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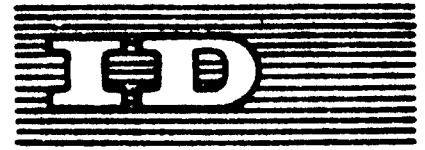
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Seminar on Furniture and other  
Secondary Wood Processing Industries  
Finland, 16 August - 11 September 1971

THE FURNITURE INDUSTRY IN IRAQ ✓

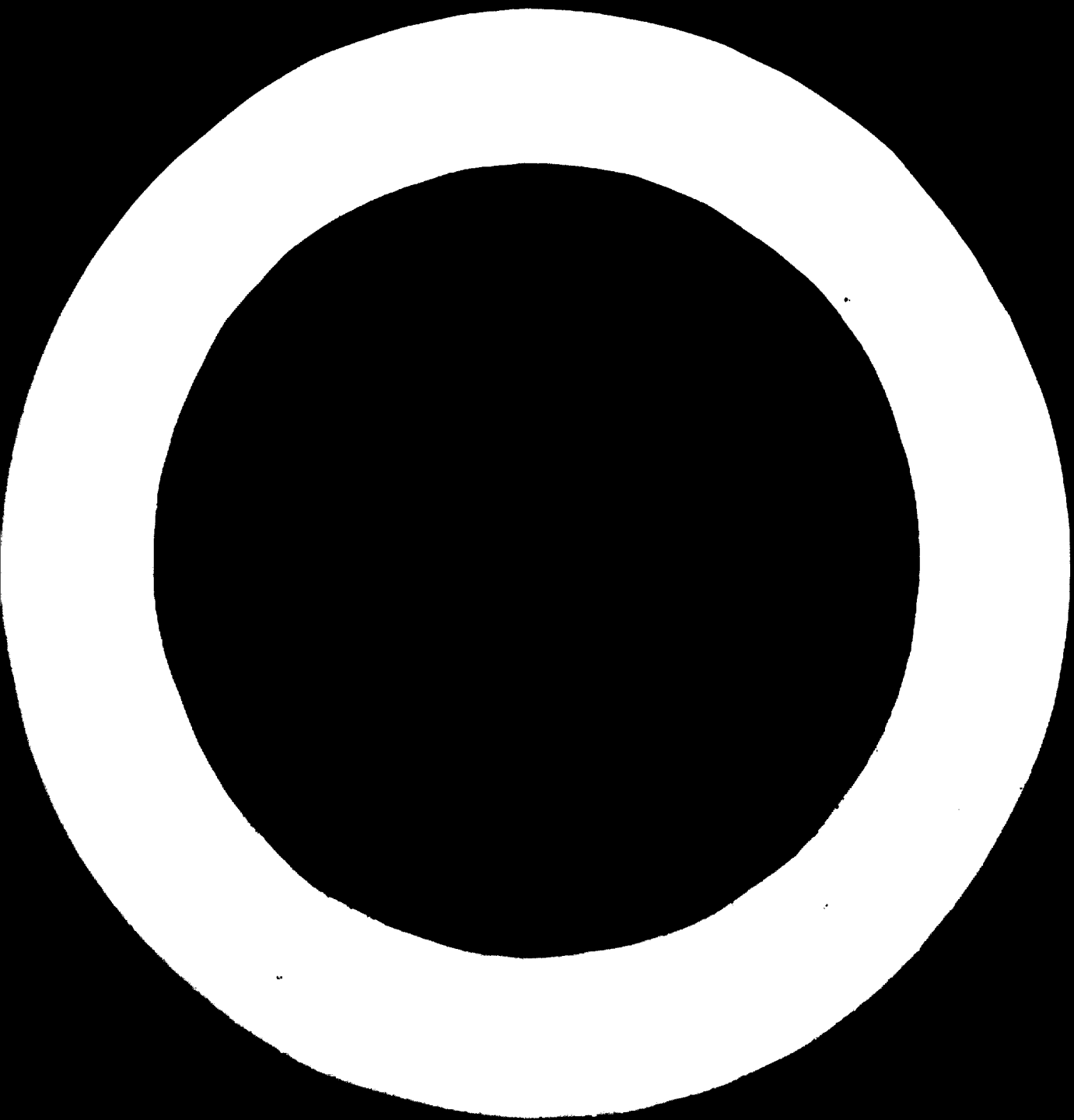
Country paper

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As a developing country Iraq faces problems in various technical fields, among which is the furniture industry. The country has to import a large proportion of its requirements of various kinds of forest products. The total value of these imports in 1970 was about I.D. 2,910,857. At present there are already quite well developed joinery and furniture industries, mostly based on small workshops, but there are also some larger joinery factories. Most of the material used in these industries is imported either as sawn lumber or as semi-processed wood. The imported wood, including a great deal of plywood and laminated wood material (which is also used in Iraq), is of relatively high cost and thus finished articles are too expensive for all but the well-off classes. An abundant supply of cheaper locally grown wood would consequently stimulate the consumption of wood furniture and joinery and expand the market for such articles in the rural areas.

### Forest Resources

To supply these markets, it is not only necessary to grow the plantation wood, but it is also vitally important to establish sawmilling and allied industries capable of processing the round wood from the plantations. Such industries are more or less non-existent at present in Iraq. The wood-using industries should be established in different parts of the country, especially near those centres where there are good future possibilities of expanding areas of tree plantations.

Any decision for future development of wood-based industry, i.e. pulp and paper mill, plywood factory, charcoal production, briquetting and wood distillation products, must be based on a number of feasibility studies, each one covering a specific or objective aspect of the forest industry plan. Iraq's climate is intermediate between the Mediterranean and the continental types. It has a long, dry, intensely hot summer season without rain and a short cool winter season with some rain. These conditions are modified by latitude and altitude, the winter being longer in the north with more rain and colder winters. The maximum temperature in summer is about 45°C and maximum temperature in winter is about -5°C. The forest wealth of Iraq lies in the vast areas of the northern part. The mountainous area which covers some 25,000 km<sup>2</sup> of which 18,000 km<sup>2</sup> is more or less vegetated with oak forest. Forest products of local origin consist mainly of firewood and charcoal, round poles, rough sawn and hewn timber and various forms of secondary forest produce, such as tanning materials.

## Furniture and joinery in Iraq

It is possible to classify local furniture making into two main parts:

- (1) Domestic furniture;
- (2) Joinery.

### Domestic Furniture

There are both fairly large and small furniture factories in Iraq concentrated mainly in Baghdad because it is the capital, and more intensely populated than other governorates. At the same time the people enjoy a reasonably high standard of living, and, last but not least, raw material sources are available nearby. Those people living outside the capital and owning wood-working shops usually buy their requirements from Baghdad. There are few high quality furniture-making shops run by well qualified people who have received their training in this field abroad. The furniture which is made by these shops is very costly due to good design, good finishing, good construction and well-chosen material.

There is another group of less expensive furniture-making shops whose prices are lower due to the fact that their furniture is poorly constructed and has bad finishing and design. This type of furniture is consumed widely by the average citizen.

There is no actual mass production furniture factory in the country but there are many small shops which employ less than 10 persons scattered here and there. The following tables issued by the Central Statistics Organisation show the number of workers employed in the factories. The small shops discussed usually buy raw materials from merchants and take them up straight to wood work machine shops, for cutting, planing, grooving, mortising and tenoning according to requirements. Then they carry these materials to their small shops to be assembled and finished manually.

Some of these shops have small show-rooms for selling their finished products, and some of them, so as to get their products instantly sold, resort to public auctions. Usually, customers make use of well illustrated catalogues to indicate the kind of furniture they desire to have. These catalogues with which the shops are provided are normally imported from abroad.

Average Number of Employees in the Small Industrial Establishments  
and their Wages paid during December 1968

<u>Industry</u>	<u>Employed Persons</u>	<u>Total Wages Paid (I.P.)</u>	<u>Average No. of Employees</u>	<u>No. of Establishments</u>
Need cutting and sewing	47	1287	105	41
Metal Furniture	30	1187	95	24
Bamboo	7	74	11	6
Palm trees leaves products	50	344	80	44
Carpentry	2924	29148	4469	2642
Upsholtery	169	2229	311	150

Total Wages Paid for Employees in the Small Industrial Establishments  
during December 1968 (I.D.)

Industry	General Total	Total		Waiters + guards		Administ-rators + Technicians		Labourers under 18 years		Unskilled		Skilled + semi-skilled	
		F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Wood cutting and sawing	1287	-	1287	-	-	-	-	9		113		-	1165
Metal Furniture	1186	-	1186			50		220		20			896
Textiles	74		74					12					62
Printed paper and allied products	344		344					24		41			279
Carpentry	29148		29148			60		2151		2396			24541
Other	2229		2229					552		116			1561



There are also some private and governmental workshops - employing from 10 to 60 labourers. Some of these governmental workshops make furniture for schools and offices. There is a negligible number of specialised furniture designers in the country but the graduates of the Architect Department are now showing an interest in the said field.

### Joinery

Suffice it to say that a large number of wood-working shops are specialised in making frames, doors and windows for newly-built houses.

Drying kilns are not used by the wood industries in general. Few of them, however, employ a natural drying process. Veneer is neither imported nor used in furniture. This is, perhaps, due to the lack of knowledge.

### What the country needs

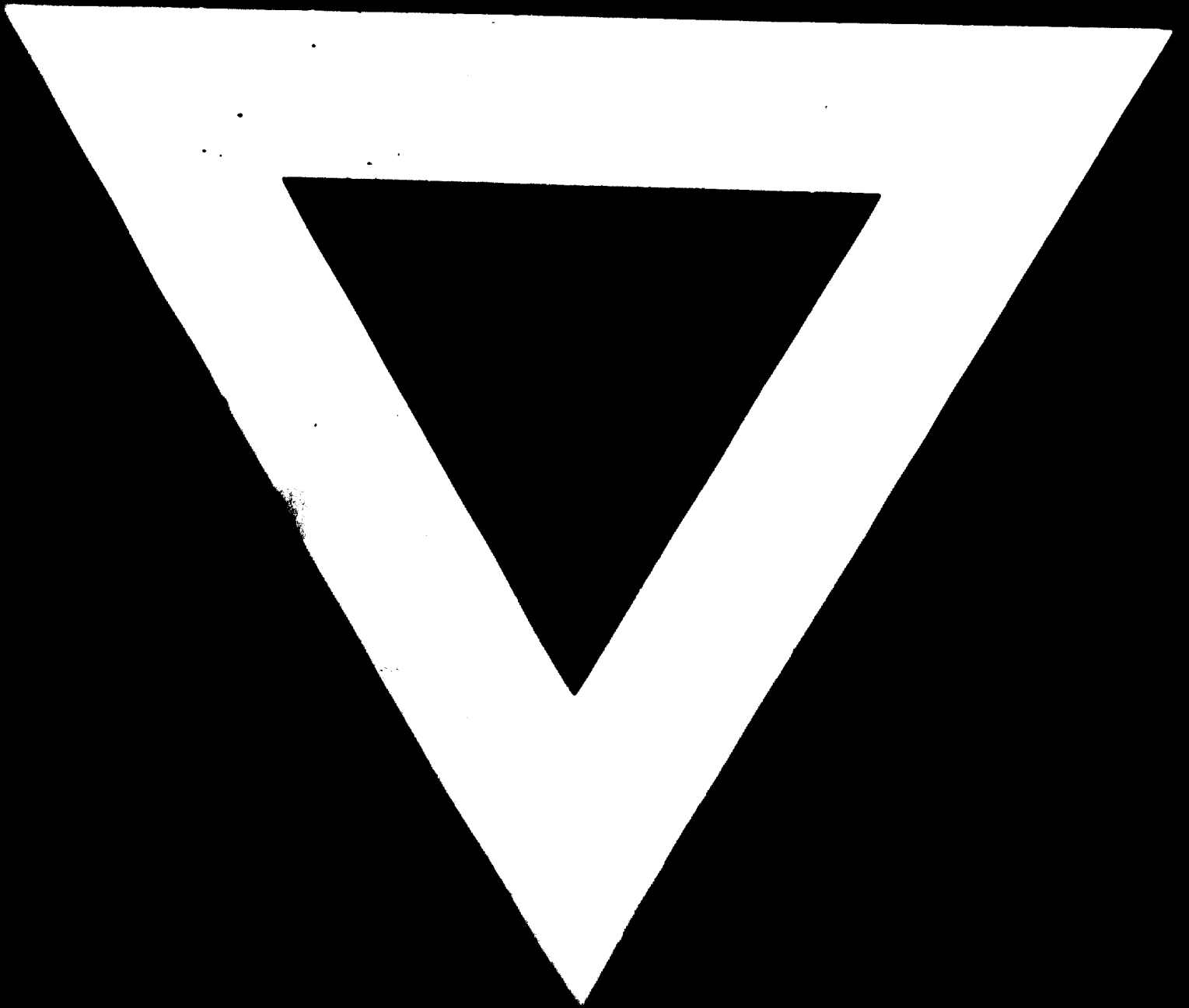
1. Technical centres for promoting the workers standard and introducing new techniques.
2. Improvements in technical training offered to technical school graduates of carpentry departments.
3. Technical text books and magazines and other information pamphlets.
4. Applied research in the field of primary wood conversion of home-grown timber.
5. Iraq's active participation in future international conferences with the object of exchanging information and ideas concerning furniture-making industries.

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