iranian Years, 1928-1954*, 33-4.

⁷⁸ Elkington to Jacks, December 4, 1932, Staff Matters - Persia and India, ArcRef: 72614, BP Archive.

1933 to defend the high salaries paid to company firemen, a category of employee that Jameson believed was overpaid. Elkington urged him not cut the wages of these key employees because of their "knowledge of Persian" and ability to work with Persian staff. Not only did the British fire assistants have valuable skills, but they also had the ability to effect the "control of labor beyond those required of any but the most senior members of the operating and maintenance departments." Again, in an early March letter to the London office, Elkington wrote in defense of higher classification for shop foreman in the foundry and machine shop at Abadan, as well as the forge, boiler shop, and fitting shop at Fields. He pointed to the importance of continuity of service which brings with it "local knowledge and experience of the company's methods and practice, but particularly to acquire knowledge of the language and ability to handle Persian labor; this later qualification regard as of first importance." In order to sustain the progress in Persia, it was imperative that the company retained skilled British hands. Retaining British staff that understood Persians was essential to Persianization.⁷⁹

Persianization was also on Elkington's mind when he wrote to express his concerns about the Indians remaining in the highest paid skilled labor category. In a letter sent February 22, 1933 he explained that:

... as a result of our efforts in the past there is a residue of 134 Indians only; they are the "serangs" or "tindals" and these are the men whom it is most difficult to replace by Persians. These Indians are men of intelligence and ability who have had years of experience on their particular occupations and in consequence can be trusted with the responsibility and can be relied on to act in emergencies when British supervision may not be available.

⁷⁹ Elkington to Personnel Department, January 3, 1933, Visit to Persia March/May 1933 - Staff Re-organisation, ArcRef: 67530, BP Archive; Elkington to London Office, March 1, 1933, Visit to Persia March/May 1933 - Staff Re-organisation, ArcRef: 67530, BP Archive.

To replace these, the company needed to train Persians first and foremost in the English language and basic arithmetic. Reductions in British staff were making the training of Persians under worldwide depression conditions all the more challenging. With the reduced British staff in the departments, upon whom training depended, it was extremely difficult to “give systematic instruction and of necessity the men must be left to pick up information from their fellow workman, and the brightest being given assistance by the British staff.” It was important to note, Elkington stressed, “that certain senior departmental heads have voluntarily devoted time to evening class instruction of their labour, with excellent results.” But the cost of this haphazard system was a high rate of wastage. More than half of the trainees failed to complete the program successfully. The solution, thought Elkington, was to focus on “a squad of 20 selected men” who would be put through an intensive course of instruction. Limiting initial training to a small group would be more efficient because it would eliminate unsuitable candidates early in the process and allow instructors to focus on the most promising candidates. The importance of maintaining British control of the selection process, as well as the conduct of training itself, was clear to Elkington.⁸⁰

British criteria were also driving the selection of Persians for the higher education that would suit them for senior positions. Promotion to first grade positions to replace British staff was a process requiring the kind of education which only European (preferably British) institution of higher education could offer. The gatekeeper for that process was Colonel Meldicott, who selected scholarship candidates for education in Britain. He wrote to Jameson on March 10, 1933 to reject the candidacy of a scholarship seeker whom he thought not “altogether

⁸⁰ Elkington to Personnel Department, February 22, 1933, Visit to Persia March/May 1933 - Staff Re-organisation, ArcRef: 67530, BP Archive.

suitable." He explained the process of selecting Persian scholars for higher education in the United Kingdom:

Under the terms of the scholarship scheme an annual competitive examination is held in Tehran. The candidates who are successful in passing the examination are then personally interviewed by Mr. Jacks, who selects the two who, in his opinion, would be likely to benefit most from a course of higher education in this country.... personality, appearance and character can be taken into account in addition to academic ability.

Meldicott entertained exceptions to the examination process in cases where Persian candidates had a "very excellent record" and came with "strong recommendations put forward both by Mr. Elkington and Mr. Jacks." This had recently happened with a certain A.N.S. Mohandes, but for some reason Aghi Ahmed Majidi would not be afforded the same consideration. British decisions, made in secret with no Persian input, determined the fate of scholarship seekers' requests.⁸¹

While Elkington fretted that spring over losing British staff and agonized over the difficulties of replacing the best trained Indians, negotiations for the new concession gained traction with the direct involvement of AIOC's Chairman Sir John Cadman and his assistant William Fraser in Tehran. The Persian government, represented by ministers Ali Akbar Davar and Hassan Taqizadeh, sought to gain British support for embedding an aggressive program of Persianization in the new concession. The British, however, were unsympathetic to the Persian appeal for rapid replacement of the more skilled foreigners with Persians. In a difficult negotiating session with Persian ministers Hassan Taqizadeh and Ali Akbar Davar on Wednesday, April 19, 1933, Mr. Fraser reiterated the company's challenging position in

⁸¹ Meldicott to Jameson, March 10, 1933, Visit to Persia March/May 1933 - Staff Re-organisation, ArcRef: 67530, BP Archive.

the early years, a time when “no Persian skilled artisans were available.” Due to no fault of its own, “the company was compelled to look elsewhere for its skilled employees.” Fraser was quick to add that “the policy of the company throughout has, however, been to educate and train Persians in all branches of its operations, with the result that to-day a far larger percentage of workers are Persian subjects.” Fraser cast education and training programs as an evolutionary continuum, explaining, “Provision has been made by the company and its various centres to afford essential elementary education and thereafter to transfer these pupils for technical training in workshops specially provided for the purpose.” He reminded Davar and Taqizadeh of the “dormitories for the accommodation of the pupils admitted from areas outside our actual centres. These pupils are well looked after.”

Yet, AIOC work in Southern Iran demanded “highly technical modern plant and machinery, in connection with the operation of which skilled artisans were essential. It took a very long time to train such artisans, and it should be no matter for surprise if sufficiently skilled artisans were not available in Persia at the present time.” For Fraser and Cadman to agree to the government's demand for hiring a fixed number of Persians and educating 30 Persian subjects per year overseas would necessitate complete cessation of work in essential departments. To the suggestion that the company should take into its service outside Persia some “Persian subjects for instruction to fit them for even higher positions,” he argued that “present world conditions” would make that difficult if not impossible. Fraser made the argument that “[m]ost countries in the world are confronted to-day, with unemployment, and certain countries where we are operating we have not a single Britisher in our employ.” World conditions required the company to have a free hand with its employees. Fraser warned the Persian government against presenting the AIOC with a “handicap” by restricting that free hand. “Irrespective of nationality, we must be free to employ in every branch of the

company's operations most highly skilled workers. At one time all our drillers were Americans.” The AIOC needed to be “free equally to draw on other countries who, for any reason, are in a position to supply the best brains for a particular job.” Fraser also explained that it would not be possible to send the “minimum of 30 students annually to Europe or to America for higher education.” The Persians were not being practical, since “quite apart from the cost involved is impossible for me to guarantee to later absorb the students in the company's operations.”⁸²

Returning three days later to the subject of Persianization on Saturday, April 22, Taqizadeh noted that the government's proposal for concrete goals for Persianization, including the 30 students to be sent at company expense to British Universities, was “in every way just.” He pointed out, no doubt with symbolic intent, that “the company had had 30 years in which to train Persians for their operations and it had written a letter some few years ago in which it had agreed to get rid of all foreigners by 1932.” No response is recorded in the Cadman diaries to Taqizadeh’s rejoinder that “Mr. Fraser's arguments in regards to this clause were the weakest yet submitted.”⁸³

One month later, after intense and protracted negotiations on a wide range of issues, the Shah agreed to a version of the new concession draft for submission to the Majlis on May 19, 1933. The next day, the Majlis approved the new concession, in which AIOC and the Persian government set the parameters under which Persianization would unfold for the remaining two decades of the concession. Article 16, which dealt with employment and education, began by emphasizing the importance of “maintaining the highest degree of

⁸² Persia - Lord Cadman's Private Diary and Notes, Entries for April 19 and April 22, 1933, ArcRef: 96659

⁸³ Ibid.

efficiency and economy in the administration and the operations on the company in Persia.”

It went on to require AIOC to “recruit its artisans as well as its technical and commercial staff from among Persian nationals to the extent that shall find in Persia persons who possess the requisite competence and experience.” Unskilled workers were to be exclusively Persian nationals. The last two sections of Article 16 would prove to be the most significant:

(III) the parties declare themselves in agreement to study and prepare a general plan for the yearly and progressive reduction of non-Persian employees with a view to replacing them in the shortest possible time, and progressively by Persian nationals.

(IV) the company shall make a yearly grant of £10,000 sterling in order to give in Great Britain, to Persian nationals, the professional education necessary for the oil industry. The set grant shall be expended by committee shall be constituted as provided in article XV.⁸⁴

Here, the British avoided a commitment to specific numbers for Persianization, but they committed themselves to a specific sum in pounds sterling to be paid each year in support of industrial education in the United Kingdom. In addition, in Article 16’s third clause, the firm committed itself to developing a general plan for Persianization. Issues concerning this plan and the £10,000 expenditure for education would be the focus of debates in the ensuing years. The creation of the Abadan Technical Institute some six years later was one major outcome of these debates.

On May 29, 1933, just one week after the Majlis ratified the new AIOC concession, SOCAL and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia finalized the Arabian-American concession. The signatures of Sheikh Abdallah Al-Suleyman, the King’s finance minister, and Lloyd Hamilton representing SOCAL sufficed to seal the deal. In contrast to the situation in Persia, where an active Majlis debated the measure and Sir John Cadman answered to a board that

⁸⁴ Cited in Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: The Anglo-Iranian Years, 1928-1954*, 33-47.

included 51% British government ownership, there was no need for parliamentary debate on either side in the Saudi deal. So far as the development of Arab nationals in Aramco would be concerned, unlike the British concession just ratified by the Persian parliament, which mandated both the development of a plan for Persianization (the General Plan) and company commitment to spend £10,000 to train Persians for the oil industry in Southern Persia, the American petroleum concession did not require Americans to train Saudis. However, the Saudi government did insist that wording was included that would make Saudi labor law applicable to the American company in its exercise of the concession. As that law matured, so too would the pressure to expand its educational programs.⁸⁵

The day after the Aramco concession was signed, the Shah's finance minister Hassan Taqizadeh approached the AIOC to appoint an official representative who would lead the company's negotiations over the General Plan. Taqizadeh would lead the General Plan negotiations with the British until he was appointed minister to France, at which point the Iranian Justice Minister Ali Akbar Davar would take over. Throughout the next three years, until a General Plan was finally agreed, the Persians repeatedly attempted to gain British commitment to specific numbers for Persianization targets and the British struggled to avoid any such commitment. As Elkington prepared to submit a report to the Persian government on training, pressure from the Persian government's oversight of AIOC operations was shaping the way he assembled the report. He wrote to Cadman on June 1, 1933 to explain to the Chairman that they would not include tests or syllabi of training for medical personnel in the report on training that C.L. Hawker was putting together. The absence was due to Elkington's assessment that there were "far too many busybodies connected with the

⁸⁵ Pledge, Dialdin, and Tahlawi, *Saudi Aramco and Its People: A History of Training*, 2. See also Viola, *Human Resources Development in Saudi Arabia : Multinationals and Saudization*, 2.

government in this matter who will jump an opportunity to postulate their own views and criticize ours." Elkington went on to explain that he was "examining the question of recommending a personal allowance in lieu of Cooks."⁸⁶

When Elkington wrote Cadman on June 20, 1933 to discuss training replacements for cooks, the vast majority of whom were from the island of Goa, the options he laid out demonstrated both the lengths to which AIOC management would go in order to preserve the lifestyle which the British staff enjoyed in Persia and the effects of Persian government surveillance of the training and employment programs. The first option for replacing Goanese cooks was that the company could train Persians cooks. This option was unattractive to many British staff, as they believed that Persians were incapable of cooking to the Goanese standard. Another option was to "transfer the present Goanese cooks from the category of company employee to that of personal servants, making allowance for the staff to cover their wages." Elkington recommended against the latter option because "the numbers involved are too great to permit of such juggling without giving cause to the government to suspect that we are evading the issue." The Goanese cooks were good enough that, if allowed to stay, they would make it very difficult for the "home-made product" to gain footing. The Indian government was also a problem, because they might step in to protect the cooks by requiring service guarantees, and thereby tipping off the Persian authorities. Then there was the Persian consul in Bombay, who would doubtlessly have noticed something amiss if so many Goanese suddenly decided to migrate to Persia. Finally, it was logistically impossible for the staff to make their own arrangements to obtain the services of these cooks. Though it would be theoretically possible to simply discharge all cooks, and let them make their own

⁸⁶ Elkington to Cadman, June 1, 1933, Correspondence Mainly Concerning the Persian Government and the Renewal of APOC's Concession, ArcRef: 84879, BP Archive.

arrangements, this would be impractical. In the face of such daunting logistics, Elkington recommended training the Persian cooks after all. If staff really needed to have the superior services of a Goanese cook, they could make their own arrangements. On Elkington's recommendation, the company committed itself to training Persians to cook in the Goanese style despite the bias of British staff that Persians could not be trained to cook in any style but that native to Persia.⁸⁷

Pressure to promote Persians to positions of increasing responsibility also affected the formulation of training policy in the wake of the new concession. In order for Persians to advance in the company, they would need to achieve the standard of Indian labor. Referring to the region of India from which many of the skilled Indian laborers had been drawn, Elkington imagined Persianization as a "return to the kingdom of Chittagong." The key difference would be that British control would need to be "vastly strengthened" and the Persian would be a "much superior Bench Tindal" than his Indian predecessors. Before Persians could aspire to achieve the status of British managers, they would need to attain the standards of the skilled Bench Tindal who ensured those ships' engines operated safely and efficiently.⁸⁸

In allocating of the £10,000 designated by the concession for training in the UK, the AIOC leadership sought to minimize the number of Persians sent for University training and maximize the number sent for trade training. They understood the limits to Persian development as a function of Persian staff's cultural limitations. As C. C. Mylles noted one

⁸⁷ Elkington to Cadman, June 20, 1933, Correspondence Mainly Concerning the Persian Government and the Renewal of APOC's Concession, ArcRef: 84879, BP Archive.

⁸⁸ Elkington to Mylles, July 5, 1933, Article 16 - Allocation of the Grant (Iran), ArcRef: 52887, BP Archive.

week after Elkington called for a return to the “Kingdom of Chittagong,” AIOC should oppose sending Persians to higher education in the UK because Persians had “social customs and prejudices” which made it unlikely that after obtaining a University degree they would consent to “get dirty amongst the labourers and fitters.”⁸⁹ In order for educated Iranians to become what Elkington called a “middle class,” the AIOC management believed they would need a long slow tutelage in the British way of work. Hence, Elkington and Mylles both argued consistently for trade training in the UK as the best investment of the £10,000 as opposed to sending Persian students to higher education at Birmingham University, the option vigorously argued for by Zarrinkafsh, the imperial delegate appointed by the Persian government.⁹⁰

For nearly two years, the company would argue with the imperial delegate on the ratio of trade training to university training slots. Rather than sending the Persian boys to University to replace British management, as the Persian imperial delegate advocated, AIOC’s position was that Iranians needed longer, not shorter, apprenticeship periods in order to attain the skills necessary to replace Indian skilled labor. Persian students were better suited to vocational training than academic training in the United Kingdom. As opposed to supporting the construction of an educated elite for the nation, the objective of Persian training, in the firm’s view, was to build practical skills for the many. The Persian government representatives consistently resisted this approach, as Persia had a long history dating from

⁸⁹ Extract From Letter from Mr. Mylles to Mr. Hearn, June 12, 1933, Article 16 - Allocation of the Grant (Iran), ArcRef: 52887, BP Archive.

⁹⁰ Robert Brown and J. A. Bowden, Education and Training in Iran (Undated Draft by Group Historian and Archivist), ArcRef: 142640, BP Archive. The authors cite Author cites six different places where AIOC officials question the ability of Iranian University graduates to fit in to the Company for cultural reasons. This moment in the fall of 1933 during the negotiations over the £10,000 allocation in Article 16 is the first. They also point to the need for adding training in the UK as an extension of the apprenticeship in South Persia. Bamberg stressed the “long lead times which were involved in the training and promotion of Iranians to senior positions,” see Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: The Anglo-Iranian Years, 1928-1954*, 363-5.

the late 18th Century of sponsoring study in European universities. Reza Shah favored education at continental universities for his people, and sent his own son to Switzerland for education. For the period of the AIOC concession University attendance abroad for Persians, sponsored in many cases by the central government, was highest in French and German universities.⁹¹

In addition to fighting for Persian seats at British Universities, the Shah's government continued to exert pressure on the matter of skilled labor training for Persian employees in AIOC. In September 1933, Taqizadeh wrote Fraser to complain that the employment situation was worse than under the old concession, as the AIOC had gone back to employing Indians as "cooks, servants and overseers." This was not permitted by the new concession, and the company needed to replace these staff with Persians forthwith.⁹² Under unrelenting scrutiny from the Persian government, the British staff met to discuss the problem of Indian labor on numerous occasions throughout the fall and into the winter. In a meeting held by William Fraser on November 23rd, James Jameson reminded the senior staff "the works had felt the effects of the 1922 strike in Abadan and the proportion of British labour had been increased as the Indian strength had been reduced." He pointed to training as the key to allowing the Persian component to increase. He had reminded Taqizadeh, when questioned about AIOC employment of Indian labor, that the Persian government also employed Indians on the national railroad. Fraser acknowledged the basic justice of Taqizadeh's argument since "to-day people were beginning to recognize the obligation to give employment to the

⁹¹ On the history of Persian education in Europe see David Menashri, *Education and the Making of Modern Iran* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992). Mohammed Reza Shah discusses his own education in Pahlavi Mohammed Reza, *Answer to History* (New York: Stein and Day, 1980). Statistics on higher education during the AIOC concession were compiled by the British Petroleum company historians and are available in the loose papers of R.W. Ferrier in ArcRef: 142640, BP Archive.

⁹² Taqizadeh to Fraser, September 11, 1933, Article 16 - Allocation of the Grant (Iran), ArcRef: 52887, BP Archive.

nationals of the country in which they operate.” Though training would help the company achieve Persianization, Jameson reminded all in attendance at the November 23rd meeting that Indian clerical staff was particularly problematic to replace due to Persian weakness in the English language.⁹³

Whereas English language training would be beneficial to achieving the goals of Persianizing clerical staff, known in AIOC parlance as second class employees, it would be unwise of the company to move too quickly in addressing Taqizadeh’s demands with regards to first class staff. As Fraser wrote to Jacks in November 1933, training in the UK for Persian youth held out the danger that “any Persian sent to England for special training would go back as a superior foreman ... if fore [sic] any reason such men ceased to be employed, then their power to hatch trouble among the workmen would certainly have been increased.” It was therefore imperative that the company proceed with extreme caution in educating Persians in the UK. Returning workmen would not be given first class status, and even in second class assignments they could be dangerous.⁹⁴

While the AIOC leadership struggled to show progress towards increasing Persian participation in higher-level positions, without committing to anything specific in terms of a General Plan, the newly appointed Director of the Iranian Petroleum Department within the Ministry of Finance succeeded in upping the negotiating ante in October. During a visit to Abadan, Nasrullah Jahangir accused the company of failing to meet its obligations under the new concession. Up until that point, AIOC had not produced a plan with numerical targets

⁹³ Notes of Meeting Held in Mr. Fraser's Room, 23rd November, 1933, Article 16 - Allocation of the Grant (Iran), ArcRef: 52887, BP Archive.

⁹⁴ Fraser to Jacks (Extract), December 7, 1933, Article 16 - Allocation of the Grant (Iran), ArcRef: 52887, BP Archive.

for the reduction of foreign employees. The British reaction was to accuse him of not caring about training. William Fraser commented that Jahangir was ignoring the importance of training and playing around with staff as if they were a bunch of “lead soldiers.” Aramco managers when reacting to the nationalism of Saudi Arabia’s Petroleum Minister Abdullah Tariki would echo this defensive response years later, as he demanded meaningful changes in employment for Saudi Arabs. As the Aramco Americans would do when Tariki demanded changes in Saudi Arab employment, the British tried to wait Jahangir out. Fraser consistently refused to commit the company to a concrete program that would include specific Persianization targets.⁹⁵

Jahangir was justified in believing that without concrete goals Persianization would not proceed as quickly. AIOC recruitment and employment of Indian technicians was indeed underway once again. On November 4, 1934, a mere two weeks after his visit to Abadan, a confidential memorandum from Elkington to A.H. Langdale in Bombay regretted that “the smell of bribery and corruption again reaches my nostrils,” evidenced by the fact qualified workers recently discharged were unable to find employment with the firm, “while in their place we receive menials disguised as artisans.” Reminding Langdale “every Indian we import produces a cry of indignation from the petroleum department in Tehran,” he directed Langdale to cautiously prove the technical qualifications of men before they were sent to Persia. To avoid Jahangir's anger, “it is essential, therefore, that those we do import possess even a higher standard of workmanship than the average we used to employ, and by this means, that is to say, by virtue of their skill, we may limit the numbers as far as is possible for us to do so.” Langdale defended his actions, writing on November 19 that his recruiter, a man named Ashton, was checking thoroughly on the work eligibility of all the Indians he was

⁹⁵ Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: The Anglo-Iranian Years, 1928-1954*.

recruiting. Ashton was merely being proactive. He anticipated there would be a large need for Indian employees in the company since Mylles had opened up recruiting on October 4, 1934 for AIOC in the Punjab. Had Ashton waited for permission, it would have taken him several months to locate suitable Punjabi gulpers.

Mr. Langdale received clear guidance on the recruitment of Indian labor on December 8 in a confidential memorandum from Elkington. Reviewing the recent correspondence, he repeated that it was necessary to ensure that the testing certificates of all Indian labor be countersigned at the appropriate company official. He reminded Langdale "when recruiting on a scale is commenced in India, all sorts of influences both in this country and in India begin to make themselves felt." He lamented that:

[I]t has also come to light that numbers of men who were axed during the recent depression, proceeded to India without your being notified as to whether they were returnable or otherwise. Moreover, these men were repatriated and marked returnable from Centres in the days before an effective system of testing was instituted ... only the really high grade Indian artisan is now required for our purposes... Unless, therefore, a man whose name is on the returnable list as a note in his pass-book to the effect that he actually passed a third grade test here, he should be tested again in Bombay before re-engagement. This is necessary by reason of the fact, that cases are occurring of men re-engaged from the returnable list being found unsuitable and below the standard now required on arrival here.

When pressed by skilled labor requirements to in expanding refinery operations, the British company had been reaching for Indian recruitment to solve its immediate staffing problems. They had sufficient reason, therefore, to seek out understanding Persians who would turn a

blind eye to these violations of the spirit – if not the letter – of their concessionary agreement.⁹⁶

When Ali Akbar Davar took over the negotiations for the General Plan in December 1934, AIOC management believed they had found such a partner. His conciliatory approach was a welcome change at the top of the Persian government. Given his experience reforming the Persian judiciary along western lines in the 1920s, Davar seemed a suitable negotiating partner unlikely to make the kind of “unreasonable” demands that his predecessor and the Finance Ministry’s Petroleum Department Director had recently made. Thomas L. Jacks evidently raised no great concern when he told Davar that the majority of the men sent to the UK on training should be “the practical type rather than university type.” Davar also empathized with the British in their claim that budget deficits in Iran were leading to elementary schools that failed to prepare students for higher learning. When Jahangir argued from the Petroleum Department that the British were obliged to provide funding for general education in Southern Persia, Davar overruled his subordinate and supported the British position by agreeing that education in Khuzistan was a Persian government responsibility. When Jahangir argued that the failure to provide concrete numbers for foreign staff reduction contravened the terms of Article 16, Davar again sounded a conciliatory note. Davar managed, however, to convince both T. L. Jacks and William Fraser, that an informal and non-binding proposal with planned non-Persian staff reductions would be helpful for the General Plan process. Against their better judgment, they provided a draft Persianization plan with projected numbers and thereby established a precedent for the commitment to specific staffing targets in the general plan. In London, Neville Gass moved quickly to limit

⁹⁶ Elkington to Langdale, November 4, 1934, Staff Matters - Persia and India, ArcRef: 72614, BP Archive; Langdale to Elkington, November 19, 1934, Staff Matters - Persia and India, ArcRef: 72614, BP Archive; Elkington to Langdale, December 8, 1934, Staff Matters - Persia and India, ArcRef: 72614, BP Archive.

the company's liability by seeking a legal opinion that limited the company's liability by ruling that all educational programs outside the £10,000 commitment in Article 16 of the 1933 concession were "voluntary."⁹⁷

With the founding of Tehran University in early 1935, the pressure on AIOC for academic training in the UK did not decrease. As indicated in an official memorandum on "Education in the UK and Training in Iran" dated March 15, 1935, despite the fact that the Persian government had ended its scholarship program for overseas study at the start of that year, Persian public opinion was finely tuned to any signs that the government was ceding control of educational programs to foreign powers, as they had under the old concession. The memorandum indicated that the time was ripe for a compromise, which would allow the Persian ministers to show progress in their negotiations on the disposition of the £10,000 annual grant.⁹⁸ By the fall of 1935, after two hard years of negotiation, the Persian government moved to accept a 50/50 split between education and trade training in the UK. This disposition of the £10,000 after nearly two years of extremely contentious discussions opened the gates to Persian students attending trade schools in the UK and higher education at Birmingham University.⁹⁹

In the summer of 1935, the company was already preparing for a large influx of trade trainees in the industrial region surrounding Newark, located in close proximity to one of the United Kingdom's major industrial areas. As with the Persian apprentice hostels established after the strikes of 1929, the company was concerned that the Persian students have the

⁹⁷ Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: The Anglo-Iranian Years, 1928-1954*, 89-91.

⁹⁸ Office Note on Education in the U.K. and Training in Iran, March 15, 1935, Article 16 - Allocation of the Grant (Iran), ArcRef: 52887, BP Archive. Founding of the University of Tehran is discussed in Menashri, *Education and the Making of Modern Iran*.

⁹⁹ Board Report for July, 1935, Article 16 - Allocation of the Grant (Iran), ArcRef: 52887, BP Archive.

appropriate “pastoral” care in their living environment. In assigning full-time supervisory staff and selecting the hostel at Coddington Hall in Newark, they selected two experienced labor relations officers and a location in a “medium-sized industrial town” which afforded a “most beneficial atmosphere for Iranian trainees.” The town itself was marked by “a dry healthy climate” and the community was “hospitable” and “of good character.” Primarily a working class community, Newark had “just the type of English people suitable for young Iranian trainees to meet.”¹⁰⁰

As preparations proceeded at the hostel, with antiquated facilities there modernized for new Persian inhabitants, Sir John Cadman was busy preparing an address on the nature of “Technical Education” for a British audience. Appearing at the Manchester Technical Institute, Cadman recommended practical experience in industry to his audience as a remedy for labor-management conflict. Through direct contact with the working man students would develop a basis for mutual understanding. He explained how it was “a commonplace that industrial disputes frequently have their origins in misunderstandings.” Such disputes resulted from the fact that “employer and the employed have different views. The “brain worker” and the manual worker have divergent, instead of common, aims. Each may lack understanding of the other ...” An internship experience could build empathy between these cerebral and manual workers. As a remedy to potential class conflict, “the Spartan method of the successful businessman of a past generation, who forced his son to start his career at an early age on the lowest rung of the industrial ladder, had the one great advantage of ensuring a real understanding of, and a usually lively sympathy with, the worker at every stage of his career.” In the modern world of 1935, “much of this advantage can be provided today if the

¹⁰⁰ G. Stevenson and H. A. Urguhart, Training of Iranian Apprentices in England, June 9, 1935, Education and Training of Iranian Students, Coddington Hall, Iranization Training in Iran, Correspondence. ArcRef: 56035, BP Archive.

educational system permits a break in theoretical study at the conclusion of general education in order to allow of the youth spending a year or so in the environment of his future career.”¹⁰¹

Cadman went on to praise the faculty of the college of technology for their practice of exposing their students to work experiences while they were still young, avoiding the deplorable practice of isolating the student from the world of work:

Few things arouse our better feelings more readily than the appeal of youth to learn from our mature experience. That is where the boy has the advantage over the young graduate. The former knows nothing of industry and admits it; the latter also knows nothing, but feels that the academic knowledge he possesses puts him on a higher plane than his industrially experienced, but academically unqualified senior...

Conflict would be avoided when “the young college graduate and the industrially experienced man” were exposed to each other early. So too the young Persians would benefit from early exposure to the world of work in Newark and its environs.¹⁰²

William Fraser and Ali Akbar Davar worked through a series of discussions in early 1936 that resulted in the first mutually agreed General Plan that spring. On April 2, AIOC and the Persian Government signed two documents, a General Plan and an accompanying Proces Verbal. In the General Plan the parties agreed to targets for the reduction of non-Persian staff as a total percentage of the staff complement, but also stipulated to AIOC discretion to hire only qualified and “efficient” staff. In the Proces Verbal, the company committed to a five year plan which included extending the new primary school in Abadan, constructing and administering its technical college, and improving worker housing and amenities in Abadan.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Sir John Cadman, “Technical Education,” *NAFT* XI, no. 10 (October 1935): 24-25.

With Davar's death in February 1937, relations with the petroleum department once again became strained. For the next several years Nasrullah Jahangir maintained pressure on the company to meet the agreed to goals. In May of 1937, he informed AIOC that Iranian employees had complained of discrimination in promotion and salaries. He requested a copy of the company's regulations governing the engagement and promotion of technical, commercial and clerical staff. He went on in February 1938 to press the company on details on the new refining plant and equipment at Abadan and Kirmanshah, including the staffing of these facilities. It was not until January 1939 that AIOC finally devoted the staff resources to managing technical personnel. The appointment in January 1939 of M. A. C. MacNeil to that post placed responsibility for the Persianization program in one office.¹⁰³

Eight months later, when the Abadan Technical Institute opened (September 1939), its head was Dr. Reza Fallah, who was one of the Persian students sent by AIOC to Birmingham for higher education. The institute included seven full-time and 17 part-time lecturers, who made courses available in mechanical and petroleum engineering, as well as for commercial and clerical work. The institute offered a higher-level course leading to an intermediate certificate. Based on the model of a British technical college, it incorporated the "sandwich principle" whereby students were exposed to the mix of classroom instruction and practical experience that John Cadman had advocated in his lecture at the Manchester Technical Institute. Enrollments in the technical certificate program (12th class) more than doubled between 1940 and 1949, going from 150 to nearly 350 students. During the Second World

¹⁰³ Jahangir's scrutiny of AIOC employment practices was justified by the numbers. As Bamberg recorded, while Iranians employed as senior staff increased from the cancellation of the D'Arcy Concession (15 at the end of 1932 and 177 at the end of 1938), only 1% of all Persians were foremen while 7% of Indians held supervisory positions by the end of 1938. Iranians continued to make up the majority of the workforce as third class employees and in the category of contractors which Nicholas had begun to include in reports to the Persian government in the mid-1920s. Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: The Anglo-Iranian Years, 1928-1954*, 74 - 93.

War, ATI introduced a BSc in petroleum technology. The BSc program enrolment tripled from 50 to 150 students in 9 years. The Institute provided a conduit for high achieving students to compete for technical internships and university scholarships in the United Kingdom. Situated alongside the works training and apprentice training shops, it completed the range of educational opportunities in the town of Abadan.¹⁰⁴

Chapter 3: Aramco Managers in the Shadow of AIOC, 1940-1949

Industrial Education Programs and the Disruptions of World War II

In March 1940, less than six months after the Abadan Technical Institute opened, Reza Shah visited the facility. The Shah's visit figured prominently in the later recollections of both C. L. Hawker and J. H. Baxter, both of whom had worked as training managers in AIOC. According to C. L. Hawker, superintendent of training at the time, the Shah displayed an aversion to academic training, commenting that he did not want his people to "sit down and read books." L. H. Baxter recalled that Hawker's deft handling of the Shah had saved the institute's Iranian principal, Reza Fallah, from the humiliating treatment he would have otherwise suffered. As a British citizen, Hawker was not expected to observe the ritual obsequiousness displayed by ministers like Nasrullah Jahangir, whom the Shah evidently treated in a particularly abusive manner during that visit.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Education and Training for the Oil Industry in Abadan, 1950, ArcRef: 30826, BP Archive. See also BP Group Historian and Archivist, Unpublished Research Paper Entitled Training (Dates covered from early 1920's to early 1950's), ArcRef: 135601, BP Archive. See also Robert Brown and J. A. Bowden, Education and Training in Iran (Undated Draft by Group Historian and Archivist), p. 16, ArcRef: 142640, BP Archive.

¹⁰⁵ Brown, Robert, and J. A. Bowden. "Interview with C L Hawker, June 22, 1984, ArcRef: 142640, BP Archive," June 22, 1984. BP Archive; Brown, Robert, and J. A. Bowden, "Notes on Interview with L. H. Baxter, March 1, 1983, ArcRef: 142640, BP Archive," March 1, 1983. 142640. BP Archive.

Reza Shah was not alone in his concern for the need to focus young Persians on manual work, instead of academic work. AIOC management had consistently expressed such concerns throughout the past decade. In the view of James Pattison, manager at Abadan during the war, educated Iranians displayed a “dilettante” attitude towards work. Furthermore, training efforts in Southern Iran -- and in the UK -- were continuously undermined by high staff turnover. Less hospitable during peacetime than the cooler and more “civilized” climes of northern Iran, wartime Khuzistan became even less attractive to educated and skilled Persians. AIOC officials complained that higher paid positions with allied forces in Iran attracted away skilled Iranians. By February of 1941, Pattison was again complaining to Rice in Tehran that the Persian students were unable to fit into the company. In August, he added the complaint that educated Persians were leaving for government service, where they could expect prestige with little expenditure of effort and would certainly enjoy the spoils of office as well.¹⁰⁶

As AIOC management worried about the war’s impact on its established educational programs, the California Arabian Standard Oil Company (CASOC) made a small but auspicious start in support of general education in its Saudi Arabian concession. In May of 1940, CASOC opened an elementary school for local boys in Al Khobar, a school that would become known as the Jebel School. This school paralleled the general education efforts of Anglo-Persian two decades before and presaged a trajectory similar to that of the 1920s and 1930s in Persia. The American company seemed to be committing itself to support for elementary education in Al-Hasa in a manner similar to the British commitment in Southern Iran.

¹⁰⁶ Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: The Anglo-Iranian Years, 1928-1954*, 366. Robert Brown and J. A. Bowden, Education and Training in Iran (Undated Draft by Group Historian and Archivist), ArcRef: 142640, BP Archive.

The opening of the Jebel School was to pass into company lore, memorialized as the start of an “inevitable” process of American educational uplift for Saudi Arabs. First cast in this light by Carleton Coon in his 1955 *Operation Bultiste*, the portrait of the Jebel School was a consistent component of narratives of progress in Arabia.¹⁰⁷ Later Wallace Stegner in a series of articles in *Aramco World Magazine*, then in his book *Discovery!*, would portray the Jebel School’s rise and fall as a “natural” process on the frontier.¹⁰⁸ Yet during World War II, a time Phil McConnell would recount as the “Time of the Hundred Men,” there was nothing inevitable or natural about how educational policy would evolve in Aramco.¹⁰⁹

On June 26, 1941, as the company moved to set up its educational programs, J. G. Hosmer wrote an official report describing the CASOC Schools.¹¹⁰ He noted that the school had opened on May 11, 1940 as an "experiment" using a room rented by Aramco in the house of Hejji bin Jassim. Open to all residents of Al Khobar, not just employees, the firm provided a building, a teacher and equipment. The school was so popular that it soon grew to 50 students, and the company hired another Saudi Arab employee named Hamza Saleh. On March 29, 1941 they moved to a barasti hut with electricity from the government wireless station. They had opened a second school in Saudi Camp on July 6, 1940, located in the same barasti hut as the first had been, and hired a Syrian employee named Mohamed Aridi as its instructor. In this school, enrolment grew from 85 to 165. In January 1941, the company opened yet a third school for houseboys, waiters and telephone operators with evening hours. This allowed boys to attend school after work. At that time, they hired a full-time teacher, Jaffar bin Mohamed, and the school became known as the Jebel School.

¹⁰⁷ Carleton S. Coon and William A. Eltiste, *Operation Bultiste: Promoting Industrial Development in Saudi Arabia* ([Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff's Uitgeversmij, 1955).

¹⁰⁸ Stegner, *Discovery; the Search for Arabian Oil*, 172.

¹⁰⁹ McConnell, *The Hundred Men*.

¹¹⁰ J. G. Hosmer, CASOC Schools for Saudi Arabs, June 30, 1941, Box 21, HRS Papers.

Hosmer went on to explain that the school had, from its beginning, stressed the importance of basic skills. Aramco made minimum English language proficiency a prerequisite for attendance in order to get the school “on a firm foundation.” English instruction was based on the Macmillan New English Reader, Primary I and The Basic Way to English, both of which were designed “for people living in the Middle East.” “Illustrated with native pictures,” these texts were helpful in ensuring that the Saudi students “grasp more readily the meaning of the English words.” Concern for the appropriateness of materials extended to the selection of copybooks in which the students practiced writing. Imperial copybooks, purchased through the Bahrain Mission Book Store, were used to practice written English. The text of these copybooks, designed specially for Indian students, did not meet the school’s requirements and the Saudi Arab students only used the blank pages. In addition to reading and writing, arithmetic figured prominently into the curriculum. Lacking the association with military regimentation characteristic of AIOC-sponsored elementary education in Southern Persia, the school nonetheless enforced discipline, as “irregular attendance and lack of interest would retard the development of the system.”¹¹¹

The school introduced a trade training curriculum. This curriculum was explicitly distinct from the general education program:

Although not directly connected with the curriculum of the schools, Saudi Arab employees are instructed in the use of office equipment - namely, typewriters, adding machines and calculators. The employees receiving this instruction are connected either directly or indirectly with the accounting department and the storehouse. Such instruction, in the future, will be associated with the contemplated trade school for Saudi Arabs and will be a basic course open to those interested.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

Hopes were high for the extension of both general education and trade training, when the schools introduced a report card system in February of 1941. Hosmer commented, "The students' reaction was very interesting to note." He observed that "many of the students would take their report cards to their American foreman, and they were pleased and proud to show the grades they had earned." He was confident that general education would provide a firm underpinning for cooperation between Americans and Saudis, since knowledge of English "will minimize a discouraging obstacle - the language difficulty which exists between the Staff and Non-Staff employees." He hoped that general education would provide "better understanding and efficiency" and recorded that "the future of the CASOC Schools is bright, for the potentialities of development are unlimited. It is virgin territory into which we have barely trespassed." Most importantly, Hosmer was concerned that Saudi Arabs "be equipped with a basic working knowledge of the English language which will enable Staff employees to explain the reasons and the 'whys' of their particular assignments." Though "experience has shown that Arab employees seldom question why they do a certain act but once they learn they do it mechanically," he held out hope for a better future for the Saudi Arab employee through the attainment of the basic skills.¹¹²

On June 30, Floyd Ohliger sent Hosmer's report on CASOC Schools for Saudi Arabs to Terry Duce in California. He informed Duce that general education in Arabic as well as English was needed in order to prepare Saudis for productive work in Aramco. Indeed, they needed to learn "something about the world at large" in order to improve "their mode of living and their general attitude toward steady work in the Company." Ohliger described to Duce an evolutionary process in which the Saudis were "first called upon to improve their Arabic; their exposure to numerals is making them more conscious of the measurement of

¹¹² Ibid.

size and amount; and those with a better knowledge of English were recruited into first-aid classes and thereby introduced to elementary anatomy." Noting how quickly the students were progressing, he emphasized the linkage between general education and self-directed mastery of trade skills:

There will soon be enough employees with the necessary basic training to break them out into the courses of special instruction that will have definite application to the Company's activities. It will not be long before we can select promising craftsmen for specialized training and thus equip them for leadership in the trade which they already have chosen.

Pointing out that the government officials who visited Dhahran were impressed, he stressed the public relations benefits of these programs and argued that education was a project which "should have been started much earlier in our program of development."¹¹³

In his response, Terry Duce expressed agreement with Ohliger that the firm delayed too long in emphasizing education. In his recollection, one of the mistakes the oil companies had made in their early operations in Latin America was a "lack of attention to details of this nature." As a consequence, in Latin America it had become characteristic for "the Politicals to complain that the Companies took no steps to improve the education of their employees to both their own and the countries' greatness." According to Duce, the "Politicals" were wrong because "in Venezuela to-day, all drilling and most of the mechanical work is done by Venezuelans as a result of the training program which was adopted by the companies about 1930." As Edward Elkington had argued for the last two decades in AIOC, education had led to the growth of a "loyal, stable and well paid native company employees who are a credit to the company and to the country." In Duce's version of domesticated Venezuelan nationalism,

¹¹³ Ibid.

the American oil company had supplied Venezuela with a “stable middle class.” This linkage between Saudi attainment of middle class status and the success of Aramco education programs, articulated here by Terry Duce, would be a staple of Aramco publicity for years to come.¹¹⁴

While the Americans reduced their operations substantially in wartime Saudi Arabia, keeping alive the modest start towards both general and technical education, the British struggled to keep petroleum operations running in Persia. The war had led to the suspension of University scholarships to the UK and had made it extremely difficult to place technical trainees there. In December 1941, an Order in Council prevented any British staff from leaving Persia as they were designated essential to the war effort. CASOC staff had sent their wives and children home to America, an option unavailable to British staff with families under attack by German warplanes in the United Kingdom. As the war proceeded, AIOC restricted vacation destinations to India and South Africa. The majority of British staff labored the entire war in Persia without leave.¹¹⁵

By 1942, conditions had deteriorated in South Persia under wartime shortages of materials to a point where large numbers of workers slept in the open. Unsurprisingly, the company failed to meet its Persianization targets outlined in the General Plan for that year. Conditions worsened further with the outbreaks of cholera and smallpox in the fall. The company reached out to treat as many of the sick as possible, but the logistics of assisting the thousands of homeless and sick proved overwhelming.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Duce to Ohliger, August 15, 1941, Box 21, HRS Papers.

¹¹⁵ Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: The Anglo-Iranian Years, 1928-1954*, 363-5.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 93, 247.

As thousands of Persians made homeless by the war roamed the countryside of rural Iran in search of food and shelter, the graduation of young nationals from the Abadan Technical Institute in July of 1942 provided something of a bright spot on an otherwise bleak wartime horizon. *NAFT* reported with pride on the dual system of practical and theoretical studies offered to students at the Institute, which was fitting them for “responsible positions with the company when they were old enough.” ATI awarded diplomas to fifteen technical trainees who had gained the Intermediate Certificate in 41 and 42. Ten had earned engineering diplomas, which were equivalent to the British National Certificate. Another seven had earned diplomas in commerce. After the ceremony, faculty, staff and parents were treated to a performance of Aladdin’s lamp, which included “skits of local conditions and life” which portrayed a world beyond the present wartime conditions.¹¹⁷

In 1943 Abadan was also struck by a typhus epidemic which affected more than a thousand company employees. AIOC imported essential foodstuffs and ran bakeries where bread was sold at subsidized prices to employees. At the same time, the company took over and ran schools in Abadan, schools the Persian government had run in the 1930s. Under wartime conditions, the ability of the government in Tehran to administer the schools (already poor in peacetime in the firm’s view) had gone from marginal to hazardous. The schools constituted a danger to public health. The quality of teachers also suffered. As two BP historians would write in the 1980s, “the Company recognized that to obtain better teachers and schools it must ‘pay the piper and call the tune’.” In a note written in July 1943, C. L. Hawker explained that ‘the only way to exert sufficient pressure... is to pay for the establishment and running expenses of all the schools in Abadan and Fields areas ... We realize that this is a

¹¹⁷ D.M., “Presentation of Certificates at Abadan Technical Institute,” *NAFT* XXIX, no. 2 (September 1942): 10-11.

return to the 1928 policy but, having seen the Iranians trying to run their educational affairs over the last ten years we know that it is the only way." AIOC took over the Abadan schools in 1943, setting up the Abadan education committee and closing schools they deemed unsanitary.¹¹⁸

In December of 1943, Gilbert McLean "Mac" Nearpass arrived in Dhahran to supervise and direct the school program. He was the first full-time educational supervisor hired by Aramco.¹¹⁹ During that same month, AIOC opened discussions on a new General Plan. Elkington opened the negotiations by confirming that they were willing to "prolong the training schemes, continue paying for the Abadan technical Institute, resume the British educational program and prepare plans for postwar situation." To do this, they proposed extending the General Plan of 1936. The Persian government under the new Shah, Mohammad Reza Shah, would take time to reconsider the future of the linked programs of education, training and Persianization. The British had, after all, failed to reach their targets for reductions of foreign employees in the past two years. Once again, Indian employees had been hired to fill senior technical positions that Persians should by rights have occupied.¹²⁰

Persian staff suffered other indignities as well. When AIOC had 50,000 suits sent to Persia for men and boys of the "artisan and labor type" at the end of 1943 to relieve acute clothing shortages, they offered "sports coats and flannel trousers for sale [only] to members of the staff." Given that most of the employees of "artisan and labor type" were Persians, the leadership of AIOC was displaying more than what James Bamberg called "a somewhat quaint and some might say, curiously British attachment to the preservation of social

¹¹⁸ Robert Brown and J. A. Bowden, *Education and Training in Iran*, n.d., ArcRef: 142640, BP Archive.

¹¹⁹ Pledge, Daldin, and Tahlawi, *Saudi Aramco and Its People: A History of Training*, 17.

¹²⁰ Robert Brown and J. A. Bowden, *Education and Training in Iran*, n.d., ArcRef: 142640, BP Archive.

distinctions.” This display of distinctions was indicative of the persistence of a racial order in which the British staff still lived in palatial homes at company expense and large numbers of Persians were living in inferior conditions, many sleeping out in the open. The conflict between Persian dignity and the corporate objectives of AIOC would be negotiated in meeting rooms over the next several years while the parties disputed the program for a new General Plan. Training and education programs figured prominently in these debates.¹²¹

Labor, Education and the Shaping of a Post-War Order

In the spring of 1944, AIOC faced unrest with British as well as Persian labor. Director James Jameson complained of a “staggering” loss of Persian labor during the war as the company struggled to ramp up production for the post-war world. Having spent the war years without leave, British staff members were unhappy with travel restrictions. Members of Parliament from the British Labour Party, including Irene Ward, visited Abadan to hear British staff grievances. They saw for themselves at first hand the way in which the company was dealing with staff issues. Ward accused the company of not knowing anything about modern labor organization. Ernest Bevin then commissioned an investigation by the British Ministry of Labour, which made recommendations to AIOC management in April on dealing more effectively with British and Persian employees. Evidently the consultative committees they recommended, though implemented, did not go far enough to satisfy labor. AIOC called in the Birmingham Labour Board for further consultations, which in the spring of the following year recommended extending the consultative committees to include Iranian labor,

¹²¹ Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: The Anglo-Iranian Years, 1928-1954*, 358.

a recommendation in the Bevin report ignored by the firm. They also recommended extending representation to junior as well as senior employees.¹²²

While AIOC was attempting to establish this mechanism for settling disputes with its employees, Aramco sent one of its many deputations to visit with the British company. In 1944, Gilbert McLean “Mac” Nearpass visited British petroleum interests at Basra, Baghdad, Damascus and Beirut. He also visited AIOC at Abadan. According to Tom Pledge in his history of training in Aramco, Nearpass discovered that training at those installations was based on “traditional apprenticeship programs,” which according to Pledge brought him to reject the idea of technical training for Saudis in Aramco. What Nearpass had noted with favor, according to Pledge, was that AIOC at Abadan had “financed construction of government schools. The company provided housing and helped pay the salary of some teachers, but it refused to take responsibility for the education of Iranians in Government schools.”¹²³ Since the British had taken over administration of government schools in Abadan in 1943, it would probably have been more accurate to report that the British had tried to avoid responsibility for educating Persians to the greatest extent possible, but had been forced by political pressure to do so for more than twenty years. In a place like Eastern Saudi Arabia in the 1940s -- where government schools hardly existed and central government involvement was minimal -- pressure on Aramco was less intense than it had been for AIOC in Persia as Reza Shah moved to consolidate his power in Khuzistan during the 1920s.¹²⁴

¹²² Ibid., 376.

¹²³ Pledge, Daldin, and Tahlawi, *Saudi Aramco and Its People: A History of Training*, 19.

¹²⁴ For a consideration of Reza Shah’s involvement in Southern Persia in the 1920s, see Stephanie Cronin, *The Making of Modern Iran : State and Society under Riza Shah 1921-1941*, RoutledgeCurzon/Bips Persian Studies Series (London; New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003). and Mohammad Gholi Majd, *Great Britain & Reza Shah : The Plunder of Iran, 1921-1941* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2001).

The sheer growth in employee numbers brought pressure on Aramco to consider skills development as World War II drew to a close. Aramco hired thousands of skilled and unskilled employees to build the Ras Tanura refinery (6000 employees primarily Saudi Arabs, were hired in 1944 alone). With the rapid growth in Arab staff, they also began to extend general education for Saudi boys as the British had for Persian boys. Two Saudi government teachers taught the Koran, ethics, and other religious subjects in the company schools. As had happened twenty years before in Ahwaz, in 1944 Dhahran the company began to assume responsibility for instruction of Saudi boys in the local language (Arabic), as well as in English, arithmetic, and physical education.¹²⁵

The Aramco training efforts, based in what were called “Opportunity Schools,” were simply insufficient to meet the demand for skilled and semi-skilled hands at the new Ras Tanura refinery. Not only had the company failed to build enough quality housing for employees in lower pay grades, but they were also failing to deliver the training opportunities to support the local workforce in acquiring new skills and progressing in the company. As a consequence, on June 11, 1945, Aramco encountered its first labor unrest, which started as a riot at the Ras Tanura refinery. The employees were angry that they were given inferior food rations, and were demanding training classes that would allow them to learn after hours. On July 12, the Arab drillers in Dhahran struck for pay and benefits equal to those of white workers. On July 30th, Italian skilled labor went on strike because they were angry about being treated “like Arabs.” The strikes had serious impacts on production in Aramco, serious enough that the King became involved and forced the company to apply the 1942 Saudi Labor Law. This meant Aramco labor would be paid for their day off, work shorter

¹²⁵ Viola, *Human Resources Development in Saudi Arabia: Multinationals and Saudization*, 12.

hours, and receive better medical and workers' compensation benefits. The strikers had also demanded improved training opportunities for all workers.¹²⁶

In December 1945, Aramco sent Frank G. Tallman from Ras Tanura to spend a week with Warren Hodges studying training programs at the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company facilities in Abadan. In his training history, Tom Pledge makes the undocumented claim that Tallman and Hodges didn't approve of the apprenticeship program, and that they had reported the British Technical Institute had their students performing idle tasks that "seemed like treading water." Participants closer to the actual visit recalled matters differently. In an April 25, 1955 letter to L. M. Snyder, Harry Snyder recalled that Tallman and Hodges actually recommended building a training institute in Aramco along lines similar to the British institute. According to Harry Snyder the proposal was "rejected by management." In reaching for solutions to problems at the heart of worker discontent expressed in the first strikes, Aramco management was pulling away from the British path.¹²⁷

1946 would be the year of the general strike in AIOC, and in response to its observations of the British reaction to that strike Aramco would pull away yet further from the course in training and education adopted by the British. By the later part of 1945, S. K. Kazeruni, deputy labor superintendent at Abadan, called on the British to set up departmental labor councils to give Persian labor a voice in management of the firm. Employees were suffering from the same shortages of housing, food and medical supplies in the immediate post-war period as they had during the war. Despite the establishment of "buffer councils," work stoppages began in AIOC in the spring of 1946. In February, Ivor Jones (who had replaced

¹²⁶ Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier*, 93-7.

¹²⁷ Harry R. Snyder to L. M. Snyder, April 25, Folder Marked "History of Vocational Schools Project at Aramco," Box 19, HRS Papers.

Pattison as AIOC general manager in 1945) worried that the withdrawal of troops from Iran in March would open the door to further work stoppages and ultimately a larger strike. Soon after the troop withdrawal, strikes at Agha Jahri – inspired if not led by the communist Tudeh party -- ignited a chain of events ultimately leading to a general strike throughout Khuzistan. Workers' grievances were with both the government and the company. The strikers demanded the dismissal of the Governor General of Khuzistan, Misbah Fatimi, disarmament of the tribes, and an end to company interference in Iranian internal affairs. As the Saudi workers had demanded a year earlier, they also demanded payment for the rest day. Mauzaffar Firuz, Minister of Labor, travelled to Abadan in October and ended the strike by conceding all demands and releasing all detainees. Nichols had done the same in response to the 1922 APOC strike. The firm's hand was soon to be forced in terms of general education provision as well. The following month, the Tehran government issued a decree concerning compulsory education that placed more pressure on AIOC to fund what would be a growing number of elementary schools in Khuzistan.¹²⁸

AIOC's General Plan and Aramco's Near East College Association Study

Towards the end of 1946, Aramco decided to broaden its intelligence gathering on education and training in the region beyond the British company holdings to the north in Iran and Iraq. On January 20, James MacPherson wrote to Andy Anderson in personnel asking for more information about the visit of an "Educational Committee" from the Near East College Association (NECA), a group that served an oversight role for American Universities in the

¹²⁸ Nov 25, 1946 Degree Concerning Compulsory Education and concerns over comparison with Aramco cited in Robert Brown and J. A. Bowden, Education and Training in Iran, n.d., ArcRef: 142640, BP Archive. Account of the 1946 General Strike in Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: The Anglo-Iranian Years, 1928-1954*, 376.

Middle East.¹²⁹ MacPherson wanted to know under whose sponsorship this group was coming. Was it an American University sending the group or was it the State Department? It was neither. The group was sponsored by NECA itself.

In the spring of 1947, Andy Anderson was acting as the go-between on this mission between stateside management and management in Dhahran. MacPherson needed more information about the group that would be visiting with his people in Dhahran. In response to a December letter from Terry Duce informing management in Dhahran of the imminent arrival of the “education committee,” Anderson provided an overview of company training. He stressed the need for a general education program in Al Hasa, and outlined Dhahran’s views on the nature of a comprehensive educational program for Aramco employees. Educational programs that the company was running at the time in Saudi Arabia included American Elementary Schools, Arabic-English Elementary Schools for Arabs and trade schools for Arabs. He told Duce that:

The Arab Trade Schools are still in the formative stage. Money has been appropriated for the buildings in Dhahran and Ras Tanura, tools and equipment ordered, and the construction of the first units of the buildings is about to start. One instructor is on the job and is teaching some classes in temporary classrooms. Much remains to be done.

Going on to outline the on-the-job training efforts underway for Arabs, he also touched on instruction in Arabic for Americans and supervisory training for Americans. He spent most of the response in explaining the planned training for Americans. This would include “job instruction training, job relations training, foreman training, foreman conferences, etc.” With hundreds of new American employees, the need for this type of training had become “very

¹²⁹ J MacPherson, “Memorandum to A. L. Anderson on “Educational Committee,” January 20, 1947, Aramco Training Programs Folder, Box 20, HRS Papers.

urgent.” Dhahran had big plans for the training for American supervisors, and some of it had even started. He explained to Duce that this program depended on hiring qualified trainers. The supervisory training program would “be expanded as rapidly as necessary instructors are employed and sent to the field.”¹³⁰

Harry Roscoe Snyder was to lead the “education committee.” As an Army Air Corps Colonel, Snyder had led the training efforts at the Dhahran Air Base and was serving at the time as a director of the Near East College Association. In February 1947 Snyder wrote to survey party members. Casting the educational mission broadly as a continuation of American educational programs in Latin America and the Philippines, as well as British efforts in their colonial possessions, he placed the mission in global historical context. The survey party would be assisting Aramco in its efforts to get the Saudis to take on the training of their own workforce.¹³¹

C. Ken Weidner, fellow survey party member and another former military officer with extensive Near East service in World War II, joined Harry Snyder as a member of the “education committee” for a meeting with Terry Duce at the Aramco Washington, DC headquarters. Snyder recorded in his diary that “Duce suggested we stop at Beirut only as long as necessary to determine availability of teachers & other assistance.”¹³² The survey team needed to get to Dhahran as quickly as possible to help MacPherson, “without stopping enroute for other visits.” In his handwritten notes from that meeting, Snyder recorded that

¹³⁰ A.L. Anderson to J. Terry Duce, January 28, 1947, Aramco Training Programs, Box 20, HRS Papers.

¹³¹ Snyder to James MacPherson, Memorandum to Survey Party Members (re: Proposed Educational Survey to Saudi Arabia), February, 21, 1947, Aramco Survey Folder, Box 32, HRS Papers.

¹³² Harry Roscoe Snyder, “Diary,” March 30, 1947, Aramco Survey, Box 32, HRS Papers. H. B. Allen from the Near East Foundation was also present at that meeting, as was Richard Sanger from the State Department, but the education committee was convened under the auspices of the Near East College Association.

Duce didn't want Aramco to become "another East India Company." In Duce's view, if the government asked for help, the Company "wants to be able to help but on a partnership basis." In contrast to AIOC where the education of children of nationals was seen early on as a critical company objective, for Duce the real problems were the challenges posed by the need for a secondary school for children of Aramco employees from the United States. This was "a financial necessity" because some of its most valuable employees were leaving Saudi Arabia because of a lack of educational opportunity for their children. He stress that "Culture must always be a native culture." By "native culture," he meant that American kids would not be educated alongside Arab kids. He pointed to the "Need to establish parallel schools for Arabs." Duce reminded the team that the Saudi King was interested in trade schools, which would help develop in the Saudi Arab a respect for the "dignity of labor."¹³³

Before departing DC via train for New York, Harry Snyder was briefed by the War Department and Ken Weidner was briefed by the Navy Department. Habib Kurani, the third member of the party got his briefing from State. The series of flights from New York to Dhahran took them through Beirut. They did their best to comply with Duce's guidance but were delayed for a week by the challenges of scheduling flights and getting visas for passage through Egypt. While in Beirut they spent most of their time discussing "educational problems in the Near East." Among the places they visited were the American University of Beirut, where they spent time in discussions with faculty, and the American Community School where some of the Aramco staff sent their children for junior high and high school.

When Snyder, Weidner and Habib finally arrived in Dhahran on April 16, they met with James "Mac" MacPherson, the resident Vice President, and his senior staff. General

¹³³ Harry Roscoe Snyder, Notes on Conversation with James Terry Duce, April 1947, Box 32, HRS Papers.

Manager Floyd Ohliger and Personnel Manager Andy Anderson joined them for the meeting. MacPherson and Anderson explained that the visiting committee had a “free hand to investigate anything” and their visit was to be an occasion for the “full discussion of problems of Aramco in terms of educational programs.” Snyder recorded in handwritten notes of the meeting that Harry Ashforth, who had replaced Mac Nearpass as “Director of Education” in Dhahran, cited the “Agreement between SAG + Aramco that the latter should employ Arabs instead of Americans or Italians as much as possible.” Ashford argued that in order to meet that commitment Aramco must expand elementary schools for Arabs to “feed up to trade schools” as well as “take care of immediate needs.” Ashford informed Snyder that 10,000 to 18,000 Arabs were to be working for Aramco in next two years.¹³⁴

There were limits to what even a relatively enlightened career educator such as Ashford could recommend. He shared a survey of current education and training programs with the visiting committee. In his official report on educational programs, Ashford outlined distinct programs for American school children and Saudi Arabs.¹³⁵ Both began with elementary education, but the purposes and nature of these two separate efforts were very different. “American Elementary Schools” were to be augmented by a new building that would allow for extension into the junior high school grades. These programs were to be accredited by the State of California Department of Education and the U. S. Department of Education. The objective of these programs was to ensure that American kids would be prepared to meet “all requirements for entry to our American Universities.” The “Arab Elementary Schools,” on the other hand, were not intended to prepare Saudis for university education. On the contrary, they were and would continue to be, geared toward trade training. In a general

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ H. T. Ashford, “Survey of Arab Training and Education, 1946, Box 32, HRS Papers.

shop, the Saudi Arabs would learn “auto motor, sheet metal, elementary machine shop, woodwork and elementary carpentry, electricity, and cold metal bench work.” The objectives of this type of training were twofold. First, it would give the Saudis exposure to manual work, which Ashford and most other Americans insisted they were lacking. Second it would help form their character by helping them develop “likes and dislikes.” By allowing them to choose a preferred course of trade training, it was more likely that they would excel as enthusiastic tradesmen. Ashford called for a one to three year apprenticeship in the shops.

Ashford also thought it was possible to have some highly capable Saudis assume training roles, and he had begun the process of having training materials translated into Arabic. He believed, however, that the brunt of the training burden would have to fall on American foremen, an argument that the British had not made. Extensive plans for anything approaching a training institute with a dedicated staff of professional instructors were not on the American agenda. Absent too was any discussion of supporting Saudi general education through contributions of materiel or personnel for the construction of elementary schools to educate the children of the company’s Saudi Arab employees. Given a clear focus on the job trade training for Saudi Arabs, in combination with a belief that line supervisors were going to be the primary instructors, Ashford spent much of his time describing the efforts Aramco was making to develop American supervisors as trainers of Saudis.

When the committee moved on to the onsite meetings on April 18, they went first to Abqaiq to interview the Arab workmen named Ali and Saleh assigned to teach English to Arab workmen. The party moved quickly back to Dhahran to visit the “native school” and meet the staff with Vince James and Powell Ownby. Ashford had shared with Snyder that “as long as you build up the confidence of the Arabs they develop very rapidly,” but Powell Ownby

was concerned, that Arab staff (Egyptians, Lebanese and Syrians in particular) resented being trained by Indians, who were “about only available non-American teachers.” Ownby focused on the difficulty of getting the natives to get along and stressed that “Indians must be Sunnis or Christians - cannot be Hindu, Shiite.”¹³⁶ As long as the culture of Indian instructors aligned with American Christianity or Saudi Sunni Islam, clashes could be minimized.

Visits to the refinery at Ras Tanura over the next two days brought the survey group in touch with the manager, Bob King, and the supervisors of the machine shop and upholstery shops. Arabs and Italians were working the lathes in the former and Arabs and Indians were the only employees in the upholstery shop. Line supervisors Brodford and Abrams at Ras Tanura felt that the key to solving the problem of retaining any capable workers, be they Arab, Italian or American, was to provide housing for families. In the chemical laboratories, Fields and Laney warned the group that “certain top technical positions must be kept by Americans” and that Arabs should be trained for only the lower level positions.

The next day, April 23, the survey team was pulled into a conference at the administration building. Evidently the free movement of the team amidst the staff on sites had caused some confusion and “misunderstandings.” American staff members were perhaps wondering if they were about to be replaced. The survey team would now turn its attention to other locations, as they had spent enough time in the Aramco operations.¹³⁷

After a brief visit to Bahrain, the team traveled north to inspect the British operations at AIOC and American missionary schools in Iraq. They were to make yet another visit to the

¹³⁶ Harry Roscoe Snyder, Conference with Mr. Ashford and Nearpass, April 17, 1947, Box 32, HRS.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

American University in Beirut and then return back to the US via Cairo. Of all the training programs they inspected, Harry Snyder was most taken with the programs at Abadan.

At Abadan, L. H. Baxter greeted the survey team. Nearly a quarter century after the Persianization program had begun, Baxter described the staffing to the team as consisting of “Iranian artisans, Indian foremen and British staff.” The general education program was divided into elementary schools for the first six years and secondary schools for the second six years. Snyder toured the apprentice training shops and works training. At the higher technical level, in the Abadan Technical Institute, Iranian students studied refinery engineering, laboratory work, and process engineering. Snyder summed up the technical institute as “very impressive.” Snyder also commented on the works training program, which since 1941 had turned out 120 works supervisors in addition to the 300 who had completed the program and were still junior fitters. However, only 3 Iranians from that program had achieved staff status by 1947. L. H. Baxter explained that the town of Abadan had grown up around the refinery and that most of 120,000 inhabitants had come to the island after the refinery was established. The AIOC was providing opportunities for Iranians, spending £168,000 per year on their training programs. Subsidies for students at the Technical Institute amounted to an additional £ 60,000 per year. As to the cost of maintaining the Institute itself, figures were not offered.¹³⁸

The survey group went on to make visits to the Christian missionary schools in Iraq and again to the American University of Beirut. Snyder’s journal reveals very little about plans or proposed policies in those entries. However, he did take time on May 9 as he awaited his return flight in Cairo to type up a long memorandum for the record in which he recorded his thoughts on the approach Aramco should take to education and training. After discussing

¹³⁸ Ibid.

educational problems in the Near East with practitioners on the ground during the past month, he wrote of the need to promote self-help for the Arabs.

In view of the experience of American Educational Institutions in other parts of the Near East, it is deemed wise to aim always at the goal of helping the native peoples to help themselves. A paternalistic attitude by Aramco toward the problems of education, or toward any other problems for that matter, will not in the end command the respect of the native peoples, or bring satisfactory economic returns to the company.

Recalling the Protestant work ethic of the missionary schools he had just visited, Snyder argued that the “most important goal of any educational program, must be the aim to install in the native peoples a respect for the dignity of work.” Echoing Duce’s call for proceeding on a “partnership basis,” Snyder’s position was that training would become a tool for propagating American attitudes toward work, so that “[i]n developing a curriculum, or in developing administrative policies relative to education, or to production, the view must constantly be kept in mind that whatever is good for the natives of Saudi Arabia will also be good for the interest of Aramco itself.” The best way to quickly instill these values into Arabs was through mass methods of instruction perfected in World War II. Mono-skilled approaches would work fine for the time being because, as Snyder explained, the Saudi Arab lacked flexibility of mind. Once the Arab learned to use one machine, he argued, that skill could not be easily transferred to another machine. This is due to lack of industrial experience. As far as general education was concerned, the imparting of basic skills would need to be done in segregated facilities because Aramco wanted people to “feel at home.” To shield Americans from Arabs, separate elementary school systems would be necessary for some time to come.¹³⁹

¹³⁹ Harry Roscoe Snyder, Confidential Memorandum Dictated at Cairo, May 9, 1949, Box 32, HRS Papers.

Harry Snyder worked on a long series of drafts of the 1947 Study Report for the Near East College Association. Unsurprisingly, given the guidance he had received from Terry Duce and his own writings on the matter in Cairo, he included a recommendation in the report that Aramco build separate schools for Americans and Arabs. For the non-Americans the training programs were to be industrial training in the "production line system of shop procedure." The final draft of the recommendations included a description of the program that included "Presentation and explanation of the lessons to a large group (approximately 100) by one experienced teacher who will drill the trainees in unison." Then the students would break up into smaller groups of 15 for further drill to check comprehension. Trainees would get a minimum of 2 hrs a day of training, which would include other non-English speaking workers. They were to start with naming tools and showing how to use them and later get into trade mathematics. General education would be integrated into the trade training program and would only be delivered as needed to support the simple skills needed to fit into the mass training program.¹⁴⁰

While the Near East College Association report was in draft form, from the spring of 1947 into the summer the British were once again negotiating an extension of the General Plan that had expired during the war. The Ministry of Finance was pressing the company to do something about moving towards a new set of definite goals for the reduction of non-Persian employees.¹⁴¹ In June, AIOC put together a new series of proposals to take to the Ministry of Finance. In working up this proposal, the company reviewed the performance of Article 16 (III and IV) of the General Plan, those clauses which dealt with education and training. Summarizing the performance from 1936-1946, a member of the planning staff made

¹⁴⁰ Northeast College Association, DRAFT Study by NECA of Aramco Programs and Recommendations, n.d., Aramco Survey Folder, Box 32, HRS Papers.

¹⁴¹ Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: The Anglo-Iranian Years, 1928-1954*, 359-60.

comparisons between the work of the Abadan Technical Institute and the Metropolitan-Vickers School in Manchester, UK as a way to highlight the persistent problems that AIOC encountered with Persian labor.¹⁴² Unlike in the Victorian days, Manchester had by the mid-twentieth century achieved a "supply of capable, sturdy, adaptable recruits from the schools," having once been "notorious for its insalubrity and stunted people 'vide Victorian literature.'" Manchester had accomplished this through "tremendous emphasis" on "good elementary education and healthily brought up children." As a result, it had several excellent Technical Colleges and an Engineering Degree Course at its University.

The weakness of the local government in Khuzistan was a significant obstacle to creating a Metropolitan-Vickers. Despite wide range of AIOC operations in Southern Iran, it consistently relied on the efforts of local educational schools "for the production of sturdy, intelligent, reliable, and adaptable youths in large quantities for the various levels of intake in the Company's Training Schemes." This approach had not been successful in preparing students to work in the company, yet the AIOC continued to rely on local schools. In 1946 at the A. T. Shops, 85% of all sixth class applicants failed the math test. The physical health of the young recruits was also bad and "on health grounds if the boy does not come into the Apprentices Hostel or is not the son of a well-established employee living in Company married quarters, he is often undersized and underfed." Students were coming up short "with regard to reliability and adaptability" because of the lack of "serious character training in initiative or leadership such as Boy Scouting, properly done provides."¹⁴³

¹⁴² Article 16 (III and IV) General Plan. Education and Training. A-Summary 1936-1946; B-Proposals for Discussion in Abadan for Reviewing the Plan - June 1947, ArcRef: 15918, BP Archive.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

The critique of government education also argued that Persian students had simply been “herded into overcrowded classes and received minimum attention.” Due to this lack of extracurricular leadership development opportunities, even in 1947 the company had to start from scratch “to produce good Foreman Artisans for the Company.” Students who graduate 11th class are “usually sturdy and well fed and (have) got much more character and understanding.” They “obviously” come from better homes. The Company needed the Artisan type in greater numbers, since only 10% of the students were entering technical or commercial training with the company. Keeping Iranian kids in school was the company’s business because “Only in very rare cases does force of circumstances or some special guidance urge a normally intelligent boy of 16 to leave the Middle School at the beginning of the 9th Class and join the company.” Because of this “in the A.C. Course the door of entry has been thrown open to any lad in the Company anywhere in Khuzistan who has his 6th Class Primary Certificate and a record of two years further attendance at Night Classes.” The solution to contemporary problem with artisan, technical and commercial apprentices was greater, not lesser, involvement of the company in general education in Khuzistan. As Metropolitan-Vickers had shown in Manchester, the company needed to broaden the base. The company needed to intervene to “improve the Ministry of Education teachers, Directors and farrashes.”¹⁴⁴

This corporate paternalism also worked to undermine Persian nationalism by shifting the focus away from University education. The memo recommended closing down the university courses at Abadan. The head was too heavy for the hips and feet to carry. C.L. Hawker had written a note in the summer of 1946 entitled “Academics and Industry,” in

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. Farrashes were the equivalent of office helpers, often referred to as “tea boys” in Persian Gulf countries today.

which he had shown that it was inadvisable to focus on University education “on the sun-smitten, industry-ridden island of Abadan,” it was time to realign the programs at Abadan. AIOC needed to “get them back on a peacetime basis.”¹⁴⁵ This would be best for young Iranians and would lead to “healthy, useful and happy relations” between the Iranian Government and the Company. Rather than educating Persian to the BSc level, the company could give scholarships to students to attend Iranian trade school in “Honorestan” to relieve the load on the Razi Middle School. This could be done cost-effectively without incurring the cost of building more hostel space. Ideally all of the apprentices would be “feeding and living in hostels under discipline and supervision, but this is too much of an undertaking to contemplate seriously.” More advanced technical study at the University level should be the province of the Engineering department of Tehran University, to which the company was in the process of making a donation of £140,000 worth of equipment, 2 British professors and 2-3 Abadan-trained assistants at a cost of £12,000 per year.¹⁴⁶

AIOC’s lack of skilled Persians to fill artisan, technical and clerical roles was to be remedied by building the same kind of respect for manual labor which Snyder was urging for Saudi Arabs. Company representatives continued to insist that two decades of work in Persia had failed to produce an industrial work ethic. Along with the local government, which in the firm’s view was abdicating its responsibility, the lack of the appropriate values for an industrialized society on the part of the Persian youth was a major problem highlighted as the general plan was under revision. As one report lamented:

¹⁴⁵ C. L. Hawker, “Academics and Industry,” August 28, 1946, Abadan Technical School, ArcRef: 96458, BP Archive.

¹⁴⁶ Article 16 (III and IV) General Plan. Education and Training. A-Summary 1936-1946; B-Proposals for Discussion in Abadan for Reviewing the Plan - June 1947, ArcRef: 15918, BP Archive (Anglo-Iranian Oil Company), BP Archive.

Sixteen years of struggle, particularly in the earlier years 1931-42, have overwhelmingly convinced the writer that the problem of training here is owing to impatience and lack of vision, background and trust of the apprentices themselves and owing to the amazing opportunities of getting rich quick elsewhere for the 'smart Alecs' who are alert and literate.¹⁴⁷

Even though it was short staffed in the training department in 1947, the company owed it to the apprentices to reach out to them and help them develop into “normal and healthy” youths. Apprentice group discussions could help, for in talking to the young apprentices "These talks would cure some of their impatience and youthful impetuosity and give them a bigger vision of the industrial field and greater tolerance.” AIOC should not degrade apprentices by making them do heavy and dirty work, and the apprentices should be allowed to choose their own field of study (in so far as that corresponded with company needs). It was not good policy “for a boy, who is madly keen on I.C. Engines and motor overhauls, to be made to become a Boiler Engineer when he hates the sight of boilers.” There was also the danger that Iranians may not realize the moral benefits of company work because of mechanization, which may rob them of the direct work in the plant. This problem, thankfully, could be remedied by summer work experiences.

This call to intensified paternalism was part of the AIOC's response to increased Iranian government efforts to renegotiate the General Plan of 1936. Starting in the fall of 1947, and continuing into the summer of 1948, they exerted renewed pressure on AIOC officials to complete a revised and updated General Plan. Training provisions, and their direct linkage to promotion of nationals to staff positions within the company, were at the center of their concerns. Iranian rejection of the British approach to slow organic growth in senior staff was apparent to AIOC leadership, but they dismissed evidence of Iranian nationalism as

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

“impatience” which resulted from “immaturity.” Reviewing the progress of Persian students at Birmingham University, AIOC officials blamed the Persian graduates for causing attrition by leaving Abadan behind for Tehran. They focused on the shortcomings of young Persians, rather than on finding ways to retain the best Persian graduates in Southern Iran. C. C. Mylles, the company's staff manager in Iran, complained bitterly of the Persians’ lack of gratitude and what he believed to be a distorted focus on topmost positions within the company. He observed "there is more joy in Iran over the appointment of one Iranian chemist/engineer/accountant/doctor/Labour Officer than there is over the appointment of 1000 Iranian artisans or 1000 Iranian cooks."¹⁴⁸

Adding insult to injury, Husayn Pirnia in the Petroleum Department of the Ministry of Finance shocked Neville Gass with the assertion that the General Plan was illegal because it was not approved formally by the Council of Ministers. AIOC corporate attorneys became involved again. They assured Gass that the General Plan of 1936 was legally binding because Ali Akbar Davar, Persian Minister of Finance at the time of the plan’s approval, had signed off on it. The firm suspected Nasrullah Jahangir, formerly head of that department and at the time director at Bank Melli, was driving this aggressive and nationalistic stance. Once again, the Persian government was pointing to discriminatory practices in hiring and promotion of Persians and at the same time pushing AIOC to provide better housing, amenities and training opportunities for its workers. When G. N. Goby took over negotiations for the British in the summer of 1948, the Ministry of Finance demanded concrete numbers

¹⁴⁸ Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: The Anglo-Iranian Years, 1928-1954*, 359-60.

for Persian advancement to senior positions in the company – even if it required an “emergency” training program.¹⁴⁹

Despite having already donated £150,000 of state-of-the-art lab equipment to Tehran University in 1947 (along with the temporary assignment of staff from ATI to provide support), AIOC planners were feeling the pressure to intervene in a major way in general education when they contemplated a £1.5 Million investment to “rescue” primary education. In light of the decree on compulsory education the British continued to do their best to contain the extent of their obligations under a new General Plan. They worried, however, about compromising quality in a rush to compliance. They clung to the position that facilities like assembly halls and dining rooms had to be of high quality because they assumed (incorrectly) that the Americans would soon be doing big things for the education of nationals in the Persian Gulf.¹⁵⁰

The AIOC may have gotten their mistaken impression that Aramco was planning to outdo them in the realms of training, housing and staff amenities from the admiration expressed by the many senior Americans connected with Aramco who visited the AIOC operations from the later days of the war into the immediate post-WWII period. Following the same well trodden path to Abadan as the training assessment team led by Mac Nearpass in 1945, and more recently Harry Snyder in 1947, Harold Hoskins embarked on a mission to Abadan in

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. Exemplary Persians, ones who knew their place and progressed slowly and steadily in the company, were profiled from time to time in the *NAFT*. See, for instance, “Forty Years in the Anglo-Iranian Oil company,” *NAFT* (Dec 1948) for a story about Kal Muhammad, foreman of the Labour staff at the General Office, Abadan. His status as an honorary pioneer is conferred through his association with Dr. Young and Mr. Reynolds. Recruiting labor in Basra and Shushtar he was “stoned by a hostile population.” He worked as a telephone operator in Ahwaz and remained alone at that office when the British staff evacuated during World War I. Since his job was eliminated in 1924 with the electrification of the telephone system, so he was transferred to CDD in Abadan and worked there dutifully for the next two decades.

¹⁵⁰ Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: The Anglo-Iranian Years, 1928-1954*, 359-60.

early 1948 on behalf of Exxon, one of Aramco's parent companies. Hoskins, who was also a board member for the American University of Beirut, arrived in Abadan at a time when the increased scrutiny of the Persian government overlooking AIOC affairs had brought that company to appoint Mustafa Fateh to the position of assistant general manager for labor affairs. Reza Fallah, Stuart Memorial College alum and the first head of the Abadan Technical Institute, had just been put at the head of the staff department in Tehran.¹⁵¹

Hoskins' report on his visit called upon Aramco to follow the AIOC model, to build better housing for Arab staff and provide them with better amenities. It also urged Aramco to adopt a robust training model based on the Abadan Technical Institute. In terms of the educational recommendations, this was the same conclusion as Nearpass and Snyder had both come to in their missions to Abadan. What Hoskins evidently did not know, but what Harry Snyder's own notes and his Near East College Association report drafts show, was that the Association report had been watered down by Terry Duce's intervention at the very start of that process. Aramco would, however, send yet another investigatory team to learn, among other things, the details of the British company's "crash housing program," a program which they had initiated after the 1946 strike and under the pressure of an activist Persian government inspecting every aspect of the company's operation. Talks among senior Aramco staff in the Poconos in the fall of 1948, where the senior Aramco staff discussed the many shortcomings of Aramco programs in light of what they knew to be true of AIOC, were the prelude to an even wider ranging discussion about the future of Aramco "corporate welfare programs" in Saudi Arabia. The story of how the company justified its rejection of Hoskins' recommendations is the story of the Aramco Personnel Planning Committee, which was

¹⁵¹Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier*, 106-7.

convened by the Aramco President shortly after Hoskins submitted his report to the Aramco board.¹⁵²

The Aramco Policy Planning Committee and the Lessons of AIOC

Harold Hoskins was not the only representative of Aramco's parent companies who visited Abadan to size up the British programs. Brewster Jennings of Mobile visited the AIOC facilities at Abadan in January of 1949. While in Abadan, he toured staff and labor housing with the AIOC Managing Director, Ivor Jones, as his guide. Prior to that visit, Neville Gass had asked Jones to pay particular attention to any comments which Jennings and his traveling companion Harding made on the AIOC housing program. Writing to Gass on February 14, 1949, Jones was happy to relate that, "Jennings expressed himself as very impressed by the quality and extent of our programme." Harding had been "very outspoken and said among other things that nowhere in the western hemisphere, except in one instance, had he seen labour housing of the quality we were providing. The exception was an Oil Company in Venezuela whose housing he considered comparable, but unfortunately he could not remember its name." Gass could rest assured in the knowledge that both Jennings and Harding "were emphatic that our efforts both in quality and quantity far exceeded anything that Aramco was attempting."¹⁵³

At the same time as AIOC senior management worried about measuring up to Aramco's efforts, Aramco management was taking the measure of AIOC approaches to housing and other personnel issues. As the 1940s drew to a close, Aramco made policy decisions on

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ivor M. Jones to N. A. Gass, February 14, 1949, General Plan Statistics - Iran, ArcRef: 54242, BP Archive. The Venezuelan company was most likely Creole Petroleum.

staffing, compensation, housing and training within an international context in which a consideration of AIOC approaches would play a major role. On Jan 17, 1949, while the Mobile managers were visiting in Abadan, Aramco President Frank Moore issued guidance to a newly constituted Personnel Planning Committee. Chaired by A.C.C. Hill, the committee also included Andy Anderson, Manager of the Personnel Department and Tom Barger, Manager of the Relations Department. Associated with the Committee were Harry Snyder, Director of Education and Arab Training and H. L. Flackmeier, Aramco's Chief Architect. The Personnel Planning Committee's mission, as articulated by W. F. Moore was:

To consider and evaluate the relationships between Aramco and its Field Force in Saudi Arabia: and to recommend ways and means to further developing these relationships in the interests of continuing efficiency and operating stability, in a manner consistent with the customs of the people and the views of the Saudi Arab Government.

The company president asked the committee to make recommendations on five specific questions:

1. What would be the best composition of the Field Force, with respect to the employment of Americans, Saudis, and the nationals of other countries?
2. How, and to what degree, could such a force be made most efficient and productive through training methods?
3. What system of wages and other incentives and payments, in the light of Aramco's field labor costs, would be best suited to such a force?
4. What type of community life would be best for each of the major groups comprising the field force?
5. How can the housing shortage be most effectively solved?¹⁵⁴

In preparing for the committee's deliberations, Aramco sent another group to review both the AIOC and Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) operations. From April 3-7, 1949 they visited

¹⁵⁴ Aramco, Aramco's Field Force: A Report by the Personnel Planning Committee, 1950, Box 1, Rentz Papers.

Abadan, Baghdad and Kirkuk. Returning to Dhahran, their findings were discussed in a series of meetings beginning on April 17 in the conference room in the main administrative building. All the official members of the committee attended. The entire Field Management Committee joined them, including the committee's chair James MacPherson. Floyd Ohliger and Vic Stapleton, among several others, also attended. The Policy Planning Committee Chair announced as the meeting opened that their recommendations had already been formulated and were based on conclusions they had drawn from visits to the British company areas. The extensive documentation of these trips points to a well planned and well executed effort to gain as much relevant information as possible. When it met in Dhahran, the Personnel Planning Committee had plentiful and current documentation at its disposal on housing issues in particular. They had interviewed not only the British, but also representatives of the "Persian race." Their primary Persian informant was Mostafah Fateh, Assistant General Manager at Abadan, who informed them that the strike of July 1946 had been directed by the "Communitistic organizations that had become very strong."¹⁵⁵

In the meeting that followed, the Personnel Planning Committee and Field Management Committee discussed how the strike had scared AIOC into doing a lot more to help the workers, particularly in the area of housing. For the Bahmanshiir (sic) housing complex, erected in the late 1930s, they had only built worker housing. In the current situation, after the strike, they were building a more holistic community including housing for doctors, preachers and teachers. In Farahabad, they were even building stores and recreational facilities for "different classes of people." With 700 Iranians graded in "executive positions," it was inevitable that these facilities could not be wholly British. Kharasabad, a nearby

¹⁵⁵ Abadan, Baghdad & Kirkuk, April 17, 1949, Personnel Planning Committee Folder, Box 32, HRS Papers. See also Notes on Anglo Iranian Oil Company, Report for the Personnel Planning Committee, April 3-7, 1949, Box 32, HRS Papers.

shantytown, was marked by “standing water, and general filth and degradation.” Although AIOC management led the Aramco visitors to believe that no company employees lived in Kharasabad, in conversations with inhabitants for which Tom Barger acted as interpreter, they discovered that nearly all of the Kharasabad inhabitants worked for AIOC. With the exception of the highest paid native staff, then, most of AIOC employees were actually living in these squalid conditions, even after the major housing efforts that followed the 1946 strike. The British approach to company housing was not going to prove to be a sustainable effort because it was only affecting a small part of the population. The Aramco visitors concluded that it would be much too expensive to really make this housing program work for the full population of AIOC workers. The same was true for the Iraq Petroleum Company in Kirkuk, where the IPC claimed to house its employees in company built housing, but according to Aramco estimates the company only housed 5% of its employees.¹⁵⁶

In both the AIOC and IPC cases, Aramco believed that the housing efforts were politically motivated and the results of pressure from the home office or foreign office in the wake of the 1946 strikes. The political pressure on the AIOC and the IPC came from a British government anxious to show the western way of life as more attractive than the Russian communist way. From the perspective of the British government, housing in AIOC and IPC was a weapon in the struggle against communism. Field management in the companies disagreed. The AIOC and IPC field management believed that workers needed to own their own houses, not live in company-provided quarters, if they were to develop as a native middle class. Mr. Hill, the committee chair, drew the same lesson for the assembled group. The “moral lesson on company housing” was:

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

If we want to have an independent, secure middle class instead of a group grown dependent on a corporation for the conduct of their personal lives, if we want free men to build a future for themselves and their families, we feel that we must not cut this wish under by company housing.

The answer was to make home ownership possible for Saudis. In the AIOC and IPC cases, British socialism was at the root of the problem. The way to avoid the pitfalls of AIOC and IPC was to avoid the creeping intrusion of the welfare state upon corporate prerogatives; a fate that the British field management believed was nearly as bad as the communist ailment it was intended to cure. In a hierarchical corporate world where the quality of housing would always be tied to pay grade, training the Saudi worker to achieve a higher level of skill would suit him for a grade in which he could obtain better housing. By denying quality housing to the mass of Saudi workers in lower pay grades, the company would motivate them to improve their lot by upgrading their skills. In Hill's rationalization, this was the best defense against communism.¹⁵⁷

In ancillary notes submitted to the committee summarizing the Aramco visit to the IPC areas from April 10-14, 1949, Aramco managers clearly believed they were facing a particularly difficult labor situation in Saudi Arabia due to the deficient human material they had been saddled with in the form of Arab Muslim workers. Visiting with IPC Supervisors on the Ground, W. M. Turner recorded that during his two-week stay in Kirkuk, he spent the majority of his time observing British and Iraqi employees on the job. Based on that review, he had concluded that:

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. This opposition to corporate sponsorship of housing in Aramco was not, however, something which originated with the Personnel Planning Committee. As early as January 5, 1944, Robert Vitalis points out that Aramco leadership had expressed the view that AIOC's model was not the answer to housing inequities and the resultant labor unrest. At a meeting in the Poconos in January 1944, Roy Lebkicher had argued for doing away with free housing for everyone because it was an exposure. AIOC had built worker housing but it was too expensive. See Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier*, 89.

The average Iraqi employee working for IPC is stronger physically than the average Saudi Arab working for Aramco. The Iraqi appears to be better fed and better clothed. He works faster, harder, for more sustained periods with less detailed supervision and carries greater loads of materials and equipment around the job site.

When he met with gangpushers and craftsmen directing Iraqi crews, he found that “their command of English and general background knowledge of their job was higher than [those in] Saudi Arabia with whom I have talked in the Aramco operations.” He concluded that the Iraqi was simply better educated than the Saudi Arab, a conclusion confirmed when he learned that Iraqi labor had on average attained a fourth or fifth grade in primary school. He noted with apparent envy that there were “a number of men with the equivalent of a high school education and some with junior college work.” He also learned from British supervisors that an employee’s cultural background played a role in education. “Christians and Jews employed by IPC,” IPC field managers pointed out, “were better educated than the Muslims.” The Iraqi Christian or Jew proved to be a “better organizer” and to have a “keener sense of responsibility when it [was] placed upon him by a supervisor.” Dealing with weak, uneducated, disorganized and irresponsible Arab Muslims, the impediment to progress was clear in Turner’s opinion. The training program in Aramco had a long way to go in 1949 if the company aspired to a native work force as capable as IPC’s. What the visitor from Aramco evidently did not hear was how Anglo-Persian officials had complained in the 1920s about the deficiencies of the indigenous human material in Persia, where the British had characterized Arabs and Persians in cultural terms laden with similar racial inflections.¹⁵⁸

When the committee reconvened to consider the composition of the Aramco field labor force, Mr. Hill opened the discussions by pointing out that any successful personnel policy would

¹⁵⁸ Notes on Iraq Petroleum Company, April 10-14, 1947, Personnel Planning Committee Folder, Box 32, HRS Papers.

need to win over the employees without falling into paternalism. In addition to the problems created by the excessive generosity of the British housing projects, the dangers of paternalism were apparent from American examples where unions had exploited the aroused expectations of employees to unite them against the company itself. Citing the example of Armstrong Cork in the US, where paternalism had resulted in a strike, he stressed the importance of winning over the employees, whom he referred to as customers of the firm.¹⁵⁹

The committee spent a good part of this meeting discussing the diversity of its workforce. Treating them as “customers” meant segmenting them according to cultural characteristics. The committee estimated the Saudi Arab component of the workforce was divided amongst Shia (3,600), Sunni settled in towns (2,500) and nomadic Bedu (6,000). A. C. C. Hill noted that you could spend millions on housing, but if you tried to get these three groups to live with each other you'd get nothing but trouble for your pains. Hill pointed out that the Bedu, the largest group amongst the more than 12,000 Saudis on payroll, had the highest turnover:

They are the ones who come in and take a job for a few months or a season and then go out again into the desert with their camels and flocks. They are the group most difficult to train because a great many of them are completely satisfied with their way of life and have no desire to become craftsmen tied down to industrial routines. They consider work of this character foreign to their basic idea of freedom.

What was worse, “they will not work for a Shia gangpusher. They will not work in a commissary, or have anything to do with housekeeping duties, plumbing, dining halls, or hospitals. They consider cleaning of any kind to be beneath their dignity.” All the Bedu were good for was working as common laborers, drivers, and watchman. Sunni who lived in towns, on the other hand, would work as a craftsman, and would even work for a Shia

¹⁵⁹ Composition of the Aramco Field Labor Force, Field Management Committee Meeting with Personnel Planning Committee, April 19, 1949, Personnel Planning Committee Folder, Box 32, HRS Folders.

gangpusher. For this reason, drilling crews were mostly Sunni town dwellers. But there were a few Shia on those crews. Unlike the Bedu, Shia would work in sanitation, hospitals, commissaries, dining halls and as houseboys. Shia excelled as carpenters and as masons. They could even work as operators in air conditioning plants, stabilizers, ice plants and refinery.¹⁶⁰

Rather than using Arab labor, half of which were essentially untrainable Bedu, the Aramco managers expressed their preference for employing more Italians from the former Italian colony of Ethiopia. Aramco had recruited skilled Italian émigré craftsmen from Ethiopia to work in Saudi Arabia as the company ramped up production after the end of the Second World War. These ethnically Italian workers would not, however, serve a role similar to that played by Indian labor in AIOC. The use of Italian labor was complicated by the cultural affinities that American workers had for these Europeans. As Mr. J. MacPherson pointed out:

Now, we would like to bring up one angle that is pretty generally known ... I mean we know it in this room ... that if we could use labor freely, a lot of the Italians would be way over that D-5 group, because somewhere along the line we would be moving them up. But God damn it, you can't put them in there, or we'd be accused of favoritism, and if you did that you'd have to bring a lot of your Saudis into line too.

Already by 1949 the use of Italian labor was restricted by Saudi protests and the reluctance of Aramco itself to afford the same promotions to Saudis as it would like to offer to Italians. Instead of owning up to their racial bias, Aramco blamed the victims of that bias. Vic Stapleton pointed out that Aramco would have liked to place Italians in supervisory roles over Saudis, but “as soon as that Italian was at the mercy of the Arab's dislike, he wouldn't be

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

much use to you." Italians were also difficult to manage because they would simply not work at grades lower than D-5. They were limited to overseeing a smaller crew. In the event they were promoted to manage a larger crew, they would have laid claim to D-6 status. This in turn would anger the Saudi workers, who would make trouble for both the Italian supervisor and the American personnel department. Convinced that different ethnic groups had characteristic capabilities, and culturally determined limitations, the company was weaving itself a complex policy web.¹⁶¹

Help might be on its way from another direction according to Floyd Ohliger. Computer technology was making it possible to replace skilled Americans with lesser skilled Saudis. The IBM machine had already helped the company save manpower. It had been deployed to "take count in a mechanical form on some basic things like Time Slips or Go-111's from the Storehouse and grind them through the machines." Ohliger thought that a lot of Americans were still doing "posting work and that sort of thing." As advances in computer technology further de-skilled the clerical occupations, "foreigners and Saudis could take their places." MacPherson pointed out that this approach had already proven itself. Vic Stapleton believed that there were a lot of Americans on payroll who were "doing work which an M-5 could do." There was "No question about it," they could "get rid of a lot of these so called 'Accountants.'" They were not accountants at all. Indeed, he argued "the term has lost its significance when you tie it in with just posting figures. We used to call them 'ledgers' - more descriptive." The position of ledgerman was something a Saudi Arabs could handle and this was one place to look for replacing costly American labor. Very basic clerical training thus held out hope for increasing the numbers of Saudis on the payroll at higher grades. Rather than focusing on clerical occupations where Saudi labor was poorly

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

represented, however, Harry Snyder urged the group to concentrate training in craft areas where Saudis have already made inroads but were still in the minority.¹⁶²

In 1949, a decade after Aramco had begun production of oil in commercial quantities in Saudi Arabia, Saudi labor was still concentrated in a limited number of occupations. Saudis performed all unskilled labor in Aramco. They also made up 100% of the company's derrickmen, rig builders, and stevedores. MacPherson pointed out that despite the appearance that foreign contract employees and Italians occupied the majority of positions as masons, the bulk of masonry was actually done by Saudis under contract. Hill noted that there was about 50% turnover for Saudis in lower pay grades. It was hard to tell what turn over was in higher grades, but he argued as the British had for years in AIOC that higher grade Saudis were going to work for contractors and in government jobs at higher rates than at Aramco.

Aramco management thought this flight of skilled Saudi labor was understandable, given the egregious disparities between compensation for Saudis and Americans. Looking at a graph of compensation, MacPherson blurted out:

... it's God-damned obvious the Saudis are not getting enough when you look at a total cost of \$84 for a D-2 Saudi and compare it with \$125 for an American. That set of figures shows that we are pretty damned vulnerable there from a Government point of view, if they ever saw that chart.

Although single American employees were less expensive to maintain than married Americans with families, they had a much higher turn over than married men with families. The cost of maintaining a married American with his family was \$1235 per year, a significant

¹⁶² Ibid.

sum in 1949. MacPherson said that the company needed to “guard this God-damned stuff with the greatest care. It would certainly pave the way for a lot of trouble.” Referring to the high cost of maintaining an American family in Saudi Arabia, Stapleton concluded, “There’s one thing that is conclusive and that is that we have a dollar-and-cents incentive to get rid of Americans. That’s damned sure.” While American salaries were based on SOCAL rates, Ohliger pointed out that the benefits chart showed:

... the whole test was the kind of amenities provided and not the salary, and that whatever group was put into American community conditions, whether Saudi, Persian, or Italian, the cost to the Company would be so large that for economic considerations, generally speaking, it would not matter which group came in.

Mr. Johnson, who had not said much in the group until that point, commented that “what the chart seemed to point out was that you could give the Arab only part of the difference between the cost to the Company for him and the American and say ‘Go shift for yourself.’” Mr. Hill wondered aloud if Mr. Johnson “had the power of reading the mind of the Committee.” Hearing that naïve comment, the entire committee broke out laughing. Shifting the cost of housing to the employee was precisely the point of the home ownership program recommendation.¹⁶³

The committee meeting wrapped up on the afternoon April 19, 1949 with an overview of the human resources available to Aramco as compared to other companies. In contrasting the Aramco labor force to that of AIOC and IPC in particular, Hill pointed to the importance of primary education in preparing the workforce. The advantage which these companies had was to be found in “a very large supply of literate nationals who have been through what amounts to six years of primary education and can read and write.” Since it imparted basic

¹⁶³ Ibid.

literacy secondary school was as important as university study. He acknowledged that the AIOC concession provided for £10,000 to subsidize higher education for employees.¹⁶⁴

At the very moment when comparisons with the British could have led the company to consider the possibility that AIOC contributions to general education in Southern Iran were significant factors in preparing the workforce, a claim which the British company had now made consistently for decades, Hill argued instead that the Saudi's lack of general education was an indication that "the national populations of both of these companies were entirely different than those in Saudi Arabia." While granting that AIOC's presence for 40 years in Abadan had given the Persians an opportunity to work up into higher management ranks, it was the unique backwardness of the Saudi population which empowered the committee to ignore everything which AIOC had done over those four decades to make that transition possible. Hill continued with his argument that there was little Aramco could learn from other companies because they "have been able to lean more heavily on the availability of relatively educated men who are nationals in the country in which they operate."

MacPherson summed up the exceptional position in which Aramco found itself, arguing that Aramco had come to "a country where the people just have never seen this type of work before, absolutely virgin territory, you might say." Ohliger reminded the committee that the countries in which the other companies worked had "important national education programs." In the absence of such programs, MacPherson concluded that Saudi backwardness required a different approach. "It all points to one thing: a hell of an intensive training program. It's right on our plan here."¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. In the course of this free-form discussion, Hill pointed somewhat illogically to the scale of their operations in Iran as a justification of incomparability of the Aramco and AIOC cases. That company had

The committee was aware that AIOC had linked general education, industrial training and Persianization. What was perhaps most alarming to the committee about comparisons with AIOC was Tom Barger's observation that Persianization was actually working in Iran. Referring to the requirements of the General Plan, Barger noted that the Persian government was forcing the British to consider qualified Persians for open positions before hiring British staff. As a consequence, AIOC was having "a very difficult time building their British staff up as large as they would like to have it." Forced to fill ever more positions with Persian staff, "they are having a rough time getting the younger people to train so that they will be able to replace the old-timers as time goes by." It would be important that Aramco's education and training policies did not place the company in a position where the Saudis could make such demands.¹⁶⁶

Two days later, on the afternoon of April 21, field management met again with the personnel planning committee at the Dhahran Administration Building. The topic of that afternoon's discussion was the intensive training program MacPherson had said would remedy the problem of Saudi labor's backwardness without endangering the concession. Harry Snyder described his experience surveying the contemporary training landscape inside Aramco and concluded that line supervisors, and not just trained educators, were already providing much of the training Saudis received. In Snyder's characterization, there was "a lot of damn good training being done by people who would be very embarrassed and resentful if you called them teachers. There are a number of hard-boiled journeymen and foremen who are doing a damn good job in training." Rather than hiring a team of 47 new teachers to train Saudis at a cost of \$1.5 Million, as Ashford had suggested, the company should "cut loose these foremen

77,000 employees, and Aramco has less than 10,000 people in Dhahran. Comparisons were simply not possible because AIOC was so much bigger than Aramco.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

and journeymen, who say that they can do the training." To concerns that training by line supervisors would be pedagogically unsound, Snyder replied that he didn't "give a continental whether the things we propose to do are educationally sound or not, so long as we get the job done in the shortest possible time and that we get the results." Calling for on the job training to ease the passage from unskilled to semi-skilled employment, he pointed out that line training would be better than merely hoping that Saudis would "absorb" the required knowledge on the job in trades where foreigners outnumbered Saudis. Some possible candidate fields included on the job training as masons, electricians, surveyors, roofers, floorman, boilermakers, sheet metal workers, and blacksmiths. Other fields included clerical work, the medical professions and even domestic service.¹⁶⁷

The primary obstacle to such a program, Snyder thought, was resistance of American foremen to taking on the role as trainers. He noted that there was "very definitely a hostile attitude on the part of the average journeyman or foreman towards training" and unless the company made it clear to them that training was a job requirement, "they will not do it." He recommended further that training personnel should attempt to blend in with line supervisors and not make too much of their credentials as trained educators, since he had "gotten the best results when the foreman or journeyman have not known who I was and thought I was just another employee, but as soon as they know I am educator, there is at once a lot of opposition." Because of this opposition, training needed to be "renamed or given a different emphasis or at least foremen and journeymen have got to know that it is part of their job."

¹⁶⁷ Aramco, Training of the Aramco Field Labor Force, Field Management Committee Meeting with Personnel Planning Committee, April 21, 1949, Personnel Planning Committee Folder, Box 32, HRS Papers.

The key to this transition was to take a “psychological point of view,” breaking down the opposition to training by making it part of the production day.¹⁶⁸

In addition to imposing the requirement on foremen through stealthy deployment of trained educators, and tricking them into doing training through the use of industrial psychology, the company would also need to provide “proper rewards for the foremen and the journeymen who do the training” as well as “proper rewards for the student who is trained.” Snyder had personally witnessed the discouraging practice of Saudi drivers being trained for higher grade (D-4) but not given increases, so they changed jobs. Americans who had been transferred from line work to training had taken a pay cut to do so. MacPherson asked Snyder if Americans were worried that Saudis, once trained, would replace them. Snyder replied that this was not a common concern; rather they were worried that supervising a crew of Saudis meant they would be paid less than they would be for supervising a crew of Americans. Barnes, representing personnel, interrupted the discussion to “set the record straight.” He wanted it made clear that people didn’t get lower salaries when they supervise Arabs as opposed to Americans. This was an incorrect assumption. Snyder pointed out that perceptions were important here. Though it was doubtlessly true that supervisors of Arab crews were paid the same as supervisors of non-Arab crews, people in the field thought differently. Johnson added that they have to fight this impression in the salary committee every time. Anderson and MacPherson both agreed that the impression existed.¹⁶⁹

The conversation then turned to general education requirements. Snyder pointed out that moving Saudis from D4 to D5, which represented the transition from unskilled to semiskilled

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

employment, required that they gain greater knowledge of English and mathematics. If they were ever to become head men and gangpushers, like American journeymen, they would need these basic skills. One option was to send them for 3 or 6 months away from the job for intensive study, something along the lines of what was being done at Heald's Engineering College in San Francisco. Another option was to take the 216 Saudi Arabs who have been on staff 5-15 years and make them the core of a cadre of teachers. This would require that these D5's be trained and promoted to D6. As Snyder continued to work through the various options, the one option which he singled out as unacceptable was continuing the trade preparatory program, where Saudi boys attended school from 6 years to 12 years old. He recommended strongly that Aramco get out of that business entirely, because elementary education was "an area best left to Saudis." The British experiences in Iran and Iraq provided ample evidence that host government restrictions on elementary education increase over time.¹⁷⁰

Asked by MacPherson if Saudis could benefit from higher education, Snyder responded that they could, but only if education were provided in the Middle East. It would be a mistake to send Saudis for education to England or the USA. The experience of AIOC and other oil companies had "indicated the fallacy of sending young natives to western countries for college and university work." He had already taken the liberty of speaking to officials at the American University of Beirut about setting up a summer program for Aramco employees.¹⁷¹

The real problem, Snyder thought, was not advanced education for Saudis. The real problem was "what to do with our American school children." In contrast to the trade training

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

program, where professional instructors were unnecessary, there was a pressing need to hire more qualified teachers for the children of American employees. Snyder recommended setting up a 9th grade, and continuing to send high school children to Beirut Community School. Whereas an investment in trade training outside the line organization was a waste of funds, the company should fund the expansion of the Beirut Community School so that it could handle the growing number of 9th graders who were children of American employees and would need to go on to secondary school. These American kids presented a pressing problem. The coming fall there would be an overflow of 9th graders headed for high school that the school in Beirut could not handle.¹⁷²

Returning again to the issue of schools for the children of Arab employees, who would need to be schooled separately from Americans, Snyder recommended the company lend its support to the creation of a school system in Saudi Arabia. He thought that the company should consider donating a school building to help the Saudis get a general education program under way. The Anglo-Iranian Oil Company has done that. The other option was to select or pay for a few of the teachers. It was not an option to actually run an elementary school. Doing so would assure Aramco of Saudi Arab Government interference. As the Iranian government had eventually done, the Saudis would attempt to exercise increasing controls on the company. Instead of allowing the host government to gain the upper hand, as had happened in Iran, Snyder recommended they “reverse the procedure” by giving the Saudis an elementary school and attempting “to exercise a little control ourselves through the American who is running the school, so we can influence the development of a curriculum in a way that would make for close coordination of our two educational programs.” As far as the current efforts in general education at the opportunity schools, for

¹⁷² Ibid.

which the company actually assumed responsibility, he repeated his point again. He was sure that the company needed to “get out of the elementary school business and concentrate our efforts on craft training.”¹⁷³

MacPherson agreed that the emphasis needed to be on craft training, and it needed to be a program that was “rather intensive.” If the firm did not do something about the numbers of Saudis employed, the Government would be “jumping” on them. The mere numbers of foreigners employed made it obvious to him that Aramco was bound to face the “nationalistic spirit raised more and more.” He was sure that “[f]oreigners, including Americans, will be scrutinized more and the pressure will be on us. It has not come on us yet, but there is certainly talk about Sudanese, Adenese and Italians.” The days of Aramco freedom to hire whomever they wished were numbered. “The King told management himself,” MacPherson reminded the group, “Why do you bring them in if they create trouble for you. You shouldn’t bring them in.” Iraqi labor had caused the company problems, and the company had to “get them out.” More labor troubles were on the horizon and “intensive training” for Saudis was the best preventative measure. MacPherson expressed his full support for Snyder’s approach to moving training into the line. 1/8 time training would be the lynch pin, and they had to get going with it. Even though line managers feared that line staff would get accustomed to a 7-hour workday, craft training for Saudis was strategically important to the company. MacPherson agreed with Snyder that Aramco needed take that risk in order to avoid the even greater risk of Saudi government interference in personnel practices in the company.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

Chapter 4: The Aramco Production Training Program, 1949-1953

American Foremen and the Imagined Saudi-American Partnership

As a mass, Saudis constitute an untrained labor supply completely lacking in industrial experience and in work habits. Few can read or write. A recent health check showed 2.4% as physically fit ... A casual observer would call Saudis small and frail. Their language is exceedingly difficult to learn. Their religion is deep and complex and their social ties and customs are strange. Their legal and political structure differs from ours in fundamental ways.¹⁷⁵

While the Aramco Personnel Planning Committee was meeting in April 1949, Harry Snyder composed a confidential policy proposal for A. C. C. Hill in which he urged explicit guarantees of long-term employment for Americans who succeeded as trainers of Saudis. Given the difficulties of working with Saudi labor, in cases where production skill and Saudi training skills came together Americans were to be "listed among the number of optimum Americans and assured a career with Aramco even though he should train Saudi Arabs to take over his present job." Snyder's recommendation signaled the growing anxiety of the American labor force as it witnessed the vast expansion of Saudi employment in the immediate post-World War II period. Throughout the coming summer, J. M. King wrote from the field to D. E. Richards at the company's Dhahran headquarters complaining about the lack of support for the supervisory training program among American foremen and asked for Richards' support in "getting everyone on board" with training.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ Appendix IV "Character of Saudi Employees," Aramco's Field Force: A Report by the Personnel Planning Committee, 1950, Box 1, Rentz Papers.

¹⁷⁶ Harry Roscoe Snyder and A. C. C. Hill, Confidential Proposed Policy Statement on Education and Production Training, April 1949, Misc Armco Training, Box 19, HRS Papers. J. M. King to D. E. Richards, Protest Brought on By Present Conditions, June 4, 1949, SVTP Envelope, Box 17, HRS Papers.

Though the alleged “strangeness” of the Aramco setting in Saudi Arabia could have called for a unique remedy, the firm reached for common practice in the global oil industry by focusing on the role of foremen in their training programs. Harry Snyder studied the Esso Training Center, established above the Elizabeth Furniture Store in Elizabeth New Jersey in 1946, as he began to build the management training programs at Aramco. In an article describing the program in *World Oil*, Dennis Ward emphasized that this management development center was expressly designed to develop line supervisors. The complexity of operations made such a center necessary. Ward described the range of knowledge a foreman needed to bring to his role as “company policy, public relations, labor techniques, national labor trends, sociological trends, inter-relationship of departments in the company, and governmental relationships and requirements.” Esso prided itself on retention and saw its management development program as fostering the dual principles of “career employment” and “promotion from within.” By developing line supervisors to train Saudis, Snyder envisioned an approach that could both retain Americans and develop Saudis.¹⁷⁷

Preparing for the Third Series of Supervisory Training Conferences in 1949, Snyder drafted a set of instructions for line supervisors. In a series of ten weekly conferences, American supervisors of Saudi labor were readied for promotion in intensive two-hour sessions. Here they learned to solve basic personnel problems, prevent absenteeism, and develop their Arab workers. The Americans were instructed to train their charges to create new habits of mind that would lead to the reduction of workplace accidents, wastage of materials and petty theft. Session leaders reminded foremen that Arabs were “new men in new work.” This workforce needed to learn that “safety is intelligence applied” and that “tardiness hurts everyone.” They

¹⁷⁷ Dennis V. Ward, “Developing an Employee Training Plan,” *World Oil* (July 1, 1949).

needed basic lessons in performing “honest work for fair pay.” Instead of living only for the moment, they had to learn to focus on building for the future.¹⁷⁸

To motivate American supervisors, Snyder and J. M. King sought reinforcement in the familiar metaphors of American sports. They put together sessions on “Foremanship Inspired” in which they encouraged enthusiastic adoption of these training goals by line supervisors. Training sessions were to be like football games and supervisors would inspire their charges with slogans like "COMPETITION IS FUN" and "PLAYERS LIKE IT, TOO."¹⁷⁹

In late October of 1949, while the training department was casting line supervisors in the role of football coaches, the department held a conference in Dhahran on “Education and Arab Training” at which staff reviewed the development of policy over the past five years. These discussions situated the decision to focus on trade training for Saudi Arabs in a coherent and well-considered response to practice within the global petroleum industry. The speaker noted that the contemporary approach to Arab education and training was grounded in a review of the operations of other petroleum concessions in the region and beyond. Aramco’s direct exposure to these programs began with the October 1944 visit of A.L. Anderson and Nearpass to Abadan, Basra, Baghdad, Damascus and Beirut. In December 1945, Warren F. Hodges and Frank Tallman had studied AIOC training methods. In addition to reviewing the apprenticeship system for trade training, Hodges and Tallman had reported that AIOC built

¹⁷⁸ Harry Roscoe Snyder, SOLVING PROBLEMS AT THEIR SOURCE" BY ARAB SUPERVISORS, n.d., Box 17, HRS Papers.

¹⁷⁹ John M. King, Foremanship Inspired (Leadership - 2nd Half), September 29, 1949, SVTP Folder, Box 17, HRS Papers. J. M. King, Leadership - 2nd HALF, September 29, 1949, SVTP Folder, Box 17, HRS Papers.

elementary schools in Iran and the Iranian government operated the schools. Aramco had decided not to follow the AIOC approach of supporting both education and trade training.¹⁸⁰

In the training department's view, the Saudi and Iranian situations were fundamentally different. Government authorities in Al Hasa – under the guise of religious concerns - were more meddlesome than government authorities in Khuzistan. At a time of rising nationalism in the Arab world, the epicenter of government intrusion in company business was the Jebel School, where the “Government teachers laid title to the role of inspectors, and during 1948-49 indicated on several occasions their right to screen and approve the employment of all employees.” In the Aramco account, the failure of government teachers to actually do any teaching had led to Arab employees' preference for educating their children at company schools. Local government inspector/teachers, rather than the Aramco Americans, had undermined the nascent Arab-American partnership in general education. It was the government inspector/teachers who had insisted on dismissing all Arab children under the age of 15 from the Jebel School in early 1948.¹⁸¹

The local Saudi authorities were not the only Arabs to blame for the halt Aramco had drawn to support for elementary education. As the Arab Training conference speaker explained, Arab employees had petitioned the King in the summer of 1948 to intervene on their behalf and allow all Saudi children to study at company schools. The petition to the King had come to naught. In the training department's view, there was little to indicate that general or

¹⁸⁰ Aramco, Education and Arab Training Conference, October 24, 1949, Box 21, HRS Papers.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

elementary education in the Eastern Province were concerns to Ibn Saud at the time when Aramco made the decision against general education.¹⁸²

Describing the Near East College Association's study of 1947, the speaker explained how the field force had wisely opposed any extension of general education, despite the meddling of certain factions at headquarters. Instead of hiring trained teachers for Saudi Arab youth, the views of supervisors in the field had won. Rather than hiring elementary school teachers for Arabs, Aramco had focused on hiring personnel with experience in industrial training to staff the Education Section of the Personnel Department. Frank Jarvis and D. E. Richards arrived in the summer of 1947 and spring of 1948 respectively. Assistant Superintendent, M. L. Luckenbaugh, joined the Education Department from the industrial training operation at the Richmond Refinery in winter 1947. Pointing to the leadership provided by these experienced industrial training hands, Harry Snyder concluded the conference by informing the audience that for the next five years all training efforts were to be focused on "On-the-Job Training." The "Arab Trade Preparatory Schools" and the "Opportunity Schools" were in the process of being closed and their functions subsumed in the new program of "Job-Related Training."¹⁸³

Vince James, entrusted with running the Aramco general education program, would look back decades later and remember the first and only class to graduate from the Jebel School. The company retreat in the late 1940s from an early tentative commitment to general education may have been "inevitable," James would recall, but it was also "sad because we felt something was disappearing that had done some good." He recalled that the school closed "without fanfare." Unlike the graduates of the Jebel School, who would go on to

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

assume greater authority within the company, the Saudi boys consigned to trade training as Aramco made its historic decision to place within the line function would not be “introduced to Western patterns of thought and the concepts necessary for success in the industrial world.” Instead of being prepared for further education, the turn away from elementary schooling for Aramco workers would tether them to mono-skilled occupations with little hope of advancement.¹⁸⁴

When the Policy Planning Committee issued its official report in 1950, it outlined a new plan for handling Saudi labor in Aramco. That plan did not include the “Tuskegee-like Jebel School.” The plan for moving training into the production area and abandoning the initial experiment in elementary education was firmly embedded in a personnel policy approach that had no place for a system of schools or dedicated training institutes, not to mention an indigenous engineering college as the Abadan Technical Institute had begun to develop into during World War II. Rather, the report included several inter-related efficiency recommendations, all of which embedded the company approach to industrial education within their five-year plan for personnel realignment.

The committee’s first recommendation called for the construction of a “Saudi-American team” at the expense of all other expatriate labor.¹⁸⁵ The program for gradual elimination of

¹⁸⁴ Pledge, Daldin, and Tahlawi, *Saudi Aramco and Its People: A History of Training*, 25.

¹⁸⁵ Aramco, Aramco’s Field Force: A Report by the Personnel Planning Committee, 1950, Box 1, Rentz Papers. The report foresaw a major reduction in forces. From July 1949 at a level of 22,500 staff, Aramco could reduce to 12,500 staff over 5 years. As of July 1, 1949 there were 15,812 Saudis, 3,183 Americans and 2,536 Foreigners (Italians, Indians, Pakistanis, Adenese, Sudanese, and others), for a total workforce of 22,531. In the company’s lower ranks – what the report labelled “steadier, older assignments, where time has been ample for training” – Saudis predominated. By 1949, Saudis held all of the positions as derrickmen and rig builders. Riggers, riggers, operators, and auto mechanics were predominately Saudis. All stevedores were Saudis. In contrast to the 7,000 unskilled and 1,200 semi-skilled Saudis, only 300 skilled Saudis worked for the company. 200 Saudis were in senior clerical positions and 400 in junior

non-American expatriate labor was far from radical. Between 1949 and 1954 the objective was to reduce the complement of Americans from 14 to 12% of the work force. The firm would increase Saudi work force participation from 70 to 80% and reduce all other nationalities from 16 to 8%. The challenge in reshaping the Aramco workforce while reducing overall staff numbers was to achieve the 10% increase in Saudi labor at higher pay grades. That was where the skilled non-American foreign workers were in the firm's labor hierarchy, a fact that placed Aramco in the same position as AIOC in the 1920s. In the Aramco case, Italian labor from Ethiopia had begun to play the role played by Indians in AIOC two decades before. Saudization of the work force would take place at the expense of Italians, as Iranianization of the workforce had taken place at the expense of Indians.

The company was to realign the workforce through training "established as an integral part of the production process" with the help of American supervisors. Since it took eight years to train a skilled craftsman, five for a moderately skilled position and three for minor skills, the plan called for skilled Americans as trainers for at least the coming decade. The report went further, however, arguing that a permanent force of Americans in the field should direct the enterprise and supervise its operations. The permanent force of Americans was to "train Saudis, supply technical knowledge, and conduct essential (sic) services in an emergency." To ensure the continuity of Saudi tutelage, and preserve Aramco's ownership of the concession, the firm required that "a continuous supply of young Americans" would be immersed in "training under Saudi Arabian conditions." Field training for American foremen in supervisory skills, already underway for the past several years, was an essential component of this agenda. Non-supervisory American personnel were necessary, but only "on a

clerical jobs. The majority of Saudis were "unskilled workers in D-1 earning \$28 per month." Therefore, 3,418 of total Saudi workforce were working for a dollar a day.

temporary basis." The company would reduce the numbers of lower paid Americans and focus on preserving American control through the creation of a role for higher-skilled Americans as teachers of Saudis.¹⁸⁶

American and Saudi workers in lower pay grades were both inefficient, according to the committee. As the report noted, "the presence of these supplementary Americans in lower classifications which to a large degree is increasing Aramco's operating costs and putting pressure on its housing situation." The committee argued that this provided "a powerful incentive for accelerating the training of Saudis and for subdividing job units so that Saudis can take over." By deskilling work further, Aramco could achieve the increases in Saudi percentages faster.¹⁸⁷

According to the report, Americans were uniquely suited to the task of training Saudis. Italians could not be used to tutor Saudis, as Indians had to tutor Iranians, because their English skills were so weak. Importing British labor was not a viable option:

As for the possibility of using English-speaking people from the United Kingdom, the Committee found that this alternative also bristles with problems. For example, AIOC has a turnover of British employees of 50% per year and complained of the low quality of new recruits from the United Kingdom, their lack of interest in the job, their lack of loyalty to the Company, their more-than-usual desire to get 'something for nothing,' and their disinterest in training nationals.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

British staff could not be relied upon to implement the Aramco approach because they had been rendered ineffective through the corrupting influences of the company's "gimme system."¹⁸⁸

In preparing the report, Aramco's survey team had learned of AIOC field management's great dissatisfaction with what they saw as a politically motivated social welfare scheme imposed upon them from London. At the heart of this scheme was the housing construction program. Between 1936 and 1950, AIOC had constructed about 21,000 homes.

Approximately half of these were built after the general strike of 1946. The company had also built "shopping, restaurant and leisure facilities, including 19 cinemas, 27 pools and various sports grounds..."¹⁸⁹ This housing program symbolized the "gimme system" for the Aramco Policy Planning Committee. Absent the political pressure to do more for labor exercised by the British government after World War II, Aramco could bolster the bottom line by drastically limiting benefits and amenities. The Aramco line training approach must be understood within the context of this strategic vision for personnel. AIOC's more robust programs -- of which housing was the flagship example -- were part of the context in which industrial education evolved in that company. Mutual perceptions, and misperceptions, had shaped the personnel policies of each since the early 1930s. While AIOC field management had shared openly their concerns and plans during the most recent Aramco visits, this time Aramco did not return the favor. The circulation of the committee's report was strictly

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: The Anglo-Iranian Years, 1928-1954*, 367. On the AIOC housing program see also Mark Crinson, "Abadan: Planning and Architecture under the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company," *Planning Perspectives* 12, no. 3 (1997).

limited and requests to share in the firms' latest plans were rebuffed by A. L. Anderson in personnel. Aramco was going it alone on this one.¹⁹⁰

Reliance upon American line supervisors to train Saudi Arabs was not a problem free proposition. Tensions between Arab workmen and their American supervisors were significant enough to warrant extensive treatment in this first published Aramco employee handbook.¹⁹¹ Americans were counselled not to "strike or manhandle Arab[s]," and were even warned off indulging in "good-humoured 'horseplay.'" By 1950, too many Americans were getting into "scuffles" with Arabs. As an antidote, the handbook urged a "kind, friendly attitude, and an interest in and sympathy with the Arab and his problems and affairs will get a warm response." Supervisors needed to understand that:

Patience, poise and self-possession are qualities admired by the Arabs if they are tempered by zeal and reasonable firmness; on the other hand, excitability and impatience are likely to be regarded as a sign of weakness, and vacillation and undue softness, however kindly intended, will quickly lose the Arab's respect.

The positive qualities of the Arab employee were significant in so far as they gave cause for self-restraint among Americans. As it dispensed wisdom to the American employee, the

¹⁹⁰ A.L. Anderson to HRS, n.d., Brown Manila Folder, Box 18, HRS Papers. A. L. Anderson Memorandum to HRS instructing him not to Share the PPC Report With IPC. Anderson wrote "Mr. Geo Tod, Asst Manager Personnel, Hdqs, I.P.C., Tripoli would like information on your training plan. I told him that at this stage I didn't believe you had any printed material you could give him that would give the picture. I had not overlooked the Per. Plan Com. report, but I felt we should not offer or mention it in view of Mr. W. F. Moore's restrictions on its distribution. I told him you went to Beirut occasionally and that on your next trip to Beirut you would contact him thru IPC's Beirut office and possibly you could visit Tripoli and give him a verbal picture of the Aramco Training Plan."

¹⁹¹ Arabian American Oil Company, American Employees Handbook Series, Aramco and World Oil, 1950, Box 1, George Rentz Papers. See especially page 42-43 and 1-6.

handbook also put them on notice that failure to align themselves with corporate objectives, in this case a particular approach to Arab employees, would result in their termination.¹⁹²

Granting that supervisors would suffer from a frustration born of constant interactions with a pre-industrial workforce, the handbook acknowledged that Arab workers were in need of discipline for many reasons. The foreman or supervisor was not, however, to take matters into their own hands. Habitual tardiness, undue loafing and insubordination – common occurrences among the Saudi workforce – required the supervisor to be “guided by or call in the assistance of the Arab Personnel office rather than to attempt arbitrary disciplinary measures on his own responsibility.” The personnel officers were experts in Saudi language and customs. They would apply the disciplinary action, which usually entailed “a warning for first offense, a 3-day suspension without pay for the second, a 7-day suspension for the third, and discharge for the fourth.”¹⁹³

Lacking the personnel expertise to discipline Saudi workers, the line manager was placed in the awkward position of having to train the Saudi worker as his own replacement. The handbook sounded a less than fully reassuring note when it instructed Americans not to “fear that the training of Arabs may eventually put themselves out of jobs ... [because] training of, and maintenance of good relations with, the Arabs is the job of Aramco craftsmen and foremen, or is at least an important element thereof.” It went on, however, to assure the American reader that “those who do it most successfully are the ones most likely to retain

¹⁹² The theme of “touchy Arab pride” is developed at length in Michael Sheldon Cheney, *Big Oil Man from Arabia* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1958). See especially his discussion on in chapter 3, “Etiquette for Infidels.”

¹⁹³ Arabian American Oil Company, American Employees Handbook Series, Aramco and World Oil, 1950, Box 1, George Rentz Papers.

their jobs.” This was a thoroughly non-committal response to the perceived concerns of Americans, but it was in line with Harry Snyder’s recommendation.¹⁹⁴

As agents of Western civilization ministering to the underdeveloped Arab, American supervisors were expected to inaugurate the worker into his place within the hierarchy of labor. The handbook explained this transformation of the Saudi worker to his American supervisor. By “working at lathes, installing telephones, driving complex trucks, hoists and bulldozers, assisting in drilling wells, operating refinery, power and air-conditioning plants,” Saudi workers eschewed “a life which, though niggardly in rewards, afforded them long hours of idleness lying in the shade.” Submitting to the discipline of industrial routines, they worked eight hours a day, six days a week. They received cash for their labor, which made it possible for them “to eat regularly, to wear better clothes and so live more comfortably.” Amidst the pictures of an Arab drilling crew, job instruction training, Ras Tanura trade school, award ceremonies for certificates of accomplishment at Ras Tanura’s trade school, and Saudi payroll disbursement on pay day, the didactic message of opportunity for Saudis reminded the American employee of his responsibilities. The company would not invest in schools or instructors. Instead, the burden of training Arab labor would fall squarely upon the American line employee.¹⁹⁵

Ironically, it was the American supervisors who were “new men in new work.” They did not bring with them the experience of serving as masters to Saudi apprentices. What little training they did receive was provided at the Foreign Service Training Center (FSTC) located in a former aircraft hanger in Riverhead, Long Island. From the content of the conversational

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

Arabic they were being taught at that center, the American supervisor was being trained to expect an Arab worker who was late for work, dirty, lazy, and often quite stupid.¹⁹⁶ This center would close in 1951, replaced by a center closer to the field in Sidon, Lebanon.

While most accounts of training in Aramco make only passing reference to FSTC training, it figures prominently in the story of Sami Hussein written by an Aramco public relations officer named Grant Butler long after that center had closed. In that account, the center was a place where Americans learned not to call Arabs “coolies.” If they were to train the Arab labor force to engage in industrial labor, it would not do any good to belabor the negative aspects of Saudi, and particularly Bedouin, culture. Butler recalled what he had learned about Bedouin culture from his time at the center:

... the normal routine of his life in the desert leaves him much free time for loafing and lengthy, conversation with his fellow tribesmen, while the women attend to the domestic duties ... it does not follow that he should therefore simply be dismissed as dirty and lazy and -- by implication -- inferior; this hasty criticism overlooks many of his truly distinctive characteristics.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶ Arabian American Oil Company, *Spoken Arabic*, Arabic Language Series (1950). First developed as a primer for the Aramco Training Department Program in the Foreign Service Training Center at Riverhead, Long Island. The language series included 19 phonograph records. The basic sentences are very generic, not much in the way of culture or value judgments. The conversational Arabic text evidences these value judgments. See ———, *Conversational Arabic*, Arabic Language Series (1950). The negative portrait of Saudi workers only grew more blatant as the text was revised. The 1960 edition is particularly harsh in its emphasis on the inferior qualities and foibles of the Saudi worker. See ———, *Basic Arabic*, Arabic Language Series (1960). Outside of these Arabic language instruction manuals, unfortunately the curriculum of the FSTC has been lost.

¹⁹⁷ Grant C. Butler, *Kings and Camels; an American in Saudi Arabia* (New York: Devin-Adair Co., 1960), 48. Even this program for training on the cheap was spun for the positive effect it could have in the press. When Snyder wrote to Floyd Ohliger with an update on the program in April 1950, he sent a copy marked "PUBLICITY ARAMCO TRAINING PROGRAM" to public relations officer Grant Butler. See Snyder to F. W. Ohliger, DRAFT Memorandum (Attn: Grant Butler), April 10, 1950, Folder Labeled "Trip - January 5, 1951", Box 18, HRS Papers.

Sami Hussein, the Arab language instructor, had grown up a Bedouin. His distinctive characteristic was a hunger for knowledge. Aramco gave Sami the opportunity to teach in Long Island, and he had jumped at the opportunity.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Aramco's supervisors were charged with identifying the Sami Husseins in the crowd, ensuring that they got their chance to shrug off the less attractive elements of Bedu life, and supporting them as they entered the world of industrial work. Beyond Butler's account, and a brief mention of time spent at this center by Michael Cheney in his *Big Oil Man From Arabia*, it is hard to know how much actual cultural training American recruits received on Long Island. It was, at best, only the newly recruited employees who benefited from this "introduction to the language, customs and peculiarities of Saudi Arabia."¹⁹⁸

With the launch of the production training program in Saudi Arabia in January 1950, however, the focus shifted to a decidedly non-academic approach. When Aramco's General Manager Vic Stapleton introduced Harry Snyder to an assembled group of line supervisors, he emphasized that Snyder had worked his way through college. He wasn't a traditional "academic," with only book smarts to back him up. He had actual experience in the Middle East, having served there in the Army during World War II. Stapleton made a point of emphasizing that Snyder "left as a Colonel." As a member of the Hill Committee on Personnel Planning, he had visited other oil companies in the region and eight training

¹⁹⁸ Cheney, *Big Oil Man from Arabia*. Cheney describes his FSTC training experience as "amusing." On page 120, he described "the spectacle of Texan drillers and Jersey plumbers tackling the intricate, rather Teutonic sounds of the Arabic language under the pace of tutelage of young Saudis brought to the states that purpose. As a reward for hearing their mother tongue mangled daily during the year they spent there, the Saudis were also given a chance to see something of the United States and its custom peculiarities in they seemed to be enjoying the experience and taking kindly to at least some American ways, as one who would develop a passion for high -- yield Texas boots and would wear nothing else."

programs in Venezuela to learn about the best ways to train Saudis. Though he had also served as editor for McGraw Hill, which might otherwise have counted against him, he had worked in Business Books. His expertise was in "Supervision." The assembled audience also learned that "VIC" Stapleton, who had left SMU after two years in 1923, joined the Texas company "AS AN 'ORDINARY' LABORER."¹⁹⁹

Voluminous correspondence on the launch confirms that the firm positioned the training effort as far from academic education as possible. The line managers in Aramco were not teachers by profession, and asking them to assume this role was a stretch. To increase the acceptance of this approach amongst the staff, a memorandum was circulated to all department heads in Aramco at the start of January reinforcing the official company position that participation was not voluntary. Training was part of supervisors' official duties.²⁰⁰ Reminders from senior management to staff continued to reinforce the shift to training in the line throughout the summer of 1950. In late August Fred Davies wrote to all American employees, reminding them once again of their responsibilities in passing on skills to "Saudi colleagues":

The Company expects you and every other American to be skilled in your craft or specialty ... equal importance, you are expected to be effective in passing on your skills to your Saudi colleagues ... you should make it a fundamental part of your job here to carry out to the fullest your share in this program to train and utilize our Saudi employees.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ Introduction - Conference Leadership, January 9, 1950, SVTP Folder, Box 17, HRS Papers.

²⁰⁰ Harry Roscoe Snyder, Memo to Department Managers, Headquarters Managers, and District Managers, January 7, 1950, SVTP Folder, Box 17, HRS Papers.

²⁰¹ F. A. Davis, "Memorandum to All American Employees on Program for the Utilization and Training of Saudi Employees," August 26, 1950, Box 18, HRS Papers.

He went on to explain the objective as "shift[ing] the weight of Saudi employee classifications toward the higher grades as rapidly as possible." Manpower planning and systematic training would assist Saudis in demonstrating their eligibility for promotions "according to approved standards and tests." This would work to "eliminate the utilization of non-Saudi employees for the performance of any actual work which can be done by Saudis without undue loss of efficiency." To this end, Department Heads, HQ Groups, Divisions of General Administrative Groups and Districts had formed shop committees to "consider qualifications and performance of individual Saudi employees as well as the collective training and manpower problems of crafts and operating units." These committees, which included no Saudi participants, extended the power of the shop foreman by making him chairman of the committee. Along with representatives of District Organization Planning Section and Division Training Coordinator, this American committee would determine the eligibility of Saudis for further development.²⁰²

Supervisory training in Aramco was already in its fourth year when the 1950 program launched. This year's program was linked to the new clearing-house process dubbed the Saudi Vestibule Training Program (SVTP) Program. The new program ensured that newly hired Saudis would be vetted in the first two months of their employment to eliminate troublemakers in the first sixty days of employment, thereby keeping Aramco within the statute of limitations under Saudi law for termination without cause.

²⁰² Ibid. The committee settled disputes on the following matters: manpower requirements for efficient production and training; schedules for the upgrading of Saudis and replacement of non-Saudis; job standards; assignment of trainees and unit trainers; performance records of individual Saudis for the purpose of training, downgrading, or transferring; requirements for funds, equipment, materials, and space for training; review of the development and administration of training outlines; appraisal of existing training and Saudi utilization programs for the purposes of determining whether there are adequate to accomplish training objectives and, if not, how they can be improved.

For those Saudis who made it through the Vestibule Training Program, Davies went on to explain, additional training opportunities included "One-Eighth-Time Training," "Advanced Trade Training" and "Language and Other Training." To become candidates for Advanced Trade Training, Saudi employees were required to demonstrate "loyalty, craft and leadership ability, intelligence, and potentialities for absorbing advanced training." Advanced trade topics included clerical, craft, culinary, driller, hospital, scholarships for technical school or graduate training. In charting the course to the latter, the Shop Committee also nominated candidates for summer sessions at the American University of Beirut. The Director of Training made the final call on who was suitable for training, as had Colonel Meldicott twenty years before in AIOC.²⁰³

Other patterns from AIOC were also repeating themselves, and Harry Snyder believed this was detrimental to the firm. The temptation of using Italian labor in supervisory roles was proving as irresistible in Aramco as that to use Indian labor had been in AIOC. On September 10, Harry Snyder wrote in confidence to Fred Davies complaining about the new housing plans and making him aware as Senior Resident Officer of the problems being caused by waiving English language requirements for Italians in order to allow them to be promoted as supervisors of Saudis.²⁰⁴ On Aug 26th, when Davies had announced the Production Training Program, Snyder had learned immediately following the announcement that \$4.5 M was to be spent on construction of an Intermediate Camp for which Saudis would not qualify. Two days later, Snyder learned from a confidential memo from Dale Nix that 353 Italians would be upgraded from D-5 to D-6 by waiving English language proficiency requirements. It was his impression that "this point was so well established that Field

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Snyder to F. A. Davies, September 10, 1950, Box 20, HRS Papers.

Management and Top Management decided to develop natural communities adjacent to our camps for Saudi, foreign contract, and American employees." Snyder reminded Davies of company policy giving preference to Saudis and recommends that all Saudi D-5s be screened first for promotion to D-6, then the Italians could get their chance. In addition to the problems caused by having Italians in positions where they would need to train Saudis, Snyder was opposed on principle to the construction of the new Intermediate Camp. If the observations of the Personnel Planning Committee were correct, Snyder argued, it was clear that the experiences of oil companies in the Middle East and South America indicated the fallacy of going the 'company camp' way.²⁰⁵

Opposed to the corporate welfare system of company housing, Snyder was in no way opposed to an activist personnel policy that would set quotas for Saudi promotions. In a manpower analysis written that fall, he complained to Davies that clear guidance from management was lacking on the issue of Saudi promotions.²⁰⁶ What was needed were "definitive quotas" to avoid the damage being done by "shot gun training" in line units by supervisors who neither new how to train nor cared to learn. He urged Davies to consider that:

There may be other ways to accomplish the basic training objective. Many foremen and supervisors have agreed that we would witness vigorous training and upgrading of Saudis if Management were to announce that in a stated list of crafts and occupations, Grade 5 or Grade 6, Italians and Foreign Contract employees herein recruited after specific replacement dates were scheduled on a replacement time table approved by Management.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Harry Roscoe Snyder, Saudi Employees, Manpower Analysis and Training Quotas, Report to F. A. Davies, n.d., Brown Manila Folder, Box 18, HRS Papers.

Some supervisors had requested that the company issue such an ultimatum. He believed that "the best way to accomplish this shift in skills and abilities in the Saudi labor force was to put the responsibility on line organizations and personnel." His solution was for Division Training Coordinators to work with shop committees to establish "realistic quotas" for training within each craft. The theory of line training was perhaps correct, "but in practice, shop foremen and supervisors are often not very enthusiastic about developing Saudi replacement for established Italian, Foreign Contract, or other non-Saudi employees." The Division Training Coordinators had not carried sufficient weight in the organization to bring personnel mandates together with training schedules. Snyder wondered if "Saudi training and Saudi replacement quotas is [sic] a problem that should be handled by Personnel Headquarters and the Manpower Section of the Central Organization Planning Division."

Less than a year into his full-time appointment with Aramco, Snyder had become convinced that "arbitrary decisions" would have to be made establishing timelines and quotas for Saudi promotions if the firm were ever going to replace Italians and other non-Saudi contract employees. Taking seriously the commitment to upgrading Saudis, he was beginning to make recommendations that echoed the arguments of the Iranian Petroleum Section Head Nasrullah Jahangir in his negotiations with AIOC over the General Plan in the mid-1930s. During the course of the coming decade, Harry Snyder would find himself in the awkward position of defending Aramco's slow progress on Saudi development to nationalists like Abdullah Tariki.

Industrial Psychology and the Creation of the Saudi Craftsmen

In late 1950, Harry Snyder travelled with George Trial to visit schools throughout the Middle East. Their destinations included Baghdad, Istanbul, Tripoli, Aleppo, Beirut, Cairo, Khartoum, Addis Ababa, Aden, and Asmara. In his report back to Fred Davies upon his return to Dhahran, more of the idealism displayed with regard to quotas showed through. The most significant findings came from the visit to the American University of Beirut, what Snyder called “the outstanding American educational institution in the Middle East.” This was the school offering Aramco “the best opportunities for developing college and university courses of study for our Saudi employees.” AUB was also the location of the special summer sessions conducted at the university for Saudi employees during the summers of 1949 and 1950. Although it would be difficult for Saudis to meet the Lebanese entrance requirements, he reported to Davies that “university officials are willing to accept a few of our employees on an experimental basis, regardless of their background, with the hope of supplementing their backgrounds to the point where they can qualify for regular university enrollment.” Snyder urged the extension of the summer study programs for the summer of 1951. The firm had made a good start and should build on that start.²⁰⁷

It was in talks with C. Ken Weidner, the newly appointed dean of AUB’s Engineering College, that Harry Snyder was able to share his interest in vocational training “as an underpinning for professional engineering training.” AUB President Penrose, Dean Weidner and Aramco representatives met in order to coordinate programs of vocational training as a

²⁰⁷ Harry Roscoe Snyder and George Trial, Report of Trips of H. R. Snyder and G. T. Trial to Mr. F. A. Davis, Senior Resident Officer, January 1951, Box 18, HRS Papers, Trip Report, January 1951, HRS Box 18, “Trip - January 5, 1951” (Brown Manila Folder), HRS Papers.

first step towards engineering education. In the follow-on correspondence, Ken Weidner shared his belief in the ability to spread American ideals through education:

... I am not interested in coming to AUB simply to be another Dean. You, Habib and Binks have sold me on the vital urgency of projecting American ideals through education in the Middle East Area. Consequently, my efforts will be to develop the finest professional engineering school possible in that area whose graduates will be socially and industrially accepted even though they have, and they will be required to have, full and complete respect for the dignity of manual labor.²⁰⁸

Weidner shared Snyder's aversion for what they deemed the "Egyptian" style of education, which led inevitably to engineers who were mere effendi:

Unless we can produce socially acceptable professional engineers who demonstrate to the whole community that they can and will work with their hands, and that they have a pride of accomplishment in their skill as well as in their knowledge, your whole vocational training program will remain in the social realm of the fellaheen.²⁰⁹

Integration between AUB's engineering school and the technical training programs in Aramco, like that which developed between the Abadan Institute of Technology and Tehran University, would be critical to the success of Aramco training efforts in spreading the American gospel of engineering.

Like John Cadman, Weidner saw education as a way to unite workers with management (Cadman had called the union one of manual workers with "workers of the brain"). Weidner offered an interpretation that hinged on his read of the history of US Land Grant Colleges. These schools, he believed, had failed in their mission to bridge the technical and the professional. Instead of leaving technical education to professional schools, the Land Grant Colleges had competed with professional schools, and thereby drove a rift between the

²⁰⁸ Weidner to Snyder, February 6, 1951, Sidon Folder, Box 32, HRS Papers.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

academic world and the technical – ultimately leaving the realm of the “technical” to the control of “labor.” Weidner wanted to help the Middle East avoid that fate by having AUB and Aramco collaborate to develop the full spectrum from technical training to the professional school. He agreed with Snyder that cooperation between AUB and Aramco was essential “to prevent any further development of the effendis.” He was convinced that this could only be accomplished if done “from both ends of the education scale simultaneously.” It would gain Aramco very little to develop a “vocational technical education and training system” which was not a part of an established professional school like AUB’s Engineering College.²¹⁰

There is little to indicate that unhappiness with educational opportunities was a motivating factor in the next round of labor actions in Iran’s oil producing area. Rather, in early 1951 AIOC had begun to scale back allowances paid for “outstation” work in the oil fields. Arguing that post-war prosperity had rendered unnecessary what were intended as emergency measures to offset wartime inflation, they learned at close quarters how difficult taking away a set of benefits could be. At Bandar Mashur, where the Iranian communist Tudeh party had organized oilfield workers, work stoppages followed the assassination of General Ali Razmara, the Iranian prime minister who had championed a new oil agreement with the firm. On the Iranian New Year (March 21), workers in Agha Jari joined the strikers in Bandar Mashur, adding higher wages to the demand that allowance be continued. The central government declared marshal law, as the workers in Abadan went on strike. Students at the

²¹⁰ Weidner, coming from the University of Chicago, thought the salary at AUB was too low, so at the same time as he was expressing these lofty ideals about education and training he was trying to set up a consulting arrangement with Aramco to supplement his income. Ample evidence for this is provided by a package of letters between C Ken Weidner and HRS about Weidner taking over the Deanship of Engineering School at AUB. Letters ranging from Feb-Oct 1950 are in Sidon Folder, Box 32, HRS Papers.

Abadan Technical Institute had joined the strike to protest what they believed were unfair grading practices, but they did not play a leading role in the strikes.²¹¹

When the central government sent a team of negotiators to Khuzistan in early April to broker an agreement that would effect a return to work, the Iranian government team convinced the AIOC to grant strike pay, raises and a stay on the suspension of allowances. By April 27th a formal agreement had been worked out. It was too little too late to rescue the concession. Within a week, Minister Mohammed Mosaddeq, the new Iranian prime minister, had approved a nationalization law that declared Iranian ownership of the country's petroleum resources and expropriated AIOC. From May when nationalization was declared until July when the entire British staff evacuated Abadan, the company's efforts were focused on making their legal case for compensation in front of the World Court and then the United Nations Security Council. Over that summer company sponsorship for education of any sort in Iran came to an end.

During the first week of May 1951, as the Iranian government nationalized the country's oilfields, Dhahran experienced a flurry of activity. Homer Metz in Public Relations Division shared the log of guests with senior company officials. The list included a broad range of oil company and government representatives. Among the guests were intelligence operatives General Wm J. Donovan (listed as an attorney from New York) and Mr. William A. Eddy (one of the many guests from Aramco NY). Mr. W. J. S. D. Cole and Mr. George Heseltine

²¹¹ Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: The Anglo-Iranian Years, 1928-1954*, 378.

were expected from IPC. Many interested parties, including the US Government, were watching the situation in Iran very closely from Dhahran.²¹²

To mitigate the risk of labor activism in Saudi Arabia, Aramco redoubled its efforts to train American supervisors as ambassadors of the American way to Saudi labor. American foremen would convince Saudi workers by their example of the benefits of cooperating with the company. Harry Snyder began the preparations to establish a more robust Foreign Service Training Program for American foremen at the Tapline offices in Sidon, Lebanon. He retained the services of Richardson, Bellows, Henry & Company to study the learning habits of Saudi workers in order to determine what the main problems were in training Saudis. They were also to make recommendations on how American supervisors should be trained to overcome those difficulties.

On June 15, 1951, RBH & Company published the results of their study as “Saudi Learning Problems in Job Training.”²¹³ This study was based on interviews of about 300 Saudi workers for Aramco in the three districts of Abqaiq, Dhahran and Ras Tanura, Saudi Arabia. RBH had administered the study by asking written questions in English, which were then translated into Arabic for the workers to answer. The results, submitted in Arabic, were then translated back into English. Via this circuitous route Aramco learned that Saudis lacked personal motivation, had inadequate background for training, received inadequate practice before being asked to do tasks on the job. “Supervised practice” was the recommended solution. RBH indicated that they understood the firm could not afford to provide general

²¹² Homer Metz, Weekly Visitor Report, May 6 to 12, 1951, Folder Labeled "Trip - January 5, 1951," July 17, 1951, Box 18, HRS Papers.

²¹³ Richardson, Bellows, Henry & Company, Saudi Learning Problems in Job Training, June 15, 1951, Sidon Folder, Box 32, HRS Papers.

education to all its “low-level” workers. Through the repetition of simple tasks for the Saudi, the American supervisor could build his Saudi charge’s confidence and make him a productive worker.

In order to train foremen to build motivation and self-confidence in Saudis, it would be best to take examples from real life in Aramco to share with foremen. Roy Lebkicher wrote to Fred Davies in New York asking for materials from personnel files that could be used to develop case studies for use in training. Lebkicher imagined that they could create case studies modelled on the Harvard Business School’s studies in the *Administrator* magazine.²¹⁴

Selection of the right candidates for employment, stressed by the RBH report, was ensured through the Pre-Job Training Program.²¹⁵ During the first 12 days of employment a Saudi candidate went through orientation. This included classes in safety, fire prevention, health and personal hygiene, district geography, time consciousness, courtesy, and cooperation. It also covered two interestingly titled special subjects: “Company Citizenship and “Work-Willingness.” After this indoctrination, they were tested according to standard “general classification tests” developed by RBH. If they passed the test, in the next 78 days they would be taught courses in the following subjects: “Trade English and Arabic, Arithmetic and Measurement, Hygiene, Health, and Safety, Tool Familiarity, The Oil Business, and Arabian History.” During the last two weeks of this training program, they were released to their line units to complete training. If their supervisor thought them unfit, “industrially untrainable” or “unsuited for Company employment,” they would be dismissed.²¹⁶

²¹⁴ Lebkicher to F. A. Davies, Confidential Memo, June 15, 1951, Box 32, HRS Papers.

²¹⁵ Harry Roscoe Snyder, “Operating Instructions, Saudi Pre-Job Training, July 1951, Box 18, HRS Papers.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

If all went well, the Saudi worker would emerge from his Pre-Job training with a new appreciation for the value of time. As E. J. Roberts explained in a memorandum on “Abdullah's First Day in Saudi Pre-Job Training,” most important of all was that “the Trainee's day be firmly and definitely scheduled for coverage of the units of instruction included in the curriculum of Pre-Job Training. In fact, his schedule should be used as a device to condition the Saudi to a western concept of time.” It was equally important that “Abdullah” get the “Safety Chat” and the “Fire Prevention Chat.” Using a Disney sanitation film, he would learn about personal cleanliness. Following a discussion about company regulations and policies, there was a discussion about training opportunities with the firm. At the end of the day, the probationer learned about recreation activities in Aramco, so that he could make good use of his time off.²¹⁷

As Aramco prepared for the launch of supervisory training at the Sidon Training Center, RBH brought in academic experts to advise the firm on handling Saudi labor. In a July 3, 1951 letter, anthropologist Federico S. Vidal summed up his reactions to a discussion with RBH on June 6th and 8th. Defining the “core problem” of Aramco operations as “the desire to stay in Arabia until we have produced the last drop of oil,” he warned that doing so rested on the ability of the firm to accomplish “cultural integration.” He argued that the company's problem could be “formulated and defined in precise anthropological terms as ... the gradual picking up by other people with a technologically underdeveloped culture, of elements pertaining to another culture of higher technology.” Failure to accomplish this integration “could mean suicide, an enlarged and revised edition of Iran.”²¹⁸

²¹⁷ E. J. Roberts, “An Outline for the First Week's Activities in Saudi Pre-Job Training, July 1951, Box 18, HRS Papers.

²¹⁸ Vidal to Fryer, July 3, 1951, Sidon Folder, Box 32, HRS Papers.

Vidal set the acculturation challenge faced by Aramco in a global context:

Having to deal with an acculturation situation is not peculiar to ARAMCO or the Middle East. In our times, all colonial or semi-colonial administrations are concerned with it, as are also such industrial enterprises as Standard Vacuum in Indonesia or United Fruit in Central America ... the recognition of the universality of this situation, and the necessity of having to deal with it in scientific terms that would have direct practical application has led to the development of the entirely new branch of "Applied Anthropology."

He had written his PhD Thesis on Spanish administration of Moroccan Arabs and American administration of Indians, where the same administrative phenomena occurred in both situations. Based his own work, he warned of "a clash between two widely differing cultures [which] revolves mostly only around the problem of learning, training, or acculturation, all considered as related facets of the same thing: cultural contact." He was not optimistic that Aramco could master the problem "since the beginning of recorded history, we know of not a single society that has been able to cope with it successfully." The greatest danger to the enterprise arose from the creation of an "in-between" class who are rejected by their own people and not fully accepted by the colonial or pseudo-colonial powers. History was replete with examples of this character: English "detrribalized," US "marginalized," Spanish American "Ladino," clerical employees of British India, the "effendi class" of the Ottoman Empire, and the American Indian situated between native and white culture.²¹⁹

Vidal thought the company's position was very difficult. If it impacted one aspect of the culture, say its sense of time, it could have ramifications in ways the company could not predict. At first the acculturation process had been slow, until ARAMCO ramped up production. Then it had sped up, as the company imported Pakistanis, Indians, Palestinians

²¹⁹ Ibid.

and others from the Levant. These groups were already a finished group of "in-betweeners." Vidal warned of their revolutionary potential and recommended bringing the Saudi Arab back into the educational process, motivating them through the "ultimate cultural values" which bring prestige within Arab society. They could do so by building on what he called the "ideal of Arab social mobility" to acculturate the Saudis. Federico Vidal impressed the RBH team enough to earn himself an invitation to participate in the proposed Saudi acculturation project first hand. On July 13, 1951, Douglas Fryer invited him to participate in the Aramco job classification system (to map Saudi specialties to Aramco job descriptions) and the Prerequisite Training Center (where the Saudi inductee will get training on "job Arabic" and "tool Arabic"). Fryer explained that these centers were "based on the philosophy that industrial specialization has its roots in all primitive cultures." Aramco could use Vidal's help.²²⁰

By August, RBH had completed the training manual for the Sidon Training Center.²²¹ The manual provided a "Supervisory Training Course Outline" that roughed in for Training Departments the major areas in which instruction would be needed. Training Topics for American supervisors began with "Training Psychology." The topics went on to include "Methods of Instruction, "Training Problems and Aids in their Solution, "Programming for Training, and "Leadership and Morale," "Health and Safety" and "Supervision."

Under the rubric of "Leadership and Morale," American supervisors would learn about the importance of the Arab workers' social background, the impact of Arabic Culture, and

²²⁰ Fryer to Vidal, July 13, 1951, Sidon Folder, Box 32, HRS Papers.

²²¹ Richardson, Bellows, Henry & Company, Supervisory Training Course Outline RBH 245-4 (Aramco), August 1, 1951, Sidon Folder, Box 32, HRS Papers. At the time, RBH also provided along with this course outline a study "Learning Theory in Relation to Specific Skills" and a "Manual for the Saudi General Classification Test (English Edition)."

factors affecting the acculturation of Saudis. To master the acculturation challenge, they would learn lessons from business organizational and operational structures, as well as theories of leadership development. Several sections dealt with building Saudi morale, including the theoretical underpinnings of morale and its foundation in Saudi culture. Handling personnel problems was also classified under the morale rubric. There were normal problems and abnormal problems to learn about, as well as ideological and legal problems. Mastering the foundations of personnel guidance, they were supposed to apply Aramco's rules in a way that bolstered, instead of destroyed, morale.²²²

The module on supervision covered present practices in Aramco, current procedures in industry and concluded with a discussion of "how supervisors may evaluate their own work." "Shop Organization" required knowledge of "Coordination, Production and Training," "Personnel Activities - integrated aspects," and "Aramco practices." "Human Engineering" required a grasp of "Saudi occupational background," "Developing tools to fit skills," "Developing machines to fit skills," and "Developing jobs to fit skills." "Work Layout and Scheduling" included sections "Principles of Work Flow," "Job Standards," "Aramco Procedures," and "Cost Accounting." "Recruiting, Classification, and Wage Administration" covered "Recruiting Procedures," "Aramco Job Evaluation" and "Procedures for classification and reclassification."

²²² The "Health and Safety" curriculum introduced supervisors to conditions of fatigue, including its cultural, physiological and psychological bases. It covered the effects of "Daily and Weekly Fatigue Curves" "Monotony," "Conditions of Health," "Cultural influences on Saudis," "Normal Diet and Sanitation," "Improvement in Special Senses, e.g. vision, and "Aramco's program." "Influences of Efficiency" included "Motivation and Morale," "Effects of Rest Pauses," "Effects of Change and Rhythm," and "Training Leadership." "Conditions of Work" included "Effects of Temperature and Humidity," "Illumination," and "Organization of Shop." "Safe Practices" covered "Mechanical Safeguards," "Psychological factors," and "Safety Training."

By the time RBH published the supervisory training manual, the company intrusions into workers' lives under the auspices of training and personnel management were already in full swing. An August 1951 memo from W. K. Landis Memo to Mr. H. M. Smith, Job Development Group Director, discussed the "Utilization of Saudi Employees"²²³ All Saudi candidates for pre-job training were to be questioned in detail as to their education and experience, then submitted to an employment physical to determine if they were defective. The company probed each candidate's physical, mental and social development in detail. Candidates for all levels of employment were subject to intrusive interviews. This applied to required clerical, crafts, trades, and even higher order jobs such as line supervisors. A physical examination record was used to categorize their physical and mental condition as "green, yellow or red" as part of a "Work Load, Health Profile and Report." The workload score represented the examiner's estimate of the applicant's physical ability for his specific work. The health report indicated physical fitness and identified any physical handicaps. A health profile chart provided graphic analysis of the health condition of the applicant, mapping physical maladies to their location on the candidates' bodies. The social questionnaire administered to candidates mapped their "Religion, Family, Origin, Social Group, Location of Family and Local Residence."

Saudi reaction to this intrusive behaviour was captured in the exiled Saudi novelist Abd Al-Rahman Munif's lightly veiled fictional account of Dhahran. In *Cities of Salt*, Munif described Saudi workers' reactions to being photographed, fingerprinted and interviewed for training and promotion in the company. He wrote of the workers' fear and confusion over these personnel policies:

²²³ W. K. Landis to H. M. Smith, "Utilization of Saudi Employees," August 16, 1951, Box 18, HRS Papers.

... immediately after lunch, the workers were photographed, much to their surprise and suspicion, and they talked about it for a long time afterward. They were even more afraid when a fingerprint was taken, and though they submitted to the process with a resignation, they could think of no satisfactory reason for it.²²⁴

Munif linked the use of interviews as a classification tool for Saudi workers to the rise of the personnel office and the deterioration of relations between Americans and Saudis. Where once the Americans treated the Arabs well, slapping them on their backs and joking with them informally, the arrival of the personnel office corresponded with a change in the attitude of the Americans who began to curse the Arab workers. Relations would henceforth be handed through personnel. When new groups of workers arrived, the personal office resurfaced, which had been "so long a phantom," to inform them of the interviews to determine each worker's "classification."

Munif evokes the anxiety this classification system caused the workers. When questioned about their families in particular, the Saudi characters became defensive and angry. Asked why all these intrusive questions were necessary, the Americans from the personnel office explained, "All this information is necessary for us to raise your salary-for your promotion. It can help us in sending you to America for training." The personnel officer persisted in pressing the point on training. It was precisely at the point when the American personnel officer asked the Arab worker about training that he lost his composure. The fictive conversation proceeded:

"would you like to go to America for training?"

"no."

"Why not?"

He laughed loudly and did not know why he said, "the jackal is a lion in his own country."

²²⁴ Abd Al-Rahman Munif and Peter Theroux, *Cities of Salt: A Novel* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 235.

American personnel managers told the Saudi workers not to discuss the questions and interviews, but as soon as they get back to Saudi camp it was all they could talk about. “Did they tell you what they told me?” an excited worker asked his compatriot, “You’re one of the best workers we have. You have a future here. We’ve got to send you to America for training – you can learn English and go to college and someday you’ll be a manager.”²²⁵

In *Cities of Salt*, the resistance encountered in face-to-face interviews, moved the Americans to abandon in person interviews and use of personnel questionnaires instead. It was the “echoes of the men’s curses and fears” which reached personnel and brought “silence and halting of the interviews.” Though the administration gave no overt signs of anger, they visited Arab camp much less frequently. Tensions were increasing, as seen in Munif’s portrait of a particular encounter between a worker and American personnel managers in which the worker responded to the intrusive questioning by asking them “where they kept the jinn, and if they wanted to fetch a number of demons equivalent to the number of Harran’s residents and the surrounding tribes.” When the Americans responded by quoting from the Koran, he flew into a rage.²²⁶

In the autumn of 1951, in the wake of AIOC departure from Abadan, the Aramco Saudization program was not achieving the success the Personnel Planning Committee had charted for it. Though modest progress had been made in promoting a limited number of Saudis to senior technical grades, the numbers of Saudis in lower pay grades was obscuring the progress in training.²²⁷ In September 1951, the Job Development Group responded to this problem by

²²⁵ Ibid., 231-37.

²²⁶ Ibid., 334-35.

²²⁷ Because Aramco was basing its self-measurement of percentages of Saudis in particular grades, failure to dismiss Saudis in lower grades made the numbers look bad. In a September 1, 1951 report, Harry

submitting a report to management on “Promoting Saudis With Firm Targets and Goals.” Though Snyder could urge reductions in lower ranking Saudi numbers, the only traction he had consisted in the numbers promoted. The report urged "firm, specific goals or targets and careful controls." In addition to "proper, hiring, orientation and placement of new employees" there needed to be "specific available jobs," "carefully planned training programs to fit employees for advancement" and beneath the firmness "intelligent, sympathetic supervision of employees to bring greatest return to Aramco from investment represented by the employees."²²⁸

What the Job Development Group sought was “a definite District target divided into grades so that operating men and training personnel could actually set goals for specific jobs in particular shops or segments.” They felt their efforts in training would go to waste unless the firm targeted specific jobs for replacement by Saudis. The superintendent with his foremen and training coordinator would “determine which jobs on the chart are to receive attention for the target period ... specific sections of work may be designated to be made All-Saudi Arab operations. Definite individual higher jobs may be named for Saudi Arab filling.” Rather than simply relying on abstract numbers, “Approximate dates and the names and numbers of definite individuals are to be listed showing exactly what jobs the men will be advanced.” They were particularly interested in the publicity value gained when "All-Arab segments are to be created.” These red letter events would need to be “listed and the dates for their accomplishment specified. An outline of the organization of the group or groups will be

Snyder urged adjusting personnel goals for 1952. They were meeting their targets for Grade 6, but on the other end of the spectrum, where they had planned to cut back on grade 2 Saudis, progress wasn't happening. In 1950 they had planned to reduce grade 2 Saudis to 1190, but the actual numbers were 2583. It looked worse in 1951, when they had planned 1305 and the actual number by September was 3434. See the bar graphs and reports in "Aramco Saudi Utilization Goals, 1949 to 1954, Proposed by Personnel Planning Committee," Job Development Group Report, September 1, 1951, Box 21, HRS Papers.

²²⁸ Harry Roscoe Snyder, Method for Forming Targets for Saudi Arab Utilization, Job Development Group Report, September 8, 1951, Box 21, HRS Papers.

included." To bring this to fruition, the field units needed to identify competent supervisors and trainers.²²⁹

When the training co-ordinators first met in Sidon, Lebanon on September 10, 1951, there was disagreement over the purpose of supervisory training. In his handwritten notes, Harry Snyder recorded that Schau, Belcher, Sullivan, Landis, MacDonald, and Jarvis had joined him for the 9:40 AM meeting with Douglas Fryer.²³⁰ When Fryer made his initial assignments to his "students," he told them they would need to go through two texts on industrial management. The group began to argue about whether this was about preparing supervisors for educating line supervisors in the methodologies of training as Fryer was arguing. Fryer made the case that his mandate came from Roy Lebkicher, the most senior manager in Dhahran with responsibility for training oversight. Lebkicher had the support of management for the approach Fryer was taking. Landis said that he worked for Cy Hardy, and he would not agree with this bookish approach. Fryer pointed out that the company's management would need to decide "what is frosting and what is cake." Was Aramco interested in education of professional trainers or merely in oil operations?²³¹

Taking seriously the role of supervisors in training Saudis meant that supervisors would undergo a thorough re-education, at the heart of which was an introduction to the use of psychological techniques in the workplace. Fryer assigned readings in "Industrial Psychology" by Maier and "Educational Psychology" by Skinner. To successfully deploy the

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Under "Aramco News," the Sidon Highlights noted, "Harry R. Snyder has joined the Training Center as Director of Training. Dr. Douglas H Fryer, Professor of Industrial Training at N.Y.U., arrived on the Excalibur Sept. 5 to set up a supervisory program designed to train Arabs in American crafts and practices. Dr. Fryer is accompanied by his wife and five daughters." See "Aramco News," Sidon Sidelights, September 18, 1951, Sidon Folder, Box 32, HRS Papers.

²³¹ Harry Roscoe Snyder, Notes on Briefing for Co-ordinators, September 10, 1951, Sidon Folder, Box 32, HRS Papers.

techniques of industrial psychology, supervisors were to become new men doing a new kind of work. Other reading assignments would help the foremen develop “skill in mental work.” They would learn to “read better and faster,” as one handout on speed-reading techniques instructed them. The supervisor’s work would need to become more efficient. The program would use readings from the *Harvard Business Review* on “Self-Training for Foremen” to foster an ethos of self-improvement, which was intended to be a lasting effect of the program.²³²

Outlining the techniques line supervisors would use in “handling Saudis in training,” Harry Snyder explained that Saudi personality characteristics posed barriers to effective instruction, and ultimately limited both the speed and effectiveness of training. The American supervisor could overcome the Saudi shortcomings through counselling, guidance, and the application of psychological techniques. Since Saudi attitudes were inappropriate for work under industrial conditions, and their morale was low, the supervisor needed a foundation in industrial psychology to understand the Saudi mind. By understanding “theories of morale” and “the development of leadership that have particular relevance for Saudis employed by Aramco,” they would be empowered to apply corrective measures. The key was motivating the Saudi to want training. Since motivation in Saudi culture was focused on the short term, the best way to motivate the Saudi worker was demonstrating what training would do for him now. Through training he would gain greater prestige among co-workers and his community, and increased security for his family. He could buy more comforts such as automobiles, refrigerators, etc. He would have greater opportunity for advancement. The instructor

²³² Frank Jarvis, Activity Log - Supervisory Training Design Group, September 10, 1951, Sidon Folder, Box 32, HRS Papers. Among other things, they were assigned F. J. Roethlisberger, “Training Supervisors in Human Relations,” *Harvard Business Review* XXIX (1951): 47-52.

needed to keep in mind that “rivalry and competition” were keys to motivation and “emotion is a stronger urge to action than reason.”²³³

Recognizing that Saudis were not all the same, Snyder urged the foremen to take into account “individual differences,” by which he meant that trainers pay attention to “cultural and tribal traits in developing leadership.” He noted that “Saudis from various geographic, social + tribal backgrounds” had different “optimum learning stages.” Though personnel would try to recruit the younger, stronger, larger and healthier Saudis, at times the supervisor would be saddled with less than optimal human material. When facing this new work, even the optimal Saudi would suffer from “frustration and maladjustment” due to language problems. Many had already been trained the wrong way and would have to “unlearn” bad techniques. The accumulation of all these problems led to “emotional insecurities,” “psychological illness,” and “neurotic behaviour.” The role of the trainer was thus no less than “promoting mental health.” The cure to Saudi psychological problems was through making them productive and efficient. Training was the key to allowing them to rise above the “coolie” concept of labor and become well-adjusted workers in the new industrial world of Aramco.²³⁴

Snyder went on to describe how “problems of efficiency or economy of work” resulted from a wide range of conditions that could be beyond the supervisor’s control, including high temperatures, humidity, poor ventilation and lack of air conditioning. Strong sunlight caused eyestrain. Many Saudis suffered from illnesses of the eye, including trachoma, which reduced their vision. Under these conditions, Saudi workers needed to be carefully

²³³ Harry Roscoe Snyder, Outline for Applying Psychological techniques to Saudis in Training (handwritten note), n.d., Sidon Folder, Box 32, HRS Papers. Unfortunately, the case studies from files of Arab Personnel Section to which he refers in this note have been lost or destroyed.

²³⁴ Ibid.

supervised and their lives regimented to ensure they got enough sleep during off hours, and had sufficient break periods for rest during the day, least they fall victim to fatigue. The cost of fatigue, physical and mental, could be reckoned in increased accident rates. Recognizing that Saudi workers were “accident prone,” it was also the job of the supervisor to instill a psychology of safety through worker education.²³⁵

As Harry Snyder initiated the process of transforming the RBH training manual into curriculum, Frank Jarvis carried the initiative forward by breaking the training down into detailed section outlines. Snyder provided guidance in a handwritten note that outlined “Barriers to Effective Instruction.” He highlighted “factors that made training Saudis difficult.” In a two-hour lecture, two hours of conference discussion and four hours of self-study, trainers would “gain a useful appreciation and an applicable means of coping with the personality factors, individual differences and physical factors which make for difficulty in training Saudis.” Jarvis replicated this basic format in a series of training segment outlines that would form the basis of training in the Sidon Training Center throughout the 1950s.²³⁶

The Jarvis segment outlines served to familiarize the American foreman with the peculiar Saudi worker and to chart a course for the latter’s cultural transformation. The segment on Saudi culture entitled “Understanding Saudis to Manage Them,” covered the history of the Arabs under “Glimpses of the Arabian Past,” placed Saudi development in a global context under “Social Customs of Primitive Peoples,” and then finally focused in on the peculiarities

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ HRS, “Barriers to Effective Instruction,” handwritten note, n.d., Sidon Folder, Box 32, HRS Papers. Assigned readings included selections from *Personnel Management and Industrial Relations* by Dale Yoder, Douglas Fryer’s *Handbook of Applied Psychology*, and other readings from a text entitled *Psychology in Industry*. For the linkage between personnel policy and industrial psychology see especially Dale Yoder, *Personnel Management and Industrial Relations* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1948), 516-18.

of the Bedouin. The Bedouin posed particularly difficult acculturation challenges, as they were the least accustomed to the settled life of industry. The educational and occupational background of Saudi employees provided the context in which to understand “Saudi Learning Problems.” Job Training was complicated by the Saudi’s lack of experience previous to job employment. They could learn through frequent practice, proper supervision, and the skilled use of training aids.²³⁷

In the segment on “Rhythm as a Motor Skill in Productivity,” the Sidon outline pointed out that Saudi culture lacked the athletic pursuits that would have developed in the worker a sense of rhythm necessary for industrialized production. It showed the instructor how to impart Saudi workers a sense of rhythm. Borrowing again on the metaphors of American sport, the outline encouraged the trainer to think of teaching cargo handling like teaching golf. The segment outline cited other examples of places where the Saudis needed rhythm in driver training, craftsmen, food handling, and even clerical jobs. Grounding the approach in psychological techniques, the curriculum called for readings on “Psychology in Industry” and drew its concepts of “development of motor skills and knowledge” from a text entitled *Educational Psychology*.²³⁸

Wrapping up the curriculum development session in October, Harry Snyder worked with Douglas Fryer to produce RBH Special Report on Developments in Production Training of Aramco. This report charted the course of production training. Stressing the need for

²³⁷ “F. L. Jarvis Segment Outlines,” Box 32, HRS Papers. In addition to those mentioned here, other topics covered by Jarvis included “Comprehension: The Development of Understanding,” “Counselling and Guidance in Training,” “Development of Perception,” “Individual Differences,” and “Methods for Mental Work,” “Introduction and some Fundamentals of Psychology,” “Incentives in Saudi Culture,” “The Nature of Learning” and “Motivation in Industry.”

²³⁸ Ibid.

participation by "superintendents, foremen and supervisors," the RBH Special Report recommended an integrated approach to the development of Saudis for the petroleum industry. "Aptitude Tests for Selection," "Pre-job Training," "Job Development," and "Supervisory Training" were all inter-dependent:

The tools of job training, e.g. job breakdowns and trade tests, cannot be used successfully until the division trainers are trained in their use, as they will be in their course in supervisory training; the coaching and guidance of Saudis by the instructors in the Prerequisite Training Center cannot be successful without the cooperation of foremen and trainers.

The guiding principles of "training in the line" would include the selective enrolment of new hires, prerequisite training for Saudis to be used as instructors for the "Pre-Job Training" program in the districts, and this supervisory training program developed at Sidon "to indoctrinate all concerned in the best methods of training and supervision."²³⁹

Harry Snyder may have gone too far in the agenda of advocating Saudi betterment. In a confidential letter sent to Snyder October 2, 1951, Roy Lebkicher wrote that Snyder's training group was undermining the American employees' confidence in their job security. He was particularly concerned about statements about "replacement of Americans." Striking a conciliatory note he wrote that:

We have all used the expression, but like many expressions chosen for convenience it is not altogether an accurate one and may cause misunderstanding. To the Saudi it may give the impression that individual Saudis are taking over jobs held by individual Americans, which could hardly ever be the case unless the particular Saudi were highly exceptional and the particular American had not actually carried the load we expect of Americans. To the American it may give the impression that certain employees are shoving other employees out of jobs, which is not necessarily so. In

²³⁹ Richardson, Bellow, Henry & Company, Special Report on Developments in Production Training of Aramco (Draft), n. d., Sidon Folder, Box 32, HRS Papers.

either case, the impression created could have serious repercussions, which are obvious.

Lebkicher called Snyder's attention to letter to District Managers dated August 20th under a heading of "Saudi Replacement of American Employees." He reminded Snyder of the "realities of the situation," which included the fact that "Americans and other foreign employees have had to perform certain duties which would normally be performed by local labor." The Saudi situation was abnormal in that "except for the shortage of local skills," local labor would be performing the "craft work." By training Saudis, Aramco was trying to bring out a more normal situation in which Saudis took their rightful place as craft workers in the proper order of industrial society. Importing craft workers was out of step with the globally accepted practice of using local labor for that purpose. Saudis should not be given the erroneous idea that they were being trained to replace Americans in management roles. Saudi development had limits, and it would behoove Snyder to keep those limits in mind.²⁴⁰

As they defended the prerogatives of Americans in 1951 by closing the Jebel School and moving thousands of Saudis through trade training in the line, Aramco managers were giving limited ground to Saudi aspirations for higher education. The firm reported to the Saudi Government at the end of 1951 that it continued to grow its small Saudi Scholarship Program. Eight Saudi students were enrolled for summer study at the American University of Beirut and another four at Aleppo College in Syria. Aramco had also inaugurated a Professional Employee Development program for Saudis and other Arabs who already had a

²⁴⁰ Lebkicher to Snyder, October 2, 1951, Personal Correspondence - Training Department (October 2 1950 - Dec 27, 1959), Box 20, HRS Papers," October 2, 1951, (accessed July 18, 2005).

diploma from an institution of higher learning. Though the company reported an enrolment of 23 in this program, it is not clear how many of those were Saudi students.²⁴¹

The company held the line against renewed involvement in general education. Despite a Saudi government letter dated July 16, 1951 stating that the company was bound by the terms of the 1942 labor law to provide schools for Saudi workers' children, the company stood fast against requests to open an elementary school in Dhahran. For the next two years, Aramco offered many justifications for not complying with the government mandate. Managers questioned whether this school would need to educate only company workers' children, or would it need to be open for all local children? And what of non-Saudi expatriate workers' children? For a company that prided itself on pioneering feats of exploration in the "barren desert," Aramco was remarkably timid when it came to investing in elementary education. Whereas the agenda for training supervisors stressed the need to "transform" Saudi mentalities, and urged supervisors to exploit or reshape Saudi cultural values, the management assiduously avoided responsibility for the "cultural education" which they claimed was at the heart of elementary education. This specious division between "culture" and "technology" animated much of the argument against support of general education. Aramco managers resisted elementary education obligations to contain costs. Greater political pressure would need to be exerted to move the firm to take on the additional costs, pressure that in 1951 and 1952 was simply absent.²⁴²

By 1952, the success of the training program had become an integral part of the company's narrative of progress in Saudi Arabia. When Colonel William Eddy, Aramco advisor and

²⁴¹ Aramco, "Report of Operations to the Saudi Arabian Government (1951)," George Rentz Papers.

²⁴² Viola, *Human Resources Development in Saudi Arabia: Multinationals and Saudization*, 13-17.

American intelligence operative, spoke to the Foreign Service Group at AUB on August 1, 1952, he described the Saudi trade-training program as “gigantic.” The program was ideally suited to a world dominated by the “blue shirt and not the white collar.” Aramco was, after all, a place where a “Bedu in khakis” could be spotted “eating hamburgers & ice cream side by side with [a] geologist and engineer.” He reminded his audience that there was “most fraternization where there is the greatest gap in culture and customs.” Fortunately for Aramco, the Arab workman and the American foreman had formed a partnership. The conflict between cultures, attendant with technological change elsewhere, had been suspended in the Eastern Province by the wise Saudi King, who had shown his people the way to adopt Western technology -- Eddy called it “our iron” -- without violating the Muslim faith. Eddie pre-empted charges that Americans support reaction and monarchy, noting, “We are guests and foreigners” and must not criticize our hosts. As guests of the wise King, “we admit the King can kick us out any minute.” Unlike the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, which had just lost its concession, Eddie pointed out “we do not teach political democracy” or “aspire to be an East India Company.”²⁴³

Had there been any actual American geologists in the audience at Eddy’s talk, they would probably have found such assertions odd, as would the medical staff in Tripoli where Saudis had been sent for nursing training. Instructions given to field parties in Saudi Arabia since the late 1930s were still in place in 1952. These instructions called for strict segregation of Arab and American facilities. When Richard Kerr worked with Aramco in the early 1950s as a transportation consultant, he was given a handbook with the provisions for alcohol crossed

²⁴³ William A. Eddy, “Impact of an American Industry (Speech Notes), August 13, 1953, Folder 19, Box 15, WAE Papers. See also William A. Eddy, “King Ibn Saud: Part I “Our Faith and Your Iron,” n.d., Folder 1, Box 17, WAE Papers.

out, as the Kingdom had banned the consumption of alcohol by early 1953. Yet the requirements for separate, but inferior, arrangements in camp for Saudis remained intact.²⁴⁴

The twelve Saudis involved in the nurse-training program at Kennedy Memorial Hospital in Tripoli, another staple of company promotional literature at the time, were also living in a difficult environment.²⁴⁵ A year earlier in August 1951, Dr. Henry Boyes had expressed his “willingness to train 3 Saudis as nurses,” but he needed to know several things before committing. “Do they speak English, have any nursing experience? Would they be going through with the full four year program or would a shorter more theoretical curriculum work?” He had insisted that “They would have to understand that there would be no time out for Moslem holidays” and “it would be understood that they could not keep the fast of Ramadan or other Moslem feasts” because the hospital did not give time off to its own people on New Years, Christmas, Easter, etc. ” He noted that “Up to the present time all students are required to take a Bible training course - attend morning prayers, and services.” He wondered if they needed to omit the Bible training courses. He reminded George Trial “If these men do

²⁴⁴ Aramco, “Instructions, Field Parties in Saudi Arabia, n.d., Box 11, RCK Papers,” 1939.

²⁴⁵ Eddie’s source for his AUB speech was likely an Aramco Public Relations circular. See “Aramco Background Information, 1952, Folder 3, Box 19, WAE Papers. In the flier, Aramco explains the role of training as follows: “Aramco’s training division is playing an important role in bringing Saudi Arabia up to the 20th century. The company’s object is to place the Saudi employees in skilled and important jobs just as fast as workers obtain the necessary skills and experience. American and other foreign employees are recruited as instructors, to teach Saudis their jobs as they are producing. Saudi employees start training as soon as they’re hired, with a 90-day orientation and aptitude training course. The job training program, designed to protect a skill in a single job, is open to any employee up to one-eighth of his working time. Selected workers take full-time, advanced trade training courses. A remarkable example of training is the operation of million-dollar gas-oil separator plans by all-Saudi crews. At the top of the graduate nurse training program and a college scholarship program, which are carried on in hospitals and centers of learning in the Middle East. Classes are currently in attendance at the American University of Beirut, Aleppo College, and Kennedy Memorial Hospital in Tripoli, Lebanon. In 1951, an average of 4,276 of the company’s 13,786 Saudi employees were enrolled in training courses, with 73 per cent of these in job skills training. A total of 37,305, job training courses were given during the year, an increase of 26% over the previous year.”

not fit in with our Christian background, or cause trouble about our preaching on the wards in which there are Moslem patients, we will not keep them."²⁴⁶

Another of the training successes celebrated in the early 1950s and recounted for the next five decades, was the tale of the all-Saudi crew in running the Gas-Oil Separator Plant. What a closer reading of the contemporary record reveals the depth of distrust between the Americans and Saudi crew. The Gas-Oil Separation Plant Training (GOSP) Manual contained an "Employee Code of Conduct" especially designed for Saudi crews. It explained to the Saudi worker that he needed "take some initiative," and then listed the company rules that he must not break. From the list of rules for Saudis, the authors clearly believed that Saudis had trouble with honesty, expected "special" favors, failed to get along with fellow-workers, and had trouble following even simple orders. The members of the all-Saudi crew needed to be reminded to "make every effort to do his job and do it well." They were told not to sleep on the job. They were to comply with all safety regulations. The GOSP manual listed housekeeping rules and safety rules, which were followed by trade terminology and the concluded by listing the most excruciating details on the operations. Though there was great public relations benefit to this innovation, the line supervisors who wrote this manual clearly did not trust that Saudis could do the job. Since they didn't even trust Saudis to stay awake or tell the truth, how then could they trust them to run a Gas-Oil Separator Plant?²⁴⁷

Resolution of this conflict is imposed retrospectively in the narratives of Aramco's representative men. Men like Frank Jungers, who as 26 year old superintendent of maintenance shops at Ras Tanura trusted the Saudis to do the work themselves when other

²⁴⁶ Henry Boyes to George Trial, August 1, 1951, Sidon Folder, Box 32, HRS Papers.

²⁴⁷ Gas-Oil Separation Plant Training Manual (Job Breakdown for Gas-Oil Separator Plant Operator), 1952, Box 21, HRS Paper.

less supportive supervisors failed to have the vision for Saudi development. Jungers would go on to lead the company because they trusted Saudis. In early 1952, as Tom Pledge recounts, Frank Jungers was a 26-year-old superintendent of maintenance shops at Ras Tanura when he “ordered a one-quarter reduction in contract labor by year’s end and a corresponding increase in Saudi workmen in the shops.” As Jungers had predicted, the warnings of foremen that the quality of work would decline was proved wrong. “The Saudis stepped in with a will and a surprising speed and flexibility,” Jungers said. “They had, in fact, been well trained by the supervisors who were reluctant to use them.” Retelling the narrative decades later, he obscured the conflict and tensions of the workplace which contemporary documents clearly reveal were central to the relationships between Americans and Saudis. Years later, the successful retiree could look back and see only a failure of self-confidence on the part of lesser Americans who lacked his personal vision for the development of Saudis.²⁴⁸

Strikers, Students and Deviance in Aramco Education

In November 1952, Roy Leblicher published an article in *Oil Forum* celebrating the success of Aramco’s training programs. Training integrated with production was “America's Greatest Middle Eastern Oil Venture.” Under his editorship the company also published a revised handbook in which admonitions to Americans to behave appropriately towards Saudis began

²⁴⁸ Pledge, Daldin, and Tahlawi, *Saudi Aramco and Its People: A History of Training*, 85. For further details of the interview with Frank Jungers see Jungers et al., “American Perspectives of Aramco, the Saudi-Arabian Oil-Producing Company, 1930s-1980s.”

to recede behind a narrative of progress in the training of Arab employees. As that year drew to a close in Saudi Arabia, Aramco management was in a confident state of mind.²⁴⁹

The self-congratulatory tone of “America’s Greatest Oil Venture” obscures an underlying tension between the aspirations of thousands of Saudi workers living in Saudi camp and the much smaller group of American managers living in markedly superior (and separate) accommodations in American camp. Published contemporary accounts offered no hint as to why a reasonable Saudi worker would have a legitimate cause to complain about any aspect of their treatment in the company. To an external observer reading official accounts of what was happening in Aramco, the strikes of 1953 would come as a shock. As we have seen, the documentary record offers a different view, one marked by conflict and tensions. Training programs were sites for the reconstruction of Saudi mentalities, for bringing Saudi workers in line with the demands of industrial production, and ultimately for equipping them to join the industrial proletariat.

During its first two decades of operation in Saudi Arabia, the company had operated with a free hand with regard to its handling of employees. By 1953 this was beginning to change. Crown Prince Saud took up the case of one worker in particular, writing personally to the company to request his reinstatement on January 23, 1953. The career path of fired worker Abd Al-Aziz Abu Sunayed is remarkably similar to that of Sami Hussein charted by Grant Butler in his *Kings and Camels*. The outcomes, however, were starkly divergent. Aramco had selected both men for the fast track in Saudi development, starting with tours as instructors at the Foreign Service Training Center in Riverside, Long Island. They had both

²⁴⁹ Roy Lebkicher, “America’s Greatest Middle Eastern Oil Venture,” *Oil Forum* (November 1952): 389-396. Also published a new Aramco Handbook Arabian American Oil and Lebkicher, *Handbooks for American Employees*.

participated in the company's summer training in Beirut after a successful tour in Long Island. Sami Hussein had returned from Beirut to work with Andy Anderson in Aramco personnel and engineer a return to his newfound homeland of America, as well as the sweetheart he had left behind on Long Island. Abu Sunayed's story was far less romantic. He had been reporting to the King on the activities of the Americans in the Kingdom. This display of loyalty to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia led to his dismissal from Aramco.²⁵⁰

Concerns over the physical and psychological shortcomings its Saudi Arab workers that Aramco managers had attempted to address in the creation of curriculum at Sidon, took on increased urgency as it assessed the candidates it would select for higher education. Two weeks after senior management received the Crown Prince's letter of intercession on behalf of Abu Sunayed, Roy Lebkicher announced the competition for Saudi Scholarships for the coming 1953-1954 Academic Year. Six faculty members from AUB and Aleppo College were coming to do the screenings. Interviews were to take place on March 15th.²⁵¹

On the same day that Lebkicher announced the scholarships program, Aramco signed an agreement that obliged the firm to build and pay for the operating costs of elementary schools for sons of Arab and Muslim employees. That Aramco had agreed to this was hardly a "logical development."²⁵² For the past twenty years, the company had ignored the deplorable state of elementary education in the Eastern Province, abandoning the Saudis to the devices of "Egyptian educational experts" whom the Americans held to be incompetent, even dangerous. The company agreed to this commitment to avoid an option they feared

²⁵⁰ Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier*, 145-6.

²⁵¹ Lebkicher to All District Managers, General Office Departments and Divisions, February 7, 1953, Box 22, HRS Papers.

²⁵² Viola, *Human Resources Development in Saudi Arabia: Multinationals and Saudization*, 13-14.

would be even worse. Crown Prince Saud had not only begun to intervene with the company to re-hire terminated employees, but he had also begun to suggest that the company would be better served by building a dedicated technical institute than they were currently being served by “training within the line.” On February 10, 1953, he shared his views with Floyd Ohliger and Tom Barger in a meeting at the Ministry of Education. The Crown Prince suggested that an industrial training institute would be a better investment than paying wages to workers while they are undergoing training. Playing to the American’s anti-Egyptian bias, he even suggested that by building this institute the Americans could save Saudi Arabia from the pernicious Egyptian influence that had so thoroughly permeated the government schools. Furthermore, Prince Saud mused, a Dhahran Technical Institute could be a model for schools in Hofuf, Riyadh, Taif and Jeddah.²⁵³

For a period of three weeks following the meeting with Prince Saud, a proposal by Harry Snyder for an Aramco Technical Institute was under consideration by Aramco management. On March 8, Harry Snyder informed L. M. Snyder that management had rejected the Vocational Technical School Proposal on cost grounds. Harry Snyder would later note that this was the second time a formal proposal had been made to management to build this institute, and it was the second time management had rejected the proposal as too costly. More important perhaps was the implicit risk posed by a growing set of technical schools that might produce a stream of Abu Sunayeds who would begin by questioning the company’s methods and end up questioning the very basis of the concession.²⁵⁴

²⁵³ Harry R. Snyder to L. M. Snyder, April 25, 1955, Folder Marked "History of Vocational Schools Project at Aramco," Box 19, HRS Papers.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

The perception of dangers inherent in educating Saudi workers beyond the level of basic crafts was reinforced in a letter to Roy Leblicher from Powell Ownby on March 9th. Writing concerning the Saudi Scholarship Program at Aleppo College, Ownby painted a grim picture of the misdeeds of trouble-making students. Despite the fact that “[e]very precaution was taken by the Company to select candidates who had 'earned' placement in the program," the students clearly did not understand their place. They were making demands like "living accommodations, diet, laundry and bathing facilities in excess of that normally provided students enrolled as boarders.” When denied this “special” treatment, “the eight men requested they be returned to the Field.” Dressing the students down, the company representatives had “replied to the effect that the scholarship program was based on attainment rather than living standards and that their problems would be considered individually at the conclusion of the mid year examinations.” They persisted in their demands. After passing the midyear exams, they had "insisted as a group that their living arrangements be improved immediately or that the company return them to the Field.” Ownby met personally with the Aleppo students five times from February 24-26, individually at first then in a group. "Throughout the period they were friendly and cordial but assured and adamant in their insistence that they be accorded special living arrangements not in line with facilities made available to other Saudis and students enrolled as boarders." When their demands were not met, three stayed in Aleppo and five returned to the Field.²⁵⁵

Ownby’s discussion turned next to the now familiar “concern” about the students’ physical and mental health. He noted, “three Freshmen and six preparatory students remain in the Aleppo program. All students enrolled in the Aleppo program have had good health.” However, Ownby related, “Three of the men are reported to be bed wetters and Mustapha

²⁵⁵ P. W. Ownby to Roy Leblicher, March 9, 1953, Box 22, HRS Papers.

Khan reveals some of his inner tensions through constant mail biting." They said they ate off campus because the food on campus was "unhealthful." "Nadreen informed me that dreams at night made the students unclean and that the lack of water and facilities for ablutions was interfering with their practice of religion." Forced to use the public baths, they complained that they were served a ham and cheese sandwich on the plane from Dhahran to Beirut.²⁵⁶

When their demands were not met as individuals, these educated workers had begun to organize to bring their grievances as a group to the company. From the company's perspective, this was an extremely dangerous development. Noting that some of the students were in their second year, Ownby wrote that "it is quite possible that what should have been leadership developed into onerous seniority. The eight petitioners lived and played together, studied the same subjects in the same classroom and slept in the same room." This was obviously too much freedom for the workers. Asked if they made friends outside the group, they said they had. Dean Miller assured Ownby that they had "successfully maintained themselves as a second group." The generosity of the firm in educating its workers could quickly turn to a platform for unionization.²⁵⁷

Ownby did not blame the Aleppo administration for putting the company in this precarious position, since everyone had given the student-workers "close, sympathetic attention."

Admittedly, living accommodations were bleak and the food was bland, but that was true of boarding schools throughout the US. The choice of Aleppo College was a fundamentally sound one:

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

The remoteness of the college from Levantine luxuries, the fine climate, the fact that the city is a conservative Arab city, the proved reputation of Aleppo College and Dr. Carelton led the Company to select Aleppo as a proving ground for Saudis assigned to the scholarships. And our reasoning was good.²⁵⁸

It did not matter that the Ford Foundation had "recently awarded the College funds to augment its staff, to raise base pay of its faculty, and to provide additional pumping equipment for water" due to the poor conditions of facilities at the school. No matter that the dorms were crowded, and the Ford Foundation had insisted the problems should be fixed before sending more students. Ownby's recommendation was that the company ignore the incident and that the students be broken up and not allowed to live together. Two weeks after he recommended breaking the Aleppo students up to prevent their organizing to make demands of the company, Abu Sunayd joined 154 other "intermediate skilled workers" back in Dhahran in demanding cost of living allowance and better working conditions and privileges from the company.²⁵⁹

On March 31, Leslie Leavitt, Chair of the Aramco Scholarship Selection Committee, submitted the committee recommendation to the Training Division.²⁶⁰ The report noted great variety in the students and divided them into three groups. In the first group were employees who were "18 to 22 who have a good foundation in Arabic, Math, and English and who have good minds and powers of application." In the second group, which contained "the bulk of candidates," was a collection of men whose ambition was not matched by the abilities that would suit them for a college education. The third group consisted of the "foreman type" who is "hardworking, reliable, faithful men, competent in their specific fields. They are not

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier*, 145-6.

²⁶⁰ Leslie W. Leavitt, General Observations For the Committee, Aramco Scholarship Selection Committee Report, March 31, 1953, Box 22, HRS Papers.

scholars, either college or secondary scholars, and should not be encouraged to feel that they can be professional men.” It had been a waste of time to send these candidates before the committee, but in the end they left the final decision to Sheikh Abdullah and Mr. Leblicher.

The committee report also contained were the "Work sheets for Selection Committee Interviews," which each committee member was instructed to fill out on each scholarship candidate. These completed forms are, unfortunately, lost to posterity. Yet even the blank questionnaires give us insight into what the scholarship committee was supposed to assess. The forms directed the committee members as follows:

Record your own personal feeling about him. This sheet may be filled out during or after the interview, but if done during the interview it should not be more noticeable than necessary... the applicant should not be made uncomfortably aware of what you are doing.

The options were “Favorable, Unfavorable and Indifferent (Leaves you cold).” They were instructed to record “[h]ow the applicant looks: notice features, posture, build, dress, carriage, general appearance, etc.” Even the applicant’s facial expression was subject to scrutiny. The committee was to “study his grimaces, responsiveness, facial movements, ticks, frowns, etc.; his gestures: observe smoothness, posture, too many or exaggerated, too few, easy, restrained, etc. ...” They were to assess how well he expressed himself and his “emotionality” in so doing. Especially noteworthy would be “nervousness, fidgeting, dryness of mouth, excessive perspiration, blushing, etc.” Based on this assessment, the committee was supposed to "select a group of young men who, with perhaps a year and a summer of study in Beirut and Aleppo, might be able to carry freshman college work.” Scholarly ability counted, but “character” was what the committee tried to document. Obviously the committee did not want to recommend another set of candidates who would repeat the

performance of the last Aleppo group. They did not want “opinionated” or “suspicious” candidates who were not “normal looking.”²⁶¹

During the following summer workers who had studied in Beirut in 1951 and 1952 were amongst the 155 “intermediate skilled workers” whose petition gained them an audience with Aramco management and later with the local labor office. Had they not accused the local labor officials, including the director Abd Al-Munim Majdhub, of selling out to Aramco they might not have been arrested. He was initially empathetic, but they had crossed a line by insulting the Royal Committee and demanding formal recognition as representatives of Saudi labor in Aramco. With the petitioners locked up, there was no way to negotiate with labor. The outcome was a strike which lasted from October 16 -23. It broke out in Saudi Camp and spread to the American Air Base. As a result of the strike, Aramco went back to the bargaining table with the Royal Commission, which by that point had adopted the strikers’ agenda of “better housing, more Saudis in jobs now held by foreigners, more hospitals, more schools, more drinking fountains, Saudis trained at universities abroad at company expense.” With the death of King Abd Al-Aziz and the ascension of Crown Prince Saud in November, the Commission took up negotiations and pressed for “across the board raise for all workers, subsidies, paid breakfasts, buying them bikes, paying for uniforms, etc.” In a move that echoed Reza Shah’s early populism in response to the 1929 strike in APOC, King Saud forced Aramco’s hand in the final round of negotiations. The new King got the firm to agree to a higher wage hike than they had intended and then announced that agreement in a

²⁶¹ Ibid. Possible adjectives used to describe him included average, ambiguous, anxious, argumentative, appeasing, aggressive alert, arbitrary, brilliant, bluffer, bewildered, cultured, cautious, clean-cut, courteous, conventional, confident, dogmatic, dull, definite, evasive, fluent, flexible, haggling, impressive, immature, inarticulate, incoherent, mature, neat, normal-looking, objective, opinionated, poised, persuasive, respectful, shy, sociable, suspicious, spontaneous, tactful, ungrammatical, and verbose.

Dhahran meeting that was then broadcast on the radio. Reza Shah had done essentially the same thing in 1929 in ending the Anglo-Iranian strike of that year.²⁶²

Chapter 5: From Arab Training to Saudi Development, 1954 -1963

Ending the Production Training Program in Aramco

LET'S MAKE SOME ACCEPTABLE PLUMBERS. THAT IS A TRAINING ACHIEVEMENT! THE MEMORIZATION OF BOOK II ENGLISH IS AN INCIDENTAL, AND EXCEPT IN RARE CASES AN INCONSEQUENTIAL THING, FOR BOTH THE SAUDI AND THE COMPANY.²⁶³

In September of 1953, as worker agitation was growing, the company scaled back the growing Advanced Industrial Training Program in Dhahran. Instead of letting the students go to school full-time, they were required to attend this training on a co-operative basis. They did this in an effort to prevent the students from getting any false notions about their importance, as had Anglo-Iranian before them. The experience with students who attended Sidon and Beirut training had shown that workers who became full-time students soon organized to demand fair treatment in a variety of areas. Aramco acted pre-emptively to reduce the likelihood of this happening in Dhahran.²⁶⁴

²⁶² My understanding of the course of the 1953 strike comes primarily from Vitalis, but is also influenced by Cheney's account. See Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier*, 145-6, 51-57. Cheney, *Big Oil Man from Arabia*, 227-36.

²⁶³ E. J. Roberts, A Rethinking of the Saudi Training Program With a Corrective Proposal, 1954, Robert King Hall Reports Folder, Box 20, HRS Papers.

²⁶⁴ Roy Lebkicher, "The Training of Saudi Arab Employees: Arabian American Oil Company," in *The Yearbook of Education*, 1954 (Yonkers-on-Hudson, NY: World Book Company, 1954), 2-23.

According to Roy Lebkicher in his 1954 article for the *Yearbook of Education*, a small select group of Saudis were attending programs run by the central training office under the rubrics of “General and Industrial Education, Job Skills Training, and Supervisory and Management Training.” He didn’t give numbers for these later three categories, but he did explain that these courses were entirely ad hoc and assembled when there were “enough students.” Most of the learning was done after the workday in voluntary training. Only Ras Tanura had a building for voluntary training, but the company was planning to build one each in Dhahran and Abqaiq to make it easier for the employee to go to night school. While Lebkicher attempted to portray these centers as a company investment in its workforce, judging from the popularity of the voluntary classes at the Ras Tanura shop, the firm was being remarkably stingy with its training efforts. Rather than cutting into production time, which would cost the company, they were shifting the burden to the employee in training as they were in housing with the home purchase plan.²⁶⁵

As 1954 began, despite the promise to build and support ten new schools in the next two years, the development of skills for workers in the three R’s of general education remained voluntary, saving the company a tremendous amount of money. Lebkicher sounded a cautionary note about line training in which “responsibility is placed upon people who are ordinarily very busy with other things and whose own training has not been in the training field.” Distancing himself somewhat from the program, he explained that foremen were responsible for drawing up training plans for their people and then conducting their training themselves. Because the knowledge imparted was so narrow, most Saudis were confined to jobs as “helpers.” Saudis would progress through “wage progress steps” under the supervision of the shop committee, chaired by the supervisor. Under the foreman’s

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

supervision, the Saudi would move from repeating simple tasks as a helper to a position where he would perform a "whole job." Whereas most of the drilling crews were already 100% Saudi, supervisors were training ever more Saudis in this fashion for work in crafts, operation of plants and office work.²⁶⁶

On July 6, 1954, Aramco's Comptroller, a man named K.H. Beekhuis, wrote to Mr. N. Hardy in the Dhahran central office requesting that "Saudi Clerical Training" be "restricted" until the company could get trainees with elementary school education. Noting the failure of the Saudi clerk trainees, E. J. Roberts made a proposal in a formal report in which he argued that general education was a waste of time, and the company should focus training on making some acceptable plumbers. The failure of clerical training was symptomatic of a larger failure of mass training as an approach to imparting skills to Saudis. Roberts argued that the mass approach to training was wasting more than a \$1 Million per year. By eliminating the lower 60% from General Industrial Training, which cost the company \$1,735,136/yr, Aramco could save a million dollars.²⁶⁷

As AIOC management had done repeatedly in the 1930s, Roberts pointed to the dangers of academic achievements that are not tied to job performance. Promoting Saudis based on "academic achievements" encouraged the Saudi to develop an "exaggerated conception of his own ability." Aramco would "reap employee discontent, employee unreasonableness, and bad public and government relations" if it continues to produce "over-ripened Saudis in work classifications beyond their current abilities." He recommended that they "eliminate fanciful

²⁶⁶ Ibid. In 1953, the Saudi Arabian government built 7 elementary schools in Al Hasa, bringing the total in the eastern province to 21. There was only one government secondary school in the province.

²⁶⁷ E. J. Roberts, A Rethinking of the Saudi Training Program With a Corrective Proposal, 1954, Robert King Hall Reports Folder, Box 20, HRS Papers.

attempts to put all Saudi employees through six Basic English books at Company expense to the detriment of healthy industrial operation and to the personal confusion, and amusement, of the employees."²⁶⁸

To illustrate his point about waste in the Training Division, he related the story of a recent instance where a District GIT Principal had gotten a request to “enroll the entire Landscape and Gardening crew of his District in English and Arithmetic classes for two hours daily,” he made it clear that of the 102 crew members “probably five were of the right age and training potential to profit from long-term general instruction in English and Arithmetic.” He wondered why they needed literacy and numeracy to do a good job of “watering, mowing, weeding, and spading.” Such work could be done without a mastery of the English language and with less than a little knowledge of arithmetical processes." Fortunately, he related, the Principal has turned the request down. Too much education ran the risk of ruining an acceptable gardener or plumber. Not only was it a waste of time, but also it ran the risk of giving the Saudi the false impression that he might become “an effendi, a scholar, or a member of management."²⁶⁹

Not only were the Saudis limited in the clerical field, but also "in those crafts which demand a considerable background of related knowledge such as machinists, electricians, instrument specialists, communications workers, plumbers, and pipe fitters.” He thought most of Aramco’s employees were likely to level off as 'helpers' in these highly skilled occupations. To replace foreign contract workers with Saudis would take years, maybe decades.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

Roberts pointed out that job requirements required too much "academic knowledge." He pointed out that "the related knowledge side of the Wage Progress Steps for a driver of automotive equipment requires at one point that the trainee be able to name, in English, fifty parts of an automobile." This requirement was insignificant as far as driving ability went, and it cost Aramco "thousands of dollars in training time while Bedouins were taught to chirp English names in unison, additional thousands in labor controversy, and still more thousands in good will." He observed "these fifty English words were an important cause, an inciting cause at least, of a drivers' strike of several weeks duration in the Ras Tanura District." When he tallied up all expenses related to training, he claimed it was close to \$5Million/yr, and for that they got drivers going out on strike?²⁷⁰

Any activity that was leading to labor agitation, in addition to wasting the company's money, was fit for further investigation. Shortly after Roberts wrote his report recommending a serious curtailment of Aramco's mass training, George Trail submitted a complete report on the failure of Clerical Training.²⁷¹ He shared this report with Robert King Hall, Aramco's senior education consultant. As professor of international education with a broad consulting experience, Hall brought to Dhahran the status of global education expert to the Dhahran training team. Among his many accomplishments was leading the US occupation team responsible for the reconstruction of education in Japan at the end of the Second World War. He had written a book about the experience entitled *Education for a New Japan*.²⁷²

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ E. J. Roberts and George Trail, Report on Clerical Training, 1954, Robert King Hall Reports Folder, Box 20, HRS Papers.

²⁷² Robert King Hall, *Education for a New Japan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949).

George Trial's report on the failure of clerical training was based on first-hand information from District Accounting Offices about experience of Saudis as accounting clerks. It included data submitted by accountants and trainers. The report concluded "the clerical training problem extends beyond the Accounting Department to such Departments as Material Supply, Community Services, and the General Offices." Focusing on the Accounting Department, Trial believed he had a representative sample that would yield results that held for clerical jobs throughout the company then occupied by foreign contract employees in "the M.S. and C.S. Department and the higher level clerical jobs scattered through other operations."²⁷³

In late 1954, they had 404 total clerks in all district offices. Given historical turnover, they were predicting a total of 30 replacements by the end of 1956. At the present rate of replacement the Saudis would have replaced foreign contract labor by Jan 1, 1985. During the past 5 years the Abqaiq accounting office had at least thirty Saudis in training at any given time, 2-4 hrs in class the rest on the job. Over that period only 4 Saudis had replaced foreign contract labor. The same low rates of Saudi replacement held for Ras Tanura and Dhahran. Almost all instances the replacement had been "in the Payroll Section where the work is routine and does not require discernment and judgment." They had been "brutally forced" to realize that they were "making rather fantastic expenditures without getting in return either a significant training progress or an accolade relations-wise from employees or government."²⁷⁴

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

When asked why they thought the Saudi clerk trainees were failing, the chief accountants pointed to the illiteracy of the recruits. "They point out repeatedly that the Saudi is not susceptible to on-the-job training in accounting operations until he is able to understand, read, and write English and do simple arithmetical processes." Without English literacy, "on-the-job training is but little more than an airy nothing used to camouflage a vacuum." What was worse, Saudis were actually learning the wrong lessons in training.

Trainees working only half-days at extremely simple tasks develop poor work habits and attitudes. Some get the impression that 'employment' constitutes sitting at a table, i.e. merely being present and thereby he is eligible for a paycheck at the end of two weeks.

The trainees represented "a nuisance to supervisory personnel." Saudi clerical trainees had become an "adverse moral factor to qualified employees in the group who have to work for their paychecks."²⁷⁵

Trial argued that asking the Accounting Department to supervise this many illiterate Saudis represented an unreasonable workload on American supervisors. "[A]ny Stateside accounting office who proposed to take 100 illiterate American youths to train as accounting clerks would be quickly subjected to psychiatric examination anticipatory of committal to a mental hospital." There were serious dangers to this approach. As one District Chief Accountant feared, Saudis without a high school education would "develop into more or less 'robots' acquiring skills in a specific job but lacking flexibility for branching out to other work." Technology was making the situation with Saudi clerks even worse. From District G.I.T. Principals, Trial learned that "with most of the posting eliminated with the change to IBM payroll accounting, the Accounting office has no way to use illiterates or semi-illiterates."

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

Accounting had “neither space nor staff to go into the school business.” A “horde of untrained people” would have to be assigned to 'busy work.'"²⁷⁶

During the interviews conducted for this report, one member of the District Training Staff urged that the company should set up an elementary school and leave the Saudis there until they finished, and then give them clerical training in secondary school and finally put them in the Accounting offices for OJT. The basics of the three Rs could be imparted in three years, but would probably take longer. The problem with rushing general education was that:

This presumes however, a compression of the training period which takes no account of the gradual development of a responsible maturity in the trainee. It is the kind of telescoping and skeletonizing of education which the experienced teacher regards cautiously, even sceptically. It is a mechanical, factory-like coverage of skill knowledge which savours of animal training, a little like teaching dogs to do tricks.

Instead of animal training for Saudis, Trial recommended 7 years of combined work and experience, approximately the same period that AIOC had used for many years in its apprenticeship programs.²⁷⁷

At a minimum, Trial urged the company to let go of "low potentials" to make sure that these “fantastic expenditures” were not being wasted on Saudis who will never replace a foreign employee. It would be cheaper, Trial reported, to train a select few in the right way than to continue training masses of “low potentials.”²⁷⁸ Perhaps they could “shift the problem to the Saudi Government” by getting them to build more schools? Pledge though it was “worth

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid. The cost per trainee for 5 years of GIT was \$10,296 and for additional 2 years at AIT \$9,531.20. Total cost for a poorly trained employee was \$19,531.20. That number didn't take into account facilities costs, impact on production and other expenses. The figure didn't include attrition, which would be at least 20%. Trial still argued it was cheaper to do it the right way.

making the proposal to the government at the highest levels.” Trial recommended that the company remove “untrainables” from its current program and make it clear to the Saudi Government that Aramco would hire elementary school grads for clerical positions. To ensure that Saudis were trained in a fashion of which the company would approve, Aramco should supply the 10 government elementary schools with good English teachers. Sending employees children to SAG Schools was better than paying the Saudis \$1.45/hr for training. These schools could be used as pre-employment training centers for Aramco. Subsidizing schools without assuming responsibility for running them was the same approach APOC had taken in the early 1920s in Southern Iran.

The same enticement to hire Indian clerks that had so often ensnared Anglo-Iranian was also a temptation for Aramco. J. B Rushmer from the “Employee Measurement Research Section” wrote to O. T. Devine on December 16, 1956 to inform him that Bob King’s need for typist-clerk jobs could be satisfied from a local source. In a recent trip to Pakistan, J. C. Tarvin had learned what the British had known for the last four decades. Skilled labor was plentiful and cheap on the Indian subcontinent. In his words, “there was an apparently inexhaustible supply of Pakistani’s able to qualify for the full job of clerk-typist. These people all have had 11 years of education and nearly 11 years of English.” Rather than trying to force the issue with clerical work for Saudis, when they could be used in other areas it would be preferable to import more Pakistani labor.²⁷⁹

By the spring of 1955, Roy Leblicher had returned to yet another approach to solving the problem of developing Saudis for skilled positions. On February 27, he made a presentation

²⁷⁹ E. J. Roberts and George Trial, Report on Clerical Training, 1954, Robert King Hall Reports Folder, Box 20, HRS Papers.

to the Aramco senior management team in which he recommended building a dedicated training institute.²⁸⁰ The idea was not a new one. It had been proposed by the training staff at least twice before (1945 and 1953) and rejected by management each time. This time management was under a new kind of pressure. Called by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to testify on its role in “Technical Aid Assistance,” Aramco would make one last attempt to justify “training in the line” as the best way to approach training and position the foreman as the best teacher. It was an idea that was discredited within Aramco but seemingly still viable for a Senate Committee.²⁸¹

In a document prepared on March 3 for the Senate Committee, Aramco made the case that it was providing “technical aid assistance” to the Saudis. The argument had two main themes. One theme, which becoming increasingly common within Aramco as a justification for outsourcing, was that Saudis learned skills with Aramco, which they took with them when they left the company and formed their own businesses. The other theme was that training provided “in the line” was better than the “schools approach.” They stressed the quality of supervision, arguing, “The competence of supervisors was at “the very heart of Saudi development.” Line supervisors were close to Saudis and personally oversaw their development. The education and training programs were “closely integrated with industrial operations and administration,” making them “not easy either to describe or comprehend, as compared to the usual school system approach.” Rather than explaining the approach in detail, Aramco dissembled.²⁸²

²⁸⁰ Roy Lebkicher, Saudi Arab Education and Training Programs, Memorandum to Members of the Management Committee, February 27, 1955, Aramco Training Programs Folder, Box 20, HRS Papers.

²⁸¹ Aramco, Data Prepared for the Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to Investigate Technical Aid Assistance, March 3, 1955, Box 1, Rentz Papers.

²⁸² Ibid.

The idea of building a technical institute was not dismissed out of hand this third time around. On April 25 Harry Snyder sent L. M. Snyder another proposal urging the company to build the institute. Previously few Saudis were ready for such training. "Conditions and needs, however, are changing rapidly," Harry Snyder noted. Aramco's workforce was in the process of "being upgraded at a rate that removes the urgency to train masses of illiterate and unskilled Saudis." At the same time as Aramco's training was making progress, the character of the available Saudi labor supply was "beginning to reflect the considerable expansion of Government educational facilities in al Hasa Province." He pointed to the fact that many Saudis then applying for jobs had some primary education. He was even optimistic that "within a few years the Company may be able to limit recruiting of new Saudi personnel to graduates of primary schools." To keep pace with these trends Aramco's training facilities and programs must be improved "in quality and levels of learning." Saudis needed to be trained for jobs that required "expert technicians, professional men, supervisors and industrial leaders." To make this possible, Aramco needed to build a technical institute.²⁸³

The proposed Industrial Technical Institute was an extension, Snyder argued, of the Advanced Industrial Training program established in November 1950 to provide full-time vocational training for qualified Saudi employees. The first class numbered 31 and only 37 are enrolled at present. Requests had been received to enroll 101 full-time trainees and 225 part-time trainees in September. Thereafter the demand would skyrocket. He predicted that "by September 1958 in al Hasa Province alone about 700 Saudis [would] be qualified and eager to enroll if vocational secondary schools are available. By September 1960 the

²⁸³ HRS to L.M. Snyder, April 25, 1955, Folder Marked "History of Vocational Schools Project at Aramco H. R. Snyder (Confidential)," Box 19, HRS Papers.

cumulative total may be over 1400." He went on to discuss the public relations benefits of opening the technical secondary school.²⁸⁴

Under separate cover on the same day, Harry Snyder recounted the history of the "Vocational Technical School Project" and called for a reconsideration of the idea.²⁸⁵ In 1949 only 84 Saudis worked in Grade 6 or above. There were now 1131 Saudis in Grade 6 or above. So many more Saudis could now move to this level, but there was no place to train them. The existing Advanced Industrial Training facilities were not sufficient. He worried that someone might beat them to the punch, and he attempted to rally support by playing the "Egyptian card":

It can be predicted with confidence that someone will build a technical secondary school in Saudi Arabia in the not distant future. The Ministry of Education has already indicated hopes of building a technical secondary school at Dammam. It is of first importance to the Company and to the economic welfare of Saudi Arabia that vocational training be established on the American rather than on the Egyptian (French) pattern.

The moment to move was now. King Saud had given Aramco "freedom of action in this respect as being the most direct and effective way of getting out from under the present school system which is so thoroughly entrenched with Egyptian educational ideas." In Harry Snyder's view this was this was a unique opportunity. In his view, the company should commit itself to the idea of the Vocational Technical School as a "matter of principal." Dr.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Harry Snyder to L. M. Snyder, April 25, 1955, Folder Marked "History of Vocational Schools Project at Aramco," Box 19, HRS Papers.

Hall, the senior education consultant, recommended the Instituto Tecnico Federico Santa Maria in Santiago Chile as a model.²⁸⁶

Harry Snyder had done his homework this time. He had worked with W. R. Cooper, Aramco's Chief Engineer in Saudi Arabia, to provide Roy Lebkicher with costing information in a faculties estimate for "Proposed Industrial Technical Institute for 500 Boarding Students." The total cost would be \$8,680,000 for the school, which could be broken out into two increments of \$6,200,000 and \$2,770,000 for a total cost of \$8,970,000. They even included an additional \$290,000 due to breaking out in two increments. They estimated annual operating expenses (including teaching and admin, feeding, school supplies, fixed charges) would be \$2,392,378. This made the cost per student \$4,780. They even mapped capacity requirements out from 1955 to 1960. Including 20% of Al Hasa Elementary School Grads and Qualified Aramco Employees, cumulative totals go from 272 in 1955 to 1480 in 1960. That would outstrip even AIOC's Abadan Technical Institute.²⁸⁷

A week later, worker discontent over unequal transportation accommodation for Saudis led to a series of petitions, protests, work stoppages and boycotts against Aramco. It began on May 2nd with a bus petition demanding that the company replace the inferior contractor-provided buses for Saudis with the equivalent of what the Americans rode in. Aramco refused to adopt that more costly approach, and a bus boycott ensued. More than 3,000 workers from intermediate and general camp signed the petition, in which they also demanded the right to

²⁸⁶ Ibid. Tab A in Snyder's report was a confidential memo to F. A. Davies (New York) February 10, 1953 from F. W. Ohliger which discussed the meetings with Jamal Bey Hussein in Ministry of Education where they discussed the industrial training institute. Crown Prince Saud had suggested that it would be cheaper for Aramco to run the technical institute than to pay the wages to Saudi Employees while they are undergoing training. Also noted that the crown prince wanted Aramco to take this over to provide a way of overcoming the Egyptian influence. Dhahran could be a model for schools in Hofuf, Riyadh, Taif and Jeddah. Tom Barger was at this meeting.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

elect their own representatives on labor matters rather than being represented by the handpicked candidates of the labor office. The boycott would last several months.²⁸⁸

While the bus boycott proceeded, Harry Snyder continued to work on the technical institute proposal. Another letter from W. R. Cooper went to Roy Lebkicher with cost estimates. This time Cooper presented six alternative estimates just for facilities costs. The study had been undertaken with the specifications given by Robert King Hall. The options for housing 500 boarding students ranged from \$2.9 to \$8.5 Million.²⁸⁹

On September 4th, Robert King Hall wrote to Harry Snyder to commiserate over the bad news they had received. Their “high hopes for the Technical Institute” had once again been “put in cold storage.” Hall noted that at Department Level and above they had “solid support, except the District Managers and present Acting General Manager.” The senior production management people simply did not want to spend the money. Roy Lebkicher was not entirely enthusiastic given the cost involved. “Very severe opposition” on the basis of manpower and budget put it off again. Another disconcerting thing was the lack of “support for this among some of the training personnel below the department head level which we do have in management itself.”²⁹⁰

Toward the end of September, Harry Snyder wrote to Hall with some consoling news. He had spoken with Solon Kimball, the Columbia University education professor who recently

²⁸⁸ Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier*, 171-3. Vitalis points out that this is part of global freedom struggle. It is more than a coincidence that seven months later Rosa Parks would be arrested in Montgomery, Alabama for refusing to move to the back of the bus.

²⁸⁹ W. R. Cooper to Roy Lebkicher, August 25, 1955, Box 5, HRS Papers.

²⁹⁰ Robert King Hall to Snyder, September 4, 1955, Personal Correspondence - Training Department (October 2, 1950 – December 27, 1959), Box 20, HRS Papers.

visited Aramco and wrote an article that featured the work of Aramco's Training Division in a positive light. According to Snyder:

He certainly is a convert; says Aramco will be the main theme of his course from now on. He has the highest of praise for your philosophy and objectives. He foresees plenty of stress and strain ahead in the field of human relations and hopes the Company will recognize these areas rather than oil technology as the main problem to be faced.

Hope for the institute was not dead. There were other leads to follow up on too. Harold Clark recommended that Snyder get all available material from Jersey Standard on the Creole Petroleum "social and educational programs." He wanted to know if Hall had any contacts at either of those two companies or should he work through Joe MacDonald, Dale Nix or Terry Duce.²⁹¹

Despite the good intentions of high-minded advocates for Saudi development like Harry Snyder and Robert King Hall, the inequalities of pay, benefits and living conditions continued to gall ambitious Saudis. The taylorized methodologies of trade training, especially the classification tests, must have struck them as degrading. On December 18, two of the highest-paid Saudi intermediate employees at the Heavy Duty Section of Dhahran Garages petitioned King Saud for pay and benefits equivalent to Americans and end to aptitude tests. Starting that same day, swing-shift workers in Abqaiq joined them in protests, adding work stoppages to their grievances. Labor Office agreed to take up their complaints. On December 22, Saudi masons in Abqaiq laid down tools and a week later the efforts of the

²⁹¹ HRS to Robert King Hall, September 24, 1955, Personal Correspondence - Training Department (October 2, 1950 - December 27, 1959), Box 20, HRS Papers. See also Solon T. Kimball, "American Culture in Saudi Arabia," *Transactions of the New York Academy of Sciences* 18, no. 2 (1956): 469-84.

company to put fences around Arab camp ignited further protest. When the Amir got involved, the fences came down.²⁹²

Aramco's labor troubles spread to the training organization itself in late January 1956. On January 22, R. N. White wrote to E. J. Roberts in Dhahran, providing him "an unpolished account of our daily meetings" in the matter of a group of teacher trainees who had complained about the quality of the instruction they were being given. On January 16, Tom Barger and Roy Lebkicher had met with this Saudi government delegation. They expressed the view to the government delegation that the company was responsible for "manual and mental skills and industrial maturation" but left "Cultural Education" to the Government. The Ministry of Education believed that the teacher trainees were justified in their complaint. Barger and Lebkicher believed "the basic trouble with the RT group was that they were under training too long. They had become too remote from company operations and had forgotten why they were being trained." In the face of some doubt on the part of the government representatives, they had attempted to explain that, "in US industrial experience, a close contact between education and job is far more beneficial to the student/trainee than is a long period of education followed by job activity. The two must go together for the best results." When the discussion turned to college education, the Saudi delegation agreed that the company would need to provide close control over what students did. The Aramco representatives pointed out their "generally greater experience in industrial training and the entire industrial métier, to speak (sic) with authority on how to advance the Saudi Arab most rapidly within the Company." In the realm of cultural education, which was not needed for their jobs as teachers in an industrial environment, the company would "naturally" look to the

²⁹² Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier*, 173-6.

government as experts and expected they would provide this kind of education. Their reaction to this statement was “non-committal.”²⁹³

On January 17, the Royal Committee on Labor Affairs joined the Saudi Ministry of Education delegation at Ras Tanura. The Royal Committee wanted to know why there was such unevenness of curriculum between Abqaiq and Ras Tanura. They asked why the company didn't offer geography in Ras Tanura as it did in Abqaiq. The company team replied that they might offer that course "one of these days; it would be nice to teach the employees all sorts of things, but we do not have the time. We must get on with the job." The Royal Committee kept pushing on the set curriculum idea. The company countered that curriculum was not fixed; rather it was based on job needs/requirements. The company granted that it had been a mistake to centralize the Advanced Industrial Training in Dhahran, “where men were physically removed from all contact with supervisors, job and job environment.” It was done because there were only a few who qualified. Now that there were sufficient advanced employees to warrant it, they were going to open AITs in RT and Abqaiq.²⁹⁴

Asked if the eight who had lodged the complaint could continue training, the Aramco team said that it would have to be in the Ras Tanura District, where the instruction was admittedly limited at the present time. The Aramco team took the opportunity to warn the government about “the personal behaviour of these men; to train a man for a responsible job we must be sure that he is a responsible individual whom we can trust.” While they understood this, they argued that the payoff for the company would be even greater if the employees got four full

²⁹³ R. N. White to E. A. Eeds on Aramco Training, Government Investigation, January 22, 1956, Box 22, HRS Papers. The Ministry of Education Group included Sheikh Adb Al-Aziz Turki, Ustadh Mushin Barun, and Ustadh Abd Allah Baghdadi.

²⁹⁴ Ibid. The Royal Committee on Labor Affairs included Salih Al-Utaisham, Ali Al-Ghamdi and Abd Al-Aziz Al-Uhaidib.

years of training. The company's response was that "well-rounded education" is "neither our purpose nor our responsibility."²⁹⁵

After touring Abqaiq GIT on the 18th the Saudi delegation moved on to Dhahran AIT on the 21st. At AIT, they saw classes on typing, bookkeeping, and geography. The Saudis wanted to know lots of details about "numbers of academic and clerical students in each, plus the job titles of the men." Touring the Light and Heavy Duty Garages training units, the head Saudi instructor took them around. The head Saudi instructor made a point that the Aramco team thought was especially worthwhile. "The bedu boys," he said, "come to use with open minds and appreciate what is put therein. They tend to stick close to the job at hand and progress steadily in sequence up the ladder." The trouble makers were "the city boys [who], after a few months, tend to think they know everything and at once set their sights on the topmost rung; they want to go straight to the top without bothering with the intermediate work." Most of the trouble came from these types. What the Saudi government delegation failed to understand, but what that Saudi lead trainer had internalized, were the limits that Aramco had artificially imposed on its Saudi employees. Whereas Aramco believed in limiting Saudi's exposure to only what was "needed for the job," the Saudi government team thought differently. They failed to see how limiting the growth of their people could be good for either the individual or the company.²⁹⁶

The meetings with the Saudi government delegation caused the District Managers to question further the limited commitment the company had already made to General Industrial Training. In the District Managers' Meeting on the 23rd, they wanted to know what the limits

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

of Aramco's commitment actually were. How much training are people supposed to be getting on work time? "Some of our organizations have required that Saudis demonstrate their interest and capacity to handle academics by attending voluntary time classes until they pass the First of Second Levels in GIT," one of the managers noted. The training division people questioned the defensibility of this position, given that "academic requirements are specifically defined or implied in the Wage Progress Steps for many of our jobs. " All present felt that there was "a need for clarification of the Company's position on these points in order that our supervisors understand the training policy and implement it uniformly as to intent." The discussion had gone far enough, as Roy Lebkicher noted in a follow-up note. Lebkicher spoke to Paul Arnot to have this agenda removed from the next District Managers' Meeting and deferred until they could get "policy clarification." Recent meetings had seen the assigned time training issue "drive wedges in [their] own ranks." Caught between exceedingly stingy line management and a Saudi government increasingly impatient with the artificial limits imposed on Saudi workers, the Training Division was between a rock and a hard place.²⁹⁷

The pressure from the Saudi government did not let up. On January 24, the Ministry of Education team returned for a final meeting. Tom Barger, Roy Lebkicher, R. N. White and E. J. Roberts attended on behalf of Aramco. Lebkicher attempted to sum things up by saying that the Company felt the Ras Tanura Teachers case showed that "long-continued separation of employees from a work situation led to misconceptions on the part of the employees of the purpose of our training efforts." The Ministry team wanted to know what the Company was going to do about the eight Ras Tanura trainee teachers now in AIT. The Company

²⁹⁷ R. N. White, Discussion of Company's Responsibility Assigned Time Training of Employees, GIT, January 23, 1956, Box 22, HRS Papers.

representatives proposed again that they would stay at AIT in Dhahran until the end of that semester and then be sent back to do their training at Ras Tanura. The company would “decentralize AIT and offer the same level of training in each District where it would be available on the basis of planned job integrated programs to the eight as well as to scores of other selected Saudi employees.” This would prevent the “attitudes which made their training a very serious problem and that each of the eight would have to be handled individually in terms of very careful analysis of what was needed for his further development.”²⁹⁸

There would be no punishment or penalties for the eight who had complained, nor would Aramco deliberately block their further development. On the contrary, they were “anxious to redirect these employees along sound lines for their benefit as well as the Company's.” They wanted to retain the maximum flexibility and emphatically rejected any limitations on their manoeuvre room. The conversation had begun to sound a good deal like the debates between the Persian Petroleum Department Director and the Anglo-Iranian representatives in working out the general plan in the 1930s. The aspirations of workers and government seemed to be aligning at the expense of the firm.²⁹⁹

The pressure from the Saudi government seems to have worked. On March 6, Robert Hall wrote Harry Snyder to let him know that the company was moving forward with hiring more qualified teachers to staff the new distributed AITs at Abqaiq and Ras Tanura. The company bureaucracy was making the task all the more complicated. It was a "heartbreaking task to get job descriptions, wage and salary action and transfers of personnel accomplished, but little by little we seem to make small but substantial progress." Hall thanked Snyder for the

²⁹⁸ R. N. White to E. A. Eeds on Aramco Training, Government Investigation, January 24, 1956, Box 22.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

background information he had provided on “the tight market in the area of teachers and educational administrators.” He had passed that on to Roy Lebkicher and Bob Eeds. He was “encouraged by policy discussions with regard to future personnel but the actual securing of personnel through the cumbersome machinery we have for recruiting and placement is laborious and time consuming. To date we have achieved authorizations and requisitions, but very few warm bodies in the field.” Committing to staffing up was one thing. Actually doing it would prove to be another.³⁰⁰

Under pressure from the Saudi government and the worker-trainees themselves, Aramco was forming Industrial Training Centers (ITCs) in each of the districts that would replace the old AIT and even older Opportunity School model. The question of extending AIT to the Districts “became the center of considerable managerial attention, so that it seems probable that this operation will be very carefully watched by top management.” Hall emphasized that a “simple solution of part-time work and study each day will not be acceptable, and a real cooperative curriculum must be designed.” Noting the arrival of vocational analysts in the field, he observed happily: “some of them appear to be quite competent.” The area of Job Skill Training remained one of their weakest points. All activity in that area had ceased, since the Divisions had made the unilateral decision to fire all Division Training Advisors. It was these advisors who had been moving the Job Skill Training forward and now the new vocational analysts would need to pick up where the terminated Division Training Advisors had left off. He regretted that he had nothing to report on the “troublesome labor case dealing with the trainee teachers at Ras Tanura.”³⁰¹

³⁰⁰ RKH to HRS, March 6, 1956, Box 21, HRS Papers.

³⁰¹ RKH to HRS, April 25, 1956, HRS Personal Correspondence - Training Department (October 2, 1950 – December 27, 1959), Box 20, HRS Papers.

Hall informed Snyder that the use of Arabic in instruction had also become an issue. They had been “asked by Abqaiq District to clarify the position of Arabic Language, both as a subject on voluntary and assigned time, and also as a vehicle of instruction.” Hall had drafted and secured approval by Mr. Eeds of an interpretation of existing company policy that allowed Arabic to be used in voluntary courses and for training in specific jobs on assigned time. They were going to use “Arabic as the vehicle of instruction only where lack of communication or a clear link with the subject matter is indicated.” Bilingual instructors were to be used only when absolutely necessary.³⁰² Snyder would want to know this when he went out to the field again from his sojourn in the USA where he had taken leave to pursue his doctoral coursework at Columbia.³⁰³

In early 1956, Aramco had formed a new body named the Saudi Development Policy Committee. Chaired by the VP of Industrial Relations, Tom Barger sat on the committee, as did Roy Lebkicher and Paul Arnot. It also had subcommittees for Abqaiq, Dhahran, Ras Tanura and the General Office headed by the District Manager. On June 1, this body published a document entitled *Aramco Basic Patterns for Developing High-Potential Saudi Employees* that described the labels that Aramco would assign to every Saudi employee a category from A to E. Once assigned the label, that assignment was to be kept in strictest confidence. No Saudi employee was to know his own label. As the report warned, “[p]ublic

³⁰² Ibid

³⁰³ RKH to HRS, April 26, 1956, HRS Personal Correspondence - Training Department (October 2, 1950 – December 27, 1959), Box 20, HRS Papers. In this short personal note, Hall expressed concern that there be no “slip up” and that HRS return to the field with all the work done but his dissertation. The gap in the Snyder files for 1957, when he was at Columbia, poses a problem for continuity in this narrative. He did, however, finish his course work and went on a few years later to write his dissertation on the topic of building a community college for Saudi Arabia.

identification of a candidate as being in Pattern A, B, C, etc., must be scrupulously avoided.³⁰⁴

To receive a C label, designating a worker as of the “highest potential,” the employee would need to demonstrate “intelligence, loyalty, stability, diligence, initiative, and high ratings on supervisors' appraisals.” The Saudi Development Policy Committee was concerned about the “proper handling of high-potential Saudi employees who fail to measure up to estimated abilities or capabilities.” These men could present a challenge to “retain their talents for Aramco use and their good will as loyal employees.” In order that they not turn against the company, “wise counselling and capable work supervision” would be necessary. While all of the patterns required caution and control in the process, Pattern C was the most potentially troubling. In describing the pattern's key points, Key Point 5 stated “Planned methods for, and curriculum modifications to allow, any employee to discontinue this sequence if he is approaching or has reached his developmental stage.” A footnote stressed the importance of this point: “NOTE: # 5 of Pattern Key Points, above, is very important and must be planned with the utmost care so that the good will and constructive attitude of the candidate is retained at all times.”³⁰⁵

On June 9, workers held up banner seeking the King’s support in their struggle for justice in Aramco just as King Saud entered the compound. As a result of this public embarrassment of

³⁰⁴ R. A. Eeds, *Aramco Basic Patterns for Developing High-Potential Saudi Employees*, Box 17, HRS Papers. The patterns were as follows: PATTERN A - - For long service employees with limited formal education; PATTERN B - For comparatively young employees whose interests are predominantly in craft, clerical or operational type jobs; PATTERN C - For young employees of highest potential who can be developed to do work requiring high mental ability now predominantly performed by non-Saudis with secondary or college education; PATTERN D - For qualified and carefully selected Saudis requiring out-of-kingdom education; PATTERN E - For Saudi college graduates, new employees returned from Company scholarships, and Saudi Senior Staff employees in training.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

the King, two days later the King issued a decree banning unions. When a demonstration broke out a few days later in Ras Tanura, empowered by the new decree the Amir sent in the police to break it up. With Aramco's help the local police located the 10 workers who organized the demonstration, hauled them out after prayers, whipped them 100 times each, and threw them in prison. They had demand to be allowed to watch the same movies Pakistanis and Palestinians were allowed to watch.³⁰⁶

In the wake of these events, Aramco operationalized its guidelines for preventing the further growth of "anti-company leaders" in a July 3 circular from T. R. Brannen. He warned his readers that unnamed "anti-company leaders" now predominated. Such an insidious influence could be working secretly, organizing resistance to company direction after hours while appearing during the workday to be model employees. The answer was to build a positive role model of "pro-company leadership." It would be this pro-company leadership that would have the patience to tolerate a long, slow tutelage in western ways of work and not demand immediate equality. They would help convince others to wait for promotion to principal technical and clerical positions. Accepting the separate and unequal pay scales and benefits which accompanied them for themselves, the pro-company Saudi leaders would know their place. The difficulty was that both anti-and pro-company leaders were the Pattern C employees. Brannen's guidance would help Aramco's management team get the "bright boys" back on track.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁶ Robert Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 159-60.

³⁰⁷ T. R. Brannen, Leadership Among Saudi Arab Employees of Aramco, July 3, 1956, Box 5, HRS Papers. On the demands of demonstrators and strikers see Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier*, 179.

Education and Training in the Last Days of Aramco's "Age of Ignorance"

In June 1957, Robert King Hall replaced Roy Lebkicher as Aramco's Director of Training.³⁰⁸

As a consultant, he had been a voice for reform in the firm's programs. He framed his critiques within the larger context of personnel policies. He brought a global perspective to the problem. His approach reveals a great deal about the ways in which companies rationalized the separate and unequal systems. In the American case it was one for Americans and another for Saudis. In the AIOC case it had been one for British staff and another for Iranians.

In one analysis, he described the problem as a conflict between an "emotional" and a "logical" evaluation of the Company Program:

It would be a serious mistake to base the Company policy solely upon justice, as measured by Western - and specifically by American - standards of ethics. Justice is not enough. And American Justice may at times appear to be quite unjust by Saudi Arab and Islamic Standards. The Company policy must be just - but this will be only a minimum of achievement. It must also be emotionally appealing. For the Company will be judged as much on an emotional basis as on logic.³⁰⁹

He rationalized the company's "restriction to senior staff of rental of homes with A/C, purchase of imported goods, use of Company script and use of toilet facilities" as a "natural" outcome of the present system. The Saudis didn't have the ability to do senior staff jobs due to lack of education and training, so they were excluded on the basis of skills. With not enough facilities to go around, this was "just."

³⁰⁸Pledge, Dialdin, and Tahlawi, *Saudi Aramco and Its People: A History of Training*, 73-74.

³⁰⁹ Robert King Hall, Report on Aramco's Education and Training Program (Confidential), n.d., Robert King Hall Reports Folder, Box 20, HRS Papers.

Hall understood that the Saudis would take a different view. "Such an explanation is logical, and it may be just. But it probably will not satisfy the Saudi Arab working alongside an American Senior Staff member, and unable to enjoy equal advantages." From the Saudi perspective, "His resentments will be directed against the Company, and not against his own country for failing to make available educational facilities which would give him legitimate access to the Senior Staff position and the desirable services." This Saudi position has logic of its own. "Since such educational facilities do not in fact exist in Saudi Arabia," Hall reasoned, "it is unrealistic to argue that there is free competition for higher positions."³¹⁰

Hall perceived the danger of Saudi nationalism and placed it within the larger Middle East context:

The Saudi sooner or later will come to feel that he has been discriminated against by the Company. Following the pattern in other Middle Eastern nations, he will almost certainly reduce it to an over-simplified formula: "They're taking our oil, - but we can't get the good jobs in the company."

It was therefore essential that Aramco build elementary schools to head off the growth of Saudi nationalism. If SAG doesn't build schools, then the company will be blamed. He went on to frame the issue of equitable treatment within a comparison between AIOC and Aramco. In his most elegant summary of AIOC programs he argued:

The equity of the Anglo-Iranian Concession terms and policy within Iran may possibly be debatable. The legality can hardly be questioned. At least with regard to the educational and training program, the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company carried out a very noteworthy and generous policy. For the technical and personnel problems with which the Company was faced, it is doubtful if a better educational system - from a purely technical viewpoint - could have been devised. It was excellent. It trained

³¹⁰ Ibid.

about 93,000 employees, from mono-skilled workmen to graduate engineers returned from study in England.

The “crucial test” which AIOC “failed miserably” was the one that involved producing an “informed and sympathetic leadership in Iran with whom the Company might deal.” AIOC did not “create any body of loyalty among the common people of the country, which would support the Company's policy in time of crisis.”³¹¹

The British historian Arnold J. Toynbee had recently stressed the importance of associating Aramco interest with Saudi Arabian national interest. In Toynbee’s analysis, AIOC failed because it didn't get the company identified as a "Persian national interest". Aramco's public relations, Toynbee argued, would keep the company out of this trouble. What Hall seems to have ignored in his selective reading of Toynbee was the latter’s point that Americans had isolated themselves like the British had 150 years earlier. Around 1800 the British walled themselves off from the Indians, stopping the easy social mixing that had occurred. He located the cause for this separation partly with British nationalism and militarism, and partly with the “new” colonialism. He pointed out that it was also made possible by the steamboat, which allowed the British to return to England and not have to mix with the native population. "This made the English community in India become, like the American community in Arabia, a living fragment of the English nation that happened to be living temporarily in an exotic environment." This had contributed to the environment that led to the Sepoy Mutiny at mid-century. Toynbee encouraged Aramco to learn from the mistakes of the British and integrate with the Saudis.³¹²

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Arnold J Toynbee, Report for Aramco, n.d., Box 19, HRS Papers.

For Hall, and the training division team that he led, there was no reason to heed this radical advice. The effective management of training, to include the indoctrination of Saudi recruits, could help produce that grateful and loyal group of Saudis. More efficient training would make the Saudis appreciate Aramco. It would win over their hearts, and their minds would follow. Integration of facilities was not only unnecessary it was unmentioned. Rather, to ensure that the company was getting the best recruits to undergo this indoctrination, it was essential that managers use the 90-day window for pre-job training to eliminate Saudis who would not fit in. The firm also needed to hire qualified instructors and stop trying to have line supervisors with no background in pedagogy create curriculum and teach students. This was, as has been noted, costly and ineffective.

Most important in Hall's analysis was the implication that company training was proletarianizing the Saudi worker instead of producing a middle class. Line training had sustained "a group of highly skilled leaders who determine precisely what the workers will do." These formed the ruling class of Americans, who lorded it over "a mass of semi-skilled [Saudi] workmen who unthinkingly repeat certain learned procedures without really understanding why." Training should produce thinking, middle class Saudis, instead of proletarians ripe for revolution. Elkington in AIOC would have agreed with this objective. He had never admitted to a failure of the AIOC training policy, however. AIOC had won the hearts and minds of many Iranians. The failure to retain the concession was due to outside agitators, not the loyal cadre of middle class Iranian managers and senior technicians that the unquestionably legal AIOC training system produced.³¹³

³¹³ Ibid.

In his re-examination of Aramco's education and training program, Hall produced one of the more sophisticated analyses of the company's programs. He saw the challenges of a system in which education and training are "processes which cannot exist in isolation from the society in which they are located." The Aramco programs dealt with "real cultures, existing at definite times and at definite places." He understood that "any educational process will inevitably be modified by and in turn modify the culture in which it exists." For these reasons, the company needed to reconcile the educational policy to a number of vested interests. In this field he included the Saudi government and population, parent companies and the oil industry, employees of Aramco, neighboring Middle Eastern States, and the United States. He noted pressures from outside and the potential for Communist subversion (in addition to nationalism). Changing social conditions with the urbanization of Al Hasa and first strike fall 1953 had changed the educational and training situation. The production slow-down had brought the end of mass hiring and with it the end of the "emergency character of training."³¹⁴

Sophisticated though this report was, Hall was thoroughly invested in the system and could not see outside of it. He shared the generally held Aramco assumptions about the role of the middle class, assumptions shared by the leadership of AIOC as well. Instead of calling for equity, he called for the establishment of "training consciousness." An example of the limitations of his proposals was his observations on the "Wage Step System." He pointed out "Much of the criticism of this system has stemmed from the belief that this related knowledge is an unnecessary and undesirable requirement, which tends to lead to salary increments on

³¹⁴ Robert King Hall, Reexamination of Aramco's Education and Training Program, n.d., Robert King Hall Reports Folder, Box 20, HRS Papers.

the basis of education rather than work performance." The system was "essentially sound" and could be adjusted over time.³¹⁵

The problem was with supervisors who were not competent teachers:

It would almost appear that some production supervisors, unable to determine any valid basis for measuring the progress of their workmen on the basis of the work they are performing, have turned to the convenient but exceedingly arbitrary standard of some achievement in arithmetic and English, which may be quite irrelevant to the actual performance of the work demanded.

The key to his paternalistic recommendation was to find competent, trained teachers with a "genuine willingness to work with the Saudi and to respect him as an individual, not an employment number." Teachers also needed "command of at least working Arabic, and willingness to teach the Saudi directly, not through interpreters or Foreign Contract leadmen." With "thorough knowledge of the operational process and ability to perform in the production line," such an instructor would "command the respect of production supervisors." The instructor would display an "interest in teaching, willingness to perform the operations himself, and resistan[ce] to the temptations to become a 'white collar' administrative assistant in the air-conditioned office." Thus positioned, the competent trainer was ready to fill the empty vessel that was the compliant Saudi. Never did Hall countenance taking the Saudi into this partnership, involving him in the process of charting a course for his own development. For this most enlightened of professional educators, the partnership was absolutely one sided.³¹⁶

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

Hall's paternalism extended to his discussion of the Saudi Scholarship Program. He thought that it was "eminently wise not to send Saudi Arabian undergraduate students to the United States, but to restrict them to excellent Middle Eastern Universities." Sending Saudi students to schools within the region would have the additional benefit of developing a critical mass of students at the same school, allowing for the development of camaraderie amongst the students. In this sense, his views represented a substantial change over those of men like Powell Ownby who had regarded Saudi students as deviants in need of constant surveillance instead of paternalistic care. Hall's attitude was closer to C. L. Hawker's than C. C. Mylles.³¹⁷

For Hall training was a matter of "Developing Attitudes and Citizenship." He evoked the historical precedent of the European and American Christian Mission Schools in the Middle East. Like the Communists, they have been effective in making converts to their way of life. He urged Aramco to adapt a model of the "American Way of Life" that was truly attractive. He warned that Americans were often inferior ambassadors for that way of life, and the Saudi was "especially repelled in his contact with certain types of personnel. He is hurt, angered, repelled, or puzzled by discrimination and rudeness which he occasionally encounters." Hall's cure for the "ugly American" was greater selectivity in "recruitment, indoctrination, and supervision of the ARAMCO Senior Staff personnel." The benefit of greater selectivity in senior staff positions would be that these new men could be relied upon to continue the development of "worthy talent in the Saudi population." Echoing T.R. Brannen's call for pro-company leaders, he pointed out that carefully selected American supervisors could "train Saudi discussion leaders able to convince by persuasion." Propaganda was not limited

³¹⁷ Ibid.

to developing pro-company Saudis. The company also needed to “train American Senior Staff to present the case of the Company effectively.”³¹⁸

He worried about "Ideological Situations" in which Saudi employees “indicate that they consider the Company to be 'exploiting' the Arab.” He saw some evidence of the rise of “extreme Nationalist and Communist attitudes, perhaps incited by professional organizers.” Other Saudis “have distorted ideas about the Company as a center of 'foreignism' and of 'vice.’” Even though it would be difficult to combat these ideas, it was essential that the company do so. He took heart from the “loyalty of the Saudi Arab Intermediate Staff in the 1953 strike.” This was “an encouraging sign of resistance to these ideas.”³¹⁹

A first step in shoring up Saudis against the allures of “extreme Nationalism” and Communism, would be addressing “unfortunate attitudes in training.” An important role of training in Aramco was to teach Saudi Arabs that training is a privilege and not a right. They were to learn that training should be on voluntary time instead of company time. Wage increases were not automatic and must be earned. One of the greatest perils was the development of a class of “professional trainees” for whom training had become a way of life. Supervisors had abetted this development by using General Industrial Training as a “convenient dumping ground for unwanted Saudi employees.” While he noted “slight evidences of bitterness and contempt for Saudi employees-frequently stemming from a feeling that Senior Staff positions at the lowest level are beginning to be threatened,” he did offer a solution for this insecurity. He refrained from confronting the inherent problem that promoting Saudis would inevitably mean Saudis taking jobs held by Americans. Curiously,

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

he seemed to believe that Americans were being irrational in worrying about their jobs. Evidently logic was defined by corporate interest.³²⁰

Hall's concerns with students' susceptibility to the allures of nationalism were well founded. Hall and Snyder had access to evidence of the ways in which Pan-Arab Nationalism was linked via technical training to trade unionism. In January 1958, for instance, the Aramco Overseas Company Representative in Cairo, Egypt attended the "Conference on Vocational and Technical Education for Arab Countries of the Middle East." At this conference, amongst calls for stirring the imagination and creativity of students, was the suggestion that free schooling be provided to technical school students and that the graduates of technical schools should join trade unions. In correspondence between the Cairo representative, Harry Snyder and Robert Hall over the matter copious marginalia document their concerns with the potential that loyalty to a trade union might come between the individual Saudi and the company. They made sure to prepare a memo to Eeds, warning him that employees who were trained in Egypt could have developed trade union affiliations.³²¹

Transforming the Saudi worker into a middle class citizen of Aramco was complicated by a "desperate lack of real talent." In March 31, 1958, Robert Hall wrote to Harry Snyder to complain that 47 positions of the total 207 authorized senior staff slots in training were unfilled. "We are so short of talent of any real quality [that] the organization is in desperate straits." It would take two or three years to remedy the situation. While most programs were going well, "only Job Skills Training is giving us really serious concern." This was a "long and complicated problem." Hall and Snyder had been fighting for years to get qualified

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ J. A. Fadil to R. K. Hall, January 21, 1958, Box 19, HRS Papers.

personnel to do this work, where most Aramco managers did not see the need to retain classification specialists. Hall was happy to report that they were “beginning to get the new vocational analysts and we are certainly going to give this system every possible chance to succeed.”³²²

All was not gloomy in the training division in 1958. According to the annual report to the Saudi Arabian Government, Aramco had built 9 primary schools for the Saudi Government since 1953. Yet, it was the difficulties in job skills training that preoccupied Hall and Snyder that year. Though Aramco paid the teachers’ salaries, the Saudi government controlled the curriculum in those schools. These were not the locus for indoctrination in “the American way of life.” That program would be confined to the schools that Aramco actually ran. Hence the emphasis on the Industrial Training Centers at which job skills would be taught. The devotion to the idea of an Aramco training institute sprung from the same desire to control the ideological content of training.³²³

In the fall of 1958, the Saudi press became an instrument for exerting pressure for reform in Aramco education. Abdullah Tariki, Saudi Arabia’s Minister of Petroleum and Minerals, granted an interview to a Saudi newspaper in early September 1958. In a September 10 article, the interviewing journalist began by explaining how American magazines were “attacking him bitterly.” Oil, the headline blared, was a source of power and national wealth. That national wealth was being controlled by a foreign power, and *Hira* wanted to know Tariki’s position on the matter. The journalist had recently toured Aramco installations and seen “a great number of Saudi workers but they do not hold important jobs related to the oil

³²² RKH to HRS, March 31, 1958, HRS Personal Correspondence - Training Department (October 2, 1950 – December 27, 1959), Box 20, HRS Papers.

³²³ Viola, *Human Resources Development in Saudi Arabia: Multinationals and Saudization*, 15.

industry and the majority only learn simple crafts. A large number of them work as servants ...“ In the paper’s view, this was inconsistent with the Saudi national interest, which they defined as “the creation of a working class which will understand the oil industry very well.” Asked for his view, Tariki replied that the government’s duty was “to prepare such workers and to educate our countrymen so that, when they are fully prepared, we shall be able to impose them on industry and protect them through laws against the competition of foreign workers.” The preparation of his countrymen meant that Aramco needed to build a healthy living environment, including schools, hospitals, and public facilities. These were the same demands that the oil workers in Aramco had been making themselves for the last decade. Like Nasrullah Jehangir in Iran a quarter of a century before, Tariki was now publicly throwing the weight of the government behind the workers’ cause.³²⁴

Discussing the government responsibility for vocational and industrial education, Tariki called the situation of the Ministry of Education “delicate.” They ran the risk of making of the Saudi population “a bunch of clerks and semi-educated persons who do not greatly benefit themselves or their country.” He advised the public to “study geology, engineering, economics, accounting, and all subjects directly related to the oil industry.” Echoing the dialogue from the 1930s in Iran, he declared, “The graduation of one Saudi geologist means the saving of the money spent on a foreign expert.” There was more joy, indeed, in the appointment of one senior staff member than in the hiring of a thousand clerks. Tariki’s strategy was to “nationalize the oil industry, not by seizing the property of others, but by making it a national industry, with its [Saudi] employees and technicians.” The Saudi Minister of Petroleum and Minerals could not have been more direct. Nationalization of the

³²⁴ “The No. 1 Man in Middle East Oil Talks to *Hira*, Interview with *Hira* (English Translation), September 10, 1958, Personal Correspondence - Training Department (October 2, 1950 – December 27, 1959), Box 20, HRS Papers.

industry was the goal, and education was the means to make that happen. The Saudis in Aramco were to be trained to take over the company.³²⁵

The task of responding to Abdullah Tariki's *Hira* interview fell to Harry Snyder. He wrote to Tariki praising his "astuteness and tact" in responding to difficult questions which, "in less competent and sympathetic hands, could have been handled in a manner that would have been a disservice to all concerned." Snyder relayed the company's gratitude for "the highly professional and friendly manner in which you conducted the interview." More than most, he knew how accurate Tariki's understanding of their programs was. All the extant evidence points to the conclusion that Snyder and Hall agreed with the objectives which Tariki was setting out for his country. Paternalistic though they were, Hall and Snyder believed that at the end of the long slow tutelage was Saudi Arabia's control and ownership of its own national resources.³²⁶

As Snyder sent his flattering letters to Tariki, B. C. Nelson circulated a labor relations report to Fred Davies, Tom Barger, Harry Snyder, Robert King Hall and the rest of the senior management team.³²⁷ Reviewing the history of Aramco personnel, he reported that since 1940 Aramco had hired 55,000 Saudi Arabs and 18,000 Americans. Despite the fact that during the last two decades 73,000 Saudis and Americans "have rubbed shoulders together in the Eastern Province under Company auspices," the current payroll of 2,600 Americans

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ HRS to Abdullah Tariki, September 1958, HRS Personal Correspondence - Training Department (October 2, 1950 - December 27, 1959), Box 20, HRS Papers. Snyder wrote another short note to Tariki in Jeddah on November 10, 1958. Snyder assured Tariki that he "believe[d] it to be important that the people of Arabia are informed of the operation of their natural resources, their benefits, and problems. You may always rest assured that such undertakings will be handled in the most accurate, honest, and truthful manner." See Abdullah Tariki to HRS, November 10, 1958, HRS Personal Correspondence - Training Department (October 2, 1950 - December 27, 1959), Box 20, HRS Papers.

³²⁷ B. C. Nelson, Labor Relations Report, October 1, 1958, Aramco Training Programs Folder, Box 20, HRS Papers.

and 12,300 Saudis were still in the process of “acculturation.” Indications were that most Americans had learned little about Saudi Arabia during the time they spent in Aramco. As evidence for this conclusion, he recounted the tale of the 12-year veteran who “phoned public relations the day before he left to get some printed material on SA so he could answer people's questions at home.”³²⁸

In contrast with the recalcitrant American worker, the Saudi had come a long way since the Americans began bringing them into the industrial labor force. Nelson recalled "Aramco's major local Labor Relations problems began thirteen years ago with its Al Hasa recruiting drive to secure manpower for the Ras Tanura Refinery.” The Bedouins, were “the choicest employment prospects: muscular, with good eyesight, excellent teeth, general stamina, and willing disposition.” Because of the association in Saudi society of craft labour with the slave class, the Bedu “stubbornly refused to have anything to do with the crafts.” Happy to “dig ditches and perform general laborer work ... any attempt on the part of the Americans to bring them close to carpentry or the machinist's bench would meet with sullen responses.” Initially the Bedu wanted to be drivers because it most closely resembled work of camel-drivers. It had taken a "decade of American exasperation" to get Bedouin into Aramco shops as "machinists, mechanics, drillers, carpenters, painters, masons, welders, warehousemen and clerks." The cultural transformation was near completion, however. The last challenge, inducing the Bedouin to accept “plumbing work or anything having to do with sanitation detail,” was unlikely to be conquered soon. Citing a 1956 example of three Bedu from Ras Tanura who appealed to the Uncle of the King when asked to work on a sanitation detail, he

³²⁸ Ibid.

reminded his readers that the King's uncle advised the company that they could not require tribesmen to use a broom.³²⁹

Nelson also wrote optimistically that the seven Saudi senior staff families in Dhahran were fitting in as well. Though Saudi housewives wouldn't give up the preparation of elaborate meals for simpler American fare, there was hope for the integration of Saudi families with American culture. Saudi wives and mothers had begun to "let down their hair" by taking off the Islamic headscarf inside senior staff camp. He also related the story of a Saudi senior staff member's wife who had even been seen running out to play baseball with American kids.³³⁰

Having thus laid the rhetorical foundation for the "domestication" of the Saudi worker, the company could now admit, to itself at least, that it had been busy disassembling its "retrograde system for disciplining and punishing Saudi workers."³³¹ With the Bedu giving up their wrong-headed resistance to craftwork and Saudi wives "letting down their hair," Nelson circulated another labor relations report on December 30. In "The Boys in the Back Room," he caricatured the early personnel operations in a manner sure to raise a hearty chuckle in the senior staff ranks. In his narrative of labor relations from 1945-1958, Nelson related the story of the "Young Man from Berkeley," first director of Arab Personnel who fired eight Arab watchmen only to have them return in different clothing. The Back Room, where discipline was handled, "combined the atmosphere of the Pit in Chicago with that of the Night Court in lower Manhattan." To diffuse the tensions animating a senior Aramco management under assault by Saudi workers and government alike he used a combination of

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Vitalis, *America's Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier*, 206-7.

humor and homely metaphor as a rhetorical strategy, making it safe to admit Saudis had indeed referred to the system of disciplining labor in place ever since the company ramped up production in 1945 as “an age of darkness.”³³²

Reforms had been underway since early 1956, when following more than a year of labor disturbances the company had come up with the Saudi Development Plan and substituted warning notices for time off without pay. In March 1958, the company had symbolically destroyed Bunkhouse 25, where the personnel office had been located previously. They set up a new personnel office in the South Administration building. Six months later, following Tariki’s article in *Hira*, the company advised American supervisors to remove from Saudi personnel folders records of employees’ ‘infractions.’ With the Minister of Petroleum and Minerals taking the workers case to the press, the firm had come up with a new “Performance Improvement Program.”³³³

At the same time as the company was preparing to roll out the “Performance Improvement Program,” it was starting to fund scholarships for overseas study by Saudi employees. In addition to setting up the Industrial Training Centers in the Districts, it was also under Robert King Hall that the firm initiated a formal Aramco Scholarship program. In 1957 Aramco had struck an agreement with the Saudi Ministry of Education to formalize an Aramco scholarship program. The Ministry and the company would struggle for control of final candidate selection for 20 scholarships in 1958 and 60 scholarships for 1959. At issue were

³³² B. C. Nelson, The Boys in the Back Room, Special Labor Relations Reports, December 30, 1958, Aramco Historical Documents Folder, Box 19, HRS Folders.

³³³ Ibid.

the fields of study they would pursue, the countries in which they would study and the schools they would attend.³³⁴

As C. L. Hawker had been an advocate for his “Persian boys,” so too Harry Snyder sought to advance promising Saudis. With the new scholarship program in full swing, in early 1959 he was corresponding with the Dean of MIT’s engineering school in an attempt to secure positions there for the most promising Saudi employees, the Aramco acquiescence to the demands from their workers and the Saudi Government for expanded higher education opportunities was hedged in by a myriad of fears and uncertainties. AUB’s Harold Hazen thought the best Saudis might have a “fair chance” of admission, but suggested they start at a smaller school and then attempt to transfer to MIT after becoming acclimatized to American higher education. It had been with similar concerns in mind that AIOC had selected Coddington Hall in Newark for the location of their Persian students. Aramco had historically relied on the American University of Beirut, as AIOC relied on Stuart Memorial College, as a reliable training ground for young nationals. An alliance with an equivalent to Birmingham University for Aramco was slow in coming, though Aramco was building alliances with a variety of institutions.³³⁵

Failing to get support for projects like the admission to MIT for the brightest Saudi employees, Snyder was hedged in between an Aramco management team that was rejecting

³³⁴ Viola, *Human Resources Development in Saudi Arabia: Multinationals and Saudization*, 12.

³³⁵ Harold T. Hazen to HRS, March 13, 1959, Personal Correspondence - Training Department (October 2, 1950 - December 27, 1959), Box 20, HRS Papers. An April 23, 1959 memorandum summarized Aramco Donations to Higher Education Institution as follows: AUB 53-58 - \$1,233,030.07, ACS 53, 56, 57 - \$130,243.81, AU Cairo 53-58 - \$56,521.84, Kennedy Memorial Hospital - 56-58 \$ 9,267.65, Princeton University - Since 54 \$15,000 per year for King Saud Chair of Arabic Studies, John Hopkins University - 53-58- \$80,500.00, Harvard University - 54-58 - \$90,000.00, University of Michigan - 54-58 - \$25,000.00. The same report listed the cost of the Scholarship Program for Saudi Students in the 1957-58 academic years as \$101,696.02. Memorandum on Data for Department of Zakat and Income Tax, April 23, 1959, Box 21, HRS Papers.

his proposals for a technical institute and pressure from the Saudi Government to promote their nationals. In a letter to Tariki on September 20th, he expressed his personal anguish at hearing that Tariki had expressed the view that "we people in Aramco hate Arabs; that Arabs are never going to get anyplace in Aramco; that we regard them and will continue to regard them as third-class citizens." For the man who had spent the last decade trying to advance Saudis, and most recently was interceding with the Deans of MIT on behalf of his Saudi charges, such a thought was too much to bear. He told Tariki that he suspected the latter had been quoted incorrectly or out of context:

You doubtless have had ample reason, at times, to be irritated with and impatient with out actions or lack of actions. I do not maintain that we are blameless, but most of us are doing the best we can. Our efforts may not be good enough, but you are wholly wrong if you should harbor any suspicions that we dislike Arabs and are not sincerely interested in assisting them to qualify for the highest possible positions in the Company in the shortest possible period of time.

"It would be intolerably discouraging to those of us who are devoting our professional lives to the education and training of our Arab colleagues," Snyder pleaded, "if we thought you do hold the views attributed to you." Signing his letter as "Harry" and with kindest personal regards, he refused to believe that Tariki would think ill of him, a dedicated who had devoted much of his adult life to Saudi development. It was a letter that could have been written by C. L. Hawker.³³⁶

³³⁶ HRS to Abdullah Tariki, September 20, 1959, HRS Personal Correspondence - Training Department (October 2, 1950 - December 27, 1959), Box 20, HRS Papers.

Towards a Saudi Talented Tenth?

Harry Snyder made an uncharacteristic cameo appearance in Grant Butler's 1960 *Kings and Camels*, where he explained the training program in Aramco as part of the "partnership in progress" with the Saudis. Appearing as Coordinator of General and Industrial Education for Aramco, he explained for the reader that the company knew most Saudi Arabian workers were at the bottom of the labor force. Few Saudis were able to rise above menial jobs. Butler's Snyder noted that this was due to a lack of education and training. That was where the Aramco training program came in, providing opportunities for Saudis to learn and grow with the company. Everyone benefited from the program: the Saudi worker, the American company and the nation of Saudi Arabia. The training program was, Snyder said, "good common sense."³³⁷

To reinforce the message of training as vehicle for Arab self-betterment, Butler went on in *Kings and Camels* to chart the development of the Saudi Arab Sami Hussein from Bedouin Arab to Aramco employee in New York City. Sami Hussein's story was a propagandistic antidote to the story of Abu Sunayed, a narrative that the company buried. Sami Hussein and Abu Sunayed were both promising young Saudis trained at company expense. They both served as teachers at the Long Island Foreign Service Training Center and then went on to training in Beirut. While Abu Sunayed was leading protests, Sami Hussein was cooperating with Andy Anderson to secure a return to his beloved New York. In this fantastic account, Sami Hussein the Arab becomes Sami Hussein the American. He joins the American "melting pot," marrying a "Spanish" girl. He also becomes an ambassador for Arab-Israeli

³³⁷ Grant C. Butler, *Kings and Camels; an American in Saudi Arabia* (New York: Devin-Adair Co., 1960).

peace by helping his Jewish neighbor with her garden and giving talks at his local community center to foster better understanding of the Arabs. After reading Sami's story, it would be exceedingly difficult for an American in 1959 to give credence to Abu Sunayed's story. What the average American reader was hearing from Saudi Arabia, even in as sophisticated a publication as the *New York Times*, was that Dhahran was like an "American suburb."³³⁸ Sami was familiar, and his story played to a myriad of American myths, from the melting pot to the belief in the self-made man.

As Butler was crafting this fantastical account, the Aramco Training Division engaged in a flurry of its own history writing. The Training Division was approaching its ten-year anniversary in 1959. Harry Snyder was involved in that exercise as well, but to very different effect. Robert King Hall pulled together all the functional area heads within the central department to report on the current status of their areas of responsibility and place that status in the context of ten years of development.³³⁹ In assembling the report, Harry Snyder reviewed the slow and steady progress with Saudi Scholarships and "Schools for Sons of Muslim and Arab Employees." In one supporting document he reviewed the frustrating history of the "Vocational Secondary School Project," recounting the sad legacy of 16 proposals he and others had made to management since 1945 for a Saudi Technical Institute. Management had rejected all 16 proposals as too costly. Even renaming the Technical Institute as the "Vocational Secondary School" had not allayed management's concerns. In the final report, the "Historic Decision for Job Skills Training" was portrayed accurately, as a

³³⁸ Dana Adams Schmidt, "Arabian Oil Town of Dhahran is Like U. S. Suburb," *The New York Times*, November 23, 1959.

³³⁹ Aramco, *The Growth of Training Policy (1949-1959)*, 1959, Box 21, HRS Papers.

radical deskilling of work based in the World War II assembly line; no mention was made of the Vocational Secondary School.³⁴⁰

Instead of a Technical Institute, the company was focusing on the “Saudi Development Program.” Rather than bemoan his losses, Hall had thrown his energy into developing Saudis under the recently updated guidelines from the Saudi Policy Development Committee, which had reissued its guidance in the summer of 1958. Paul Case reported to Hall on the new and improved Saudi Development Program. Under Hall’s direction, he had made a survey of 22 U.S. Colleges and Universities to determine the best fit for Saudi candidates. The results of the Annual Saudi Talent Survey came in August, and Hall used the datacenter’s I.B.M. system to analyze the data. In an effort to make his logic unassailable, he had let the computer program identify promising Saudi candidates. The analysis he oversaw identified both candidates for training in the Middle East and for Out-of-Kingdom training that would last up to five years.³⁴¹

By the time the final 10-year review was circulating amongst senior management in late 1959, the Robert King Hall era in training at Aramco was coming to a close. His consistent pressure for a Saudi Training Institute had not endeared him to senior management, who had done everything possible to avoid the expenses involved in such a venture. Line supervisors resented his multiple advanced degrees. When he was appointed Director of Training, he had insisted on being “Doctor” Hall. Hall had never been “an ordinary worker,” nor was he a retired military officer. Hall had encouraged Snyder to complete his doctorate and brought a

³⁴⁰ HRS, Vocational Secondary School (Formerly, Technical Institute), August 17, 1959, Box 21, HRS Paper.

³⁴¹ Paul E. Case to RKH, October 17, 1959, Box 21, HRS Papers.

number others with advanced degrees to the filed.³⁴² His attempt to “play down doctorates in the field” could not camouflage his conviction that he knew what was best for just about everyone, Saudis and line supervisors included. Bad feelings had accumulated on all sides over the past two years. During summer leave in July, he attended a conference in Tokyo to speak on “Job Skills Training” at which he made had made a pitch again for the importance of higher education for Saudis.³⁴³

Pressure for expanded involvement on the elementary education front was also coming fast and furious. On October 23, 1959, King Saud made a royal proclamation calling on Aramco to expand its support for elementary education to include schools for girls.³⁴⁴ Tom Barger, a man on the move with his eye on the CEO’s office, attempted to get ahead of the curve on this one by submitting a recommendation that the company commit itself to a serious building program for Girls’ Schools. His November 4th memorandum charted the course that the company would follow in the 1960s under his leadership. By limiting subsidies to elementary schooling, when it was readily apparent that there was a growing cadre of candidates for a Saudi talented tenth, the company would appear to be “progressive” while at the same time extending the long slow tutelage in western ways of work.³⁴⁵ Even in this “coup d’etat,” Aramco’s hand was forced, however. As Joy Viola records, it was an “ingeniously worded letter” from the local Saudi director of education in Al Hasa that

³⁴² Robert King Hall, “RKH to HRS, April 26, 1956, HRS Personal Correspondence - Training Department (October 2, 1950 - December 27, 1959), Box 20, HRS Papers,” Personal Correspondence, April 26, 1956, Box 20, HRS Personal Correspondence - Training Department (October 2, 1950 - December 27, 1959), HRS Papers.

³⁴³ The text for Hall’s 1959 Tokyo speech is in a folder with materials for the 4th Arab Petroleum Conference. Aramco, “Memorandum "Data for Company Paper for 4th Arab Petroleum Conference, May 12, 1962, Training Policies and Programs Folder, Box 21, HRS Papers.

³⁴⁴ Joy Winkie Viola, *Human Resources Development in Saudi Arabia: Multinationals and Saudization* (Boston: International Human Resources Development Corp., 1986), 14.

³⁴⁵ Thomas C. Barger, Memorandum to Aramco Executive Committee on Schools for daughters of Muslim and Arab employees of Aramco, Confidential Working Paper, November 4, 1959, Box 17, HRS Papers.

translated the federal level decree for girls' education into a local mandate for Aramco to support girls' education.³⁴⁶

At the same time, Labor Relations was writing about the Americanization of the Saudi wife. In a confidential report entitled "My Wife and the Americans," the focus was on baseball. Putting the "traditional" restrictions of Saudi womanhood behind her, a Senior Staff wife runs out to play ball with the American kids. The memorandum goes on to use this episode as a defense against charges that Americans were "subtly degrading Saudi workers." Liberating Saudi women was yet another way in which Aramco training was remaking Saudi Arabia. The confidential memorandum ends with an admonition to the narrator's translator to "put that in Arabic – Ali."³⁴⁷

Yet one did not have to look any further than one's local bookseller in 1960 to see degrading literary portraits of Arab deviance. Published in 1958, Michael Sheldon Cheney's *Big Oil Man from Arabia* was the first of two books by Aramco public relations men that would appear in as many years. Cheney's account of the hapless Salah represented the darker potential of training. Like Butler's Sami Hussein and the real-life Abu Sunayed, Salah was a promising Saudi who had served as an instructor at the FSTC on Long Island. There he fell in love with a "blonde American girl" and returned to Saudi Arabia heartsick. He longed for the freedom of America, suffering terribly under the restrictions placed upon him as an Arab in Aramco. He eventually became, as Abu Sunayed, a leader in the 1953 strike. His anger was based on "wounded race pride," rather than legitimate nationalism. The dark Arab was smitten by white America, not by an indigenous striving for justice or fair treatment.

³⁴⁶ Viola, *Human Resources Development in Saudi Arabia: Multinationals and Saudization*, 16-17.

³⁴⁷ Aramco, *My Wife and the Americans*, Confidential Special Labor Relations Reports, n.d., Aramco Historical Documents Folder, Box 19, HRS Papers.

Cheney, like most Americans, was simply unable to conceive of a legitimate indigenous nationalism. If the Saudi were going to show such ingratitude, it would have to come from the same psychological maladjustment that Dr. Fryer had placed at the center of his understanding of the “Saudi problem in Aramco” and that Powell Ownby had identified with the Aleppo Students in 1954. As much as Cheney tried to help Salah deal with his station in life, he ended up “saying it with rocks” by turning to violence and attacking the very company that had given him such great opportunity. The reason for this ingratitude lay in the “dark recesses of the Saudi mind.”³⁴⁸

Rescuing the Arab from himself was at the heart of the Aramco view of training. Accomplishing this meant focusing him on appropriate skill sets. When publishing a series of oversized posters in the early 1960s, Aramco spread the message that training was for “new skills,” by which they mean “trade skills” and not leadership skills.³⁴⁹ This series of posters reinforced the hierarchy in which Americans led, while Saudis and others followed. One poster showed American “Oil Men in Arabia,” another of the heroic feats of Americans “Exploring for Oil in Arabia.” Saudi Arabs were pictured as “Industrious.” A Saudi Nasiri looked back on the land of the Arabs before the coming of Americans, while a Saudi Mohammed is featured “Looking Ahead” to a bright future with Aramco. This bright future featured work in the trades, working as an auto mechanic or on an assembly line, as opposed to assuming leading roles in management of the oil concern. The poster on “Jobs in Saudi Arabia” featured a young Saudi girl holding a boy. By drawing attention to the situation of young educated girls, forced to care for children and not enabled to get an education

³⁴⁸ Michael Sheldon Cheney, *Big Oil Man from Arabia* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1958).

³⁴⁹ Aramco Posters, Box 16, HRS Papers. Other poster themes were focused more toward the American audience and included A Saudi Arab's Wardrobe, Arabian Animals, Children in Arabia, Schools in Arabia, Shopping in Saudi Arabia, An Arabian Oasis, The Busy Persian Gulf, The Useful Camel, Transportation in Arabia, and Weather in Saudi Arabia.

themselves, the company encouraged a focus on elementary education as a substitute for the more dangerous course of building the talented tenth through support of a training institute.

Having worn out his welcome with Aramco, and perhaps uninterested in substituting female empowerment for more important efforts, Robert King Hall didn't return as Training Director at the end of summer 1960. Ken Beach, who had been in charge of the Training Division in Hall's absence, was appointed Director as soon as Hall was safely back in the United States. Beach had a background in management training. Free from the burden of advanced degrees, he also had a very upbeat attitude – just the kind of person Aramco needed to usher in a more “optimistic” assessment of progress in Aramco through training. Beach inherited the Training Division's documentation celebrating “10 Years of Training in Aramco.” Shortly after taking the position as Director, he initiated his own review of training. After the official presentations were made in 1961, he was overjoyed by the progress that the company had made.³⁵⁰ Beach was the right man to lead Aramco's Training Division in a celebration of “A Decade of Cooperation with the Saudi Arabian Government.”³⁵¹

Beach took over Training at a time when nationalist pressures in Saudi Arabia were reaching a new high. Saudi Arabia moved to join the new OPEC organization to coordinate production among petroleum producing nations in 1960 in an effort to protect themselves against what they viewed as the arbitrary manipulation of oil prices by the majors. Aramco saw OPEC as the next step toward nationalization of the entire industry. In the atmosphere of extreme concern that pervaded Aramco management, it was no time to doubt the rectitude

³⁵⁰ Thomas A. Pledge, Ali M. Daldin, and Muhammad A. Tahlawi, *Saudi Aramco and Its People: A History of Training* (Dhahran, Saudi Arabia and Houston, TX: Saudi Arabian Oil Company and Aramco Services Company, 1998), 83.

³⁵¹ Aramco, “A Decade of Cooperation With Saudi Arabian Government,” 1950-1960, Box 21, HRS Papers.

of America's "handling" of Arabs in training. Aramco had redoubled its public relations efforts. It was also a time when downsizing of the workforce had reduced the size of programs. The handful of Saudis in the Management Development program had plenty of space to hold classes in the Dhahran. Industrial Training Center enrollments were down, leaving Beach with the blessing of open classrooms.³⁵² Recounting the History of Management Training in Aramco, the felicitously named E. P. Thompson echoed Edward Elkington in the post 1929 downturn when he argued that history showed the importance of maintaining a strong American presence in the field to provide leadership for Saudis.³⁵³

With headcount down all around, the company was circling the wagons. Tom Barger led the creation of a series of "talking points" papers to justify Aramco personnel policies.³⁵⁴ These papers provided carefully reasoned justifications for inequities in compensation and benefits, as well as extolling the benefits of the training and education efforts within Aramco. This provided cover for efforts to regain control of the direction of Saudi development within Aramco. For instance, by the 1960-1 academic year Aramco had backed out of the agreement to fund Saudi scholarships that were administered through the Ministry of Higher Education. Without American guidance, which included a close connection to the shop floor, the company's limited investment in higher education for Saudis would be wasted.³⁵⁵

Whereas AIOC had haggled incessantly with Iranian government representatives over the allocation of educational funds in the 1930s and 40s, they were legally bound by concession

³⁵² J. W. Mileham, Industrial Training Center, 1961, Aramco Training Programs Folder, Box 20, HRS Papers.

³⁵³ E. P. Thompson, Management Training in Aramco, 1961, Aramco Training Programs Folder, Box 20, HRS Papers.

³⁵⁴ Tom Barger to Mr. A. Q. Tahir re: Background Information, June 24, 1961, Folder 13, Box 4, William E. Mulligan Papers.

³⁵⁵ Viola, *Human Resources Development in Saudi Arabia: Multinationals and Saudization*, 15.

terms to continue the appropriations. For most of the 1960s, Aramco would assume unilateral control over which Saudis went abroad for training at company expense. They provided annual funding for a low of 19 and a high of 57 candidates of their choosing each year between 1961 and 1967.³⁵⁶ Giving ground only grudgingly, and only under consistent pressure, Aramco was attempting to control the course of Saudi nationalism. Education – especially higher education -- could lead to “extreme” nationalism, or it could produce “pro-company leaders.” From the Aramco perspective education was a two-edged sword, cutting both ways. To keep these limited excursions in higher education on course, the company maintained strict control over who went abroad for training.

Snyder selected and circulated student letters from grateful Saudis like Ali Baluchi, whose positive attitude towards Aramco suited them for Out-of-Kingdom training. Writing a “Dear Friends” letter at the company’s behest, he described his time at Bucknell as affording him “wonderful knowledge and experience.” Encouraging other Saudis to study American “Social Customs and Manners,” he was also quick to tell his countrymen that bringing traditional Arab dress was important. This would allow the student to act as a “representative Saudi.” Encouraging them to be frugal and punctual, he also cautioned them to relax and enjoy their stay. To a Saudi nationalist, Baluchi’s missive would have doubtless have appeared obsequious in the extreme. He was Aramco’s token “educated Arab” going on display for American audiences and beckoning others to follow him.³⁵⁷

In contrast to the AIOC development of a full-service training program on Abadan, with the Abadan Technical Institute at the pinnacle of Iranian development, Aramco would continue

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 12.

³⁵⁷ Ali Baluchi, “Dear Friends” Letter, May 1961, Box 22, HRS Papers.

to prevaricate on the funding of a “Vocational Secondary School.” As a substitute for the technical institute, Aramco turned belatedly to an advocacy of general education for the population, adding the propaganda value of advocating the “progressive” cause of girls’ education. Aramco was able to exploit interdivisional rivalry within the Saudi ministries to delay fulfilment of the actual fulfilment of the commitment to building girls schools until March 1963, when jurisdictional issues within the Saudi government were finally resolved. In 1964, Aramco completed construction of the first Girls’ School and turned it over to the Saudi government. It had a capacity for 300 students each and Al Khobar and Rahimah. It would be another decade before these women would be in a position to jockey for positions in management training programs.³⁵⁸

Aramco had successfully parried the demand from inside and outside the company for developing a technical institute. The Saudis, with the help of Robert King Hall and Harry Roscoe Snyder, would build their own indigenous technical leadership capacity through the College of Petroleum and Minerals. Following his 1960 departure from Aramco, Hall was the College’s senior consultant from the early planning stages onward. The inauguration of the College of Petroleum and Minerals took place under the patronage of King Saud in 1963, with the direct backing of a new Minister for Petroleum and Minerals, Sheikh Zaki Yamani. Aramco donated land for the college, generously returning to Saudi Arabia its own property. Finishing his dissertation in 1963 on the topic of subject of a community college for Saudi Arabia, Dr. Harry Roscoe Snyder joined the CPM staff as Assistant Dean in 1965. He did so only after getting clearance from Tom Barger to the effect that this move would not “embarrass” Aramco. Aramco would eventually make a grant of several million dollars in support of the College, but that was not until 1967. The effect of all this was to extend the

³⁵⁸ Viola, *Human Resources Development in Saudi Arabia: Multinationals and Saudization*, 16-17.

long slow tutelage for Saudi Arabs in the Eastern Province. Each concession was wrung agonizingly from the company, given grudgingly and then celebrated by the company's publicists as yet another example of corporate magnanimity.³⁵⁹

In Conclusion: Two Foundings in Context

The first technical institutes in Iran and Saudi Arabia were established in company towns, towns that western oil companies built. These two institutes, dedicated to training Persians and Saudi Arabs in the leading petroleum technologies of the day, continue to carry on the same basic mission today long after the national governments of these two nations have taken over control of their own petroleum resources. In September 1939, the British Anglo-Iranian Oil Company opened the Abadan Technical Institute (ATI) – an institution it designed, funded, staffed and administered -- in its company town on the Iranian Island of Abadan. In the early 1960s, it was the Saudi Arabian Government which founded the College of Petroleum and Minerals, known today as the King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM). The design and administration of that institute, founded in the American company town of Dhahran in 1963, was a Saudi Arab affair.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁹ Walter S. Symonds, *Jebel Dhahran and the New Saudi Generation: A Personal Encounter* (Houston, TX: Brockton Pub., 1993).

³⁶⁰ The most complete existing account of the founding of the College of Petroleum and Minerals, and the Aramco involvement therein, is available in Ibid. Others have assumed, incorrectly, that CPM was "founded by Aramco." For one such explanation, see Mordechai Abir, *Saudi Arabia in the Oil Era : Regime and Elites : Conflict and Collaboration* (London: Croon Helm, 1988), 43.. On the founding of the AIOC's Abadan Technical institute, see J. H. Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: The Anglo-Iranian Years, 1928-1954*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).. For a more general history of education in Persia, in which the Abadan Technical Institute is mentioned and the British given credit, see David Menashri, *Education and the Making of Modern Iran* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).

It could be argued that the divergent outcomes -- a British founding for the technical institute in Abadan and a Saudi Arabian founding for the technical institute in Dhahran -- are accounted for by differences in the terms of the petroleum concessions under which the two companies operated and under which educational policies were formulated. The concession granted by the Iranian government to AIOC in March of 1933 required the company to provide £10,000 per year for training of Persian nationals in the petroleum industry. The 1933 American concession, negotiated with the Saudi Arabian government one week later, levied no such training requirement. Although the American company's concession required it to employ host country nationals when qualified nationals were available, the extent of the Americans' financial commitment to training Saudis was left up to the company's discretion.³⁶¹

In both the AIOC case and the Aramco case it took approximately one quarter of a century to progress from first petroleum production to the creation of a technical institute dedicated to training the local population in advanced petroleum technologies. The British Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC) began commercial oil production in Southern Iran in 1913 as the Abadan refinery came online. After just over a quarter century of petroleum production, marked by protracted struggles over the nature and course of industrial education, the British company established and administered a technical institute to train Persians as an integral part of its program to increase the number of Persians in senior roles within the company. 1939 was also the year in which an American oil company began commercial production in

³⁶¹ Accounts of concessionary negotiations between the California Standard Oil Company and the Saudi Arabian Government are available in Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993). Irvine H. Anderson, *Aramco: The United States and Saudi Arabia; a Study in the Dynamics of Foreign Oil Policy, 1933-1950* (Princeton U. Pr., 1981). Pledge, Daldin, and Tahlawi, *Saudi Aramco and Its People: A History of Training*. On the British concession see Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: The Anglo-Iranian Years, 1928-1954*. R. W. Ferrier, *The History of the British Petroleum Company* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

Eastern Saudi Arabia under the terms of a concession granted by the King of Saudi Arabia in 1933. It would be more than a quarter of a century before the Saudi Arabian Government would found the College of Petroleum and Minerals.

This study has shown how development along the global mineral frontier has taken place at different rates. In these two concrete cases, the drivers were local, regional and global. The Abadan Technical Institute was an integral part of AIOC's overall educational strategy for its concession, a strategy which can best be understood by looking at the AIOC's early approach to training and observing how that approach changed during the 1930s under pressures within Iran. In order to provide a convincing explanation for these disparate outcomes, this study explored the evolution of educational policy over time in AIOC and Aramco to understand timing, influences, and impacts of institutions on policy formulation. This study has contextualized Aramco resistance to the creation of a college in the Eastern Province. Instead of taking ownership and ensuring the success of the institute, as the British company had, Aramco grudgingly made a limited financial contribution over a period of several years during the 1960s. The crushing of Saudi labor with the help of Aramco was part of the story. The rest of the story lies in the details of policy development. Understanding this outcome has required an excavation of how a Western idea of superiority and Arab deviance and underdevelopment shaped Aramco's approach to training from the 1940s onward.

This study provides ample evidence that the British viewed Persians as inferior and that this impacted the course of British training in concrete ways. It was an orientalist view in AIOC that justified resistance to sending Persian employees to study at Birmingham University. Portraying the Persian student as a dilettante who would scamper off to the more comfortable climes of northern Iran at the first chance demeaned Persians, the British continued to believe

that the Persian in AIOC was best suited for trade training due to Persian racial characteristics. It was within this ideological context that AIOC's leadership was driven, against its will, to ever-broader involvement in the educational process in Southern Iran. AIOC built the Abadan Technical Institute, making a major commitment to post-secondary education, despite their best attempts to limit their financial commitments.

As the company's successful avoidance of responsibility for constructing a technical institute in Dhahran indicates, Aramco was marginally more successful in achieving its goal of limiting direct cash outlays for the development of Saudi staff than AIOC had been. Whereas individual Americans like Harry Snyder and Robert Hall worked tirelessly to foster the development of Saudi Arabs, as their work outside the company in the building the King Fahd College of Petroleum and Minerals highlights, they were often frustrated in their efforts inside the company. Within the broader context of petroleum production in Aramco, industrial education programs worked in a manner similar to and interconnected with the AIOC approach, restricting the Saudi Arab to trade training as long as possible.

In the final comparative analysis, the Aramco industrial education programs stand out for the attempted use of the latest techniques of psychological control to address racial deficiencies within the industrial education process. It was the Arab in Aramco who was understood as deviant. Seeing their strategy as superior to that of the British, the Aramco Americans were both more efficient, and more dehumanizing, in the tactics they pursued. By making it possible to view the American commercial presence in the Gulf today through an additional historical lens, perhaps this study of the long tutelage in western ways of work has also exposed some roots of anti-Americanism in Saudi Arabia today.

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