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Report Submitted by the Faculty of the American University of Beirut [to the Rockefeller Foundation] concerning the Opportunity to train Students for Service in the Near East through Commerce and the Social Sciences (Excerpt)

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Summary:

In 1866, US Presbyterians who had been working for half a century in the Ottoman city of Beirut founded the Syrian Protestant College (SPC), to compete with Arab and French endeavors in higher education. Chartered in the State of New York, the American University of Beirut (AUB), as the SPC has been called since 1920, came to employ American, European and Arab professors. It soon turned into a foremost institution of higher education for Arab Christians and Muslims alike from Greater Syria (present-day Syria, Israel/Palestine, Lebanon, and Jordan), and especially after World War I attracted more and more students also from other Arabic-speaking countries, a history told in Betty Anderson's *The American University of Beirut: Arab Nationalism and Liberal Education* (2011). AUB's educational quality and missionary institutional bedrock gave it some clout in the United States.

Hence, when the New York-based Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Foundation in 1924 added an international layer to a US-centered social science grant program it had been running since 1922, it in 1925 asked the AUB president, Bayard Dodge, whether his institution would apply for such a grant. AUB did. Making its case in a way that reflected the establishment of League of Nations Mandates in the post-Ottoman Iraq and Greater Syria and the rise of anticolonial nationalisms there, AUB received a US\$39,000 grant to develop its social science offerings in 1926-1931, and three additional grants through 1940.

The text published here is an excerpt of an initial report by AUB professors to Rockefeller Foundation grant officials.

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Transcript - English

Section 1

A: THE NEED FOR STUDENTS TRAINED IN COMMERCE AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

a. Results of the war

Before the war the lands of the Near East were dominated by oriental systems, whereby special privileges and "bakhsheesh" or corruption played an important part.

Modern efficiency methods in the realms of commerce, government administration, industry, and agriculture, were rare. As a result there was a serious lack of progress, which interfered with the progress of the Levant as a whole.

During the world war, there was so much fighting, famine, and transference of population, that the social and economic life of the people was reduced to a state of great depression. [...]

[...]

c. Native leadership

No longer are the people of the Near East willing to submit to the full control of masters from the West. [...] Native leaders are sure to spring up. The important thing is to be sure that leaders of the right kind will appear. Bad leadership will plunge the Near East in another era of corruption, special privilege, despotism, conservatism, religious hatred, and inefficiency. Right leadership ought to produce peace, honesty, efficiency in trade and government, scientific progress, and prosperity.

d. Channels of leadership [...]

A year and a half ago the Minister of War of 'Iraq was asked: "For what professions do you wish to have the American University train 'Iraqi students." His reply was; - "'Iraq needs to have men trained to improve every walk of life." [...]