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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM AMEMBASSY, BAGHDAD
TO THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON
MESSAGE CENTER

July 18, 1952
DATE

REF Foreign Service Political Reporting Appraisal
Embdes 1249 June 17, 1952

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SUBJECT: MECHANICS OF CONTROLLING AN ELECTION

The Department has inquired about the mechanics by which the government in power controls an election.

Presumably the Department's chief interest is in the means of controlling the balloting. However, aside from the government's considerable power derived from the electoral law (see Embassy despatch No. 25 of July 8) and from its control over army and police, there are innumerable means by which the government can bring pressure to bear either through coercion or patronage. In contrast to Western countries where agencies of the government develop codes of fair practice which operate independently of the group in power, here virtually the whole apparatus of the state is at the disposal of the ruling group to be used for political ends in such manner as they see fit. The government's tactics are by-and-large developed ad hoc to fit a given situation.

The Embassy can point to two recent examples of coercion, one which took a "rough" form, the other a somewhat "polite" form.

The deportation of three pro-Saleh Jabr leaders of the Kenaan tribes (Embassy despatch No. 50 of July 17) is a good example of the "rough" form. This is not to say that the charges of smuggling brought against the Kenaan leaders were false. But the fact that the Nuri government chose this particular time to take action against them was rather obviously intended as a demonstration that not only crime, but also political opposition to the regime does not pay.

An example of the "polite" form of coercion was given at a dinner party recently given by Dr. Fadhil Jamali. One of Dr. Jamali's guests was a certain Dr. Bassam of the Royal Hospital in Kadhimein. At the dinner table Jamali, with a great show

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affability, said, "I hear, Doctor Bassam, that you might run for Deputy from Kadhimein". (Dr. Bassam said that he had not yet made up his mind.)

"You know, Doctor," Jamali continued, "the Government has been urging me to present myself in Kadhimein but I also am somewhat undecided. The last time ^{1/} I stood for election in Diwaniyah and was unopposed." (At that point Jamali gave pointed emphasis to the word "unopposed".

Dr. Bassam replied, "I am sure, Dr. Jamali, that if you present yourself in Kadhimein you will also be unopposed".

Dr. Bassam of course knows that if he stands for election against Jamali's (and presumably also the Government's) wishes he risks not only loss of the election but also his position at the Government-controlled Royal Hospital in Kadhimein.

Not an inconsiderable source of the government's power is derived from its large measure of control over the economy, over the leasing of state lands, over export and import licensing, over the control of hard currencies, over the location of bridges, roads and irrigation systems, etc. As one can see, the possibilities of applying either benefits or pressure are almost limitless. The Embassy will bring individual examples to the Department's attention in the course of its reporting of the elections.

^{1/} A bye-election in 1949. During the 1948 regular elections Jamali, as one of the Portsmouth Treaty negotiators, was distinctly persona non grata.

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