





Chile: *The Pace Picks Up*

President Allende's constitutional reform bill has turned out to be sweeping indeed. In addition to proposing a unicameral legislature with a curtailed capacity to obstruct the executive, the measure published on 11 November would broaden the President's already extensive powers, make important changes in the conservative Supreme Court, and nationalize key sectors of the economy now beyond the government's grasp. Some apparently minor features are tailor-made to provide the governing Popular Unity coalition with new weapons in its quickening effort to consolidate political power. One, for instance, would legalize the formation of joint electoral slates by parties that agree on a formal political program.

The breadth of the reforms increases the chance of congressional opposition, but the bill's complexity and vagueness may assist Allende in getting approval of changes that he most wants. The multiplicity of items included serves both to placate the demands of his diverse coalition and leave some room for Allende to maneuver in response to political and popular reaction.

The bill will also help to divert attention from new problems that have risen to complicate the government's task. Copper workers at the big Chuquicamata mine hardly waited for Castro to leave town before they announced their decision to ignore Allende's personal appeal to scale down their demands for a 50-percent wage hike. Coalition parties are in a minority position on the union council at Chuquicamata. Thus far, the

government has failed to enlist support of Popular Socialist union leaders who hold the balance of power. The Popular Socialists bolted Allende's Socialist Party several years ago in a leadership fight but cooperate with the government when it suits their purposes. In this case, they know that it may be crucial to the government to keep wages down and to avert a copper strike, so the price for their cooperation is stiff.

The escalating struggle to avert government control over the University of Chile is another headache. Under the guise of effecting badly needed reforms at the mushrooming national university, its coalition-dominated governing council is trying to consolidate the numerous autonomous units into four divisions that can be dominated from the center. The university rector, a political independent with Christian Democratic ties, is leading the fight against the council. Several university sections have been taken over by antigovernment forces, others have been disrupted by professors' walkouts. Violence may bring the matter to a boil. Government slates have been defeated in several student elections recently, which may have encouraged opposition forces to unify their efforts in the far more important university issue. The university has a large role in national life, so victory for the government would be a key contribution to consolidation of its political position. [REDACTED]

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