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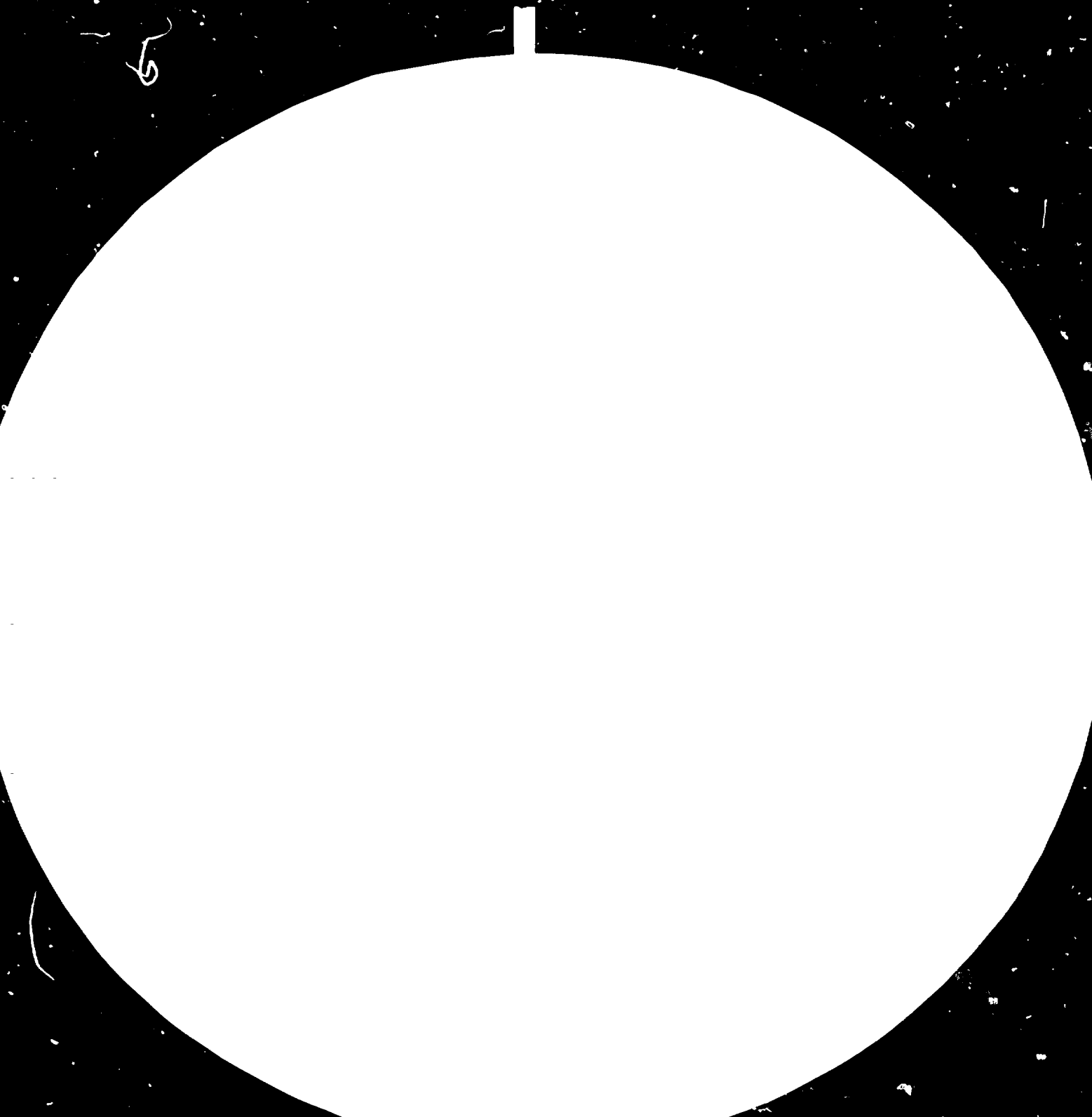
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THE FURNITURE INDUSTRY IN IRAQ \*

by

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Irak is one of the oil producing developing countries of the world with a developed agriculture and an industrial sector in expansion. The population is 13 million inhabitants, to which must be added 3 million foreigners working on development projects.

The climate has four distinct seasons; the summer is the dry season and the temperature averages 45°C or more.

Raw materials:

Irak imports 80 percent of its wood raw material requirements. These comprise teak, beech, pine and ramin. Wood-based panels are imported from Asia and Japan, except for particle board which is produced locally. (The local production is not sufficient to cover the needs of the local market.) 40 percent of Irak's need in fittings are imported and 60 percent are produced in factories belonging to the private sector. Fittings, hardware, adhesives (PVC glues) and surface finishes are produced locally in these factories. Upholstery material is produced in factories in Irak which produce many kinds of chemicals which are used by the furniture industry. Covering materials used by the furniture industry are also produced by one large local factory. Nails and screws are supplied by privately owned factories.

Structure of the industry:

The Ministry of Education has two factories, one produces all the needed school furniture while the other produces laboratory equipment; for both the Ministry and the general public. It also has four small factories for furniture for elementary schools and desks, and another furniture factory belongs to the Ministry of Agriculture, which produces for the domestic market. The Ministry of Industry also has a furniture factory to supply its needs in furniture, doors and reels for electric cables. Yet another factory belongs to the Ministry for Social Affairs, (Frisou's Administration).

All the furniture produced is for the local market, none is exported.

The private sector has many small shops producing household furniture and also some contracts for the government.

Last year, a new factory was established to produce polyurethane furniture based on Italian know-how. This factory also produces metal furniture and cover their products with synthetic leather, cloth, and elastomers.

Woodworking machines were introduced on a large scale since 1950, and although now we have up-to-date machines, we do not have skilled people for maintaining them. As far as carpenters are concerned, some 50 percent of our labour force is skilled, having acquired practice in the private sector's shops.

Major problems:

The following are our major problems:

1. The absence of clean working atmosphere throughout the factories due to the fact that machines are not connected to dust extraction systems or if they are connected due to the poor design of the systems and the unsuitability of present buildings for industrial production of furniture.
2. The absence of industrial safety within the factories. We are trying to cover this shortcoming by only importing machines that have all the necessary safety measures incorporated.
3. The shortage of wood raw materials and the difficulties of getting this wood inspite of the presence of governmental companies that import it. We are trying hard to use substitutes in production, such as plastic, polyurethane and iron.
4. The shortage of technicians, with regard to the number of workers presently available. This could be overcome by the re-opening of the higher studies institute for carpentry and furniture engineering studies, as well as the opening of training sessions for all the staff to raise their degree of skill.
5. The unavailability of good stores for storing the raw materials and the products.

6. The inability of getting skilled labour due to the difference in wages between the socialist and the private sector; inspite of the increases in wages and the offer of all the comfort and transportation facilities as well as working clothing, this problem has not been solved.

7. The present factories are in need of well trained quality control personnel and the absence of a furniture laboratory affects the quality of the developments of furniture by the public sector factories.

8. The unsuitability of the present buildings for serial production operations and the flow of raw material in turn greatly reduces productivity.

Industrial Infrastructure:

The technical Promotion Organization, belonging to the Ministry of Planning is being established and will eventually aim at standardizing sizes throughout Irak and introduce quality control both in the private and public sector.

The Ministry of Labour has an association of which the aim is to train labour in different subjects.

Assistance is also needed in production management for the new big factories.



