

Hondurans Are Poor

(Continued from Page 6) hacked out of the jungle. And have the airplane as their only even they travel into some areas link with the outside world. The only once per week. airplanes land on dirt strips From these statistics it is pos-

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MAYNARD L. BEITZEL

Witmer, Pa.

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sible to see that transportation is really one of the big problems in developing a country like Honduras.

Because of these adverse conditions produce goes to market on the backs of men. In addition must is also transported by ox cart and horseback. The mule train is a common sight in Honduras and it is not uncommon to see ox carts backed up to airplanes or railroad cars unloading them.

Working as an agricultural missionary I did experience these different kinds of travel. In order to get the job done it was necessary to walk as much as 15 miles per day between villages; to ride horseback 20 and 25 miles per day; to ride for days at a time cramped in a dug-

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out canoe; to fly in, around and between high mountains by Missionary Aviation Fellowship Piper Cub airplane. Yes, it was even necessary to go some of the miles by ox cart.

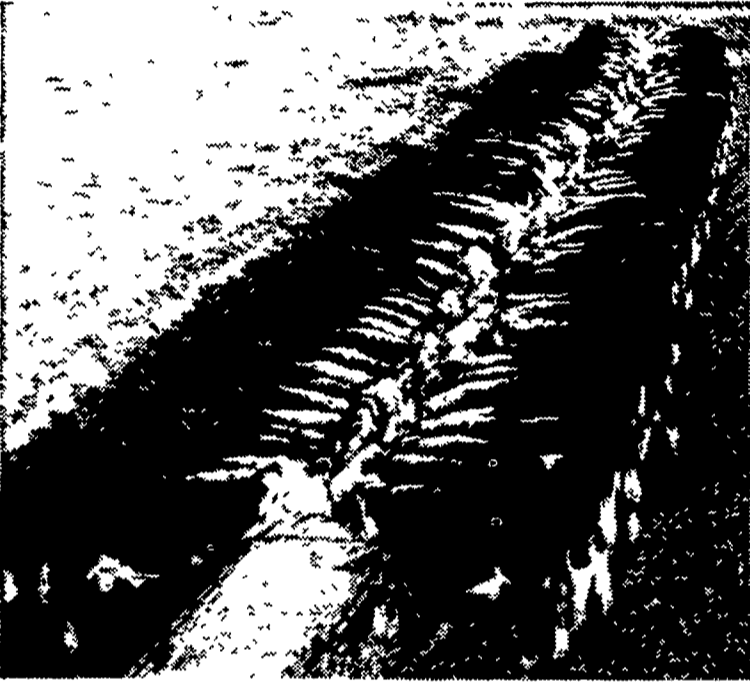
The land resources of Honduras contribute to the poverty. There are broad valleys with highly fertile soil. They are reported to be some of the richest soils in the world. However, much of the land mass is steep mountains and unclaimed jungle.

Unfortunately, the rich, fertile valleys are owned by the 10%, the already rich class. The masses of the people are forced to live in the productive, difficult to till mountains or as squatters on a richer persons land hold-

ings. It is said when Cortez returned to Spain, the King enquired what the topography of the New World was like? Cortez replied by rolling a sheet of paper into a ball in his hand and dropping it on the table "That," he said, "is the new world."

The centuries old method of "slash and burn" agriculture that is used also limits the production of a Honduran farmer. Make no mistake about it, with their capital and their growing conditions this method is not all bad. In fact, at the present economical level it remains the best for their area. However, it does not permit optimum use of land resources and as the populations grow this centuries old method of agriculture will have to change.

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With this method a farmer clears a piece of land, about 1/2 acre, with his machete in February. He lets this dry and burns it during April. In May he plants a patch of corn using his pointed stick. The burning has destroyed weed seeds so there usually is no need to cultivate. He harvests this crop in September or October. Without removing the stalks he plants a second crop of corn in the same patch during late October or early November. This crop is harvested in January and then the field is abandoned for 6 to 7 years.

Water is the carrier of amoebas and other disease producing germs. Hondurans usually have open, polluted wells or else get their water supplies from polluted streams. The dysentery they get from this water supply is one of the main reasons they are too ill to work about one-half the time. Some doctors report villages where 98% of its residents have active TB. Some of this disease can be attributed to poor diets as well as the water.

To further illustrate how transportation, types of agriculture, and education all combine to cause poverty in Honduras, consider the following. Remember, Honduras is a lush, tropical country capable of growing many vegetables. San Pedro Sula, one of the major cities of Honduras, the fastest growing city in Latin America, gets most of its fresh vegetables from Guatemala. Fresh vegetables shipped over 400 miles, over half of it dirt road into an area that is entirely capable of supplying this market itself! The missing links are 1) access roads for farmers to get their crops to the main road, 2) farmers not knowing how to grow the vegetables because no one has ever shown them, and 3) a primitive slash and burn agriculture that limits production per man to producing only enough for his own family.

These are some of the physical factors creating mass poverty in Honduras. Next week we will share with you some of the hopes Hondurans have to raise them out of this poverty.

PENNA. POTATOES

August heat had considerable influence on the State's potato crop prospects. The September 1 estimate at 8,170,000 hundred-weight was down 4 percent from predictions of a month earlier.

The Pennsylvania Crop Reporting Service said that if the latest estimate materializes, the crop will be 10 percent below last year, but 15 percent above the 1962-66 average.

Yield per acre is expected to average 215 cwt., second only to last year's record yield of 240 cwt. The five-year average yield per acre is 184 cwt.