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Mr. J. Otis Garber, USOM

March 27, 1959

Floyd L. Whittington

Embassy Comment on Memorandum from John K. Meskimen,
Director of Labor Affairs, ICA/W

The comment on Thailand seems to be over-stressing the point. While abrogation of the Labor Law and abolition of all labor unions, federations, and associations did bring the incipient movement here up short, it is now reviving again. Only nine men connected with labor were jailed as Communists and not as labor leaders. Seven of these had been members of known leftist organizations or attended meetings in Communist countries. The other two were anti-Communists, one of whom was trained in the U. S. for a year under a USOM labor leader grant.

By the end of 1957, there were one hundred thirty-six unions registered with the government, along with many unregistered groups. With a further rapid growth in 1958 before the revolution, it is obvious that the nine men jailed are far from being "most of the leaders."

As for the elimination of the USOM grants for participants in trade union leadership training, primarily in the United States, the Embassy feels that this position may be subject to review in the future. It is suggested that the Thai labor leaders sent abroad in a future program might be sent to neighboring countries which have similar experiences rather than to the United States where the problems of the big labor movement may have less validity for the incipient, politically-oriented movement here.

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350 Mem & Corr 760 Labor Gen.

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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : Amembassy BANGKOK

365
DESP. NO.

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

March 24, 1959
DATE

REF : A-180 March 3, 1959

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	REC'D	INFO OTHER

SUBJECT: Labor in Thailand

Comments on the Department of Labor's revised "Summary of the Labor Situation in Thailand" follow:

Page 2. Thanom Kittikachorn is a Thai army general and not a career civil servant.

Page 3. Rubber is the nation's second most valuable export and tin the third.

Page 3. The soil in the Northeast section is considered equally fertile with that of the rest of the country. The rainfall is not erratic, but concentrated during the wet season and inadequate irrigation reduces the populace to subsistence farming.

Page 3. The National Economic Development Corporation paper factory is not yet in operation.

Page 14. The International Tin Council is referred to by that name.

Page 15. Since the abolition of unions, they no longer offer work placement services.

Page 16. A new technical school is being established under the sponsorship of SEATO in 1959.

Page 19. An American officer on loan from the Labor Department to ILO is conducting an employment market survey in 1959.

Page 22. Since the October revolution an interim set of labor regulations was promulgated by the Revolutionary Party which in effect included all of the provisions of the old labor law except those dealing with unions.

Page 22. Government employees now have a thirty-five hour week made up of five seven-hour days.

Page 33. The Labor Party which was organized as a political party never made a serious threat in the political arena. Even in the labor area its influence was

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questionable. However, it is true that several members of the TNTUC Executive Committee did attend international labor conferences in Communist countries.

Page 35. It is questionable that the United Federation of Labor could be called the most active union or the one which enjoyed government backing. Prime Minister Thanom's Government also subsidized the TNTUC and gave it official support which allowed it to be recognized by the ICFTU. The TNTUC also had a larger number of unions as affiliates and claimed a larger membership than UTFL.

Page 37. Since the October Revolution a set of interim labor regulations have replaced those of the abrogated Labor Law. Under these, employees may refer disputes to the Labor Division for mediation, but the efficacy of such mediation is still to be determined.

Page 38. The Labor Division now employs over 100 persons and is as large as some other departments in other government ministries.

Page 40. Thailand plans to send two governmental labor officials as its representatives to the ILO conference in Geneva in 1959. No worker or employer delegations will attend.

For the Ambassador:

Floyd L. Whittington
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