

Jerusalem



# NEWSLETTER

Number 5

AMERICAN NEAR EAST REFUGEE AID, INC. February - March 1970



Dr. John H. Davis, President of ANERA.  
Photo taken while Dr. Davis was serving as  
Commissioner-General of UNRWA.

## ANERA Board Meets

The ANERA Board of Directors held its Second Annual Meeting on Monday, February 9 at the Grange Building in Washington. Thirteen Directors were present, including two from California. The most important transaction of the meeting was formal ratification of the merger of American Middle East Rehabilitation, Inc. (AMER) into ANERA. This step, set in motion by the AMER Board Meeting in November, 1969, climaxed the efforts of several individuals, led by Dr. Emmett Holt of AMER to weld AMER and ANERA into a strong single unit to assist the Palestine refugees. The AMER

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## Dr. Davis's Statement to the Board

*(Editor's Note: The following is the text of the statement of Dr. John Davis to the ANERA Board of Directors, delivered on February 9th at the Annual Meeting. The statement outlines Dr. Davis' suggestions for ANERA policy in the coming fiscal year, 1970-71.)*

On this, the occasion of the second annual meeting of ANERA, I want first to direct your attention to the needs of the Arab refugees and then talk about the future role of ANERA.

From a physical standpoint the status of the Palestinian refugees today is about the worst it has been at any time since 1948 — the beginning of the refugee problem. Most of the several hundred thousand persons displaced by the fighting of 1967 are still living in crowded and flimsy shelters and in a climate which in winter is often cold and damp and in summer blistering hot and dusty. The basic services of feeding, health, welfare and schooling are minimal and in many respects inadequate. Adding to the discomfort and misery of refugees in general are the tensions and harassment that accompanies the almost constant hostilities which now surround and at times engulf refugee camps. Life is particularly hard for refugees living in the Gaza Strip, Jerusalem, on the West Bank and in the new camps on the plateau areas of Jordan. Regrettably, during the past year, the status of many dependent refugees in these areas has worsened, rather than improved.

As one looks towards the future, the situation appears even more bleak in that there is hardly a single factor that holds out hope for improvement whereas there are a number of factors working to make things worse. With no peace in sight, hostilities are almost certain to grow worse and with this will come increased danger of physical injury or death and mounting uncertainty as to the future. In the occupied areas refugees live under the threat of becoming victims of mass retaliatory punishment in the form of the blowing up of houses and even the leveling of whole villages— a type of punishment that is administered without due process of law and often without giving individuals a chance to defend themselves. Even for the non-dependent refugees savings and reserves are now becoming exhausted, even for families who were once comfortably fixed, and inflation is further reducing their standard of living. For some one hundred prominent families of the occupied area, the head of the family has been deported and exiled, whereas other members of the family feel forced to remain under occupation to prevent their homes from being seized as "abandoned property."

Making the prospects for the future still worse is the fact that UNRWA is facing a deficit of \$5 million in 1970 and with little prospect that this can be overcome. This means that by mid-year 1970 UNRWA will be forced to drastically cut back its services. The tragedy is that, by the nature of things, such cut-back will fall hardest on education and particularly on vocational education, which is the one service of UNRWA that helps to make maturing refugee youth employable and capable of

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## UNRWA FINANCIAL STATUS

The financial status of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine (UNRWA) continues to worsen. Following his report of November 17th to the Special Political Committee of the General Assembly, UNRWA Commissioner-General Dr. Laurence Michelmore returned to UNRWA Headquarters in Beirut and began a detailed review of the organization's financial situation. The review confirmed that the expected deficit for fiscal 1970 will exceed 4.8 million dollars, as against a deficit of 4.1 million for fiscal 1969.

Adding to the problem is the fact that the financial reserves which absorbed most of the shortfall for '69 will be gone in fiscal '70. This will leave UNRWA on a "pay as we go basis," Dr. Michelmore stated before the Special Political Committee.

In highlighting the problems facing UNRWA, Dr. Michelmore emphasized four main points: First, The total needs of the refugees continue to increase. Second, it is of the utmost importance that those needs continue to be met for humanitarian reasons and also to avoid a "catastrophic worsening of political conditions in the area." Third, the cost of maintaining UNRWA's services has risen to the point where the income available is considerably short of what is needed. Finally, as the Middle East crisis has deepened, the circumstances under which UNRWA operates have become more difficult.

There are approximately 1,250,000 persons receiving part or all of the services UNRWA provides, according to Dr. Michelmore. About 840,000 of these receive food. Last year, there were 6,150,000 visits to UNRWA health clinics. 229,000 children registered for UNRWA schools this fall— 20,000 more than last year and considerably more than UNRWA had estimated.

Dr. Michelmore noted that problems had arisen during the year between UNRWA and the host governments which are responsible for camp security. Difficulties in both the occupied territories and the Arab host states have hampered UNRWA's carrying out of its mandate.

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## American Aid for Arab Refugees

American Aid for Arab Refugees is one of the most active volunteer groups aiding the Palestinian refugees. A.A.A.R. was organized in the summer of 1967 under the leadership of Mr. Robert Thabit, a lawyer from Brooklyn, New York. Through A.A.A.R., residents of the Brooklyn area concerned about the Palestinians have been able to aid the refugees and inform others of their plight.

During the current fiscal year, ending June 30, 1970, A.A.A.R. has raised more than \$5,000 through direct appeals and fund raising projects. Of the money raised, \$3,500 has been allocated to refugees relief projects in the Middle East. \$1,000 was contributed to the Islamic Industrial Orphanage in Jerusalem. \$1,000 was given to the Palestine Woman Arab League in Jerusalem. \$500 was sent to the Greek Orthodox Community of Jerusalem through their pastor, Father Yneghem, and \$500 was contributed to the Insha' Al-Usra Society in Ramalah.

According to Mr. Thabit, one of the most successful fund raising events was the showing of the Italian-Algerian film, "The Battle of Algiers" at St. Anselm's Church Hall in Brooklyn. The film was shown on Sunday Evening, January 25, 1970. Also included in the program was a speech by His Excellency Dr. George J.T. Tomeh, Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations. Approximately 550 persons turned out, and more than \$1,000 was raised for refugee relief.

The Committee which made the arrangements for the showing of the film was chaired by Mr. Andrew Johnson. Mr. Thabit singled out Mr. Johnson for the excellent job he did of organizing the evening's events. Others commended by Mr. Thabit for their contribution to other A.A.A.R. sponsored events were: Mr. John Kourbage, Mr. Majid Tayar, Mrs. Nadia Soued, Mrs. Layla Haddad, Mrs. Mona Johnson, Mrs. Mariam Sopp and Mrs. Ann Kottone.

Another A.A.A.R. project is the publishing of a booklet entitled "Palestine Reconsidered." The Booklet is a compilation of two speeches by Ambassador Tomeh. Proceeds from the booklet will go towards a scholarship fund. Those

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## President Nixon and ANERA

On February 18th, President Nixon delivered a 40,000 word statement to the Congress about American foreign policy for the 1970s. The section dealing with the Middle East begins with a quote from a letter which President Nixon wrote to ANERA President Dr. John H. Davis.

The Nixon letter was received by ANERA last October in reply to a letter from Dr. Davis to the President. Dr. Davis had written the President to express his concern for the condition of the Palestinian refugees and to inform Mr. Nixon of the continuing efforts of ANERA and the other American voluntary groups to bring relief to them. Below is President Nixon's reply in full.

October 21, 1969

Dear Dr. Davis,

Your letter regarding the plight of refugees in the Middle East and the activities of U.S. voluntary groups to help alleviate some of their burdens highlights the spirit that must characterize a true peace in that area. The condition of all of the refugees of the Middle East has been of great concern to me. It is, in part, clearly a political problem to be resolved in negotiated settlement and without a fair solution to the problem there cannot be an honorable settlement.

The circumstances of the refugees are also of urgent humanitarian concern to Americans — a concern which grows not from agreements between governments but from the common instinct which urges one human being to help another. Just solutions to the whole problem in all its aspects require imagination and boldness from everyone involved. The refugee aid work private American groups have undertaken is gratifying and very encouraging. It demonstrates once again the determination of Americans to help and more than that, it keeps alive the hope that if governments can find the courage to agree, human ingenuity and perseverance are at hand to find answers to the practical difficulties that will remain.

I commend the dedication of all those who are making a significant contribution to the cause of a peace which speaks not only about the integrity of nations, but also for the integrity of individuals.

With my best wishes,

Sincerely,

Richard Nixon

## MUSA ALAMI

Musa Alami, the 72 year old founder of the Arab Development Society, recently visited the project in the Jericho Valley for the first time since the June, 1967 War. Although it was recently reported that Mr. Alami would live in the occupied territory, ANERA has learned that he has returned to Amman after a short visit to the farm.

Mr. Kennett Love, ANERA Board member and chairman of the Board of the Musa Alami Foundation, visited the project in late January. At the ANERA Board meeting he reported that the school and farm are in good physical condition, and that their continued operation is a key factor in maintaining the morale of the population in the area. He also reported that plans are underway to concentrate efforts on vocational education and the production of cash crops in order to make the project more economically self-sufficient.

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to expand the combined assistance to refugees and to promotion of a better understanding of the Arab refugee problem by the American public. To date two meetings of fifteen interested organizations have been held for this purpose and a third is scheduled in New York for February 18th. It is not our intention to create a new organization or set up a central budget, but to plan together and then work on a coordinated basis; each through its own staff and supported by its own budget. At the request of the group ANERA has taken the initiative in setting up these sessions.

The estimated income and expenditures which we foresee in carrying out ANERA's program in fiscal years 1969-70 and 1970-71 are reflected in item II of the agenda before you. You will note that our goal is to have available for refugee assistance the amount: in excess of \$935,000.00 and \$1,200,000.00 in fiscal years 1969-70 and 1970-71, respectively.

Next year, as in the recent past, ANERA will be working against a changing refugee situation; probably even a steadily worsening situation, as in 1969. In any event, ANERA now has the advantage of building on the foundation that you have helped to build and of benefiting by the experience of the past eighteen months.



*The students at the Arab Development Center in the Jericho Valley are well fed. Much of what they eat is provided on the farm associated with the school.*

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becoming self-supporting. Education must bear the largest retrenchment within UNRWA because services such as feeding, shelter, health and welfare are more basic to keeping people alive than is education. Thus quality in refugee living becomes sacrificed for the purpose of keeping people alive.

These things being true, ANERA's biggest opportunity for assisting the Arab refugees is in preventing a retrenchment of scholarships for types of specialized training that will make maturing refugee youth employable. In UNRWA schools and those operated by voluntary agencies, the per student costs range from \$600 to \$1,000 per year, including room, board, supplies and instruction. By providing vocational scholarships ANERA can help keep vocational schools operating.

A second basic need of refugees is for assistance that supplements the limited resources of UNRWA and Arab governments, for medical supplies and health services. In recent years AMER has combined such health assistance with support of vocational scholarships. This AMER has done by soliciting in behalf of UNRWA medical supplies, mostly pharmaceuticals, which otherwise UNRWA would have had to buy. UNRWA has, in return, applied the resulting budget saving to scholarships for which AMER has been given credit. It is ANERA's expectation that the integration of AMER with ANERA will facilitate even greater refugee assistance of this essential and valuable type.

Accordingly, in 1970 I recommend that ANERA concentrate its effort on

raising cash for vocational scholarships for Palestinian refugees and expanding gifts in kind which have the effects of improving health services in a manner that augments educational scholarships.

This emphasis is reflected in the various items on the agenda, particularly those pertaining to the ANERA-AMER merger and the ANERA budget.

In our effort to place maximum emphasis on fund raising in the immediate future a new mailing to 150,000 names has just gone out, under our Direct Mail Appeal program, and proceeds from this will be coming in during the next 60 days and longer. Peter Bradley will be giving almost full time to the expansion of individual membership and in doing this will be working, where possible, with founding members and chapters. John Richardson is postponing his trip to the Middle East for three months in order that he, with me, can concentrate during that period on soliciting contributions from major donors.

If the Board acts favorably on the proposed merger of ANERA and AMER we will begin at once trying to expand contributions in kind which, in turn, support educational scholarships. Tomorrow discussions are provisionally scheduled between representatives of ANERA, AMER and U.S.OMEN for the purpose of exploring opportunities for joint efforts that are mutually advantageous. In doing this I hope that the AMER division can play a progressively useful role.

On a somewhat broader scale, ANERA is working with other voluntary organizations all of which are active in Arab refugee assistance. Our mutual purpose is

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office in New York will be retained and Miss Mary Anne Kolidas, Executive Secretary of AMER, will continue to serve in that capacity. The AMER Division will be the gifts-in-kind arm of ANERA under the administrative supervision of ANERA and its Board of Directors.

At the direction of the ANERA Board, the ANERA Award for Meritorious Service to Mankind was presented to Dr. Holt. Dr. Davis and Dr. Daniel Bliss, Vice President of ANERA and Chairman of the Advisory Council for the AMER Division, made the presentation at a ceremony on March 4 in New York City.

The ANERA Board also authorized the awarding of Certificates of Appreciation to 23 members of the AMER Board who had served for ten years or more. These awards were made by Dr. Davis at the final meeting of the AMER Board in New York on March 4.

Another important item of business was the expansion of the ANERA Board. New members (to be highlighted in the next issue) are Mrs. Margaret Pennar, New York; Dr. Gerald Dorman, New York; Dr. Stanley Kerr, Princeton, New Jersey; and Mr. Dahl Duff, New York.

Dr. Davis presented a statement summarizing ANERA's current status (printed elsewhere in this issue) and urging that in 1970 ANERA raise much greater sums of money in order to help alleviate the suffering of the Palestine refugees, which will be compounded if begins to institute the cutbacks which its financial crisis may necessitate.

ANERA's Directors who represent Founding Members, ANERA chapters, and affiliated organizations gave short summaries of the activities of their organizations since the last ANERA Board Meeting.

The ANERA Board expressed satisfaction at the progress made by the organization in the short time in which it has been in existence and urged re-doubled efforts to meet the crisis which the refugees now face in 1970.

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In closing, Dr. Michelmore quoted the remarks made last year by Secretary General U Thant urging the Political Committee to support UNRWA.

"Members", stated the Secretary-General, "may differ on the rights and wrongs of the situation in the Middle East, of which the Palestine refugees are the innocent and long-suffering victims. . . . I believe, however, that everyone will agree that the tragedy of the Palestine refugees, who three times in twenty years have known at first hand the cruel blast of war, demands that the United Nations should live up generously, and without hesitation, to its humanitarian duty towards them. I earnestly hope the action of this committee collectively, and of its members individually, will allow the United Nations to meet this responsibility to the fullest possible extent."

Following a lengthy debate, the report of the Commissioner-General was adopted and pledging conference was held on December 11th. 43 nations made

statements of support for UNRWA at that conference and 21 pledged support totaling \$13,878,786. Two nations, the United States and New Zealand, deferred their pledges pending final approval of their governments. Following the passage of the foreign aid bill, the United States pledged \$22.2 million, the same amount as last year. In addition, the U.S. has pledged \$1 million, for fiscal '70 for "expansion of vocational training centers". This special contribution does not help to liquidate the projected deficit of 4.8 million.

As the pledges total approximately the same amount as last year, the financial crisis remains unresolved. UNRWA officials state that the office of the Secretary General U Thant has been informed of the situation and that he is currently exploring ways of obtaining additional funds. As yet, there is no relief in sight. These same UNRWA officials state that if additional funds can not be found, UNRWA will have to cut back its services and that these cuts will probably come "across the board".

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interested in obtaining a copy may do so by sending \$1.00 to: American Aid for Arab Refugees, Inc., P.O. Box 67, Fort Hamilton Station, Brooklyn, New York 11209.

The current officers of the A.A.A.R. are: Robert Thabit, President; Miss Gloria Amoury, Vice President; Mrs. Olga Jabara, Vice President; Miss Mae Sotel, Treasurer; Mrs. Mona Johnson, Recording Secretary; and Mrs. Violet Kawas, Corresponding Secretary.



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