

shut down and their labourers, and in many cases owners, were forced to sell their labour power in the urban centres. A 1936 report showed that out of 12 soap factories which were operating in the city of Jaffa in 1930 only four factories remained in operation by 1936. The same report revealed that the overall value of exported soap between 1931 and 1935 dropped by about 260 per cent. (6) Other non agrarian industries were also affected in the process, for example, the sea-shell industry which in 1925 exported goods valued at P.L. 70,000. In 1930 this industry exported goods to the value of P.L. 11,532, a decline of about 650 per cent from 1925. By 1935, the value of exported sea-shells products had plummeted to only P.L. 3,778. (7)

As the Palestinian rural economy became ruined, it could not absorb the large force of redundant workers created by the process. Labourers were forced to look for work in the more developed sectors of the economy, such as private agriculture, industry or construction. Many could not find work. But for those who did, conditions under which they had to work, as the following analysis will show, were appalling.

Working Conditions within the Arab Labour Force

The thousands of indigenous labourers working in agriculture were placed in extremely exploitative conditions. Employed on a daily basis, they were relegated to the most menial and unskilled jobs. They were recruited largely by the citrus groves as pickers, packers, tree planters, or as general agricultural workers. They worked for an average of 10-12 hours per day, while a working day of as long as 16 hours was not infrequent among many agricultural workers. (8)

A survey conducted by the Jewish Farmers Association revealed that