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A General Description of the Furniture
Industry of Syria and
the Problems Which It Faces^{1/}

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The furniture industry is ancient and known in Syria and is considered among the prosperous industries, which has developed with the development of the country, and it differed and varied with the variation of every day's life.

The furniture industry used to depend, in general, on the largeness and big shapes of the furniture and the many decorations to match the big houses. Since it became dependant in its design on the smaller size of furniture to go along with flats and offices which became smaller only the demand on decorated and carved furniture is still great.

Most of the production of the furniture industry in Syria is done by owners of small workshops, or small plants, and these are mainly adjoining their show rooms.

There are no large plants which could provide sufficient production capacity to cover the local market in a satisfactory way. Until now the furniture industry is still dependent on technical hands, in the various stages of the industry, starting with the preparation and making of the original parts, joining and painting, also in preparing the carved wood and decorations; of course, with the assistance of necessary machinery and simple tools, in which the manpower is the base, which depends on the skill of the worker. That is why the price of furniture is very high in Syria, as it takes a long time in preparing, producing and marketing.

In spite of the diversion on demand for contemporary furniture, which has no decoration or carving, and whose design was imported the production is still dependent on manual old ways; even the prices for modern furniture are high for the afore-mentioned reasons.

A while back people concerned with this industry started importing modern machines for all stages of production, as well as modern machines and presses which prepare the decoration and carved wood. This production of their small workshops increased in a noticeable way. In my opinion this should be done in a studied and planned manner, so as to benefit to the utmost from the capacity of the machines for the production to be more economical. This is not the only way.

Due to the large necessity for furniture in modern life in the home, office, and factory, and because of the insufficient production of the small workshop and factory owners (due to their uneconomical production methods) the government took a high interest and with a strong and effective cooperation of general construction companies, a few large workshops, medium size factories, or small factories were constructed, to produce these furniture using modern machines. It must be clear that the general construction companies and large building companies in Syria have medium and large size factories to produce wooden joineries, doors and windows and all that is needed for construction works from various wooden materials, because of the big demand on wooden joineries, besides these companies there are small factories and workshops which produce the wooden joineries.

The basic material, wood, in its various kinds which is needed for the furniture industry is imported. Nowadays there are many factories that produce plywood, hardware, and materials needed for upholstery, even paint and lacquers are produced locally. They cover some of the needs of the furniture industries, the rest is imported.

As for the design and models in Syria, furniture is made in accordance with Middle Eastern and European styles, and international designs are largely dependent on the skill of the workshop owners in making small alterations to old designs.

Lately, modern designs were diffused in a large way due to change in living conditions and to the interest of the Government in developing all trades in Syria, including the furniture trade. Many technical schools were founded to train workers. These schools could be considered as secondary schools, only they produce a large number of workers in this trade, and in thus doing help to develop and increase the production of the furniture industry in general.

The problems and obstacles that face the furniture industry consist of:-

1. The increase in price of furniture in Syria due on the one hand to large demand and the low productive capacity on the

the dependence on skilled manpower, and the small number of large factories with large and economical production on the other hand.

- b) Insufficient basic materials produced locally, and the dependence of production on basic imported materials which are mostly not available on the markets, causing uncertainty and delays in production.
- c) The emigration of the technical and skilled manpower to neighbouring countries, where salaries are higher.
- d) As a result of dependence on skilled manpower in all production stages, rather than on automatic machines, the problem of precision and finish arises resulting sometimes in low quality production.
- e) The clear deficit in number of schools and institutes which prepare qualified students technically and practically in the development of this industry from the design, production, precision and marketing aspects.

As a result of the Government taking interest in industry in general, including the furniture industry, factories for plywood, hardware, glues and lacquer paints have been established.

Due to large demand on furniture, it is expected that production will increase on a large scale to cover the local market and even exports. There is a sincere and strong effort on the part of the factory owners, workshops, and specially building companies to introduce big factories, with the assistance of developed countries for both technical and practical aspects.

It is expected that the furniture industry will develop and flourish in future in our country on a large scale, and this development will be mainly in simple economical and multiple-use furniture.

