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WHM - 7
Vivienda I

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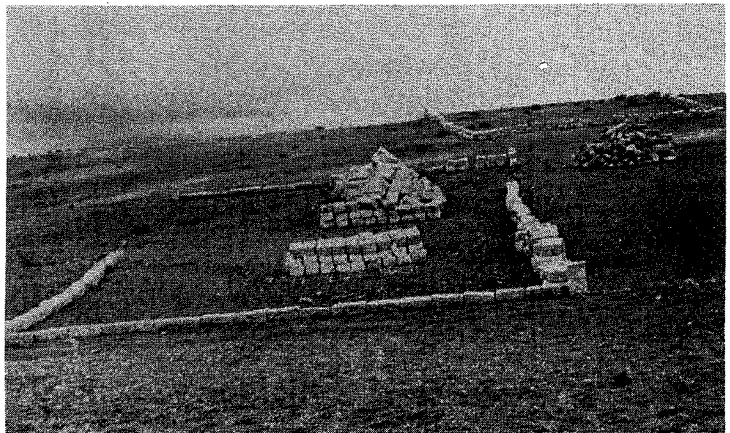
Mr. Walter S. Rogers
 Institute of Current World Affairs
 522 Fifth Avenue
 New York 36, New York

Dear Mr. Rogers:

This report is meant to be a follow-up of Dick Patch's excellent study of the problem of vivienda (housing) in Lima and the growth of the great urbanización clandestina, the City of God. When Dick visited us in Arequipa before returning to Cliza, he and I attended a conference of half a dozen leaders of the urbanizaciones particulares and populares (private and public housing projects) in this city. At that meeting, complaints were aired, accounts of progress given, and methods of planning and building discussed. It became clear that although the lack of adequate housing was quite as acute in Arequipa as in Lima, the solutions of the problem were markedly different. In Lima, the City of God represents a well planned, well executed co-operative movement. Under the capable direction of Alejandro López Agreda, the "Asociación Mutualista de la Provedencia de Obreros en General" moved its people onto Government lands and settled them according to a plan. Houses of cartons and straw mats were put up by community effort, and a co-operative government was installed. The plan was to occupy these temporary dwellings until such time as lots could be apportioned and permanent houses put up on them. Meanwhile, the people lived as best they could, but they lived on the land.

The urbanizaciones populares in Arequipa follow a different pattern. Persons who are not homeowners and speculators who want to acquire a number of parcelas or lots which might be quite valuable in the future, have joined together in asociaciones. They pay a monthly cuota (usually about 2 soles or ten cents U.S.) to the leader of the group, who may or may not keep account of the money, for the right to eventually own a lot - if and when the Government approves and legalizes the urbanización. Ringing the city are some twenty urbanizaciones, most of them merely desert land marked out with stones into rectangular lots. A few enjoy the presence of a handful of buildings ranging from chozas (hovels) to modern two-storey houses, but the distance between buildings reveals an obvious lack of a studied plan. Two or three projects, however, are well laid out, attesting to the fact that good preparatory planning has paid off. All but a few of the urbanizaciones are deserted during the weekdays.

The complaints issued at the conference of urbanization leaders boiled down to beefs about the high cost of building and the refusal of the banks to finance the construction of their projects. The head of a private project urged that the Government lower the customs duties on material imported by the asociaciones for building purposes, and that money invested in the projects be exempt from certain taxes. Other jefes were in favor of Government control of building materials until the projects are completed. Still others argued for the setting up of a Banco de Fomento de Vivienda Popular. Disagreement ran high between the leaders of private and public

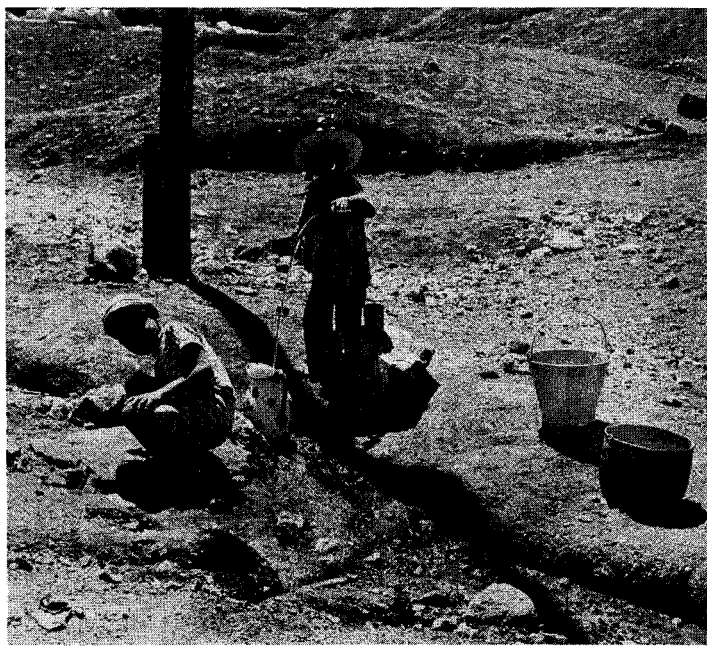


Right: desert lots marked off with blocks of sillar building stones.

projects, the former obviously looking down their noses at the latter. As usual, the Indian came in for his customary share of abuse. "Since 1950, these urbanizaciones have soaked up the indios like a sponge.", said the leader of one of the projects above the city. The feeling ran highest against the payment of land rents. "Rent is 10 soles a square meter.", said one irate jefe. "Why should we pay it? We don't even own the land."

The representative of the Government at the meeting was Ing. German Tito Gutierrez, the chief of the Oficina Nacional de Planeamiento y Urbanismo in Arequipa. A thin, handsome man of thirty-odd, Gutierrez answered questions and corrected errors in rapid limeno Spanish. His knowledge of the problems and subtleties of the matter was complete and convincing. His arguments were backed up with detailed facts and figures, some of them quite embarrassing to at least one of the jefes. After the meeting, Dick and I talked to Gutierrez about the possibility of my doing a report on the urbanizaciones arequipeñas. He readily agreed and set a date for the first interview. Hernan Bedoya Forga (WHM - 4), city architect, construction engineer, and good friend of both Gutierrez and myself, agreed to help me in the complexities of property law, building codes, and architectural problems. The two men are remarkably alike. Both have keen minds and the ability to use them; both are liberals; and both are deeply interested in the problems of their country.

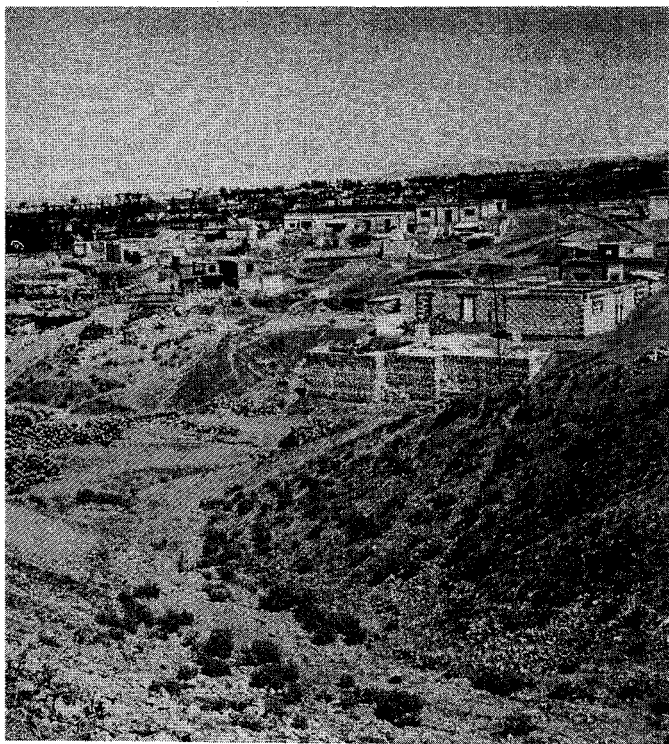
One of the main torreenteras in Alta Selva Alegre. Note lot in center of stream bed.



As we were driving ~~up~~ to Gutierrez' office, Ernie Bedoya briefed me on some of the legal points involved in the urbanizaciones. "To begin with, practically all of these projects are illegal in terms of the Reglamento de Urbanizaciones. The old law was really a series of decrees governing the organization of urbanizaciones. For instance, under the old law, no lots could be sold until all streets had been paved, sidewalks laid, water, light and sewage put in. In addition, some 45% of the total area of the project had to be set aside for áreas libres - playgrounds, parklands, and streets. The law was meant for city or private enterprise projects. It didn't take into account the urbanizaciones clandestinas. Therefore, on the 20th of January, 1955, the Government put out a new Reglamento which is much more elastic. Áreas libres are cut to 10% and water, light, and sewage standards lowered to make it easier for the poorer classes to form legal urbanizaciones."

"What is the legal process for setting up a project?", I asked.

"Well, you must ask for Government land - and all land without proper titles is Government land - by means of a petition to the Ministerio de Fomento. If the peti-





A "levelled" lot in Alta Selva Alegre.

made in 1944.", he said. "Do you see any urbanizaciones around the city?"

I shook my head. Except for a few old and fairly well accepted settlements, the desert and valleys were bare.

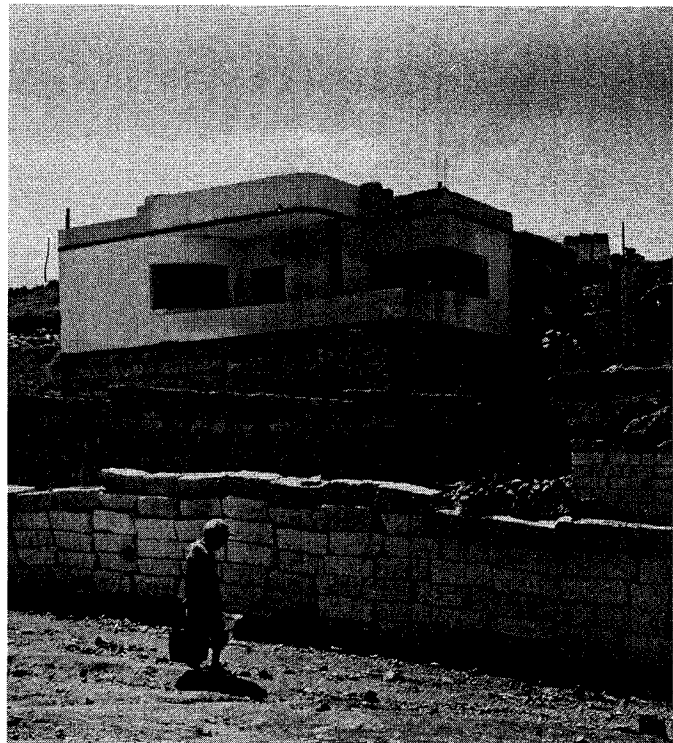
"Now look at this map dated 1955." Gutierrez tapped his pencil on each of the sketched-in areas that circled the city. "Barrio Obrero Gráfico, Alta Selva Alegre, Misti, Melgar, 27 de Octubre, Alto de Jesús, Paucarpata, Dolores, Hunter, Libertador San Martín, Piabaya, Libertad, Pachacutec, Zamácola, Salaverry, Pasto de Lara.... look at them! Some 1200 hectáreas, 12,200 lots, and only 1,000 buildings which can be lived in. Look here!". He pointed to a huge area of 209 hectáreas lying south of the city. "That's Alto de Jesús. There is absolutely nothing there except a few stone lot markers. And yet the presence of these urbanizaciones effectively strangles our attempts to expand Arequipa according to a sound plan." He glanced at his watch. "I think we'll have time to see Alta Selva Alegre, Misti, and Melgar before lunch. They are the most interesting from the point of view of comparison. Alta Selva Alegre has quite a few buildings, Misti almost none, and Melgar is close to being a completed settlement. How about a cup of coffee before we leave?"

tion is approved, the Ministerio or its Oficina de Planeamiento y Urbanismo works out a plan for your project - one based on sound principles - and makes sure that it's followed. You can see why these urbanizaciones are illegal. Most of them have just moved out onto Government land and squatted there."

"Is there any form of squatters rights here?"

"Yes there is. If a man squats on a piece of land, builds a house on it or cultivates it, and if no legal complaint is made against him by the owner of the land during the space of a year and a day, he can claim possession of that land. This has happened in some of the urbanizaciones, you know, and the Government will have to pay those few 366-day lot owners who have built houses if it wants to move them."

We parked the car in the Plaza de Armas and walked into the City Hall. The main office of the Oficina Nacional de Planeamiento y Urbanismo was on the second floor of the musty old building. Gutierrez shook hands with us, and, noticing that I was eyeing an aerial photograph on the wall, took me over to it. "This was



Alta Selva Alegre: angle of hill necessitates inefficient basement



"ESTA PROPIEDAD" could not be farther from the truth. The sign offers to sell land which was settled on illegally.

or one room shanties of sillar, others two-storeyed stuccoed houses of modern design. The land dipped and rose in a series of knobs and torreteras (temporarily dry river beds). Owners of some of the lots which hung on the steep slopes had obeyed their instructions to level the land by hollowing out flat spaces in the hillsides and throwing the dirt into the torreteras. In some cases, the dirt wall of the diggings formed the rear walls of the houses. In others, the houses were literally built on stilts - cement columns or basements which prevented the buildings from pitching forward into a ravine.

"Here is an example of bad planning", said Tito Gutierrez. "The old plan didn't take the topography into account. As a result, the lots are parceled out over slopes and through torreteras. Look at that!". He pointed to a group of half-finished houses built smack dab in the center of a torretera. "The next big season of rains will run a flood right through here."

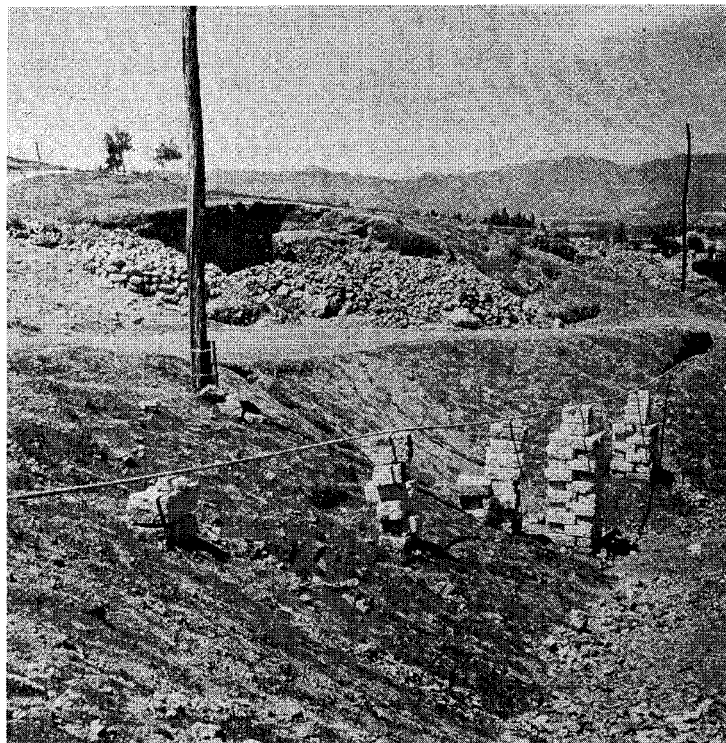
Ernie pointed to one of the houses built out of the side of a hill. "That style of building is twice as expensive as one used in a house built on flat ground. You pay for a basement you can't use. And the houses built over there on the soft fill; in two years the walls and floors will crack, and that will be the end of it. To make

Over coffee - in the "Astoria" restaurant, no less - I asked the engineer to tell me about the function of his office.

"The Oficina itself is about three years old. It was set up by the Ministerio de Fomento to aid the important cities of the Republic in their expansion. What that function boils down to here is an attempt to legalize those urbanizaciones which show good planning and prospects for the future, and to close down those new ones which are obviously badly planned and have no chance for success. By forcing these people to work through us, we can regulate the growth of the urbanizaciones according to a general plan."

In Gutierrez' camioneta we drove up to the plush residential section of Selva Alegre. Above it the green of the irrigated land turned sharply to the lifeless brown of the desert. From the well kept back yards of Selva Alegre up the ravined slopes to the skirts of El Misti, the ground was patched with squares of sillar blocks marking out the 1200 lots of Urbanización Alta Selva Alegre. On the majority of the lots, buildings were going up - some of them cuartitos

This tubería is illegally hooked up to a city water pipe.



the thing worse, all that fill that they've thrown into the torreteras will dam up the water as it comes through. The houses on the lower hillsides will be flooded."

As we climbed further up the slope, the road wound around several hillocks and down into a ravine. A small water pipe supported by sillar blocks followed it for several hundred feet. At its uphill end, a tiny trickle of water emptied into a dirt trough. Barefoot little boys filled their buckets at the spigot and hauled them up the slopes to the cuartitos and the modern houses.

"That's another illegal trick", said Gutierrez. "That pipe comes from a city water main, and an urbanización such as this one has no right to city water. You know, in one of the urbanizaciones, they have chipped holes in the main water line that leads from a reservoir to the city."

From a high hill overlooking the Torrentera de San Lázaro and the old cemetery of Miraflores (an urbanización sanctioned by the municipio but still lacking many of the promised facilities), Alta Selva Alegre and the neighboring Barrio Obrero Gráfico spread over the broken desertland, a confused mass of patchwork lots, crazily twisting dirt trails, and clumps of houses. The lack of preparatory planning the impossibility of erecting an efficient housing development on these bare, rutted hills was only too obvious. I asked Gutierrez what could be done to solve the problem.

"The only thing to do is to move these people from here to a well laid out project - one which conforms to the regulations of the Reglamento de Urbanizaciones Populares. You know, what you see here is the greatest problem in all of the question of urbanizaciones populares. These people really are in need. They have worked terribly hard, although not under a decent plan, and they have the spirit to surmount their difficulties. It is a pity that the results have been so bad. Perhaps if our office had been in operation five or six years ago, we could have prevented them from wasting their energy here."

Preparing sillar in the
Urbanización Misti

"From the look of some of these houses, I'd say that their owners have money."

Ernie answered me. "Yes, a few of them. However, the great majority are what you might call the lower-lower middle class. They live in multi-family houses like those stuck down in the Puente Bolognesi district" (a slum area running from near the Plaza de Armas to the River Chili). "Their kids have no place to play, and the houses are so congested that one family can infect a whole block with a given disease. Out here, at least, they have sun and room to breathe."

As we drove across the broken slopes to the Urbanización Popular de Misti, we talked over the methods employed by the jefes of the projects in handling construction and financial matters. "The usual asociación chief collects monthly dues from the members", said Gutierrez. "In the case of an added expense, such as the pump they tried to use in Alta Selva Alegre to draw water up a straight climb of thirty-five meters, the dues are upped accordingly. By paying his dues, you see, the member is entitled to the right to own a lot. This being the case, members send their wives and children down to the asociación office to register for lots. Then they sell and resell their rights,



subdivide their lots, until the whole thing becomes a collection of speculators. The dues are usually deposited in a bank, but the asociación chiefs rarely keep any books or hold meetings to discuss progress. Some of them have simply tucked the money under their arm and disappeared."

"A lot of these people are taken in by what they believe to be honest dealings," said Ernie. "They think they can sell their lots legally, build legally, etc. Actually, even if they pay their dues to their asociación, there is no way in which they can legalize their transactions. You see, you need a license from the Municipality to build a house. You can't register your property at the Registro de Propiedad Inmueble without the license, and you can't sell your house unless it has been legally registered at the Registro. The vast majority of these people don't have their building license, simply because their whole project is illegal in the first place."

The camioneta dipped down into Miraflores, then climbed into what appeared to be a junkheap for all the sillar quarries in the district. This was Misti, the "urbanización de los indios". Large squares of stone two or three tiers high marked off the lots. A few cuartitos were scattered over the hills, one or two thatched with straw in the Indian manner. That was all.

"This place is no problem.", said Gutierrez. "The Indian is a nomad. He may live here a few years, but he is sure to move on - either to another city or back to his tierra in the mountains. We can clean this place up any time we want to, as a matter of fact. Few of the people have lived here long enough to 'possess' their land, and practically none of them have built a house permanent enough to warrant a possession claim. Most of what you see has looked the same for years. No progress whatsoever."

We drove back to Miraflores, passing a workman shaping sillar blocks for his wall. He was the only person in sight.

The Urbanización Melgar was a welcome change. The town was well planned, shaped according to the topography. There were streets instead of trails, and the houses were built in blocks, giving the project a sense of unity. The majority of the buildings were without roofs, but they were solidly built nonetheless. Tuberías or water pipes lay above ground; they fed water into practically every inhabited house. Light wires were up and sewage ditches dug. Mariano Melgar, with 1,000 lots, was a New York in comparison with the other urbanizaciones we had seen. People actually lived there. As a town, it was an accomplished fact.

Urbanización Mariano Melgar

Further up the valley lay the Urbanización San Martín. The streets were marked out, but the houses occupied only a few blocks, the rest of the lots being marked out by the omnipresent sillar walls.

From the heights of Urbanización Melgar, we wound down through the city and out onto the paved road to Socabaya, a town about 10 kilometers south-west of the city. Some three kilometers out of Arequipa, a torrentera had covered the road with over a meter of mud and gravel. Gutierrez shifted into low gear to negotiate the ruts in the ravine. "This shows you what can happen when a torrentera really comes in," he said. "And by the way, this torrentera is a sort of boundary line for the older urbanizaciones which have grown out from the topographically lower sections of the city. IV Centenario is one of them. I. Where Peggy and I live

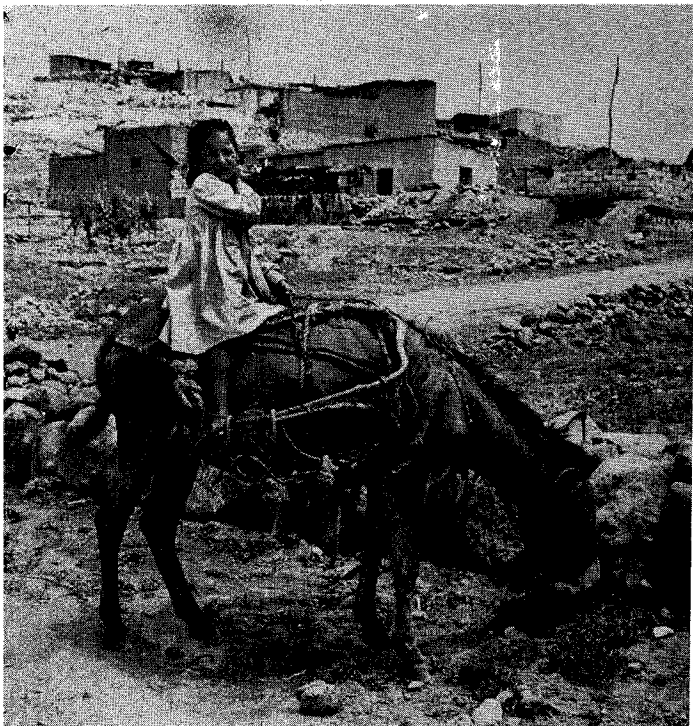


You know, it's still considered illegal; it lacks the proper área libre. Fourteen years ago, the land between this torrentera and the city was still good chacra. Now, the area is filled with factories and urbanizaciones. This is the one example of an urbanización program encroaching on cultivable land."

Near the end of the paved section of the road, we passed a few Indian huts of fieldstone - a rarity in this land of cement and sillar - and a smooth stretch of land sloping gently to the river. "That's Pasto de Lara," said Gutierrez. "The project was started by some people from the University and some empleados. They have done everything legally - the petition, the plans for development, water survey, everything. They are waiting for final approval before they begin work."

"They've chosen a good section of ground here.", said Ernie. "They know how much water they have and how much it will cost them to pipe it in. Of course, these people are in a position to know about and respect the laws and regulations."

Salaverry: the hillside



Urbanización Libertador San Martín

The engineer turned the pickup around and drove back to the city cemetery. He pointed to a steep hillock on the other side. "That's Salaverry. There are no plans for the urbanización, and the topographical conditions are such that an efficient settlement would be impossible." The houses built on the hillside were chozas of adobe and thatched roofs. Sewage and irrigation water seeped down from the upper houses, staining the walls of the barns and hovels below. The place looked more like the usual settlement of chacareros than a prospective urbanización.

Several days later, the three of us visited the Urbanización Hunter - a project which has a chance of succeeding and being legalized. Named for a famous British doctor who practiced for many years in the village of Tingo (a few kilometers downstream from Arequipa) the urbanización has received plans from Gutierrez' office, and may eventually begin work on development. Although the members of the project own their own land, they have built surprisingly few houses on their lots. Those buildings that have been completed are spread all over the land. Gutierrez told me that the lack of building block by block was the main reason why water and light could not be provided to Hunter.

"To lay down a system of pipes and wires - one which will eventually be needed when the project is completed, just isn't feasible now.", he said. "If the houses had been built according to a plan of city blocks, we could follow suit with a partial system of light and water facilities. The people out here just don't seem to understand this, and they keep building their houses as far away from one another as possible".

Back at the office of the Oficina Nacional de Planeamiento y Urbanismo, we were shown the plans for the Urbanización Hunter - the old and the new. The old plan had laid out the project in squares, completely forgetting the topography of the area. Roads were sketched across gradient lines that would make a tank commander wince. A playground was placed on the slope of a steep hill. The whole thing was badly thought out from start to finish.

The new plan, however, was markedly different. Instead of being a hodge-podge of up-ended lots, the project was organized according to a topographical plan. Streets were located in reasonably flat areas with connections to the available road net. The lots were of an efficient shape, not the thin slivers of land that had been shown on the old model. Parks and playgrounds were centrally located, and a space had been set aside for a future commercial center. The new plan had been worked out by professionals.

"In the past," said Gutierrez, "the local engineers made large profits drawing up project plans and individual lot dimensions for the 'owners'. Some of them even speculated in land sales. Inefficiency and graft played a large part in most of the urbanizaciones. Now, however, this office has a chance to force all future projects to follow an honest, efficient plan. We have our difficulties" (the office is woefully understaffed) "and the Municipality people have theirs" (a lack of sufficient police power to prevent new urbanizaciones from starting up) "but at least we have been able to cut down on the irresponsible growth of project after project."

That evening, Ernie and I talked over the data I had been given, as well as the high cost of construction. "Some entirely new method of building must be found if we are going to lower the unit cost of houses for these people.", he said. "As it stands now, a 100 pound bag of cement costs 26 soles (US\$ 1.30). Wood for shuttering costs three soles a board foot, for the simple reason that it has to be imported. The same is true with reinforcing bars."

"Sillar is the cheapest building material, isn't it?"

"No. Actually, bricks are the cheapest here, although the people in the urbanizaciones don't seem to know it. There are several brick factories in town which undersell any of the local sillar quarries."

"How much would you say it would cost to put in reinforced concrete roofing?"

Ernie put down his drink and did some figuring on a pad. "Standard reinforced concrete costs 800 soles a cubic meter, or about 80 soles a square meter, using normal slabs. Add paint and waterproofing, and you come out somewhere around 100 soles per square meter. No, Bill, brick is the only thing that could be used in the urbanizaciones, unless the Government could be persuaded to operate some of the sillar quarries on its lands at cost. Then, perhaps, sillar might be used."

Ernie Bedoya and German Tito Gutierrez have been working on the problem of vivienda in Arequipa long enough to know the intricacies of trying to regulate that which arises in some cases out of avarice, but in most cases out of a crying necessity. They know that a Ciudad de Dios could never come to pass in the cold, high desert of Arequipa, and that no plan will succeed unless it provides for dry, warm houses, water and sewage. Gutierrez is finishing a census of the city's population which will show in detail the necessities of practically every lower class arequipeño family. On the basis of 70% of the returned questionnaires, he has told me that of the 120,000 people in the city proper, 80,000 persons are

living in sub-standard housing. When all of the reports are in at the end of next month, I will have more detailed figures to give you (Vivienda II).

On the basis of Dick Patch's report and this newsletter, it should be obvious that proper housing is the biggest problem which faces this country. Alejandro López of the City of God said that the great yearning of himself and his people was to own their own land, their own tierra. He said that a man truly thought himself a citizen of the Republic when he was standing within the boundaries of his own property. The yearning has turned into one of the most powerful mass movements this country has ever known. It is up to the Government to regulate the movement, for it surely cannot stop it now.

Sincerely,

William H. MacLeish
William H. MacLeish

Received New York 3/21/55.