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**Land Reform  
and  
Social Change in Colombia**



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## Contents

When the Land Tenure Center held a day long faculty seminar meeting on "Land Reform and Social Change in Colombia" in April 1963 its content seemed of sufficient interest to merit reproduction and circulation. This pamphlet, which reports that meeting, attempts to preserve the spontaneity of the original presentations.

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# Land Reform In Colombia: Some Ideas

Albert O. Hirschman\*

The way that I came to study agrarian reform and other large decision-making episodes in Latin America was through a question that I had raised in my earlier book.<sup>1</sup> I had asked myself: if you cannot rely on market forces to correct a disequilibrium situation, can you perhaps appeal to non-market forces? And I came forward with the rather unusual affirmation that non-market forces are not necessarily less automatic than market forces. When people suffer a power shortage or when roads are too intolerably bad, there will be pressure groups agitating for power relief and road improvement. When it comes to larger problems involving human demands, it is much less clear how decisions are arrived at, but we have come more and more to realize that some of these larger decisions may be the real keys to economic development.

Intending to investigate how these big decisions are brought about, I submitted to the Twentieth Century Fund, some three years ago, a project for studying how large-scale problems are tackled in Latin America. What processes, what meanderings do we have to put up with until a breakthrough is achieved on these larger problems? Since economists have done very little thinking on this matter, I decided that the best way of learning was by doing some case studies. I started out with five studies, but in *Journeys Toward Progress*, I have limited myself to three cases. One deals with Colombia's sequence of moves toward land reform over the past 40 years. A second is the sequence of moves to improve backward agriculture in northeastern Brazil over the last 80 years, and the third is a study of Chile's almost century-long experience with inflation and anti-inflationary moves.

The title is optimistic (my wife, who compiled the index, points out to me that she found the term "failure" on more page references than the term "progress"). But to hint at the nature of the argument, I use as frontispiece a painting by Paul Klee called "Highway and Byways." My main idea is perhaps to illustrate that progress is not necessarily by the straightest road — the most orderly — the one for which other countries

may have set the pattern. In this thinking, I have been rather influenced by my friend Alexander Gerkschenkron, who once wrote that in viewing the historical record, one cannot fail to be impressed with the ingenuity, originality and flexibility with which backward countries try to solve the specific problems of their development. After studying the experiences of these several countries, I come to the same conclusion, although that idea is very much at odds with what the countries frequently write about themselves.

In my book I wage a sort of war on two fronts. One is a war against the naive view that you can have land reform, regional progress or control of inflation simply by sending an expert in to convince the Minister of Finance that to make change makes sense; the view that a liberal political party winning at the polls with a 51% edge can straightway accomplish land reform plus other good works, and all with no disturbances, no tensions. For example, some people in the Alliance for Progress now think that we can at one and the same time have a thoroughgoing land reform and an excellent climate for private investment, seemingly unaware that steps toward one objective make the other harder to achieve, at least in the short run.

My war on the second front is against the tough view of the typical Latin American radical, who believes that in order to achieve *any* change, you must change everything, that revolution is the absolute precondition for any progress. In my Brazilian chapter, I quote a taxi driver, who, when we were stalled interminably in the famous post-office-hour traffic jam in downtown Rio, sighed, "We need a Fidel Castro here!" Ah yes, traffic will flow only through revolution. I have a little running battle with my friend Edmundo Flores who, I understand, was here recently and probably offered this view most eloquently as only he can! You cannot have economic development in the real sense, so he argues even though factories are going up, it's all artificial without land reform, and you cannot get land reform until *after* the revolution.

Now frequently we find that people swing suddenly from the naive view that all you need is to bring men of good will together to the tough view that insists on total revolution; especially among technical assistance experts, I have known quite a few who start out with the naive view and, after absorbing a due amount of frustration, switch violently over to the tough view.

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<sup>1</sup>*The Strategy of Economic Development*, Yale University Press, 1958.

My aim is to alert myself and some people who may read me not only to obstacles but also to possible by-ways, to permissible detours toward progress even when the classical route seems to be obstructed. In pursuing that aim, it interests me always to note how certain weaknesses in a political structure or a cultural process can unexpectedly become elements of strength. The traditional economic development literature tends to talk about favorable and deterring factors as though these were two distinct natural elements that could never alter. However historians have frequently noted that a factor that contributes at one time to a civilization's or a nation's strength turns into a source of weakness later on. I think the reverse can also be true, and that if we study how a country moves out of stagnation to progress, we will sometimes perceive that a so-called factor of weakness becomes — with changing conditions — an element of strength. Let us note as an example the very naiveté of the reformer. Like a chess player who hasn't been told that he is losing and might as well give up immediately, the naive reformer goes on stubbornly making move after move and occasionally, in the course of countless tries, he wins. In the process he becomes a more wily maneuverer and picks up more allies than the pure revolutionary who stakes the game on a single gambit.

The hypothesis I started with — that Colombian history might have some lessons to teach along this line — has become stronger with detailed acquaintance, and I would like to indicate briefly a few of the features that seem to fit my theory. When we look at the Colombian land tenure situation, the first thing to notice is the variety of patterns it includes. We have of course the traditional *hacienda* in many areas — the Atlantic Coast, parts of the Cauca Valley, the savanna — large estates given over chiefly to cattle grazing, where *peones* till small pieces of land on the outskirts of the *hacienda* in return for furnishing their labor to the *hacienda*. It is true that traditional semifeudal pattern, *latifundio cum minifundio*, is still an important one although it has been restricted by various developments.

Secondly, also traditionally through a long history, there are small properties held by newly arrived settlers from Spain. I came upon very recently — too late to include in my book — an important volume on Colombian history entitled *Economía y Cultura en la Historia de Colombia*, written by Luis Eduardo Nieto Artete and published first in the thirties, but now re-issued. It is a story primarily about Colombian economy at the middle of the 19th century. I was struck by the fact that the author used the term "dual economy" and probably he should have credit for inventing the term. He dwells on the economy of the Oriente provinces, Santander and Norte Santander, where Spanish settlers built up individual tobacco farms and small industries in a region where there were no Indians, and contrasts it with the large colonial holdings in the Indian-filled lands of Boyacá and Bogotá. So even in the

early 1800's, the pattern of small-scale agriculture by enterprising immigrants was important, and it had a tremendous push in the second half of the century in the famous Antioqueño colonization that started out from Medellín to cover eventually not only the central slopes but also the inner slopes of both the west and east *cordilleras*. Today we have continuing trends of spontaneous colonization, people crossing the ranges over into the Amazonas basin and toward the Atlántico now that difficulties of climate and malaria are being overcome.

And finally, as a third pattern, there is the plantation. The plantation has two different types: one, the permanent plantations such as those of bananas and sugar cane in the north, and two, the very important new type of commercial cropping which changes from year to year in accordance with market demands and which impinges more and more on the *hacienda*. Operators of this new type of plantation are frequently people from the city who want to make a fast *peso* on a speculative basis and who discover that they can, with irrigation, do quite well in cotton, rice and barley. This new practice has made a very noticeable contribution to the total agricultural output in recent years and has led some observers to conclude, somewhat prematurely, I think, that there are no longer any semi-feudal patterns in Colombia, that the land problems are in the process of being solved in this particular capitalistic fashion.

Actually we must note that there have been a number of different steps in the transition from the orthodox system. The Antioqueño movement — which took place at the time of increasing monopolization of land in Porfirio Díaz's Mexico — led to the breaking up of many large tracts in the Cauca Valley that were nominally owned by single landlords. As people moved into the region, the owners were content to get a bit of monetary value out of renouncing a title here and there, and the haphazard transfers became established in the courts as a result of the actions of peasants and of the new municipalities that were built up during this migration period.

The second period of land break-up pivoted on the coffee plantations of the western slopes of the eastern *cordillera*. This area, from Bogotá down toward the Magdalena, was one of large holdings. They were assigned by their absentee owners in Bogotá to coffee as an excellent cash crop and were worked on the traditional basis of *peon* labor in exchange for small subsistence plots. In the decade from 1927 to 1936, there was a breaking-up of land-owning patterns in this region, with a sharp increase in the number of *fincas*, while only gradual increases were occurring in other areas. Superficially this change might be attributed wholly to the 1929 depression and the drop in coffee prices, but the truth is that a somewhat militant peasantry had started the movement toward change even before the coffee price broke. I have discovered a very interesting official publication of the period, which documents the back-and-forth maneuvering that preceded the

famous Law 200. This publication has eye-witness reports on the numerous claims and disputes between owners and peasants and the not always consistent intervention of state authorities; it provides a fascinating study of the skirmishes that occur before a law comes into being. Among the principal points of dispute was the *peones'* wish to grow their own coffee trees, which the landowners were trying to repress in knowledge that *peones* who owned the trees would cease to be truly *peones*.

A third critical step, which I have already mentioned, was the emergence of commercialized agriculture, the appearance on the scene of the capitalist entrepreneur who rents or buys 100 acres or more from a large owner. Some people have said that now we have an unholy alliance between the former feudal landowner and the new industrialist who is attracted by the prestige of land-owning and wants to join the traditional society. This is very bad, these critics claim, for some of the capital that might be available for industrial development gets drained off. Perhaps this is true in some cases, but usually we find that when the city man moves onto the land, he can't help being himself. He is less apt to be infected by the lazy old absentee owner's spirit than to infuse his own spirit into agriculture. We certainly have some evidence that when people who have made their money in trade or industry turn to land investment, even though tax saving and prestige hunting may be part of the motive, they get real satisfaction out of showing the old landlords a trick or two and of opening new frontiers for their skills in management.

So, in spite of the seeming rigidity of Colombia's situation, I feel that there is much room for maneuver and that all kinds of strange things can happen. One of the strange things that did happen takes us back to that period during the late twenties and early thirties when a very considerable amount of land was taken up by the squatters. The breakup was a result, not of an agrarian revolution but simply of a decentralized kind of initiative on the part of the peasants, a decentralized violence that was eventually legalized by the state in Law 200. Indeed I believe that Law 200 is one of the big accomplishments that is often ignored. It is much criticized in Colombia, and in most of the literature on the subject, as having been completely ineffective, because of Article VI, its one poetic article (which every law must have) that looks toward the future and seems hardly meant to be taken seriously. Article VI says that in ten years' time when certain lands are found not to have been properly utilized, they will revert to the state. Well, this was a strange declaration, for if you want revolution and great changes in agrarian tenure, you cannot legislate them for ten years hence. It was clear to any one that this was a programmatic portion of the law such as the clause in the Brazilian constitution of 1891 saying that a capital is some day to be built in the center of the country. (Well, eventually — 70 years later — Brasilia was built.)

But the real accomplishment of Law 200 was in Article I, which legalized the status quo, the *situaciones de hecho*. This meant that all these silent decentralized actions of the peasants were given sanction — every one acquired title to the plot of which he had taken possession. In the existing society still dominated by its old institutions and old power structure, it would have been quite impossible to achieve this feat by the theoretically normal or orthodox sequence. According to Edmundo Flores, we would first have needed a revolution and then we could legislate the breakup of the *hacienda*. But instead Colombia invented a disorderly sequence where first the *hacienda* is broken up and then this situation is legalized. And this could be done within the existing society.

What other ways are there of breaking up a solid front and of introducing changes by indirection in Colombia? I have already hinted that the landowners are no longer a homogeneous group. There is a definite split today between the old types who are content with getting some income from the land as a way of life and the progressive new landowners who are interested in economic use and maximum income from the land. This split has been particularly sharp in the Cauca Valley where the regional planning agency, CVC (Cauca Valley Corporation), has been supported by the progressive group of industrialists, landowners and cane growers and has been stubbornly opposed by the *Asociación de Ganaderos* who held to the ancient belief that there were only three good businesses in the valley: cattle ranching with good administration, cattle ranching with bad administration, or cattle ranching without administration. Growing out of this cleavage, we actually got some support during the fifties from these progressive landowners for land-tax measures that would thereby induce their brethren, so to speak, to utilize their land better or else to rent or sell it to those who would exploit it efficiently. Certainly it would be difficult to enlist these capitalistic new owners for measures of land reform per se, but their critical view of their inefficient colleagues won their support for certain tax measures.

Balance of payment pressures also played a useful role in drawing attention to land uses and brought some unexpected alliances in Colombia when the coffee price broke and there was need to have a good look at the source of trouble. The first thing that Colombians saw to their great amazement was that they were importing 100 million dollars' worth of foodstuffs. "What's wrong with us," they ask, "that we're importing seeds, cocoa, wheat, barley, cotton, etc.?" Public discussion of the need for better methods of farming enlists the central bankers and finance minister to press for results in that sector of the economy. It also leads to experiments, not directed to land reform, but to new proposals, tinkering with tax matters, and so on. These in turn may make people ready later on for land reform if the tax measures prove ineffective or unenforceable.

Another interesting lesson we can draw from Colombia's policy-making experience is that old and accumulated legislation which seemed to mean nothing can come in handy at a later date. Unsuccessful poetic legislation leaves traces on the books, and one day when public opinion and political power are such that the country is ready to do certain things, its administrations can look through the books and find that they have practically all the authority they want. Here is one striking example of how an ambitious, unenforced and utopian law proved helpful at a critical moment. The 1936 Constitution, put through during the heyday of the Alfonso López regime, a Colombia New Deal period *par excellence*, contained an article concerning expropriation. The first sentence says that property can be expropriated against compensation in cash. That is of course a feature of almost all Latin American constitutions and a stumbling block today in terms of land reform for governments which would like to pay in bonds and avoid the inflationary consequences of cash payments. But the following sentence in the Colombia Constitution — which perhaps no one noted at the time — is unique in Latin American constitutions: it states that you may also expropriate without *any* compensation, if such expropriation is required on grounds of equity or if both houses of congress vote in favor of it. This little clause was noted by Carlos Lleras Restrepo, who authored, shepherded and engineered the many compromises on the land reform bill that was passed in 1961. When the question of compensation in bonds came up and people argued that it was unconstitutional, he said, "Not at all. The 1936 Constitution gives us the right to expropriate even without any compensation. *Quién puede lo más, puedo lo menos* — one who can do the maximum can also do the minimum, and hence we don't need any new constitutional provision to enable this law." His reasoning was accepted and permitted a statement that is quite generous in terms of payment, but in any event a feasible provision for compensation.

Still another way in which a long experience of unenforced legislation sometimes proves helpful to a cause like land reform is that legislators continue to pass laws in the comfortable belief that their laws won't amount to anything. It's just another law . . . it will get us votes and the leader asked for it . . . we'll have to play along but we'll be able to block it later on. Then occasionally one of these seemingly playful laws will work, to the surprise and dismay of the people who passed it.

This habit of not taking general legislation too seriously may explain why drastic land reform laws tend to pass more easily than mild taxation laws. Taxation applies across the board, you expect it to hit you, whereas land reform sets up a selective mechanism that will expropriate here and there on a case to case basis, so that the individual landowner trusts the measure may never affect his particular property and his own pocket-book. Certainly it has proved immensely difficult

to carry through effective land taxation in Colombia, though there is at last some tinkering with tax measures. The idea of taxing land was already in the air during Alfonso López' time, but it took no shape. Then during the survey of the International Bank in 1949-50, there was wide public discussion that land should be taxed on some basis, but the mission was not able to convince the Colombian government of the merits of its proposed plan, perhaps because it was too complicated a scheme. Several later tax attempts were made both by the Rojas Pinilla regime and by the military junta, which actually put a law on the books that prescribed tax penalties for landowners who did not cultivate their land in adequate proportions. But this decree met with collection problems at the hands of local power groups and demonstrated the well known fact that taxation is extremely difficult to enforce when the existing power structure is not sympathetic to its aims. This is a complicated subject and theorists differ on whether a government can extract more tax money out of large landholders or out of the peasant holders of small plots. I am inclined to agree with Philip Raup (agricultural economist, University of Minnesota), that it may prove easier to tax the peasant if he acquires with his land a true stake in it and a motivation for wanting the improvements, education and services that tax moneys can provide.

Indeed it came home to me as I looked at the many rather fruitless efforts in Colombia that the great difficulty in pushing through tax measures is that nobody is in favor of taxation. Many are against it — all its prospective victims — but who actually profits from taxation? In Latin America there is a general idea, I think, that revenue is going to be squandered, and the prospective tax victims can always convince the public that their money will be put to much better use by them than by the government.

Revenue itself has no political appeal; you must have first a definite expenditure and you must rally political and social forces in favor of that expenditure so that people will believe that revenue is needed. After all, the big tax decisions in the developed countries have mostly been taken under the impact of wars and great economic national crises. And in Colombia the one notable instance of success with land taxation was CVC's ability to push through a territorial law that practically doubled the real estate tax with CVC as the immediate beneficiary. Here you had a venture in economic development that got off the ground and was able to rally the Cauca Valley people's support for its costs, even against very strong resistance from the landowners. It seems useless for us to preach tax reform to Latin America today unless it is linked to compelling and understandable reasons for increasing the tax bite. In fact, I've recently argued that inflation in Latin America serves a purpose in convincing people that you must tax to avoid depreciated currency.

My conclusion about the tax experience is, as I suggested earlier, rather unorthodox, because instead of saying land taxation has been a failure, one more *fracaso*, I would say it has been extremely useful in preparing the ground for land reform, just as it was the presumed failures of land reform that convinced people they had to do some tinkering with taxation. This *fracaso mania* — or whatever you call it — so characteristic of the whole Latin American scene, is certainly strong in Colombia. The Colombians' own conviction that Law 200 was a failure infected the North American literature on the subject, but my belief is quite different, as I have tried to indicate. Similarly, people were so convinced that Decree 290, passed in 1958, was going to be a failure that they made sure it was never given a chance to be applied. Even so, this decree, with penalties and benefits for desired crops to cut down on imports, did have some good effects, for it added to the push in commercial plantations.

Now Law 135 is already being given the same treatment. In my correspondence with Bogotá friends while it was being formulated in parliament, I heard, "It will never pass. It is hopeless with our kind of congress." Then as soon as it was passed, I got the story, "Well, it won't amount to anything. It won't be enforced." But there was the extraordinary experience of the first six months during which the Ministry of Agriculture and the newly created Institute put through decrees which strengthened the law very considerably. The original law set no criterion for the value of the to-be-expropriated properties, but a decree now states that the value is not to exceed 130% of the cadastral value. That was an astonishing and very decisive step in making the reform more inexpensive and potentially much more far-reaching than it could have been if they had used as a basis the commercial prices of property, which is done, I believe, in Venezuela.

Now my friends are probably saying "We've been sitting around six months, and how many hectares have been distributed?" But it was rather important to get these points clarified before the next administration came in and thereby at least put the onus on the new administration if it goes back on the decree that gives real teeth to the law.

Why do we have this attitude of *fracaso*? This insistence on counting everything that is being done a failure? To be true to myself, I must claim that it serves some function, that in some situations it can be an energizing attitude. If a man coming into power has the chance to say "Nothing has been done. I will show you what I can do" instead of feeling hemmed in by the records of his forefathers, then he can devalue all that has gone before and, starting from zero,

make anything he achieves seem so much to the good. It is about like taking over an asset that has been written down so completely that you can forget the initial cost.

My friend Leibenstein has written that in order to generate new entrepreneurship it is necessary that the first entrepreneurs must have had a more than satisfactory experience. That is a difficult prescription to follow. Obviously most entrepreneurs will have a sad experience at the start, like a child first learning to walk, and one must look for mechanisms that permit them to go on in spite of the early unsuccessful tries. Perhaps this deprecatory attitude toward past efforts is one psychological mechanism which Latin Americans have hit on to enable each generation to put forth strong efforts on what they consider wholly untouched problems. Of course this attitude becomes really damaging if you have a possible solution almost within your grasp but cannot take hold of it because the habit of proclaiming failure is too strong.

We also find, interestingly enough, in Latin America, a completely different attitude: that is, when a problem merely begins to be solved, it is sometimes classed as wholly solved. There is a tendency to say, "Ah well, it is no longer interesting." This attitude is very well demonstrated in the behavior of Lauchlin Currie, not actually a Latin American himself, but who, after living in Colombia for the past fourteen years, has become part of the *ambiente*. He was originally responsible for the International Bank proposals and the revolutionary view that everything was wrong and must be switched around entirely. It was he who startled the Colombians in 1950 with the idea that they must drive the cattle into the hills and get the peasants down from the slopes into the valleys. But in the meantime he has become somewhat more conservative, or in any event he has now decided that *latifundia* is no longer a problem. Commercial agriculture is taking over and there is no longer any need to improve land tenure institutions; what one must do now is to get the inefficient Andean peasant into the cities and give him work there. So here we have the opposite attitude: when a problem begins to show possibilities of solution, then you are no longer concerned and you say, "Let's do something else that's more interesting." In either attitude, public policy is not conceived as a tool that supplements other efforts at resolving long-term situations, but more as a sovereign weapon of attack for each new politician.

Perhaps I have not talked enough about the current land reform picture, but I have wanted to communicate to you some of the general considerations that have interested me in my study of Colombia.

# Land Reform In Colombia: Some Ideas

Charles W. Anderson\*

Late last summer I went to Columbia to gather materials to illustrate some general points about the impact of political factors and economic change in Latin America. And, like Mr. Hirschman, I found the agrarian reform problem in Colombia just perfect for my purposes.

I'd like to make a few points that relate to Mr. Hirschman's work, not so much to the ideas that he developed today, as to his case study that will be published soon of land tenure and land reform in Colombia, particularly in the context of Law 135, passed in 1961. I wish I could be a severe critic of Mr. Hirschman; that would make it more exciting. But it happens that I agree with him essentially in most of his particulars. So my function today is more or less to underscore, to expand upon, and perhaps to approach from a slightly different angle some of the things that he says in his book. I want to talk about three points:

1. The politics of the agrarian reform law of 1961 and Mr. Hirschman's concept that Colombia is undergoing a revolution by stealth since the big landowners thought that Law 135 would be another poetic law whereas there are forces in the political system which are insisting that it be implemented.

2. Some observations on INCORA, the new Colombian agency for agrarian reform, and the charges frequently made in Colombia and here that it is becoming an ineffective and bureaucratic monster.

3. A question that is bound to come up in the discussion period, so I may as well have my say ahead of Mr. Hirschman: just what are the chances for success of the agrarian reform in Colombia?

Right at the start in discussing Law 135, I want to say that I feel, as Mr. Hirschman feels, that this law, and the whole process of agrarian change through a state mechanism, must be understood as a political event. To ask whether the law is good or bad, whether the program is good or bad from a technical or economic point of view, is to ask what are logically second questions. First, we must understand what kind of reform was possible, given the Colombian political system. Carlos Lleras Restrepo, father of the Colombian agrarian reform law, attended a meeting of the Colombian Society of Agronomists where they were criticizing his law left and right for technical inadequacies and flaws. In answer, Lleras Restrepo simply

said to them: "The agrarian reform in Colombia is not a technical matter; it is a political matter."

What did he mean? Simply that the political situation of his country and of his party was such that the passage of an agrarian reform law, some agrarian reform law, became extremely important; that the first priority in his eyes was to get a law passed, an action of some sort taken, both for partisan political reasons and to avert threats to the political stability of the nation for which he worked.

Let's look at the political factors that entered into the stormy process of enacting this agrarian reform law in Colombia, a process that went on about a year, first in what was called the National Agrarian Committee — a drafting group that Lleras Restrepo had brought together as theoretically representing all interests in Colombia that would be affected by agrarian reform — and later in the two houses of Congress as Lleras Restrepo guided the drafts into law. The most critical factor on the scene, which had a twofold importance to this reform, was the nature of the Colombian National Front government. Since 1958, Colombia has been undertaking a fascinating experiment: the two classic parties in its two-party system — the Conservatives and the Liberals — have made a pact between them to end centuries of bitterness and chronic civil strife — something that is not supposed to occur in a two-party system — via an agreement whereby each party will alternate in power every four years during a sixteen-year period. Hopefully by the end of that time, political maturity will have appeared in Colombia, and they can go back to party competition on a more normal basis.

So when we think of Colombia in 1961, when the agrarian reform law came up, we must think of lawmakers for whom the preservation of the National Front is a paramount concern; it's their best working chance to avoid either the violent civil strife, which had cost 200,000 lives in the single decade before the Front was formed, or a return to military dictatorship, which Colombia experienced for the first time in the Twentieth Century between 1953 and 1958. Clearly, in any policy issue regardless of its subject, the idea of maintaining the coalition between the Conservative and Liberal parties is a vital matter. Secondly — and also a part of the problem in political stability — the Front must not shy away from the kinds of change that Colombia needs. Some Colombians look upon the National Front as a conspiracy of the oligarchy to maintain itself, a gentlemen's agreement to monopolize power. Consequently the National Front is obliged

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not only to avoid unsolvable conflicts between its own partners but to prove to its critics that it is interested in actual reform measures. These two needs outweigh any fine shadings of policy differences that might loom large in a political body with more usual competitive structure.

Agrarian reform — any agrarian reform program — became a symbol of the National Front's capacity to do something. Many people have said that if Colombia had taken the old Law 200 and put it into effect, there would be a better agrarian reform policy that can result from the new Law 135. That's a debatable point. But, what was necessary from the political point of view was that there should be a big, appealing and attractive program that could prove that the National Front was interested in problems of change and reform in Colombia. At the same time, agrarian reform, whatever shape it assumed, had to be acceptable to the groups in coalition. Obviously the agrarian reform law that resulted, Law 135, is a compromise law. It isn't a perfectly planned or consistent set of principles to guide agrarian reform, but a solving of the political differences among the Conservative and Liberal parties and the subgroups within each of those two parties.

Hence, as Mr. Hirschman brings out in his book, a process of bargaining went on throughout the debate over this law, led by Carlos Lleras Restrepo, a terrific tactician in the art of getting things through a legislative assembly. Restrepo had the problem not only of keeping unity within the disparate elements of the National Front but of coping with the several political forces that did not accept the principle of the National Front at all and wanted to heckle it on all grounds — on the right, the Laureanista conservatives, and on the left, the MRL party of Lopez Michelson, which used to be a Castro-backing party but is now more or less a social revolutionary party. These groups, which considered the Front an oligarchic monopoly, were scornful of Lleras Restrepo's agrarian reform as a grand *proyecto* to delude the small farmers, a grandstand play to be used for partisan ends alone. Typical of the opposition's stand was the statement of one delegate after the congress had finally passed the law, "Here we are at the feast of agrarian reform, and look who's present: all the people from the city, all the bourgeoisie; absent are all the people from the countryside who will continue to press for a real agrarian reform."

Actually the criticisms from delegates *outside* the National Front were vital in the whole process only insofar as they stirred up public opinion, for once the Front could achieve agreement on what agrarian reform should look like, it could — having such a large majority in both houses — simply ram the bill through Congress with little regard for the criticisms that the MRL and the Laureanistas kept screaming.

The most critical issue in the debate was the question of payment for expropriated lands, whether by bonds or by cash. The more conserva-

tive members of the coalition wanted payment by cash, the more radical wanted payment by bonds. How do you solve this? By constant give and take, both in the National Agrarian Committee and in the senate, a formula was worked out whereby adequately exploited or moderately exploited lands should be paid for in cash and the rest of the lands in bonds. Many people say that this compromise took the wind out of the whole program and ruined agrarian reform for Colombia. But if you look at it from the point of view of Lleras Restrepo, who needed an agrarian reform program of some kind, political feasibility came first, and technical questions had to be second.

One of Mr. Hirschman's main points in his paper is that this long bargaining process within the National Front was the key factor which allowed agrarian reform to slip through; that is, because so much attention was devoted to the bargaining over payments for expropriated lands, a number of radical solutions to agrarian problems incorporated in the bill slipped through without anybody noticing them. I agree that it may well have been Lleras Restrepo's strategy to concentrate attention on this one point and thereby deflect notice from other reforms he was proposing. However, in the full context of the debate over the agrarian reform, one must note that much time is devoted to the question of creating INCORA, the agrarian reform institute, and to challenges that it was going to become a superstate like Cuba's INRA or an instrument of partisan advantage in the hands of the liberals against the conservative landowners. This issue seems to have consumed as much debate time as the problem of payment for expropriated lands, and yet, the issue of land payment was the critical one, because this was the issue involved in keeping the coalition of the National Front together.

Why was this issue of land payments so important? That's not easy to explain, for it relates to deeper ideologies, efforts to reconcile them and misunderstandings entailed in them.

Of the many fascinating things about the Colombian conflict over agrarian reform, one that intrigues me most is that nobody appeared to be against reform, in theory. To be sure, the big *latifundistas* weren't heard from in the political process, but if you go down the list of represented interests and see what they were saying, you find that all of them accepted the need for agrarian reform. Even the two parties on the outside, which fought the bill for partisan reasons, said that they supported the idea of reform.

The fact that everybody accepted the need to do something about agriculture and land tenure patterns concealed a truth that we in the Land Tenure Center are aware of — that agrarian reform means very, very different things to different people. And it was these different meanings that were at issue within the National Front coalition. Some people in Colombia, for whom Lauchlin Currie became the spokesman, saw agrarian reform primarily under the rubric of in-

creased productivity. These people — and they included many in both the Conservative and Liberal parties — claimed, "It isn't agrarian reform to redistribute land to small landowners; that's exactly the way to decrease productivity and institutionalize poverty. What you must do instead is to commercialize agriculture in large-scale efficient units, move your excess labor force to the cities and expand productivity." To many others, social reform was the key. And in many of Carlos Lleras Restrepo's own statements, you see that this is what he is thinking about. An agrarian reform should be designed first and foremost to deal with an inequitable distribution of wealth; this is what we're after.

So, with this kind of ideological split in the committee, you can see that Restrepo's bargained negotiation on the terms of land payment was really part of a much larger compromise. It was the immediate issue, but it had roots in a much larger compromise which was written into the law.

Read Law 135 as it is written today, and you see that its mood, its overall tone, is one of social reform. It starts with the assertion that its purpose is to reform the social agrarian structure. Looking through the passages defining INCORA and the way in which claims to public land and expropriations are going to be dealt with, you get this feeling that the dynamic of the law is toward social reform. But at every point, you find that it is checked by safeguards, of a financial or legal nature, to prevent the law from affecting productive agricultural enterprise. This compromise between those who said, "Yes, agrarian reform but not changes that will challenge existing productivity," and those who said, "Yes, agrarian reform; we need it as a social measure," made the law possible, but this compromise also threatened its success, for its mood promised what its provisions might not be able to yield.

All of this is important to understanding Mr. Hirschman's "revolution by stealth." His point is that the whole character of Law 135's passage and its decrees, Colombia got more of an agrarian reform than the conservative sectors anticipated. He mentioned a few moments ago that now land would be evaluated at 130% of its cadastral value instead of at its commercial price. In other words, we're going to move far beyond the terms of the law. It may prove that this is a wise step, a strategy that will succeed in getting through measures that could not have been written into a law susceptible of passage. But it may turn out that the proponents of the social type of reform have overstepped the legitimate margins of their risk. For in a way the post-enactment strengthening of the law is a violation of the larger compromise which had been reached for political and economic reasons. Any party to the compromise can claim that a foul has been committed in terms of the political tactics involved.

In short, what went on in Colombia and is still going on is not merely a conflict involving person-

al interests, such as the traditional interests of landowners opposed to all reform, but more importantly, a conflict of ideologies. The compromise formula which was Law 135 was very skillfully designed as a way of reconciling both those who saw agrarian reform in the context of productivity and those who saw it as social reform. And the outcome, if this compromise is now in danger — given the whole political structure of Colombia — could threaten the implementation of the agrarian reform entirely. It may be that through "revolution by stealth," the advocates of social reform are endangering the prospects of getting the optimal feasible reform that was achieved in Law 135. Most of the decrees have been challenged as being unconstitutional in exceeding the power authorized by the legislature; and, although these pending cases have not yet been decided by the Supreme Court, there are some which do appear to be of very dubious constitutionality in terms of the way the law was written.

One of the main accomplishments of Law 135 was the creation of a new institute in which most of the power for agrarian change in Colombia was concentrated. This is INCORA. INCORA is a marvelous agency, run by an enthusiastic, very dedicated individual, Enrique Peñalosa. He is an outstanding public administrator, and INCORA is an interesting organization to study.

At the present time, during its first year of work, INCORA is confronted with criticisms from both the left and the right. The left argues that it isn't moving fast enough, that it's just a huge number of lawyers sitting in Bogotá doing nothing. For example, one leading spokesman for the left claimed that in one year INCORA had created a bureaucracy of 800 people and had settled forty families. And you hear this sort of thing in Colombia all the time. The political rightists, who are opposed to agrarian reform anyhow, have of course picked up these stories, and they convert attacks on INCORA's methods into attacks on the whole agrarian reform idea.

How about the charges that INCORA is a gigantic beehive of lawyers with no workers getting out in the field? At the end of 1962, INCORA had a Bogotá staff of slightly over 300, and of these about 60 had legal background. But note that a large part of INCORA's initial work is the legal process of getting land and of dividing it up, so there is genuine demand for legal skills. Furthermore Colombia is very short on administrative talent except for people with a legal background. Unquestionably INCORA is having trouble in finding people willing to work in the field, people with enthusiasm to get out and put the reform underway, for though it has the financial resources to outbid other agencies for competent workers, the reservoir of people who actually could carry out agrarian reform is indeed very small. When Director Peñalosa was asked what he considered INCORA's major problem at the end of its first year, he looked very sad and just muttered, "Personnel, personnel, personnel. Where are the people?"

Part of the difficulty may rest in the organization of INCORA. On paper it's a very rational, streamlined style of administrative structure. All the tasks that might be part of a reform are broken down into separate offices in Bogotá, and there's somebody in charge of every one of the separate functions. For example, in any agrarian reform project, you will go through the phases of planning, of land acquisition, of land adjudication to the people you're going to settle, and of providing them with social and technical assistance. Now for each of these functions, there's somebody in Bogotá, as well as a director for each project in the field. You can already see frictions developing between the people in the field and the bureaucrats in Bogotá who can find a thousand reasons for saying no.

It may be that this functional organization that INCORA has adopted guarantees that administrators will focus on partial, specialized phases rather than on getting a total job done. Some of us have suggested to INCORA the idea of a project orientation whereby you'd have a director and a staff who would take a project from the very first planning all the way through to execution. You bring this up in INCORA circles and the answer is that you simply can't find men competent to direct a project from beginning to end. One's rebuttal might well be, "Does specialization of function among lesser men guarantee any greater success?"

But the administrative problem of INCORA — the functional versus the project approach — is true of all Colombian administration, and actually of our culture everywhere today. What is missing, in Colombia as in many administrative systems, is the administrative entrepreneur, the man who seeks out a job of his own and risks personal failure against the rewards of recognition and creative satisfaction. Divided responsibility is more comfortable for the administrator, and not just in Latin America.

Well, now, what are the prospects for success of the current agrarian reform in Colombia? Not to get involved in the tricky business of defining exactly what "success" means, I'd like to give a few hints on what one can conceivably expect from the present situation.

INCORA is provided by law with an annual budget that equals about ten million dollars at the

current exchange. It may also get money from foreign loans and from sale of its own lands, but since these resources are rather unpredictable, let's just keep the ten million figure in mind. Next, INCORA estimates that there are 500,000 underprivileged rural families in Colombia who might be benefited by an agrarian reform. Now let's note a few other figures. At the Cunday projects, the first of INCORA's activities, the bill per parcel holder has been roughly \$2,000, which included building a house and providing certain services and equipment. At another INCORA Project — the Norte de Santander project — the estimate is about \$2,800 per parcel holder. You might like to note also that in the Cauca Valley, the CVC finds that it costs about \$400 per hectare to irrigate land. But not to get into complications over how much costs will differ depending on whether you're just going to hack out a road or carry through major technical jobs like irrigation, let's stick to the \$2,000 per parcel of the Cunday project. Then if you wish to, although I shall not, because I don't want to make all that much out of these figures, multiply it by the 500,000 of underprivileged families and see where you come out in cost dimensions against the resources of INCORA, even allowing that INCORA may get some resources beyond the ten million we've been talking about.

Your arithmetic suggests one thing — that you're not going to have, through the present agrarian reform law, what you'd call an agrarian reform revolution in Colombia. That just doesn't seem to be in the cards. This act of government is not going to brush away old land-holding patterns in one sweep. I find it more useful, myself, to think of INCORA and the present agrarian reform as advance scout troops that are going to prepare for and regularize secular trends that are already underway in Colombia, such as urbanization, commercialization of agriculture, and extended occupation of public domain. I can foresee INCORA acting as a clearing house for tensions and frictions inherent in change and hence as an instrument of political stability in handling land tenure problems. It may be able to smooth the path of transition, a path on which Colombia has a pretty good start compared to many other Latin American countries.

## Discussion

**Question:** One of the criticisms of INCORA is that it is too centralistic. It is supposed to have sectional committees in the Department and the municipalities, but I haven't heard from Colombia that these units are doing anything.

**Anderson:** In the law INCORA was given discretionary authority to decentralize its functions; that was one of the compromises that made the law palatable to the Conservatives. But I can safely say that Peñalosa personally is pretty much for writing off the running of INCORA as a decentralized body, for he believes that reform won't work unless you carry it out in a very concentrated, forceful fashion. Of the 22 sectional committees I looked at, only six had held more than one meeting. They don't have anything to do at present and they recognize it, so they hold a meeting to organize themselves and then disband. Their structure does not permit them to carry out projects on their own; all they can do is to suggest projects to INCORA: Why aren't you working in Boyacá? In Santander, In Huila? That's fine, but INCORA can work in only so many places with its present budget, and the last thing in the world it needs is to hear recommendations for more projects.

However, some degree of decentralization has taken place in that INCORA has delegated to the departmental governments the authority to adjudicate public lands up to 450 hectares, and it has delegated to the CVC and other regional organizations certain jobs of technical assistance. But my guess is that unless you see a tremendous increase in INCORA resources, the sectional committees aren't going to amount to much.

**Hirschman:** It was my impression last August that some of these regional committees had started to manifest themselves as spokesmen of the landed interests in order to make life more difficult for the central administration. In Colombia you find thoughts of land reform at the two ends of the scale — at the peasant level, in spontaneous actions and with the support of various local forces such as peasant leagues and even, in some cases, the Catholic Church, and at the very top of the central administration. The consciousness that something must be done has not come to the departmental power structures, which are working very much along traditional lines. However, I gathered that some amount of decentralization was true of one Cunday project. Its director, Avila Casas, an excellent man, made many decisions of his own and was given a fairly free hand by the administrator.

**Question:** At one project in Cunday, at Tolima, I saw INCORA distributing concrete houses although the region is rich in building stone. I think this is a great mistake when INCORA has limited funds.

**Anderson:** Two things were involved there. 1) INCORA wanted to get the project completed very quickly as a pilot model. 2) These particular houses had been imported many years before by the Banco de Credito Territorial and were stored in a warehouse; INCORA received them as a nice instance of inter-agency cooperation. But I see your point.

**Question:** It seems to me that the problem of all Latin America is the shortage of technical leadership. What is Colombia doing about that?

**Anderson:** Well, what we're doing is part of it. As one of its objectives, the Land Tenure Center plans to increase the reservoir of trained personnel and to help Latin American countries get involved in regular training programs. But the problem continues that when you train a fellow to be an extension agent, he immediately shoots right up to the top of the hierarchy and loses his touch with his field. The question of how to find people who are willing to work in the *campos* and induce them to stay there is going to take years to solve. Very little you can say except, "Education, education, education," is an answer to the question of personnel.

**Hirschman:** It's one of the special hazards of a revolution by stealth. When you have a real revolution, you generate in the process people with enthusiasm to get things done. What INCORA needs is some of the missionary spirit to attract people to work there. This has not been the case so far. It has had a double problem: too few people anywhere in the country with good agrarian training, and those few still generally find it more pleasant to work in private enterprise. Even this first project of Cunday could not find a single agronomist, and it's obviously difficult to carry out a meaningful agrarian reform without people who are capable of doing soil studies. But I suppose that in the process of showing that it is a serious agency, INCORA will improve its chances to attract the people it needs.

**Question:** The biggest debate over land reform in south Italy was whether to concentrate on the best land or the worst land, and they chose the worst — the swamps and mountain areas. They had two reasons — to expand the area of production and to avoid offending the political groups that already had the best lands in their control. What have been Colombia's tactics in this respect?

**Hirschman:** This is more or less the debate between Currie and the people who say we must do something even for the *minifundio* peasants. The second project in Colombia was in Narino. This area was thought to be entirely occupied by *minifundios*, but it was found that there were still fairly sizeable properties of 300 to 400 hectares, and by taking all these properties and splitting them up, one could improve the lot of the small-

scale farmers in the region. Was it worthwhile to make this effort, or should one rather concentrate, for example on large-scale irrigation schemes and thus give a bigger boost to the total economy? Well, I think it's a question of balance, and that both ends must be pursued. People who favor the large colonization schemes in the tropical plains of the llanos, for instance, speak as though all land in the highlands is poor, as though highland agriculture must be given up as a thing of the past and its people moved. But that simply is not true. It's amazing when you look closely into a situation how much you can still do with it.

**Anderson:** In the matter of INCORA's choice of sites, again I must point to political reasons. Narino was of particular interest to Chavez, who had a lot of influence in INCORA; Cunday was the perfect place to tackle a pretty delicate situation that had a high potential for success. Indeed, until INCORA gets larger resources, I think political reasons are bound to be a determining factor in the choice of sites.

**Question:** Is any research going on to define real factors for selecting one area as opposed to another?

**Anderson:** Oh sure. INCORA has 86 people who spend their whole time doing this kind of study on their planning staff.

**Hirschman:** In this choice of targets, remember the time factor. Splitting up *latifundios* in existing settlements can show results fairly quickly, whereas some scheme with higher potential payoff may require drainage, irrigation, long slow steps of preparation, before it begins to show any tangible results. So, from the political standpoint, the choice between poor lands and rich lands is closely linked with this criterion of immediate versus delayed results.

**Anderson:** I feel also that INCORA consciously wants to follow a mixed strategy in planning its projects.

**Question:** Is it possible to say whether Law 135 has led to improved land use in the large holdings?

**Hirschman:** There may well have been some incentive effects, but the movement toward better land utilization had been stimulated all through the 1950's by the general talk about tax legislation and by Decree 290 of 1958, so that it's hard to measure how much if any additional push was given by the agrarian reform law.

**Question:** When you spoke of a definite expenditure to make taxation more acceptable, did you mean that a land tax should be earmarked? If so, for what specific uses should it be earmarked?

**Hirschman:** Well, this is of course a matter of budgetary discipline, and you know that by principle you shouldn't earmark! But the reason we've known so much earmarking in Latin America is that the central budget is always a bit slack. At this point, we have in Colombia a chosen instrument, INCORA, that could use tax proceeds for its general operations or for particular projects such as access roads, seeds, experiment stations, and

so on. It offers the chance to mobilize public support behind land taxation for the first time — although I don't know if this is in the political cards at all. I was merely trying to explain the lack of political drive for seemingly reasonable tax proposals and the paradox of a traditional society accepting the much more radical measures of agrarian reform.

**Question:** Is there any evidence that interest groups are forming that will represent the rural population?

**Anderson:** I think I mentioned in passing that the *latifundia* owners weren't really represented in the making of the law; neither, of course, were the rural peasants. There is an incipient *sindicato* that claims to speak in the name of the *campesinos*, but there is nothing like a nation-wide interest group that can represent them effectively. Colombia's politics are still urban, and I think the agrarian reform law is going to remain in urban hands for some time. Some second-level interest groups are emerging: interest groups that don't stem from the people but speak for them — the Catholic Church, Acción Cultural, and other groups of this kind. Growth in this direction is going to be very, very slow.

**Hirschman:** INCORA itself may help in stimulating the movement when the peasant knows that for the first time he has an agency in the capital that will speak for him and take up his interests. This would seem to have been Peñalosa's intention at the beginning when he put up lots of posters around the country and ads in the papers. He was criticized, but he said, "They must know we exist."

**Anderson:** But he's being very careful now to say exactly what the agrarian reform is and what it isn't. He's not trying to stimulate a pressure force that would demand goals beyond his agency's means and jeopardize a workable program. I know that there was a big debate in November within the executive committee of INCORA: one faction said, "We must go out and sell the agrarian reform," and the other said, "No, that's the last thing in the world we want to do; we don't want to raise aspirations we can't meet." Peñalosa was siding pretty much with the latter group.

**Hirschman:** Well, I was thinking that perhaps — in terms of those figures you put on the blackboard — INCORA will find its role shaped by forces familiar to us in history. When the Colombian farmers themselves take the initiative, INCORA will be the instrument in Bogotá that can readily respond to their actions.

**Anderson:** Good point, Mr. Hirschman. And something you bring out very well in your book. There is a kind of representation which the capital must recognize and take into account that goes on whenever the farmer takes strong action. Mr. Hirschman's analysis of Law 200 shows how the rural interests got heard by this indirect process.

**Question:** When you spoke of INCORA as a sort of advance scout in a progressive movement, I suspect you mean toward more commercialized agriculture?

**Anderson:** Some of the move will be toward commercialization, but I think also of frontier settlement. There still is public land in Colombia, and there will probably be a continuing movement of internal migration, as well as more commercialized agriculture.

**Question:** What kind of people are they who come to the Campesino Congress?

**Anderson:** Of two types on the whole: some were

not real peasants, but peasant organizers working out of the city; others were the more progressive, innovating farmers who emerged as spokesmen for their own communities — the natural leaders who get sent to the capital. I was extremely impressed with these people. They remind me of our better Wisconsin farmers: they are sharp, hard-headed, and nobody is putting anything over on them.

## Social Change in Popayán

Andrew H. Whiteford\*

I have been working in Colombia off and on since 1947 and, although I have been in various parts of the country, my studies have been concentrated on one particular spot, the city of Popayán in the Cauca Valley. What I know about Colombia is primarily what I know about Popayán; this is what I'll be talking about. We all have a tendency to generalize from too limited a set of particulars, but I don't want to make any pretensions that what I say about the social structure of Popayán is characteristic of Colombia as a whole, or indeed of any place other than Popayán.

That being the case, I should tell you my reasons for studying this particular city. When we started work, shortly after World War II, anthropologists had been working in Latin America for many years, but most of their research had been concentrated in Indian villages or in completely tribal situations. We went to Colombia with the idea of doing work simultaneously in cultural anthropology and in archaeology for the Logan Museum in Beloit. Our initial contacts were with the people at the Colombian Institute of Anthropology in Bogotá where we were quickly convinced of two things: 1) That there were plenty of fascinating problems for the anthropologist in Colombia, and 2) That we could count on prospects of excellent cooperation from the people we were talking to.

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\*Professor of Anthropology at Beloit College and Director of the Logan Museum of Anthropology. The research Professor Whiteford recounts here was performed in Colombia from 1947 to 1952 and was carried on with the help of students in anthropology from Beloit College and with the assistance of the Wenner Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) and a later grant from the SSRC and the American Council of Learned Societies. A more complete description of Popayán was published as Bulletin 9 by the Logan Museum of Anthropology, *Two Cities of Latin America, A Comparative Description of Social Classes*. This book is now out of print but will be reissued next year by Anchor Books.

I stumbled upon Popayán rather by accident. I went down there first on a side visit, but what I saw remained in my mind. One of the things I had been thinking about was the possibility of finding an example, or at least a vestige, of classic Latin American culture. Obviously social change has been going on rapidly in Latin America as well as in the rest of the world, and when you get into one of the large cities, you're dealing with an international, cosmopolitan culture to a large extent, which often shares only peripherally the basic heritage of the country in which it happens to be located. It seemed to us that if we could find some urban situation that was off the main routes, we might be able to learn something about the traditional society from which the other urban situations had grown. Popayán appeared to be such an ideal, almost something which we had constructed for our own uses, because not only was it urban and somewhat isolated, but it was a city of importance. Throughout the entire history of Colombia, Popayán had been one of the leading cities and the birthplace of many leaders in Colombian history. It had been the capital of a large part of the country at one time, was still the capital of the Department of Cauca, the seat of the University of Cauca (of considerable vintage) and of the archbishopric of Southwestern Colombia, as well as being the chief marketplace for the upper Cauca Valley.

It was somewhat isolated in the sense that it had been shortcircuited by Cali when the road from Buenaventura was built. This cut off a considerable amount of the trade that had previously flowed through Popayán. But it was not in any sense a ghost town. It was still flourishing with the various activities to which I just referred, and the traditions of the past were still very much alive in Popayán.

I spoke of its having produced leaders: the presidency of Dr. Guillermo León Valencia represents the sixteenth or seventeenth time that the country's highest office has been occupied by a Payanes: the city has produced bishops and archbishops and an almost-cardinal; it has produced

generals of all sorts, and at times during the Civil War, the leaders on opposite sides were not only both from Popayán, but were cousins, Mosqueras and Arboledas, who lived across the street from each other. The historic role the city has played in national policy has been so potent that it is difficult to find parallels for it in other countries. It offered us, we thought, a place in which we could possibly find some keys to the basic pattern of Latin American social structure. I don't say, "This is what we thought," simply because we went and looked at the place, but this is what the Colombians themselves told us. When we asked, "Was Cali at one time like Popayán?" they said, "Why Cali was just like Popayán twenty-five years ago, only more so," and the general feeling was that in Popayán (possibly also in Tunja and Cartagena) there still survived living examples of what many Colombians regarded as their traditional society.

We began our work in Popayán with the intention of doing a general community study; it became an investigation of social classes by necessity. At that time, Popayán was a city of 35,000 people (or a bit more, if you were there on market day), and it soon became obvious that we couldn't know everything about the community unless we stayed a very, very long time. It was also soon obvious that even in as small a city as this, there was no homogeneity among the people; it was impossible to define a "typical Popayanejo." However, every person was not unique; each one was like some others. We soon realized that there were groups of families which resembled each other so closely that a single description would cover the majority of their characteristics. These shared characteristics were the traits which were used to delineate the social classes.

In studies that have been done in American communities, the class divisions that Warner and other researchers have set up are constructs of the research; in other words, they are entities which the research man devises as pigeon holes for his own use, but they may not be recognized by the people in the community itself. This was not true in Popayán. Here social classes were real entities. They were the key symbols for social integration and social interaction. People referred to social classes very commonly and easily at all levels. I don't mean that they all agreed exactly with one another, but the incidence of agreement was high enough so that there was clearly a pattern which the community itself acknowledged and within which it functioned.

The people in this small and stable city knew each other. When they saw a person on the street, they not only knew him and his occupation, but they knew a good bit about his ancestry and all his living relatives, so they had little hesitation about placing him in a social class. There were patent symbols such as dress, location, and activity which aided this kind of identification, but primarily it was a matter of most of the indi-

viduals in the community actually knowing each other.

To study social classes is not simply to map ecological areas in the city or to differentiate the rich from the poor. The important thing about social classes is that they constitute sub-cultures. It is possible to talk about a *mestizo* culture or a Colombian culture, but even when you speak of the culture of a single city like Popayán, you are dealing with something that is highly diverse in its ingredients. You don't begin to get categories with any uniformity or predictability until you get below the general community level into the social classes. And when you say there is distinct culture pattern for a particular class, again you're not simply saying whether its members are rich or poor or live in certain types of houses; you're talking about the fundamental and significant ways in which a group of people think and act alike.

As a person acquires his taste for clothes or for the house he wants, he acquires a deep-seated value system by which he judges things and sets up his relationships with other people. I am not completely a cultural determinist; I'm perfectly aware that many people change their values as they grow older, but it is from the social class in which the individual grows up that he first acquires his values. This is the discreet and significant sector within the whole complex society where people tend to really share values and tastes. So when you talk about the individuals in a particular sub-culture or social class, you can make generalizations about them which have a fair degree of validity.

Popayán talked about a tripartite society — upper, middle and lower. Often when we use this scale, it is because we can easily differentiate the top from the bottom and we think of everything that lies in the misty flats between the extremes as "middle." Middle class in Popayán, and in some other situations in which we've worked, is not simply the left-overs. It's a fairly definite category, for reasons which I will explain soon.

The upper class in Popayán is interesting because it has two definite ranks within it; a subtle distinction which is hard to detect on casual acquaintance. I must admit that I spent three and a half months in Popayán the first year I was there without being aware of it. It happened that I was working in another sector of the society most of the time, and I thought we had attained a fair picture of the upper class. It was not until I returned the third time to spend a year, this time with my family, that the distinctions within the class became apparent to me.

Throughout the upper class, lineage is the principal factor that determines inclusion or exclusion, social acceptance or rejection: Where did you come from? Who were your ancestors? There was a time when this was true almost everywhere in Colombian society. Today, in Popayán, it is less decisive than it once was—but it is still very important. In addition to tracing descent from the

original *conquistadores*, a number of families in Popayán point proudly to the nobility of their Spanish lineage. I'm generally rather skeptical about the nobility of noble ancestors, but the fact is that the records of the Arboledas, the Mosqueras, the Ayerbes, Valencias, and others seem to stand up well in genealogical research.

As in all the world there is no purpose in being noble unless people know you are, so you carve your family *escudo* (crest) in stone over your doorway (preferably your ancestor carved it many generations ago), and you work it into your patio grill-work and have it embroidered on your shirts and sheets. This exhibition is not at all vulgar. It has been done for a very long time in a matter of fact manner and in a setting where it is hardly necessary because every one in Popayán knows whether or not you have an *escudo*.

In the entire upper class of Popayán — both divisions — there is a strong emphasis upon culture and education; these people travel widely and their interests often develop considerable breadth in the arts, literature and philosophy. Great effort is made to educate all boys to the university level, and for generations a number of the daughters have gone to girls' schools and seminaries in France, England, the United States and Canada. All the men are professionals — lawyers, doctors, engineers — and have their university degrees. The majority of them follow the ancestral pattern of dabbling in politics, and many of them hold local and national offices. This gives Popayán a particular flavor: in spite of the fact that it is isolated, conservative, and very Colombian, it is amazingly cosmopolitan, and you are likely, at any gathering in this relatively small city, to meet a Colombian representative to the United Nations, an ambassador to Iraq, a consul in Paris or several people who have taken degrees at the Sorbonne.

For the upper class generally, the major source of income is still land, but it is important to stress that most of the men practice their professions, more or less. Doctors work at hospitals, lawyers, have offices, engineers have appointments of one kind or another; some men are in commerce, even though they have professional degrees. In Querétaro, Mexico, where we worked for a while, the people who represented the remnants of the old aristocracy did not have university degrees; they were *hacendados*, who either lived on the *haciendas* or went out to them every day. It is different in Popayán, where the aristocrats work at their professions and go out to the *hacienda* only on weekends for pleasure or on an occasional mid-week visit to check up on the *mayordomo*. They are interested in their cattle, in various kinds of grasses that are being planted, in problems of breeding and marketing, and so on, but they do not practice agriculture nor are they ranchers. Now this pattern is beginning to change. As early as fifteen years ago, there were sons of some of these families coming to the United States — not to major in philosophy or politics — but to take

degrees in agronomy or animal husbandry at Louisiana, Iowa or Washington and going back to run the family properties. Some ten years ago, one family had a serious problem because a son who had taken such a degree decided, when he got married, that he was going to move his family out to the *hacienda* and live there. At that time the owners never lived on their *haciendas* except during the summer and he was regarded as quite a heretic. His attitude was symptomatic of a change: more and more of the young men seem to be taking a real and enlightened interest in the properties which their families have possessed for generations. Today there is a new emphasis on dairying, and when we were back there this past year, I was delighted to find that they have established an annual *feria* at which an impressive number of finely blooded animals and a variety of agricultural exhibits were on display. Participation certainly contributes to social prestige and the great majority of the fine animals belong to the aristocratic families, but it must be recognized that they are here exercising leadership in the improvement of stock breeding and land use. The improvements may effect smaller operators and bring about increased productivity in the entire area.

I am not going to have time to describe the upper class mode of life in all its detail, but I do want to differentiate a little further between the two divisions in the upper class. The chief element which excludes members of the lower upper class from the top stratum is simply *pesos*. This is not so much a matter of wealth *per se*, as a matter of validating social position by means of wealth. In other words, if you happen to have money, you can also have the kind of house and clothes and the kind of memberships and travel and education which you can't possess or participate in without wealth. Some families of the lower upper class were, a generation or so ago, members of the upper upper class but have lost their money and had to sell their property. Their names are still good, since their ancestors — that important index for acceptability in the entire upper class — remain illustrious, but in their reduced circumstances, they can share only in some areas of the aristocrats' activities. Other areas are closed because they simply cannot afford them.

Even the poorest of these lower upper families eschew manual labor. They strive for education, insist on good manners, cultivate the arts and letters and diligently maintain their social facade, while they cherish the past and place their hopes in the future. So many of these people, during the last generation, have been forced to allow their daughters to work that this has become acceptable even for some daughters of the upper upper class. Women's escape from the home is something which is happening all over the world and it is acceptable in Popayán partly because of the times, but for impoverished aristocrats, this change in standards is especially welcome. It is clearly desirable to find a poor daughter a rich husband, and girls who work outside the home extend their

range of choice and greatly improve their prospects.

Many of these families have sacrificed deeply in order to procure educations for their sons at the University of Cauca, in Bogotá or in the United States. This sacrifice frequently becomes a sort of family project, because if one member of the family can improve his financial position, there is a prospect that he can lift all the others. Some of these young men do indeed succeed and come back to assist their families, though it strikes me that in recent years many of them chose to move the families to Cali as the first step of such assistance.

These, then, are the people who constitute the upper class in Popayán. What is the evidence of any mobility into this class? A significant index of its extreme rarity is the fact that when we inquired within the community, most people said, "Oh yes, it's possible. You're supposed to have lineage, but with education, money, and good manners, it's possible to move up from the middle to the upper class." And then everybody, without exception, told us about the same single instance. Everybody knew the one fellow who had done it, and nobody could ever provide us with another example. The man who does move up must be extraordinarily endowed with the status symbols which the upper class cherish. He presumably has moved away from the community and then returned, very well educated, nationally honored, with wealth, prestige and a cosmopolitan outlook. He impressed everybody with his gentility and achievement, and soon people of status sponsor him for their clubs, where he meets their daughters — and daughters always have had a tendency to fall in love with outsiders. This is the ideal procedure for social advancement, but one which is very rarely realized.

Upward mobility is still almost impossible at this level without *abolengo* (lineage). This is what specifically distinguished the Popayán middle class, because without lineage, without the particular discreet symbols which the upper class insist upon for acceptance, one cannot be a member of the upper class. One of the things most difficult to acquire by personal effort is noble ancestry; as an afterthought, it does no good whatsoever. There were cases cited to us in Popayán of individuals who came to the city claiming that they were of noble families in Palmira, Ibaqué, or somewhere, but the story always winds up with one of the pretender's townsmen turning up in Popayán to expose his humble origins. Thereupon, regardless of all his other virtues, social and other, he becomes socially ostracized and leaves the city in disgrace.

In Popayán there are two levels in the middle class. The upper division includes many professionals, well educated men, community leaders up to and quite possibly including the governor of the state. A person can have a good deal of power and education and wealth and still be regarded as middle class. This is explicable by the fact that

individuals who grow up in this particular community are inculcated with its stringent status symbols, and even if they acquire education and many other assets, they rarely expect to become members of the upper class. They don't expect to be invited to the private fiestas in the homes of the aristocracy. This is simply a matter of non-aspiration, and they lead a happy, well-adjusted life as members of the middle class. It is not considered "social death" to be middle class. You find successful lawyers, doctors, engineers at this level. You also find many successful merchants, because as a merchant improves his financial position, he may also take on good manners and some of the other requisites for this status.

These other requisites are not always as easy to acquire as we may think. When we social scientists analyze status symbols it seems as though all you have to do is buy them — a Cadillac, a Schiaparelli dress, an education, a fine house, and so on. But when it comes to such things as manners or the ability to read the right books and listen to the right music, these are postures more difficult to assume in a short time, and for many people they simply aren't worth the effort. It is too stupidly boring to do these unaccustomed things just for social mobility. I would suggest that in most cases where the social leap is made, there is a woman behind the scenes seeing to it that her husband (or aspiring husband) acquires the proper manners and mannerisms.

Of all the terms which are symptomatic of Popayán middle class, probably the most apt is *empleado*, translated literally "employee." What is an *empleado*? I learned from one of my Popayán friends when I asked her. She pointed over toward the *gobernación* building and said, "See that man in front who opens the door. He is hired, he doesn't own the place. That man coming out of the door is a secretary. He is hired too, an employee. The governor? He is also an *empleado*." For North Americans, brought up to revere bank presidents, it is a shock to hear them classed as employees. In Popayán this is what they are, and they are middle class, unless — as sometimes happens — a son of the upper class becomes president of one of the banks. He is upper class; not because he is a bank president, but because of his family name. For people coming in from the outside, it is easy but deceptive to meet many of the middle class and seeing how they live, learning about their backgrounds and education and community standing come to the conclusion that they must be upper class. It is necessary to know Popayán's own social perspective to understand why they are not.

The attitudes of the middle class toward the upper class vary. Generally it has tended to be an acceptance of the traditional pattern but some of them feel resentment. I've found in Popayán, more frequently in recent years than in earlier years, an attitude we found to be general in Querétaro on the part of middle class people, that not only are they the stalwarts of the society, but in reality they are also the "truly refined"

members of the society. The educated middle class sometimes expressed the opinion that they were the ones who knew "how to enjoy life." They asked, "Who are the people who savor the variety of life, who travel, enjoy their families, read books, go to concerts?" And they answered, "The middle class." They maintain that the upper class is so bound up with traditions and concern for prestige that it has no time or the "better things of life." From my own experience in Popayán, I think this evaluation is mistaken, but it is part of the middle class members' identification of themselves.

In the middle class there exists a gradual scaling from top to bottom based on income, standard of living, housing, education and employment. These factors don't always link consistently, and there are distortions. For example, one family is frequently cited as the wealthiest family in town, and yet, when people evaluate the family in terms of social position, they put it in lower middle class or even in lower class, because its members are uneducated and don't know how to take advantage of their money. There is no strict agreement about where the dividing lines between the upper and lower segments of the middle class fall. Generally it includes people who are uninterested in education and culture and make their living by working with their hands. This includes craftsmen, tradesmen, people who own their own shops, people who may be their own bosses and possess a fair amount of wealth and security. Not all of them work with their hands, but certainly they have come up from a handworking base. Some of them have had four or five years of schooling; practically all of them read and write and figure enough to keep up with what is going on. They dress neatly but not very well. This is a difficult thing to describe, but in the main I would say they don't wear *alpargatas* (sandals) or *ruanas* (ponchos) and they do make the effort to look urban. Let me give you an example. We have two bakers; one of them puts on his coat when he goes out on the street, possibly even his hat, and he wears shoes all the time. He has the proper parties for his children on the occasion of their first communion, and so on. His son is going to the *liceo*, and he is planning to send him to the university. He sees that his wife also wears shoes and is always neat and clean. The second baker wears *alpargatas* even on the street and goes down to the corner *tienda* in his undershirt with his apron tied around his middle. He takes his son out of school after five years because he needs him to help in the bakery. The first baker is lower middle class and the second is lower class, even though their incomes may be the same. This is a question of their attitudes toward life and society.

You will also find in the lower middle class some of the lowest rank of government *empleados*. An important mode of social mobility in Popayán, and in many other parts of Colombia, for a boy who has gone to school for a while and wants to move out of the lower class is to apply to friends and relatives who might have contacts or influence

in the bureaucracy. If he is lucky they find him a "position" as a clerk in a government office. Nepotism is more highly thought of in Latin America than here: Latins trust their relatives more than we do. Ten years ago government offices seemed to be filled with those "ambitious" lads sitting around tieless, unshaven, and indolent behind the desks. When there were papers to be filled out, it was difficult to get any cooperation from them, because most of them seemed to have just arrived on the job. Last year in Popayán I was much struck with changes that had taken place in a number of the government offices, and I hope this is a national phenomenon. There were many more young women in the offices (which isn't necessarily better in itself, though it has possibilities), and they seemed actually to be trained and inclined to know their business. Whether or not this had cut off one of the best routes of social mobility for aspiring lower class male Popayanejos, I do not know. I trust they have found their way into other arenas where they can do less disservice to their country than before.

The members of the lower middle class are frequently more relaxed than members of the upper middle class, but they worry about money and sometimes about the narrow gap which separates them from members of the lower class. Like the impoverished members of the upper class, the middle class places great stress on *fachada*; (facade) they are the ones who cannot bear to be seen on the street without a coat, preferably with a Parker 21 in their pockets. They will not be seen doing any labor or carrying packages, a custom which is rigorously followed even when it becomes a matter of considerable inconvenience. On the other hand, North Americans ought not generalize that no gentleman in Latin America can or will work with his hands. On one occasion, a pick-up truck backed up to the house of one of the aristocratic families. Two of the adult sons, wearing khaki pants and wind-breakers, unloaded a piece of heavy equipment, hauled it across the sidewalk and spent the afternoon uncrating and hammering away at it in the patio with the door open so everybody could see them. This was an example of social security. The men could afford to wear dirty khakis and handle heavy loads because everybody in Popayán knew who they were and everybody knew they were aristocrats. But a middle class citizen who was not so well known to everybody in the community as a bona fide member of the middle class could not afford to wear work clothes on the street or carry packages without losing face.

You also have in Popayán, in a manner and quantity which can not be ignored, the lower class. Its members are so defined because they lack all of the attributes we've been talking about in the way of education, manners, dress and work opportunities. In Latin America generally, if anything is lifted, pushed, pulled or carried, it is done by members of the lower class. If one does any of these manual tasks, it is almost impossible to be classified as anything but lower class. Of

course it is also almost impossible to do these things and earn enough money to acquire any of the characteristics by which anyone could possibly mistaken you for a member of another class.

In Popayán, as in many Latin American cities, the lower class is concentrated around the edges of the city; here is where the squatters live and where housing units for the lower class are now being established. It is the custom in Colombia as elsewhere in South America, to designate new housing units for particular social classes. A unit is designed for the middle class or for the *clase obrero*, and rents fall, hopefully, within the range that can be afforded by that particular group.

The lower classes have a minimal level of education and of subsistence, but strangely enough, not a minimal level of aspiration among their young. When we talked to youngsters of six to ten years of age, almost always they told us what they were going to be when they grew up, and their plans and projects were just as lavish and extensive as any boy's might be. They all had hopes and expectations of improving their condition. Most of the adults were certainly unhappy with their position, and since the time was immediately post-Gaitan and the poor areas were strictly liberal *barrios*, there was political resentment but few overt signs of dissatisfaction. Part of the reason for the apparent stability and acceptance of conditions was that many of the people in the poor areas were peasant migrants who had been in Popayán only a relatively short time.

Finally, let me say something about the changes we observed last summer. Popayán is still a traditional community in spite of the fact that it has doubled in population during the past ten years, and Colombians in general and Popayanejos themselves assure you that it has not changed at all. The people agree that Cali has changed so as to be hardly recognizable, but when you ask, "Well, how about Popayán?" they say, "Nothing has changed." "How about those 10,000 new houses on the edge of town?" "Oh yeah, we have a lot more people." You stand in the middle of the city with trucks whizzing down the streets where there were pack horses before, and yet in some curious way the changes do seem to be merely attached to the traditional Popayán without greatly altering

it. There are no more factories than there were ten years ago although commerce has increased tremendously.

However, I'm sorry to say that I found considerably more tension, frustration and expressed antagonism toward the status quo than I ever encountered before. To be sure, when I was there earlier, the country was under military law and loudly expressed dissatisfaction would have led to the *calaboso*. This year unhappy talk was plentiful. I kept hearing that one of my best informants of ten years ago is now a communist leader. He himself told me that he is a member of the M.R.L. but is not a communist. I was assured that another man I'd known since 1947, a very solid middle class merchant, was also a radical and very probably a communist. Many men of the lower class talked with us and blurted out that they were communists. I fully realize that just because these people say they are communists does not prove that they are, for they may not know what communism is. But certainly there is a very strong awareness of Castro in the region, and students at the University of Cauca seem to be infected. My sons, who spent some time there, said there were pictures not only of Castro but also of Krushchev in the students' rooms and certainly some of them seem willing to try the communist solution for their country's problems.

In balance the traditional stability of Popayán seems to be more surprising than the changes which have taken place, but the sparks of dissatisfaction which spring into print and sound, the murmur of criticism of the status quo, the pressure of a fast growing population in a slowly changing economy, and the constant provocation of propaganda from the outside will surely have effect. Honest efforts to ameliorate conditions and to initiate and accelerate progress toward a more balanced economy are being made by the government, the church and private individuals who are concerned about their community. Much has been accomplished but their effects upon the attitudes of the discontented have been slight. It is apparent that understanding, acceptance and cooperative relationships within the community must be developed with even more care than programs for roads and housing if such traditional societies are to progress through change instead of chaos.

# Implications for Research in Agrarian Structure in Colombia

## A Discussion

Lowry Nelson\*: It's my job, I'm sure, after Mr. Whiteford's report on an urban situation, to get us back to rural matters. While Mr. Whiteford has described subtle class gradations in Popayán, I believe one of the problems in rural Latin America is that we find only two classes and a great gulf between the two. We spoke this morning of personnel problems in rural reform movements — the difficulty of finding people for agricultural extension jobs, and so on, — and I'm sure that a major source of the difficulty rests in the class structure. It is almost impossible for a farm boy or girl to meet the educational requirements for college training, and the *agrónomo* students in the colleges belong to the upper class — I am speaking now of an upper stratum in general, not the specialized upper class of Popayán. These *agrónomo* students have great trouble in establishing rapport with the *inquilino*, the *peon*; they don't like to get mud on their shoes, to work with their hands, and their background makes them fearful of losing caste if they do so.

A couple of years ago I spent three months in Chile. An analysis had previously been made of the students in Chile's three colleges of agriculture. The analysis showed that many of those studying agriculture were sons of the *patrones*, and their training was preparing them to manage the *fondos* they would eventually inherit. Almost all the other students were sons of professional people or merchants, from a middle-class urban environment. They have no farming background, and when they become *agrónomos* — county agents or officials in the Ministry of Agriculture — they deal with the *patrones*, not the *inquilinos*. The tenant farmers (100,000 or more in Chile), who live mostly in rude huts scattered through the countryside, never see the *agrónomo*, and if they get any advice on how to operate their land, it trickles down to them from the *mayordomo* or the foreman.

I was interested in one effort in Chile to reach the *inquilino*. Some priests had organized what was called an Institute of Rural Education; they were selecting boys and girls from the *inquilinos'* homes and bringing them to simple training centers — about forty at the time. They kept them there for three months teaching them agriculture and handicrafts, then selected from the forty a

few of the superior ones — maybe three or four — and kept these another month to finish them off to be what they called *delegados*. These *delegados* were then placed on the Institute's payroll and assigned about four *fondos* in a given area to which they were to translate their new skills. They were paid at the same rate as an *inquilino*, namely 60 cents a day, and lived in one of the *inquilino* huts.

I would be willing to wager you couldn't find one *agrónomo* in Chile who would be willing to live in an *inquilino* home and work with the family, whereas these *delegados* can get close to the people because they belong to them. Curiously, even so, the *delegados* begin to sense a new self-importance and soon want to behave like *agrónomos*. But at least to begin with, they are people who can meet the *inquilinos* and make contacts with them, and the experiment suggests a way of developing leadership at grass roots level, which is something which we have been failing to do. Indeed the social stratification in Latin America and the great gulf existing between upper and lower classes cause one of the most stubborn impediments in achieving any kind of rural reform program.

Mario de Barros\*: I hope it will be appropriate now to discuss the importance of the Latin American cities and the role they play in developing agriculture and in improving rural life. As Mr. Whiteford's research brings out, the majority of the upper class people in the city he studied are *hacendados* or land owners. Hence an understanding of the complex power structure in such communities as Popayán is important in relation to policies and programs for rural development or agrarian reform.

Our department of social affairs in the OAS has two divisions; Rural Development and Urban Development. But I think it essential that those aspects should be understood to be truly interdependent, for the solution of rural problems in Latin America hinges on leadership from the cities.

In the last issue of *Foreign Affairs*, one writer deplored that the Alliance for Progress was putting too much emphasis in Latin America on rural improvement to the neglect of the urban situation — overcrowding, poor housing, etc. It seems to me

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\*At the time of his appearance at this meeting, Professor Nelson was a consultant, Department of Social Affairs, Organization of American States.

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\*Department of Social Affairs, Organization of American States.

wiser not to pit one aspect against the other, but to work toward an approach that comprehends urban and rural problems as interacting on each other.

At the same time, I feel that all the programs for Latin American rural development and agrarian reform are doomed to failure because we are trying to tackle everything at once. This is not possible when we haven't enough money or enough trained people. The majority of the population in our Latin countries is still rural. If you propose to get agents and facilities to all the small and spread-out villages, it is a tremendous task, demanding all the money the Alliance is supposed to have.

I would propose a more modest approach in which the development would be by phases. First, take the technological revolution in farming methods to areas nearby the strongest cities, where you have a market of consumers, transportation and communication. Afterwards, if you can, enlarge the program to include more remote areas. To illustrate my point: it doesn't make sense to me in a country like Brazil to establish an indiscriminate program for rural development in villages so remote and far from transportation that results are extremely doubtful. We do have areas where we are progressing, where there has been rural-urban migration, some industrialization, and so on. These places would be more susceptible to development programs and you'd find less resistance to change on the part of the people themselves.

We also need studies on the rural-urban migrations. What kind of people live in the shanty towns? Are they farmers? Rural workers? People from the small towns? One recent research indicates that the people who migrate to Recife, the regional metropolis of the Northeast, are not people who used to work in agriculture, contrary to the general opinion.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that our programs must be coupled — improving the urban conditions and introducing the agricultural techniques that are so badly needed on the farms. We must remember that in most of Latin America a very primitive type of agriculture still exists. We must first change that so as not to be disappointed with the programs of agrarian reform that call for nothing but a division of land.

**Mr. Nelson:** I agree that a study of who is leaving areas in Latin America is important. Even more important, who is staying? What people are really stable in an area?

**Mr. Whiteford** spoke of changes in Popayán's lower classes, that their aspirations were rising. But we know of course that there is a vast difference in Latin America between the urban scene and the rural. Many of the rural inhabitants have remained almost in a living museum of the Middle Ages; I wonder what their aspirations are. Does any one know what they really want? Do they truly want to change? Communists and other agitators assure us that all the people are uncomfortable, dissatisfied and anxious for

change, whereas some authorities describe the peasants of Mexico or Bolivia as wanting only to live and die in the neighborhood of their parents and grandparents. Now I don't believe they're quite as immobile as all that. But immobility has to be studied along with mobility. We've noted the people who are on the move and we study them, without learning much about the people who didn't and who are far more numerous. In any program of land reform, we have to deal with the people who actually stay on the land.

I worked in Minnesota on a rural development program which had particular impact on the so-called cutover of northeastern Minnesota (like Brazil, we had a northeastern problem area). There was great talk of moving these people out — there were too many there for farming to support. Well, I thought it would be a good idea to see how the people themselves felt about it, as we don't just move people around in our country if they don't want to move. We did a study and found that those people did *not* want to move. They were happy where they were. Moreover, although the maps showed it as a distressed area, they weren't doing too badly because they had other sources of income besides agriculture.

**Mr. Whiteford:** The Colombians did a couple of good studies on mobility, one in Saucio and one in Aritama, a town up in the Santa Marta area. In Saucio, where a dam was being built, as soon as the highway came through, the women all went into Bogotá to take on jobs in domestic service, and when work on the dam was completed, the men followed them into the city. But in Aritama, which is more isolated, there isn't a migration movement, but instead mobility takes the form of people trying to escape being Indian. It's a very strong desire to cease being Indian and be known as *mestizo*; since one cannot actually change one's blood line, this requires the adoption of urban traits. In other words, the local villagers were seeking a degree of urbanization without moving toward the cities.

**William Glade\*:** I'd like to get back to the operational aspects of an agrarian reform program. Since it cannot be wholly administered from the top, it almost necessarily implies some kinds of organizations, whether they be community groups, rural peasant organizations or cooperatives of sorts. Any of these in turn imply social relationships that may be rather exotic to people who have been used to working only as subordinates or dependents. What research has been done on these problems of social cooperation among peasants who have been involved in agrarian reform changes?

**Mr. Nelson:** In Bolivia there are some studies of the Indian communal groups. McBride made an early study there, and a professor in Santa Cruz is working on one at the present time. These

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\*Professor William Glade, who moderated this session, is an Associate Professor of Commerce, University of Wisconsin. He teaches the course "Economic Development of Latin America."

communities are made to order, it seems to me, for educational workers who could establish rapport with them, for they are already functioning and have leaders, but I don't know that any one has actually tried to utilize them as cooperative units in the process of change.

**Mr. Whiteford:** Two happy instances of community development are Otovalo, Ecuador, with its resurgence of local spirit and craft development, and Vicos, Peru, which has apparently succeeded in building a strong sense of direction. I was particularly aware of this problem of peasant cooperation early this week when I was talking with some Peace Corps boys who were going to villages in Colombia. I felt apprehensive for these lads with their faith that if you go in with a good plan and a good heart, every one will be eager to leap on your train and stoke the engine with you. I knew that previous workers in the areas where these boys were going had drawn personality profiles of the typical peasant as gloomy, withdrawn, and resentful of interference, not highly motivated himself but envious of progress and improvement in others. I think all of us ought to be prepared for enormous resistance when we are trying to sell our idea of progress to the *peones*.

**Comment:** In connection with Mr. Nelson's remarks on the need for research on rural aspirations, I'd like to speak of the *Acción Cultural Popular* in Colombia. It used the weekly newspapers, the *Campesino*, as a medium for a questionnaire asking farmers what they thought about the agrarian reform, and got thousands of answers to its question. Also, the Institute, INCORA, has in its archives more than 200,000 letters written by peasants about the reform, agricultural restrictions, etc. In short, we have the data at hand for a study of aspirations, and these letters might be equally useful in studying other aspects of rural life.

**Mr. Nelson:** That is most interesting. I've also heard about a radio program in Colombia that serves to communicate to and from the rural people. Several persons have told me that this is probably the most important educational step of recent years. I am somewhat more familiar with radio work in Chile carried on by the Institute of Rural Education. About thirty radio stations give time — fifteen minutes a day, four days a week, one day devoted to agriculture, one to home economics, and so on. Each radio script has a follow-up of mimeographed lessons to which school teachers can subscribe for one dollar a year. The teacher has her students listen to the radio talks and then uses the written lessons to elaborate the subject.

**Mr. de Barros:** Yes, the radio is being used in Latin America, though still on a rather tentative basis. Perhaps if we could gather in the scripts, few of which have been published, aimed at rural communities, they would help orient our thinking about rural interests.

**Mr. Whiteford:** I wonder if we tend to concentrate on the major, organizational aspects of land re-

form and overlook how many small and separate movements are going on. For instance, something which impressed me when I was in Colombia in 1961 was the changed attitude of the Church. Its emphasis now is not simply on church attendance but on human responsibility, which finds expression in such new phenomena as church housing projects. Also, and I'm not sure whether this is a matter of facing up to the approaching tide or an intelligent participation in it, there are a lot of landowners in Popayán who are showing concern for the people on their *haciendas*. While I was there I spent some time with one family which was working diligently to get a school established to take care of children all through their region. They were building the school out of their own funds, they were planning to pay for the teacher and to help to quite an extent on the radio program for the schooling content. I'm not sure, that all these activities need to be coordinated, but it ought to be recognized that a great many separate forces are at work.

**Mr. de Barros:** It seems to me that these isolated projects, good as they are, deserve an overall view so that they can be cultivated and expanded for the whole country's benefit. The Alliance for Progress requires that each country collaborate in a national plan for development, and if the national governments can bolster and give direction to these new spotty ventures, they will serve to strengthen the rural phase of each country's development program.

**Mr. Glade:** Before I throw the floor open to questions, I'm sure we should like to hear, Mr. Nelson and Mr. de Barros, just what your own research activities are at present.

**Mr. Nelson:** About two months ago I began working on a project in Washington of analyzing the history of countries that have already undergone land reform programs. Mexico is of course the outstanding one, with an experience of fifty years. Bolivia has had a ten years' history; Venezuela, three. We asked ourselves, "What goals have been achieved, what mistakes made? What lessons can we draw on to guide other countries in efforts to design and execute land reform programs?" We hope to have our study finished by July 1, so we are on the way toward documenting this analysis.

**Mr. de Barros:** Our division is very much concerned with the question of personnel. We know that the scarcity of technicians in all fields is a great obstacle to agrarian reform. This is true not only at the higher levels but also at intermediate and lower levels, as we have noted in today's discussions. We cannot afford to use, as the United States does, the college graduate as a local agent, and what we need to do is to develop leadership techniques that will work in our own situations.

There is of course always a hazard in importing techniques from another country. For example, I think we have to be cautious about extension. Extension was a technique developed in the United States for a particular kind of farming society.

Can we transport this type of service indiscriminately to Latin American countries? I have my doubts. In Brazil, it works with a fair degree of success when the extension service selects communities with characteristics close enough to those of your Middle West, that is, small farms nearby trade centers with good transportation and communication. I have to keep raising the question, "How about the other types of rural life . . . the large plantations and cattle ranches, the very primitive patterns of farming?" These are being neglected, and we need to study them and engineer new approaches to fit their requirements.

**Mr. Glade:** You brought up the problem of the transferability of experience from the United States to Latin America. I recall that the Pan-American Union sent people earlier this year to Israel, Spain, Italy, Formosa, Japan, the Philippines. What is your estimate of the usefulness of this kind of cross-cultural exchange?

**Mr. de Barros:** It's all to the good to broaden the technical assistance program. But I would say that you'll run into snags again if you try to apply an Indian or Japanese technique to Brazil without considering fundamental differences in the environments.

**Question:** What about methods of recruiting? It seems to me that we can't use the kind of recruitment methods that are successful here, in very primitive and isolated communities. Where do we start on this?

**Mr. Nelson:** We developed a plan in Brazil that we never could put into full operation due to political upsets. Our scheme was to train people from every state to supervise people in their own states. These trainees were in turn to find recruits in their states to train for service as organizers of community programs. We did hold the top training course, and some of the regional training centers got in motion after I left, I believe. I still think it's a good plan to work on. It enables you to get intermediaries between the professionals and the grass root farmers. These local trainees can call upon the technical assistance of the *agronomos* but they also know how to get word down to the communities.

**Mr. de Barros:** We learned something interesting from this project. It was the firm notion in Brazil, as in most underdeveloped areas, that once boys get some special training, they hanker for city jobs and won't go back to work on the land. Well, this was *not* true. When we offered these boys in the interior a short, intensive course and a good job in their own localities, they accepted gladly on our terms. This was true everywhere in the country. So, the fault, it seems to me, is with agents who don't set up the right type of job and working conditions. Let's not cling to the idea that training boys for local leadership is impossible.

**Question:** I wonder how effective these young fellows are in going back to teach the older people. Is there an age barrier that causes resistance?

**Mr. Nelson:** We knew that problem in the early days of county agent work, of course. Farmers were suspicious of that young fellow who just

had a lot of book learning. He had to prove himself, but it worked out over the years, and eventually when the 4-H people were running the farms, they had full confidence in their county agents. Don't you think things would work out the same way in Brazil?

**Mr. de Barros:** I would think so. As you mentioned, Mr. Nelson, we didn't have enough time to test this program because of political crises, but I think it has good promise.

**Question:** What do you people think of intensive demonstration projects? In other words, with limited resources, would you spread them around in many sectors or concentrate them in a single pilot scheme?

**Mr. de Barros:** I like the demonstration project if it is one that is feasible to multiply on a large scale. But the trouble with some of the Latin American experimental or pilot projects is that they are so costly both in funds and personnel that they cannot possibly be reproduced.

**Question:** Mr. de Barros, I get the impression that you are not in favor of land reform when reform occurs without technicians to implement it. What would you say about reform in an area where *haciendas* are being tilled and managed inefficiently? Is any harm done then if the land is redistributed?

**Mr. de Barros:** You put me in great danger to suggest that I am against agrarian reform; as you know, agrarian reform is today a great shibboleth: you cannot be against any part of it. I was trying to say that agrarian reform alone — dividing the land and giving it to peasants — is not enough, unless it is coupled with programs for development. Be it community development or extension work, it doesn't matter what name you use, there must be some program to educate the landowners in better techniques of farming. I see no point in simply giving people land: we *do* have people with land in Brazil, in some parts of the Northeast, who are in the same or worse situations than those who work as laborers. Granted that in certain conditions, you must divide the land to equalize opportunities, still you have other farming situations where that is not true. The plantation system in sugar cane, for example, there are intensive, large-scale, productive and well-organized enterprises. What's the need for dividing them? I don't see any reason.

**Mr. Nelson:** We've got to find some alternative to simply cutting up efficient enterprises into small inefficient ones. The Puerto Rico Land Authority Plantations should be studied and I'm surprised that more attention hasn't been given to it, as they've been operating mills and sugar plantations under this system for nearly thirty years now. We need a better mechanism. We tend to think of co-operatives, but if these are composed of people who have no concept of how to work together, they are not a very hopeful choice to begin with. But we do need an alternative to the land redistribution program that everybody now clamors for.

**Mr. Glade:** On the other hand, if land redistribution as such is delayed in places where it would not be particularly detrimental to production, as on the inefficient *haciendas*, does this delay jeopardize the chance of getting any kind of integrated operation, since it builds up pressures that will ultimately destroy the efficiently run properties?

**Mr. Nelson:** But once you parcel out the land into small tracts and assign titles to them, it becomes very difficult to reassemble these pieces into efficient land units. Better not divide it in the first place. As Mr. Anderson has pointed out, the land reform programs are really political, and it's hard to get the social and economic elements introduced into them. There is certainly no chance at the start. That stage comes later, after the damage has been done.

**Question:** Aren't we dealing now with two different criteria for evaluating land reform programs? The first is economic: how to get more material yield from the plantation or farm. The other is the social criterion, which I believe we have to consider. It may not be good immediate economy to break up the *haciendas*, but if you consider the dissatisfactions of the people, it may be the better choice. And it may lead to a better entire economy for the country later on.

**Mr. Glade:** I agree that by simply focusing on the agricultural sector, we may be putting our economic priorities in the wrong order. Whatever

land redistribution's effect on farm productivity may be, if it improves the total social climate, will it not perhaps lead to better health throughout the economy? The flights of capital from Latin America suggest that we can't simply look at the level of productivity in agriculture in isolation from general social and political stability.

**Mr. Nelson:** Well, there is certainly a socio-psychological derivative from land reform aside from its purely economic aspects which justifies it under certain conditions. If you have a latifundio whose workers are kept in servitude, as they are in some cases, then giving the *hacienda's* land to them suddenly changes their status to that of free men. That, some authorities say, was the only real product of the Mexican Revolution. But the economics of agrarian reform are something else again. You can't afford it, but at the present time you can't avoid it. I don't truly see any alternative to land redistribution in these countries, where it will come either by violent revolution or by peaceful revolution.

**Mr. Glade:** When you say that the change from servitude to freedom was the only consequence of the Mexican Revolution, that's hard to square with the economic progress of that country, which would have been almost inconceivable without the stabilizing effect of the *ejido* system. In a sense all of the other developments that have occurred in Mexico are predicated on the land redistribution, whatever its impact was on agriculture alone.