May 25, 1989

TO: William C. Doherty, Jr.

FROM: Richard Hough

SUBJECT: Prosterman's proposal of a Conference with the Salvadoran Labor/Agrarian Leaders next week here in Washington, D.C.

For the phone call to Prosterman tomorrow (or in case he calls us), may I give you a summary of the reasons why the subject conference is so inappropriate at this time:

1. It would largely duplicate my visit last week to San Salvador at which time I had exhaustive discussions with the campesino organization leadership on the status, problems, prospects, and what have you, of the land reform programs in El Salvador. (This will all be in memorandum to you as soon as I can find time to finish it.) To spend the money for, much less to subject the campesino organization leadership to, a repeat performance on this subject a little more than a week later makes little if any sense.

2. The present collective (psychological) ambience in UNOC is marked by concern for survival, nervousness, uncertainty and deep distrust about what the new ARENA government is going to do. The land reform program, or new initiatives and actions related to it, though important is not a priority. It was difficult to get our people to focus on it, at least it appeared that way to me. To force such a focus so soon again would be a waste, perhaps counterproductive and (by the way) rightly raise questions as to my own credibility with our Salvadoran friends.

3. We have a modest UNOC/AIFLD study on agrarian reform problems and possible new program initiatives planned for this summer. The findings of that study will provide a much more appropriate frame-work for a conference, perhaps early next fall. By that time we will also have a much better fix on the broader political ambit -- behavior and priorities -- of the Cristiani government, and where land reform fits. Believe me this is no time to push the democratic labor organizations into new actions in the agrarian reform field -- which apparently is what Roy and Mary have in mind -- until this broader political picture more or less falls into place. The present situation is much too uncertain and volatile. Our people know this; we know it; Prosterman has been told it and should be told it again.

cc: Friedman, Estrada