

Table (II - 19)

Trends in employment and sectoral distribution of the labour force

	1969	1979
Total labour force*	108.3	134.1
- Number of employed persons (in the West Bank and Israel)	103.9	132.8
- Percent employed	95.9	99.0
Sectoral distribution (%)**		
- Agriculture	47.8	31.5
- Industry	15.2	15.9
- Construction	12.0	11.8
- Services	25.0	40.8

* Includes hired and self-employed workers.

** Of workers employed in the West Bank.

Source: Statistical Abstract of Israel 1980, pp 690 and 696, and 1970 Abstract, p 633.

The results shown above reveal important shifts in the size of the labour force, level of employment and vocational division of employed workers. It is clear that there has been only a slight increase in the number of workers employed in agriculture and construction, which was caused mainly by a sharp contraction in both sectors. Many of the surplus workers were absorbed in service sectors on the West Bank itself, and the rest have either sought work in Israel or abroad.

Despite a natural population increase of over 3%, the size of the labour force has increased in ten years by only 23.8%, i.e. just about 2% a year. Again, this is further quantitative evidence on the acute problem of labour emigration to neighbouring countries.

1. Administered Territories Statistics Quarterly Vol X No 1-2, op cit, p 128.

The question of unemployment is much more complex than is revealed in Table (II-19). While it is true that unemployment has practically disappeared in recent years, there are annual waves of college graduates, estimated at about 3000 a year, of whom only about 10% succeed in getting employed. The vast majority of them are forced to seek employment abroad, and hence miss being recorded among the unemployed. So the situation of employment is now structured in a way which is specifically favourable for the unskilled and semiskilled blue-collar workers. Workers in these categories appear to find no problem in getting absorbed in West Bank or Israeli labour markets whereas college graduates and skilled technocrats stand little chance of being employed at home (and of course not in Israel); hence they are forced to leave.

Female labour

Women constitute 52 percent of the working-age population, yet their participation rate, as reported in official statistics is very low and rarely exceeds 10% of women in the working age, as compared with 60% for men.¹ Taken at face value, women's participation in the labour market compares well with most LDC countries (e.g. 3.51% in Jordan 5% in Kuwait, 6% in Syria) but much less so with more developed countries (30% in the US, 33% in Britain, 44% in the USSR)² On the other hand, women's share of the employed labour force, as reported in official statistics, is estimated at 18%³, compared with 16% in Jordan⁴ and 36% in Israel.⁵

1. Administered Territories Statistics Quarterly Vol X No 1-2, op cit, p 128.

2. Kamel Abu Jaber, op cit, p 2.

3. Statistical Abstract of Israel 1980, op cit, p 690.

4. Yousef A Haq, Economic Planning and Development in Jordan, a PhD thesis - Ein Shams University, Egypt, 1979, p 132.

5. Statistical Abstract of Israel 1980, op cit, p 5.