

The Chilean Elections

By CHARLES E. CHAPMAN

BY a majority of one, the electoral vote finally standing 177 to 176, Arturo Alessandri, the Liberal Alliance candidate, has been declared President of Chile. When the popular election was held the vote for presidential electors stood 179 for Alessandri and 175 for Barros Borgoño, the candidate of the National Union, but the final decision as to who should be the next president lay with a Court of Honor formed with the consent of both parties to pass on the qualifications of the electors. This Court decided in favor of Alessandri by a vote of five to two, and the Chilean Congress has accordingly proclaimed him president, and has ended an election which was the greatest and most significant that ever took place in Chile.

In the Constitution of 1833, the fundamental document of Chile, there is the following statement: "There is no privileged class in Chile." Justice requires one to say that there has been a steady and notable social advance in Chilean affairs since that sentence was written, but candor compels one to add that it never was and is not yet representative of the truth. There has always been a more or less dominant aristocracy in Chile, made up largely of the great land-owners and the church. For many years they were the directing force in all branches of Chilean life. The first great break from traditional influences came during the presidency of Balmaceda, toward the close of the nineteenth century. Meeting with tremendous opposition in his efforts for reform, Balmaceda illegally assumed dictatorial powers. There followed the revolution of 1891, in which Balmaceda was defeated, committing suicide rather than surrender to his opponents.

Balmaceda's reforms, many of which were aimed against the church, have since his death in great part been attained, but it is not precisely on their account that he stands out as a great figure in Chilean history. Rather it is because he is looked upon as the martyr in the fight on behalf of the masses. Their cause has made great strides since 1891. The Conservatives, the traditionalist party in Chilean politics, are no longer dominant, though they have heretofore held the balance of power—and may yet. The Liberals are now the most numerous element, but they have split into four groups: Liberals proper (*Doctrinarios*); Liberal Democrats (or Balmacedists); Nationals; and Nationalists. The Liberals, however, are no longer the chosen prophets of the people. Two new parties have appeared, one of which, the Radical, has pushed forward so rapidly that it is now the most numerous single group in Chilean politics. The Radicals represent what was until recent years a new element in Chilean society. They contain the bulk of the fast-growing, educated "middle class." They are the party of the youth of Chile, standing for social and political reforms which are not at all "radical," as that word is understood in the United States, but more in line with what North Americans would term "progressive." They are bitter enemies of the traditionalist elements, and are greatly feared by the church. A second party, the Democrats, is made up mainly of laborers, whose radicalism is more extreme than that of the Radicals. They had not heretofore attained to any considerable power, but the importance of their role in the recent election cannot be denied. There are also

some other insignificant groups—Socialists, for example.

Straight through and across these groups there is another line of cleavage, made necessary by the cabinet system and the election of a president both of which demand a majority. Thus there has sprung into being what amounts to two parties, the National Union and the Liberal Alliance. Both have their origin in the Liberal party. Strangely enough, some members of a single group may belong to the Alliance and others to the Union. Most of the Liberals, however, lined up with the Union. The real strength of the Alliance was the Radical party. The Democrats and Socialists were also enthusiastic supporters of the Alliance. On the other hand, the Conservatives threw their weight to the Union. Both candidates for the presidency—Señor Alessandri and Barros Borgoño—were not only Liberals, but also *Doctrinarios*, belonging, that is, to the same group, but the real battle was between the Radicals and Conservatives, as personified in the opposing candidates.

A natural query on the part of North Americans would be: What were the issues in the recent campaign? A study of the two platforms would lead one to believe that there were none, for both proclaimed the same things, differing only in phraseology and in degree. Thus, both came out strongly for educational reform, emphasizing the same needs; both stood for the protection of national products; and both called for legislation on behalf of the workingman. And yet there is a profound difference between the two parties, though it is mainly psychological and exists to a great extent in the minds of each with respect to the other. The Union holds that its members are the "true Chileans," not opposed to reforms, but wishing to advance toward them at a safe and sure pace. The Alliance considers the Unionists reactionaries, opposed to any and all reform, lest it injure their selfish interests, and its own members to be progressives, standing for a hastening of internal reforms. The Union regards them as dangerous innovators, ready to ruin the country to vent their spite on the church and the aristocracy.

These feelings found perfect expression in the two candidates. Barros is the type of man who would appeal to certain elements of the better educated classes. Member of an old Chilean family which has produced one of the greatest historians in Hispanic-American historiography (Barros Arana), he, too, has won distinction as historian and man of letters; for years he was a professor in the University of Chile; his political achievements have been more than usually notable, especially in his capacity of Minister of Foreign Affairs; and to round out a long, varied, and successful career, he is at present one of the leading figures in the most powerful banking institution of the country. Nor can it be claimed that he is an out-and-out reactionary. Indeed, his nomination displeased the Conservatives, because in the past he has advocated reforms that were unwelcome to the church; before they would join the Union they exacted certain pledges from him. Barros is therefore a figure that commands respect. But he does not possess the divine fire that wins the multitude.

Alessandri is just the opposite kind of man. He is a new man, of Italian descent, a self-made man, and a young man for a Hispanic-American presidential candidate, for he is only in the forties. For some twenty years he has been well-known as a lawyer and politician. As Deputy, Senator, and Cabinet Minister, he has won a reputation for fearlessness and for moving oratory, such that he is known popularly as

"the Lion of Tarapacá" (the province he represents). He is distinctly a man for the attack. If Barros is in a sense a Chilean edition of Nicholas Murray Butler, Alessandri is another Hiram Johnson. Like the Senator from California he has a wonderful personal magnetism that binds the crowd to him body and soul. No man in Chile has been more severely maligned. Every other person one meets will tell you of "crooked deals" that Alessandri has been mixed up in, but the masses either do not believe these charges or do not care about them. Never have I known a man to be so enthusiastically accepted as the prophet of the people.

On June 25 the election was held. In Santiago there were mounted carbineers and lancers everywhere; policemen and soldiers, be it said in passing, do not possess the vote. The day was more like the occasion of a glad picnic, however, than a riot, for the manifest Alessandri sentiment was overwhelming, almost to the complete exclusion of any in favor of Barros. On ensuing days news items were given out proclaiming—what seemed incredible—that Barros was winning, or at least making it clear that Alessandri could win by only a narrow margin. Then indeed there was a little trouble. Business houses closed (with shutters down), street cars stopped running, crowds of ragged commoners filled the center, and soldiers were at all strategic corners. Now and then there were mild clashes, serious only in that they might have become worse. Alessandri himself saved the situation, calling upon the people to return to work. The prophet had spoken, and all became again serene.

Chile has long been a country of two principal and widely separated classes, the aristocracy and the *rotos* (literally, the "broken"), as the common people are usually called. The lot of the *roto* has indeed improved, and many have emerged therefrom into the comparatively new middle class, but the majority of Chileans are still utterly poor, illiterate, and almost without hope. Leading politicians can refer to them as "canaille" or "rag-bags" (*chusma*) without fear of damage to their career; indeed, that happened during the recent campaign. To be sure, great numbers of the *rotos* do not possess the vote, since the law disfranchises those who cannot read and write, but there are many who do vote. They certainly do! For in Chile vote-buying has not been frowned down by public opinion. In past elections the *roto* got five or ten pesos (\$1 or \$2). This time it was different. The Alliance organized a League Against Vote-buying, which their opponents styled a "League to Monopolize Vote-buying for the Alliance," and the *rotos* resolved to stand by Alessandri. Unquestionably many votes were bought, and by both parties, even though the price went up to fifty, a hundred, and as much as two hundred pesos. Many took these sums from Union supporters, but voted for Alessandri just the same. But the real heroes, of whom one hears on every side—I have even heard men of opposite party refer to them with a certain amount of pride—were the thousands in all parts of Chile who refused even the semblance of being bought. In some cases they took the money, and tore it to shreds before the eyes of their would-be corrupters. This, to my mind, is the most admirable and by all odds most hopeful, sign in Chilean politics in recent years. It gives one confidence in the future of Chile. Here there is the making of a real democracy!

Outwardly the Chilean method of electing a president is quite like our own. The people vote for electors, who a month later cast ballots for the president. One important difference in the Chilean system is that electoral districts

are separate. Thus the vote of each province (state) and even of each department (county) does not go as a unit, but may, and usually does, split. Speaking generally, northern Chile, the mining district, went for Alessandri. The Union displayed most strength in central Chile, an agricultural section of vast estates and the nucleus of the country. The far south, the new and coming Chile, a land of great variety (though mainly agricultural), leaned toward the Alliance. Santiago, though in the center, seemed to be all for Alessandri, but on the official return he carried the department by twenty to nineteen, and lost the province twenty-nine to twenty-two. Great numbers of those who cheered, sang, and paraded in his honor must have been non-voting illiterates. It was five days before the vote of Santiago was declared. Three days more, and the full count for the country was announced as 179 for Alessandri to 175 for Barros Borgoño. Not until the last day was the former assured of his majority. Late in July the electors cast their ballots. One month afterward Congress was to pass judgment on the legitimacy of the electoral vote, but at the suggestion of Eduardo Juarez Mujica, former Chilean Ambassador to the United States, the Court of Honor was formed instead, and both parties agreed to abide by its decision.

In addition to the political factors already indicated for which this election is significant—the rise of a new democracy and the installation in the presidency of the first candidate of the people in Chilean history—there are two others worthy of note. One is that the presidency is returning to its one-time prestige. Formerly the president was the principal element in the Government, even going so far as virtually to choose his successor. The revolution against Balmaceda ended that. Then Chile went to the opposite extreme, making Congress the arbiter. In imitation of the English system, the cabinet, representing the majority in Congress, took charge of the executive branch. The president was merely to "preside," as the king of England "reigns," but was not to "rule." This system has, however, proved something of a failure, because of the instability of Congressional majorities. The average life of a cabinet has been about three months; during four months recently there were four cabinets. Inevitably, therefore, the president has been recovering prestige and power, even though legally he is still a figurehead. The importance which all classes attach to the present election is proof enough that the presidency is no longer what the victors of 1891 intended it to be. At the least it amounts to an active party leadership.

It seems inevitable that some change in the method of choosing the president will be made. The Unionist papers are advocating the French system, of election by Congress. There are two preliminary questions that ought first to be solved, it would seem. Is it possible, or advisable, to have that system when the president is not in fact an innocuous abstraction like the president of France? Is it advisable, or possible, to have it until such time as a thoroughgoing reform shall have removed Congress from even the suspicion of the venality and graft from which few Chileans of the present day absolve it? The basic question, after all, is not one of constitutional systems, but rather the development of a civic righteousness which will insist upon clean politics—whatever the system—and will then abide by the result. Such a spirit, I believe, has made its appearance (at least in one of its aspects) in the present election. This is a new force, of which it is to be hoped, for the good of Chile, that the leaders of both parties will avail themselves.

And the Public Pays

By WATSON WILLIAMS

STREET railway fares in Minneapolis have just been raised to six cents, with a provision for an automatic increase to seven cents, or four tickets for twenty-five cents, on December 15. The question has long been before the public. For three years it has taken up much of the city council's time; the State legislature has been bombarded with it; a year ago the mayor sought to stop a city ordinance which practically guaranteed the street railways company a seven per cent income on what he characterized as a capitalization \$8,000,000 in excess of actual value; and finally last November the citizens of Minneapolis rejected this same proposition with a decisive vote of three to two.

But the cat came back this summer with all her wounds healed and a nice new coat of fur. Something novel in corporation tactics was injected into this last and successful campaign; and since, because of its success here, it is likely to be tried elsewhere, it should be of interest outside Minneapolis. This time the initiative was practically taken by the company employees. Dissatisfied with their wage of fifty cents an hour, they made representations in June to the president of the company, Mr. Horace Lowry. He informed them through their representatives that the company's finances would not allow the increase requested unless he was permitted to increase fares. Whereupon Mr. Lowry and his employes held consultations, the outcome of which were representations from both to city council and public, the employer setting forth his financial needs and the employees their wage demands with a threat by the latter to strike unless the desired increases were given by the end of June. In interviews Mr. Lowry deplored the situation and declared himself unable to avert the threatened tie-up of traffic if he did not have increased fares. The employees backed his stand with reiterated assurances that they would certainly strike if the matter was not settled by the date fixed. The city council became alarmed. The public, so used to traction controversies, scarcely took heed. Besides, it was summer, and many were away. One commercial organization did arise in its indignation and declare in scorching terms what it chose to consider this newest attempt of the street railways company to mulct the public.

Nor were those lacking who thought that they saw unusual elements in this situation. They observed that Mr. Lowry for the first time dealt with a militant organization of his employees; that he sat in a joint meeting with them and listened to their strike threats without turning a hair and even issued a statement to the public that he was helpless. It was recalled that almost three years ago his company had locked out a group of mild insurgents merely because they wore union buttons; and, in defiance of the recommendations of the War Labor Board, these had not been readmitted to work until the buttons disappeared. The nascent union was ruthlessly broken, and more tractable employees, drawn largely from the country and small towns, have since been selected by the company. It was therefore a matter of great surprise that Mr. Lowry now felt himself so helpless, for no one believes him to be a timid man where his own interests are involved.

The city council, a majority of which has always been friendly to increased fares, was duly alarmed, but de-

clared itself unable to pass on the question by the end of June. A compromise with the militant employees was effected and accountants were called to verify the company's estimates of the fares necessary to grant the men's demands. Definite resolutions were not placed before the council for its consideration until the last of July. The company's proposal was a seven cent fare, but a poll of the council showed that this could not pass. Also it was known that the mayor would veto such an ordinance. The action finally taken gave the employees sixty cents an hour for a nine-hour day and seventy cents for overtime, while the company, awarded the increased fares set forth above, will have some surplus for improvements and further dividends. For awhile it was thought that the mayor would veto the ordinance on the ground that the automatic increase to seven cents provided for December 15 does not properly protect the public, since there is a large probability that it will not be needed. He proposed that the question of a further increase should either be left until the need was ascertained or that a provision should be included in the ordinance that the higher rates should take effect only in case the finances of the company demonstrated the necessity. But the council was obdurate.

However, the mayor did not veto the ordinance, as was confidently expected by many, stating that he wished the city council to have the undivided responsibility for the act. It was well known that the act could not have been passed over his veto, because eleven of the twenty-six councilmen were opposed to the ordinance. Seven of these are Socialists and the four others are more or less sympathetic with labor. It is significant that some of the strongest supporters of the ordinance are anti-labor in their allegiance. In the twin-city of St. Paul, where half of the city commissioners are labor representatives, a similar proposition by the same street railways company was rejected, although the company in St. Paul is less prosperous than that in Minneapolis.*

Neither was organized labor favorable to the increase in fares, appearing to regard it as an employer's ruse, the more so because the employees of the traction company are not unionized. Organized labor appeared fearful lest the public—the great body of unorganized workers and consumers—begin to think that labor is uniting with capital to exploit them in their long-suffering and much-profiteered condition. What the public itself thinks of it can be ascertained only at the fall elections, if at all. There was then no press in Minneapolis which reflected its views. But the significance of this instance of cooperation between capital and labor for common ends cannot easily be overlooked. Is it the end of an old system or the prophecy of a new order? In the northwest the two leading old parties have recently been fusing their strength to delay the final victory of new movements awakening in the public consciousness. Possibly certain types of capital and labor are here forced to make together their last stand in their old and outworn policies of disregarding the public interest. Or is it a sign of a new harmony between long discordant elements to bring through their combined powers an awakening of the public to its obligations to the workers as well as to capital engaged in those industries which serve it?

* On September 13 St. Paul adopted an ordinance similar to that adopted by Minneapolis early in August, after renewed and increased agitation by employees of the street car company in concert with employers. The *Minnesota Daily Star* (Farmer-Labor) said of this ordinance: "St. Paul, too, has now surrendered to the threats of the street car company. But the St. Paul city council has the defense that the fight there was hopeless after the Minneapolis council surrendered to the company without setting up safeguards for the public."