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## Discussion Report

Participants attempted to explore in detail the reasons why the Milperos have proved to be so resistant to change their particular system of farming. It was generally agreed that one of the key factors was the form of land tenure. It was pointed out by Mr. Borland that the Milperos cultivated land owned by large land-owners who were in most cases absentee owners. Moreover, the practice of these land-owners was to rent lands primarily under a one-year leasing arrangement. In this way the land owners discouraged the production of medium to long-term crops and thereby reduce the risk of having to compensate tenants for such assets when the lease is terminated. Mr. Borland further stated that it was in order to overcome this insecure form of tenure that the Government has passed legislation aimed at effecting an improvement in land use particularly by a more secure tenure system.

Mr. Borland, however, expressed some doubts as to whether the Milpa system could be curtailed in British Honduras even with the introduction of adequate forms of land tenure. The marketing system would have to be expanded and, most important, the motivation of the farmer would have to be increased. It is felt that this could partly be done by exposing the Milperos to farms on which

more efficient farming is undertaken as well as providing them with intensive training in new production methods.

Mr. Girwar suggested that the Milpa system may be a direct consequence of the soil types of the area. He pointed out that because of the thin top soil that characterises that particular region the use of mechanized forms of cultivation may result in a reduction in farm productivity especially in sugar-cane. Mr. Borland commented, however, that whereas the sugar content of the canes cultivated by the Milperos was higher than estate canes, the yield per acre of estate canes was higher than that of canes grown by the Milperos.

It was suggested that British Honduras should examine closely the methods used in other areas where the Milpa system had been overcome for possible solutions. In Mexico, for example, it was found that the Milpero-type farmers were only induced to diversify out of corn when an adequate stock of corn for domestic consumption was stored in the district before these farmers undertook the planting of new crops. This facilitated the introduction of a market-orientated system of farming as against the largely subsistence system that was previously practised.