

CONSOLIDATING POWER: CHILEAN WOMEN IN THE POLITICAL
PARTY SYSTEM, 1950-1970

DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role women had in the Chilean political party system from 1950 to 1970. It traces the evolution of the women's movement, as it related to the party structure, and illustrates how women's ideological and class interests deterred the formation of a cross-class and multi-party women's movement. This work argues that Chilean women did not retreat from politics after suffrage. During the 1950s, women expanded their presence and function in the party system and behaved as political actors from within the system, rather than an interest group or outside agent. Thus, they consolidated their presence and power in the political party structure, which allowed them to incorporate feminist issues into party agendas in the 1960s.

This dissertation applies gender analysis to examine women's evolutionary role in the political party system and to explore legislative debates founded on paternalistic attitudes toward women and children. It also explains how legislative reforms directly and indirectly challenged the patriarchal family structure. It argues that legislative battles that centered on women's labor and social security in the 1950s and national day care and divorce in the 1960s illustrated a shift in how Chilean society viewed the existence of alternative family systems. Despite this recognition, lawmakers and reformers were reluctant to adopt legislation that significantly altered gender relations.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Elena Caffarena, a cofounder of the Movement for the Emancipation of Chilean Women/MEMCh (*Movimiento por Emancipación de la Mujer Chilena*), explained in a 1942 interview that Chilean women's inability to form a cohesive movement resulted in their continued legal and social oppression. "I believe that in Chile if no more has been advanced in the field of women's demands, it is because of a lack of a union among women and the combativeness of women's organizations."¹ Her observations revealed the greatest obstacle Chilean women faced: their inability to compromise ideological goals and to unite over gender concerns. A suffragist, feminist, and attorney, Caffarena understood that there were too many conflicting messages targeted at women. Political party leaders swayed women to support their candidates by claiming their ideological premises protected women's legal and economic interests. Caffarena did not discount party leaders' need to develop militancy within their ranks and to promote their agenda. She advocated that women should support a specific party and argued that party concerns and gender issues need not be mutually exclusive. Caffarena stated, "A woman can and must act with the parties, but it is indispensable that there be a group of women that works independently without adhering to party interests to hold up the banner of

¹ Quoted in Georgina Durand, *Mis entrevistas* (Santiago: Editorial Nascimento, 1943), p. 199.

women's demands."² Her words were prophetic and her call to find a balance between party and gender advancement went unheeded.

Caffarena believed that women's liberation required the creation of a cross-class women's group separate from the political parties. She argued that women needed to balance party agendas with gender interests. She described the most incredulous display of party loyalty over women's interests as a 'fantastic' case in Chile, "worthy of appearing in Ripley's collection, that in the Radical Party assembly it was actually the women who advocated that the Party's Convention pronounce against the opportunity of conceding women's vote."³ Caffarena claimed that this illustrated how women had become their own worst enemies, prioritizing party agendas over women's legal and economic advancement. Women's dual political obligations, maintained Caffarena, made it impossible to know when to favor one over the other without compromising the competing goals. This was an arduous task for women, especially those who wanted to rise in their parties' ranks.

This study examines Chilean women's participation in the political party system from 1950 to 1970 and shows how party allegiances contributed to a fragmented women's movement. During these two decades, feminists expressed their agendas through the party system, not as a collective body. How is it that women in other nations successfully formed multi-class suffrage movements and Chilean women struggled against each other for over eight decades? Caffarena disclosed the main obstacle to forming a cross-class and multi-party women's movement in Chile: women failed to overcome ideological divisions. The struggle between middle-class and left-wing women

² Ibid., p. 200.

³ Ibid., p. 200.

during the Popular Front era (1938-1950) especially frustrated attempts to unify suffragists. Chilean ideological foundations reflected distinct class interests and from the late 1800s to the early 1900s they represented competing visions of Church and State relations. Prominent male politicians also found it extremely difficult to compromise class and secular issues.

An examination of the impact that political ideologies had on the Chilean women's suffrage movement lends to a new understanding of the women's movement after 1949. Western feminist ideologies and women's organizations impacted the development of nascent Chilean feminisms. Chilean suffragists, such as Amanda Labarca, traveled to the United States and Western Europe and were exposed to feminist ideas. Many read John Stuart Mill's, The Subjugation of Women, translated by Chilean Martina Barros Borgoño in 1872. Throughout the early twentieth century, Chilean women participated in international congresses and commissions concerning women's legal and economic status and founded branches of international women's councils.⁴ They established ties with other Latin American women who sought legal equality and protectionist measures for women and children.

Although most women agreed with the basic tenets of Western feminist concepts, they adapted them to their own cultural and social situations. The Chilean women's movement, like the political system, developed into three identifiable blocs: a conservative base connected to the Church; a secular middle-class grouping; and

⁴ For more information concerning Latin American women's cooperative suffrage and feminist efforts see, Ester Sue Wamsley, "A Hemisphere of Women: Latin American and U.S. Feminists in the IACW, 1915-1939," (Ph.D. dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1998); Asuncion Lavrin, Women, Feminism, and Social Change in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, 1890-1940 (Lincoln: Nebraska University Press, 1995) Change; Klimpel, La mujer chilena, especially chapter nine.

working-class women connected to the fledgling left. Women activists developed differing understandings of gender rights that suited their class and religious interests. Ties to political parties and the Catholic Church divided women on national and religious political issues and aggravated women's struggle for suffrage.

Some scholars have argued that the suffrage campaign began in 1913 with the emergence of elite women's reading clubs in Santiago.⁵ These studies focus on official elite women's associations that sought to discuss women's rights and how to change legislation that discriminated against women. While such works are important, they gloss over the divisive nature of these women's organizations, especially regarding the separation of church and state. Other scholars have examined earlier manifestations of women's petitions for increased rights to vote and to higher education that began in the 1860s.⁶ Their works acknowledge that Catholic women initiated the women's suffrage discussion when they entered into the public debate concerning the role the Roman Catholic Church should have in the Chilean Republic. They do not examine fully the impact political party mobilization had on the women's movement.

A recent historical study of the suffrage movement by Javiera Errázuriz Tagle, a Chilean scholar, attributes the delay in enacting a suffrage law in Chile to the fact that

⁵ Paz Covarrubias, "El movimiento feminista Chileno," in *Chile: mujer y sociedad*, ed. by Paz Covarrubias and Rolando Franco (Santiago: UNICEF, 1978); Edda Gaviola, et al., *Queremos votar en las proximas elecciones: historia del Movimiento femenino Chileno, 1913-1952* (Santiago: CEM, 1986); Ericka Kim Verba, "The Círculo de Lectura de Señoras [Ladies' Reading Circle] and the Club de Señoras [Ladies' Club] of Santiago, Chile: Middle- and Upper-class Feminist Conversations (1915-1920)," *Journal of Women's History*, 7 (Fall 1995), 6-33.

⁶ Diamela Eltit, *Crónica del sufragio femenino en Chile* (Santiago: Sernam, 1994); Lavrin, *Women, Feminism, and Social Change*; Erika Maza Valenzuela, "Catholicism, Anticlericalism, and the Quest for Women's Suffrage in Chile," working paper Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies, University of Notre Dame, no. 214, December 1995; Idem. "Liberals, Radicals, and Women's Citizenship in Chile, 1872-1930," working paper Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies, University of Notre Dame, no. 245, November 1997.

neither the political class nor the public deemed women's suffrage an important issue until the 1930s.⁷ I disagree with this assessment and believe that women's suffrage became such an extremely important issue to political leaders that anticlerical political forces strongly resisted women's suffrage. I agree with Tagle's argument that the women's suffrage issue had to be validated in the public sphere before it could become part of the political discourse.⁸ Women initiated the suffrage issue in 1865 and related it to the larger church-state debate. This act brought the suffrage question to the public sphere and, by the early 1900s it had been validated and became an issue of contention in political discourse, beginning with the first bill for women's voting rights in 1917. Tagle asserts that once political leaders resolved the issue of whether or not a specific political party would benefit from women's suffrage, they moved forward with a suffrage law. The impact of political party forces was far more complex than Tagle recognizes. Politically active women were intricately tied to political leaders and their philosophies and those relationships impeded women from uniting on their shared experiences with gender discrimination.

These studies make an important contribution to suffrage scholarship because they demonstrate that the ideas presented at the July 1848 Seneca Falls feminist convention in the United States had reached Chile very early. Catholic women engaged in the protest against anticlerical policies and adopted concepts articulated in Seneca Falls to justify their actions. Mainly, women had a right to actively participate in electing

⁷ Javiera Errázuriz Tagle, "Discourses on women's suffrage in Chile, 1865-1949," trans. by Daniela Joana Rubens Flatow, *Historia (Santiago)*, vol. I, Special Edition (2006), p. 6. [online] <http://socialsciences.scielo.org/scielo.php?script=S0717-7942006000100002&lng=en&nrm=iso>.

⁸ Ibid., p. 5.

people whose decisions affected their daily lives. In the mid-nineteenth century elite Chilean women also questioned their limited access to education. Many women influenced Liberal leaders to open the University system to women. The Law for Primary Education, promulgated in 1854 during President Manuel Montt's liberal administration, established the creation of a public school for every 2000 residents. In 1877, President Aníbal Pinto's Education Minister Miguel Luis Amunátegui issued the Decree of February 1877 that admitted women to professional university education.⁹ As women gained more access to public and higher education¹⁰ they contested gender discrimination more vehemently. However these same Liberal leaders were less inclined to move on female suffrage, fearing the Church's influence over women.

Some scholars focus on how upper-class suffragists, middle-class reformers, and working-class activists informed the popular front governments during the 1930s and 1940s. Corinne Antezana-Pernet's 1996 doctoral dissertation explored the development of MEMCh alongside the popular front movement in Chile.¹¹ Her narrative about MEMCh's development illustrated how its connections to the Communist Party worked against its leaders' ability to unite leftist and middle-class women. Antezana-Pernet argued that MEMCh had a profound impact on national political life because its members introduced women's issues into political discourse. Historian Karin Roseblatt's gendered analysis of the popular front governments explains how intersecting feminist, labor, and middle-class professional activism shaped national identity. Her study

⁹ Few women took advantage of this right before the 1900s.

¹⁰ According to Eltit, the primary education law contributed to an increase in women's literacy rates from 10% in 1812 to 32% in 1881. Eltit, *Crónica del sufragio*, p. 17.

¹¹ Corinne Antezana-Pernet, "Mobilizing Women in the Popular Front Era: Feminism, Class, and Politics in the Movimiento Pre-Emanicipación de la Mujer Chilena (MEMCh), 1935-1950," (Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of California, Irvine, 1996).

explored how gender informed the development of a welfare state that reflected modernity. These studies expose the complex relationship between women's rights organizations and political leaders, especially under the hegemonic Popular Front coalition in the 1930s and illustrate how class interests impacted women's participation in Chile's political system.

Adding to the understanding of Chilean women's struggle for suffrage and other legal rights, these studies show the tensions that existed among women's groups and the difficulties feminists faced in attempting to achieve varying visions of what women's rights entailed. With the exception of Lavrin and Roseblatt, they gloss over how political parties and women's party loyalties impeded women's ability to form a long-lasting confrontation to gender discrimination. Lavrin illustrated that women experienced the same frustrations as other political interest groups and resorted to forming coalitions to achieve marginal successes. Her study also demonstrated the difficulty Chilean women faced in overcoming the divisions that defined the political party system. She acknowledged that women learned how to navigate the complex Chilean political system, but by 1940 gender issues continued to be at the mercy of male political leaders. Roseblatt discussed the Communist Party's role in destabilizing MEMCh by discrediting radical feminist elements from the organization.¹² She also addressed how middle- and working-class suffragists' inability to overcome class differences, exacerbated by Communist Party leaders, served to polarize the feminist movement. These two scholars do not examine fully Chile's political party system and how political party leaders and women's party allegiances frustrated the women's

¹² Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises*, Chp. 3.

movement since its inception. They only examine women's political activism to the point of gaining suffrage. An examination of women's political participation in the 1950s and 1960s will augment the current scholarship by demonstrating women's political maturity as they demanded more access to the party system.

Historian Heidi Tinsman explored the development of Chile's Agrarian Reform from 1964 to 1973. She explained how the project that established the male-headed nuclear family as the cornerstone of society conflicted with rural women's attempts to wield authority over their own labor and sexuality.¹³ She argued that land reform supporters questioned neither the patriarchal system in rural society nor the land tenure system. Rather, the policies enacted indirectly challenged those structures. Her study illustrated that the Agrarian Reform project mirrored earlier social reform movements, such as the popular front governments' welfare policies, because it articulated a traditional division of labor that defined men as productive and women as nonproductive. This produced a gender inequality that generated conflicting results. Tinsman argued that while rural women accepted male economic authority they challenged men's control over their labor and bodies. Her work illustrated effectively how gender informed rural family structures and rural politics. It adds to labor and rural scholarship on Chile in the 1950s by incorporating how women's economic, political, and social situations affected legal and labor struggles. Her study also broadens our understanding of how political party and union leaders and their female members strove to define the complex relationship of gender and politics.

¹³ Heidi Tinsman, Partners in Conflict: The Politics of Gender, Sexuality, and Labor in the Chilean Agrarian Reform, 1950-1973, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.)

Women's Politics in Transition

Political party mobilization efforts hampered suffrage leaders' attempts to mount a stable multi-class and multi-ideological women's movement. Political party leaders increased recruitment of women members after women earned the right to vote in municipal elections in 1935. This added to political divisions among women and women's interest groups. Women suffrage groups founded in the 1930s, such as MEMCh, the Women's Pro-Rights Committee (*Comité Pro-Derechos de la Mujer*) and the National Executive Committee of Chilean Women (*Comité Ejecutivo Nacional de Mujeres de Chile*),¹⁴ competed with political parties and smaller women's organizations for women's activism. The intense contest for women's political participation made women's attempts to organize purely as a gender group more challenging.

The Popular Front Era, 1938 to 1952, represented the rise of middle- and working-class political participation. The two groups' desire to have a voice in public affairs altered the party system by giving rise to "compromise politics"- the process of political negotiation that existed between established political and economic sectors with special interest groups that represented the popular sectors. This political system which married the Chilean Center and Left functioned as long as party and interest group leaders willingly compromised their ideological agendas for material gains.¹⁵ Political

¹⁴ The first two were founded in 1933 and MEMCh in 1935.

¹⁵ For a more complete examination of compromise politics in Chile see Alan Angell, "Chile Since 1958," in *Chile Since Independence*, ed. By Leslie Bethell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Idem. *Politics and the Labour Movement in Chile* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972); Julio Faúndez, *Marxism and Democracy in Chile: From 1932 to the Fall of Allende* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); Tomás Moulian, "Violencia, gradualismo y reformas en el desarrollo político chileno," in *Estudios sobre el sistema de partidos en Chile*, by Adolfo Aldunate, Angel Flishfisch, and Tomás Moulian (Santiago: FLACSO, 1985), pp. 13-60; Karin Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises*; and Arturo Valenzuela, *Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Chile* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

scientist Alan Angell suggests that the Chilean compromise state added to the proliferation of political parties, arguing that interest groups' ability to make organized demands concerning their economic conditions politicized them. Their political activism enabled them to either negotiate a settlement or, if one could not be reached, to disturb the economic and political sectors through actions such as strikes, public demonstrations, and dissolving coalitional relationships.¹⁶ Interest groups' political demands threatened the privileged classes and their ability to maintain their influence over the economy and politics. Their democratization and social reform efforts met with resistance by the Chilean Right, whose political opposition strategies caused the compromise system to falter.

Although the middle and working classes attained many material benefits and some marginal democratic gains, many popular groups and leftist parties demanded still more access to political structures. For most of the twentieth century the majority of Chilean voters were disenfranchised: women did not vote until 1949; illiterates gained voting rights in 1970; and, before the electoral reforms in 1958 and 1962, poor rural voters did not have complete electoral autonomy.¹⁷ Popular front leaders' inability and unwillingness to extend voting rights in Chile contributed to the conflicts among popular front supporters. Roseblatt effectively shows in her study of the popular front era that

¹⁶ Angell, "Chile Since 1958," pp. 132-140.

¹⁷ The electoral reforms enacted in 1958 introduced an official single ballot, established harsher penalties for fraudulent voting, made voting compulsory, and outlawed electoral pacts in the Chamber of Deputies. The 1962 electoral reforms outlawed electoral pacts in the Senate, made voter registration easier, and simplified ballots. This resulted in a larger electorate, especially among the poor; landowners lost their control over rural voters; and, parties stepped up recruitment of supporters. These measures mostly benefit the Christian Democratic Party, a center party that adhered to Catholic Social Doctrine, and the People's Action Front (*Frente de Acción Popular/FRAP*), a leftist coalition. For more information about the impact of these reforms consult Collier and Sater, *A History of Chile*, pp. 256-263 and Loveman, *Chile*, pp. 261-265.

although middle-class reformers united with the working-class to disempower the old political order, their unequal relationship created tensions that hindered their objectives.¹⁸

After gaining suffrage rights Chilean women did not refrain from public view, unlike US feminists had from the mid-1940s to the 1960s. U.S. feminists entered a period of such low political activity that scholars Leila Rupp and Verta Taylor classified it as ‘survival in the doldrums’.¹⁹ Some scholars argue that the Chilean women’s movement experienced a similar lull.²⁰ Chilean sociologist Julietta Kirkwood termed the period from 1949 to 1964 as an “era of feminist silence”.²¹ Political scientist Lisa Baldez asserts that following the suffrage victory “came a period characterized by a dearth of mobilization by women.”²² She maintains that after 1949 the women’s movement “became ‘atomized’ and ‘submerged’ within political parties.”²³ This is not an accurate portrayal. Such arguments stem from the belief that the Chilean women’s suffrage movement was a unified struggle. I argue in Chapter 2 that this was not the case. Since the inception of the suffrage movement, Chilean women competed against each other to determine the scope of women’s voting rights. Suffragists were divided and aligned themselves with those who shared their class and ideological interests. After obtaining full suffrage rights, politically active women articulated the women’s rights movement through the political party system. I argue that the 1950s and early 1960s should be

¹⁸ Roseblatt, Gendered Compromises.

¹⁹ Leila Rupp and Verta Taylor, Survival in the Doldrums: The American Women’s Rights Movement, 1945 to the 1960s. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

²⁰ Lisa Baldez, Why Women Protest: Women’s Movements in Chile, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) and Teresa Valdés and Marisa Weinstein, Mujeres que sueñan: Las organizaciones de pobladoras en Chile: 1973-1989, (Santiago: FLACSO, 1993).

²¹ Julieta Kirkwood, Ser política en Chile: las feministas y los partidos, (Santiago: FLACSO, 1986).

²² Lisa Baldez and Celeste Montoya Kirk, “Gendered Opportunities: The formation of Women’s Movements in the US and Chile,” in Lee Ann Banaszak, ed. The US Women’s Movement in Global Perspective, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), p. 133.

²³ Ibid.

framed not as an “era of feminist silence,” but as an era of party infiltration. Beginning in the 1950s, women created a larger presence in the political party system. Thus, gaining greater access to resources and the political power to push women’s agendas.

The political parties became the main vehicle through which legal, political and socioeconomic policies were negotiated, formalized, and suspended. This evolution began with the Popular Front government in 1938 and dictated party politics from 1940 to 1973. Interest groups, including women, had two means of gaining a voice in this structure: forming interest group political parties or working in established parties. Women’s political parties such as the Chilean Women’s Party, founded in 1946, failed to attain effective legislative changes. Restricted by limited party experience and an inability to address women’s class and ideological conflicts, female-based party leaders found it difficult to obtain the Congressional support necessary to back their agendas. Nor could they develop agreeable relationships among the various women’s rights organizations to create an effective women’s political coalition. The most effective means for women to gain legal and socio-economic advances was to work through established political parties and to persuade party leaders and members to adopt women’s issues into their agendas.

Twentieth-Century Chilean Feminism

Defining feminism is akin to deciphering a palimpsest. Every understanding of feminism has been overwritten, reanalyzed, and redefined. How is an historian to explain a movement, action or ideas as feminist when so many definitions exist? If one cannot produce a definitive explanation, how can one designate feminism or feminist as a label? Many scholars have struggled with this conundrum and their theorizing has only added to

the challenge.²⁴ When thinking about feminism one must integrate relational subjects such as race, culture, regional variables, class, age, sexuality, religion, and historical experiences. These categories present new possibilities for understanding feminism, and, often produce more questions and analysis. Feminism is a key concept in understanding why and how women articulated and manifested challenges to legal, economic, political and social systems. Although the term is fluid and replete with controversy, a crucial element exists: a shared understanding of women's subaltern status based on their gender.

Karen Offen's conceptualization of feminism offers a comprehensive and sophisticated definition that includes a set of common aspects integral for all feminist movements. In her comparative analysis of feminism, Offen proposed that any humanistic challenge to male authority and hierarchy that is ultimately transformative should be considered feminist.²⁵ Any individual or group can fall under that category, if their ideas and actions meet three criteria

a) they recognize the validity of women's own interpretation of their lived experience and needs and acknowledge the values women claim publicly as their own in assessing their status in society relative to men; b) they exhibit consciousness of ...institutionalized injustice...toward women as a group by men as a group in a given society; and c) they advocate their elimination of that injustice by challenging, through efforts to alter prevailing ideals and ...the coercive power, force or authority that upholds male prerogatives in that particular culture.²⁶

²⁴ Nancy Cott, "What's in a Name? The Limits of 'Social Feminism' or Expanding the Vocabulary of Women's History," *Journal of American History*, 76 (December 1989); Joan Kelly, *Women, History, and Theory: The Essays of Joan Kelly* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984); Asunción Lavrin, "Female, Feminine, and Feminist: Key Concepts in Understanding Women's History in Twentieth Century Latin America," Public Lecture: University of Bristol, 10 November 1988; Francesca Miller, *Latin American Women and the Search for Social Justice* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1991); Karen Offen, "Defining Feminism," *Signs* 14 (Autumn 1988); and Hilda Smith, "Feminism and the Methodology of Women's History," in *Liberating Women's History*, ed. Bernice Carroll (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976).

²⁵ Karen Offen, "Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach," in Gisela Bock and Susan James, eds., *Beyond Equality and Difference: Citizenship, Feminist Politics, and Female Subjectivity*, (London: Routledge, 1992) and "Defining Feminism," *Signs* 14 (Autumn 1988).

²⁶ Offen, "Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach," p. 82.

Under these complimentary definitions, feminist movements are culturally diverse and can manifest themselves in varying degrees of radicalism. This helps to explain the fluid nature of feminism and how feminist movements with differing agendas can emerge simultaneously. This conceptual framework is useful in understanding the complex nature of women's competitive understandings of and differing solutions to institutionalized gender discrimination.

Offen's model is less useful in explaining how women's efforts to challenge male authority in the legal system did not necessarily extend to social relations. Women's activism does not always entail a call to transform socially constructed gender relations, as was the case with the Chilean women's movement. Various women's groups, representing differing political ideologies, class interests, and understandings of feminism articulated the need for women's suffrage. Women's enfranchisement advanced women's civil rights and led to labor and social security legislation that affected women's economic position. Some legislative reforms, such as requiring direct payment of male workers' pensions and family allowances to women, indirectly challenged the patriarchal system. Female demand and support for such measures were limited.

The way in which feminists in the Southern Cone (the South American countries of Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay) mobilized others and attempted to change public opinion about women's issues proved to be a long and arduous task. How women chose to frame their concerns and present possible solutions often conflicted with other women's voices. As historian Asunción Lavrin explained, feminism in the Southern Cone during the early twentieth century was complex, nuanced, and provided no

definitive definitions. Lavrin maintained “there was not one feminism, but a diversity of female-sensitive answers to the problems experienced by women of several social strata.”²⁷ Women from different classes and political leanings recognized they had a shared experience based on sex. This offered women a common ground to combat legal and economic discrimination. Lavrin argued the mutual sense of oppression did not result in a unitary and well defined plan to alter women’s conditions. Rather, a multi-faceted and fluctuating feminism emerged, one that represented varying and contrasting visions. Recognizing the fluctuating character of feminism allows us to comprehend the nature of the often disjointed messages women activists presented.

Lavrin examined the social and intellectual evolution of feminism in the region and reveals three main strains of feminist thought in the Southern Cone: socialist, liberal, and compensatory. Feminist movements tended to be urban-based and promoted by educated, upper- and middle-class, intellectual, and professional women and men. She argued that the development of socialist and liberal feminism demonstrated how proponents of both attempted to produce a clear understanding of feminism. Socialist feminists called for economic independence and protective legislation for women laborers, and subordinated gender to class issues. Liberal feminists sought gender equality under the law. Neither advocated women’s sexual liberation from men. Lavrin also noted the development of compensatory feminism, a concept that blended socialist and liberal feminist ideologies with femininity and called for legislation that protected women and children. Many Chilean women leaders such as Amanda Labarca adopted this strategy and advanced the notion that women were equal, but different. They

²⁷ Lavrin, *Women, Feminism and Social Change*, p. 4.

advocated the preservation of female privileges, such as protectionist labor policies. Although most women activists accepted this feminist ideology because it provided a means to alter economic and political injustices while preserving gender roles, many women questioned male authority.

The Chilean women's movement was multi-feminist. Chilean suffragists debated, defined, and conceptualized the terms of their feminism and created differing strategies to overcome the injustices they identified. After suffrage, feminists continued to fight for legal and economic gains, and some challenged gender inequalities. Others used the feminist label to describe themselves while seeking to protect traditional gender relations within the family. From this diversity we can discern that feminist thought was evolutionary and reflected specific cultural realities.

The rise of feminism and women's political activism in the twentieth century cannot be understood without explaining Chilean cultural expectations for women. Social categories affect the way in which individuals and/or groups understand their role in society, such as race, class, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, and sexuality. Lavrin addressed these issues and the construction of gender relations in the Southern Cone, arguing that socially defined terms that dictated women's function in society were biologically determined and connected to women's reproductive capacity. With this underlying premise, women were expected to exhibit their femininity, the sum of "qualities that constituted the essence of being a woman."²⁸ Society viewed a woman who exuded her femaleness or femininity as "charming, genteel, delicate, and selfless".²⁹

²⁸ Ibid., p. 33. For a complete explanation of Lavrin's examination of intellectual concepts that are based on a behavioral reality consult, Lavrin, "Female, Feminine, and Feminist."

²⁹ Lavrin, Women, Feminism and Social Change, p. 33.

Lavrin asserted that women in the Southern Cone were socialized to accept their biological destiny and to be submissive within the home and beyond. She traced this biological determinism to Iberian and Mediterranean cultural mores and added that the Roman Catholic Church was instrumental in reinforcing feminine symbols and roles.

Chilean feminist and political essayist Felicitas Klimpel argued in her 1962 study of women in Chilean politics that Chilean colonial heritage played a role in perpetuating unequal gender relations. She also claimed that the gender divisions in Mapuche society contributed to the notion that women's most respectable mission in life was to have and to rear children, a mission that complemented Catholic teachings.³⁰ Klimpel explained that the Mapuche treated women as a commodity and used them to solidify political alliances. This created a situation that placed women in a subservient role in the family and society. Klimpel argued that this cultural heritage, combined with Iberian understandings of gender relations, created a social system in which men served as the authoritative force in the family and in public and women as the subordinate. Furthermore, Klimpel opined that centuries of purporting these cultural assumptions had made them a reality in Chile. She illustrated women's inferiority in law and society through protective legislation that was based on the idea that women needed to be secluded and protected.³¹

Sociologist, feminist, and political activist Julieta Kirkwood characterized early twentieth-century Chilean feminism as a transitory period in which women developed a feminine consciousness, engaged meaningfully in the nation's political structures, and

³⁰ Felicitas Klimpel, La mujer chilena: el aporte femenino al progreso de Chile, 1910-1960. (Santiago: Editorial Andrés Bello, 1962), pp. 24-26.

³¹ Ibid., p. 46.

developed a political conduct that was acceptable for women.³² During the 1980s, she posited that feminism became revolutionary and resulted in women's recognition of and challenge to male social, legal, and economic control of women. According to Kirkwood, Chilean feminism and female consciousness must be understood within its relation to political parties, class issues, the global economy, international social movements, and education.³³ Women's increased access to higher education, discovery of international economic and political ideologies, their interest in social problems, and the courting of political parties opened the door to women's feminist consciousness.

The gender historian of France, Joan W. Scott, argued that women's and feminist history should offer more than an attempt to supplement the historical record with the neglected subject of women. She asserted that gender as a social category, is useful for understanding the hierarchies of difference, such as those present in political contests. She urged scholars to expose the hidden operations of gender to explain power relationships.³⁴ Scott shared Offen's claim that women do not function as a homogeneous group. She added that scholars should not isolate women as a separate topic or conflate women's experiences, because one female experience does not exist. Moreover, she posited that gender can be a useful analytical tool for understanding women's place in history because it is relational and assumes a multiplicity of reference, much like class and race. This Europeanist perspective informs Latin American women's history by questioning how gender shapes national politics and state institutions and how politics affects gender relations.

³² Julieta Kirkwood, *Ser Política en Chile*, p. 40.

³³ *Ibid.*, especially chapters 3 and 4.

³⁴ Joan W. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

Over the past decade Chilean scholars have produced significant works that address the varying manifestations of feminist thought and action and how conceptualizations of gender informed social reform movements and the establishment of government institutions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Historian Lorena Godoy examined Chilean women's education at the turn of the twentieth century.³⁵ She argued that although vocational schools taught lower income women valuable skills, they included moral and domestic education, such as home economics and proper hygiene. This education illustrated an inherent gendered division of labor that classified motherhood and household responsibilities as women's main and proper contribution to society. Chilean historian M. Soledad Zárate analyzed the practices and discourse of a women's correctional facility in Santiago during the early twentieth century and argued that the facility's founders and staff enforced a dual image of woman as virtuous and vicious. In this way the state established a connection between gender, delinquency, and penal codes. Social reformers and lawmakers' interpretations of female delinquents' motivations explained why correctional facilities and rehabilitation programs were gender specific. Mainly, men and women lived by different codes that society ascribed.

These studies, in addition to works produced by scholars in the United States, such as Roseblatt, Hutchison, and Tinsman, illustrate the direction that Chilean women's history has taken. Historian Thomas Klubock also used gender as an analytical tool to show how masculine and feminine identities impacted class struggles and politics

³⁵ Lorena Godoy, "Armas ansiosas de triunfo: Dedal, Agujas, Tijeras: La educación profesional femenina en Chile, 1888-1912," in *Disciplina y desacato: Construcción de identidad en Chile, siglos XIX y XX*, ed. by Lorena Godoy et al. (Santiago: Sur/CEDEM, 1995).

from 1904 to 1951. His study of the El Teniente copper mining labor movement posited that both men and women challenged normative gender concepts.³⁶ U.S.-owned copper companies imposed a middle-class value system based on the male-headed nuclear family on workers through company policies and the state to discipline the workforce. The mining community subverted these values and rather than taming labor unions, the policies intensified working-class activism. Klubock blended post-structural approaches with feminist methodology to understand how men and women interacted. Klubock and others show how gendered concepts affected or were affected by politics, economic structures, reform movements, class struggles, and governmental institutions.

In contrast, this study applies gender analysis to examine women's evolutionary role in the political party system, to explore legislative debates founded on paternalistic attitudes toward women and children, and to explain direct and indirect challenges to the patriarchal family structure. It explores women's role in the political party system and explains how politically active women used party ties to express feminist agendas. Suffragist studies and those works that discuss Chilean women's history from 1920 to 1970 locate women's political participation outside the political party system. Roseblatt, Tinsman, Lavrin, and Hutchinson recognize women's relationship to political parties, but they do not examine the intimacy between the parties and their female members. This study examines women's interactions with male party leaders. It shows how women's encroachment upon the male dominated party system led to internal debates about women's political behavior and external discussions about gender relations. Rather than retreating after suffrage, Chilean women integrated themselves

³⁶ Thomas Klubock, Contested Communities: Class, Gender, and Politics in Chile's El Teniente Copper Mine, 1904-1951 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

into the party system more fully and emerged as politicians. With political clout and respect, female politicians incorporated feminist agendas into party discourse.

Chapter 2 outlines the journey Chilean women undertook to create a suffrage movement. What emerged was not just a struggle for the right to vote. As Chilean women organized people to support women's enfranchisement, they developed competing legal, economic, and social demands that reflected differing class, ideological, religious, and intellectual interests. Although the suffrage movement presented a multifaceted and tenuous unity among women, the women who articulated feminist demands altered political culture.

Chapters 3 and 4 examine the role between political party leaders and their female members from 1930 to 1970. Chapter 3 outlines women's entrance into party politics and explains how party leaders enlisted female members, but kept them at a distance. During the suffrage struggle, women recognized that political power rested with the parties and not interest groups. Since women were not a homogenous group, female activists enlisted in those political parties that best reflected their class and ideological interests. Historian Richard J. Walter examined the performance of female voters and officeholders in Santiago's municipal government. He argued that women's political participation failed to produce a significant change in municipal government, despite expectations. Women's increased political participation forced political leaders to incorporate women into the party structure as voters and candidates. Walter argued that Santiago's female officials proved women to be capable and competent politicians.³⁷

Chapter 3 explores how women and party leaders defined women's role in the party

³⁷ Richard J. Walter, "Urban Pioneers: The Role of Women in the Local Government of Santiago, Chile, 1935-1946," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 84 (November 2004), p. 698.

structure and how they addressed women's expanding roles. During the 1950s, female party members fought for equal representation and access to political party executive committees. Women's integration transformed party politics and generated debates about female political participation and rights. Women's political participation and relationship to the parties shifted during the 1950s. Legislative battles demonstrated that although political leaders accepted women's full membership and discussed women's issues, they limited their commitment to gender concerns. Chapter 4 explains that by the 1960s, women had earned party leaders respect, learned to navigate the party system, and integrated woman-friendly issues into the party agenda. Female politicians also engaged in the ideological and class contests that fragmented the Chilean political system. Their participation in these struggles served to alienate women as a group and retarded any attempt to create cross-class and multi-party alliances.

Chapter 5 examines legislative reforms to social security and illegitimacy in the 1950s and how they indirectly altered gendered definitions of familial roles. Such reforms produced positive results for women by augmenting their economic authority in the home and increasing their ability to demand child support. The state assumed responsibility for regulating the care and economic well-being of dependents. Much like welfare reforms in the 1930s and 1940s, this extended the state into family affairs. Historian Carmelo Mesa-Lago examined the role interest groups had in developing social security systems in Latin America.³⁸ He explained that Latin American social security policies have their roots in Pre-Columbian and Iberian cultures but also argued that interest groups obtained specific social security benefits from the state, thereby

³⁸ Carmelo Mesa-Lago, Social Security in Latin America: Pressure Groups, Stratification, and Inequality (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1978).

minimizing radical agendas and maintaining elites' political influence.³⁹ Although Mesa-Lago illustrated how the modern state addressed social security, he ignored the impact gender had on developing such programs. More recently, Daniel Giménez examined the gendered nature of pension and social security systems in Latin America. He argued that state-sponsored welfare in Latin America reflects a sexual division of labor: "...any distribution of responsibilities [for care] is a means of organizing the work of caregiving and is thus a way of structuring the relations between men and women, since all societies consider women to be naturally responsible for caregiving functions."⁴⁰ I argue that social security reforms reflected slight changes in how Chilean society understood gender relations and resulted in a redefinition of the family structure. Changes to the Civil Code, such as equalizing adultery penalties, which directly challenged institutionalized patriarchy, met with limited results. Women's inability to behave as feminist ideologues, shown by their limited capacity to affect legislation and to challenge patriarchal privileges, points to the sacrifice they made to become politicians.

Chapter 6 explores the legislative battles for national day care and divorce. Although both disrupted the nuclear family unit and women's traditional role as caregivers, only national day care became law. The chapter also demonstrates how party leaders and women located feminist contests in legal battles. I show that divorce failed and met with limited support because it fit neither into the social welfare rubric nor into Catholic social doctrine. Government-funded day care generated a political discourse that supplanted the gendered division of labor with economic realities and a

³⁹ Ibid., p. 6.

⁴⁰ Daniel M. Giménez, Gender, Pensions and Social Citizenship in Latin America ECLAC: Serie mujer y desarrollo: 46 (Santiago, 2005), p. 12.

governmental responsibility to protect and instruct children, which day care proponents identified as the future citizenry. The important point that national day care and divorce revealed that the reasoning for their success or failure centered principally on the question of the legitimacy of women's challenge to the nuclear family unit.

Above all, this work augments the historiography of Chilean women and the Chilean political party system by exploring how women's incorporation into party politics affected both the political system and women's legal advancement. It bridges the gap between the emergent welfare state developed during the popular front governments in the 1930s and 1940s, and the leftist political movements in the 1960s and 1970s. By locating normative gender roles at the center of women's political participation, I argue that although Chilean women engaged in legal battles to challenge patriarchal privileges, their inability to dismantle patriarchy effectively suggested a need for both strong party participation and feminist driven organizations.

CHAPTER 2

CONSTRUCTING A WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN CHILE

Chilean women's entrance into the public debate regarding Church and State relations in 1865 launched a women's suffrage battle that lasted eight decades. By the late 1800s, most upper- and middle-class women agreed on suffrage; however, they disagreed on its terms, which retarded women's full enfranchisement until 1949. This chapter examines the Chilean women's movement failure to jell and explains that the greatest obstacle to obtaining women's voting rights was ideological divisions among women. Political ideologies, beginning with church-state relations, hindered women from presenting a unified movement for voting rights. Women's rights leaders and suffrage organizations worked closely with political parties which tied women to ideological debates and created fissures in the women's movement. These political divisions intensified in the 1930s as leftist parties gained strength that added another dimension to class interests to the already fragmented women's movement.

If feminism is by definition about political, economic, and social equality of the sexes and if feminine consciousness denotes women's special awareness of gender discrimination, why is it that Chilean women who developed a feminine consciousness did not develop a unified feminist movement? In the 1980s Asuncion Lavrin examined Southern Cone feminism and concluded it was a struggle to broaden women's economic prospects and access to education in the legal system and not a fight to alter gender

relations or the attitudes that determined them. She demonstrated that feminism had many faces and that social equality of the sexes represented only a small fraction of the struggle for women's rights.⁴¹ She argued that although women did not challenge normative gender relations, they recognized their subordination and developed a feminine consciousness. Lavrin attributed this phenomenon to the cultural respect of femininity and the fear of feminism.⁴² The preservation of female character dictated how women participated in politics. Identity politics-political attitudes that focus on the concerns of social groups identified mainly on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, class, or sexual orientation-in the Chilean case were extremely powerful and dominated by political parties. I argue that the profound influence Chilean political parties had on women's development of a political identity contributed to women's difficulty in creating a stable and sustainable women's movement.

Women became politically active at the turn of the twentieth century as gender-specific groups aligned with political parties and organizations. Women's struggle for legal rights, because they centered on larger political tensions, fell victim to the power struggle among political parties. Women's political activism operated alongside the political party system until the 1930s when party leaders invited women into party folds by establishing formal women's branches. These women's branches offered women limited access to the parties' executive arms, but they provided party leaders a means to indoctrinate female members and to monitor women's voting behavior.

⁴¹ Lavrin, "The Ideology of Feminism in the Southern Cone, 1900-1940," working paper The Wilson Center Latin American Program, Howard University, no. 169, 1986, p. 7.

⁴² Lavrin, "Female, Feminine, and Feminist," p. 3.

Women and the *Patronato*

Throughout the nineteenth century Chilean political leaders wrestled over defining the political role of the Roman Catholic Church. The debate divided ruling elites into two camps: those that supported Church privileges and those who opposed them. It also contributed to the establishment of three important political parties: the Liberal Party, founded in 1849; the Conservative Party, founded in 1857; and the Radical Party, founded in 1861.⁴³ The church-state issue had its roots in the Bourbon Reform era when the Spanish Crown restricted the political, economic, and social power of the Church. Anticlerical elements believed that corporate or Church ownership of land hindered economic development and felt that the clergy had too much influence over society. They questioned ecclesiastic privileges such as clergy's immunity from secular courts and argued against ecclesiastic control over education and the registries that recorded marriages and births. Conservative elites solidified Church power with the Constitution of 1833, which established Catholicism as the state religion and conferred the *patronato* to the President.⁴⁴ The *patronato* allowed the President to nominate archbishops, bishops, and canons and to retain diplomatic relations with the Vatican. These measures did not resolve the issue and led to more church-state battles.⁴⁵

⁴³ The Conservative Party represented upper-class interests, especially landowners, and supported the Roman Catholic Church. The Liberal Party represented elites who favored 19th century liberal ideals, such as individual freedoms, the abolishment of ecclesiastic privileges, and federalist principles. The Radical Party began when a radical wing of the Liberal Party broke away in 1861. It represented civil liberties, universal male suffrage, and anticlericalism. By the early 1900s, the Radical Party's base of support came from the professional middle class.

⁴⁴ The *patronato real* was a right extended to the Spanish King to appoint ecclesiastic functionaries and to oversee tithe income, the taxation of Church holdings, and the establishment of church institutions in the Americas. The Pope vested the Spanish King with these rights through papal bulls in 1501 and 1508.

⁴⁵ See Fidel Araneda Bravo, *Historia de la iglesia en Chile* (Santiago: Ed. Paulinas, 1986); Simon Collier and William Sater, *A History of Chile, 1808-1994* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Francisco Antonio Encina, *Historia de Chile* (Santiago: Editorial Nascimento, 1949); and Brian Loveman, *Chile: The Legacy of Hispanic Capitalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

Catholic organizations and conservative political factions mobilized women around the church-state debate which laid the groundwork for women's political participation. In 1865 the first public statement to support women's suffrage appeared in a Catholic women's newspaper *El Eco de las Señoras de Santiago* (The Eco of the Women of Santiago). The July 13, 1865 issue-the newspaper published only twelve issues-concerned Article 5 of the Constitution establishing the Catholic faith as the state religion. Catholic elite women declared that women should not sit idly by as politicians decided the future of important cultural institutions.⁴⁶ Chilean historian Javiera Tagle asserts that this became a defining moment for women's suffrage because these elite Catholic women brought the suffrage question into the public sphere. It is important to understand that this act also illustrated how women's rights were tied to larger political battles from the beginning.

Catholic clergy and Conservative Party leaders' capacity to mobilize women to support their political positions was strong enough to provoke opposition to women's political participation from anticlerical forces. On August 16, 1865, Abdón Cifuentes, Conservative Party member and editor of the conservative daily *El Bien Público*, publicly spoke in favor of women's suffrage. In a speech to the Society of San Luis (*Sociedad de San Luis*) Cifuentes argued that women's enfranchisement was an important characteristic of modern societies and that the government should incorporate women into the nation's political life.⁴⁷ Cifuentes' public announcement demonstrated that the Conservative Party was the first political party to endorse women's suffrage.

⁴⁶ Tagle, "Discourses on women's suffrage in Chile," p. 6.

⁴⁷ For a discursive analysis of Cifuentes' speech consult Tagle, "Discourses on Women's Suffrage," pp. 8-9.

Conservative leaders' continual push for women's voting rights caused an opposition reaction from anticlerical leaders.

Historian Erika Maza Valenzuela's 1997 study of Liberal and Radical party leaders' efforts to delay women's suffrage points out that the anticlerical political bloc discounted women's activism for fear that female voters would disrupt the party balance in the legislative and executive branches.⁴⁸ She argued that both anticlerical parties recruited women to support their causes and supported education reforms for women to prepare female voters for national political participation. Valenzuela maintained that Liberal and Radical leaders questioned the social connection that Conservatives and the Catholic clergy had to women through Catholic Church sponsored beneficence associations. Moreover, they argued that this influence extended beyond elite sectors, because the upper-class women who participated in beneficence activities developed relationships with women in popular sectors.⁴⁹ Thus, the Church and Conservatives held more authority over women, especially in the working classes, than upper- and middle-class Liberals and Radicals. The perceived power over potential female voters led anticlerical leaders to oppose women's suffrage until they could overcome the Conservatives' advantage.

Leftist political parties emerged in Chile during the first few decades of the twentieth century. Leftist leaders spoke out against gender discrimination and recruited women in their struggle to dismantle the class system. They shared anticlerical beliefs and promoted feminist agendas but were weaker than conservative and anticlerical political forces during this period. The Socialist Workers Party (*Partido Obrero*

⁴⁸ Valenzuela, "Liberals, Radicals," p. 29.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Socialista), founded in 1912 by Luis Recabarren, incorporated women's rights in its agenda, although women's emancipation was not his priority. Nor did all leftist leaders share his enthusiasm for incorporating feminist agendas into the labor movement. The nascent leftist movement was fraught with internal strife over ideological premises and how to construct the class struggle. These tensions contributed to its political limitations and stalled its commitment to women's issues.

The experience elite and middle-class women gained through their involvement in the church-state debate prepared them for political action. Functioning as the mouthpiece for clerical and anticlerical political issues, women entered into new terrain by voicing their opinions in women's periodicals and social clubs. Anticlerical women did not have the same access to women's organizations upper-class women active in social groups through the church. Upper- and middle-class women who did not have social religious ties engaged in public discussion through social clubs and literary circles. They did not organize political action groups or establish feminist organizations until 1910s. These activities and the emergence of women's publications allowed women to express their political and social beliefs publicly. As women supported or denounced specific party platforms, they began to demand more recognition and more access to rights guaranteed under citizenship, such as suffrage and increased educational opportunities.

Women's access to education improved dramatically after the universities were opened to women in 1877. Increased educational opportunities for women directly affected the women's relationship to the political parties. Between 1915 and 1925 female enrollment in secondary education doubled.⁵⁰ Of the 41,494 children enrolled in

⁵⁰ Covarrubias, "El movimiento feminista chileno," p. 621.

secondary schools in 1925, 20,494 were female. By 1949 females made up 49.9% of the secondary student population.⁵¹ Women's enrollment in universities increased between 1920 and 1940. The 1920 Chilean Census reported 33 women doctors, 14 women attorneys, and 7,509 women teachers. The 1940 Census listed 263 women doctors, 155 women attorneys, and 14,473 women teachers.⁵² The women who entered the universities in the 1930s had greater connection to the political party system than early suffragists. They represented a new generation of feminists who became politicized through the political parties. They were the first generation to work within the party system for suffrage. Although they benefited from having greater access to party leaders, their enrollment in the political parties separated them from other feminists and hampered women's rights leaders' attempts to establish umbrella groups to oversee the women's suffrage movement. Women activists and feminists could not divorce themselves from their political ideologies and class interests. Women's indirect and direct connection to the political parties retarded suffrage and separated women and led to women's attempt to obtain more power within the political party system in the 1950s.

Political party leaders aggressively recruited young people from the universities in the 1930s and 1940s. Their efforts increased greatly after women won the right to vote in municipal elections in 1934. Only 9% of women who were eligible to vote registered for the 1935 municipal elections. This was a poor showing and played on anticlerical party fears that women's suffrage would benefit the Conservative Party, because the Conservative Party received 34% of the female vote in the 1935 elections.⁵³ This

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 623.

⁵² Ibid., pp. 622-23.

⁵³ Statistical information in Gaviola *et al.*, *Queremos votar*, p. 60.

showing should not be surprising considering that Conservative leaders had long mobilized women. After the 1935 election cycle that other political party leaders intensified recruitment of women members, especially at the university level.

Women and the Vote

At the turn of the twentieth century Chile underwent a serious political, economic and social transformation. Embroiled in a series of international conflicts that resulted in the War of the Pacific, Chile's victory over Peru and Bolivia in 1884 led to Chile's acquisition of the nitrate-rich Atacama Desert.⁵⁴ The wealth gained from nitrate exports contribute to industrial expansion, urban growth, and an increase in the middle and working classes. Chile also experienced an influx of European and Argentine immigrants between the 1850s and 1920, although Chile did not attract as many European immigrants as did Argentina.⁵⁵ These economic and demographic shifts, alongside the arrival of European and U.S. liberal economic and philosophical ideals and the restructuring of the education system, led to the emergence of new social and political actors.⁵⁶ Various interest groups, such as laborers, landowners, intellectuals, and the military, organized and demanded reforms that represented their needs and visions of justice.

Industrialization brought with it huge social transformations and criticisms as well as an intellectual debate about the need to reform the political sector to better reflect social realities. Laborers organized around collective bargaining issues and new political parties formed that represented specific class and social interests, just as Chile's political

⁵⁴ Loveman, Chile, p. 172.

⁵⁵ Between 1889 and 1907, Chile only admitted 55,000 immigrants, whereas, Argentina welcomed over 2 million during the same time period. Collier and Sater, A History of Chile, p. 172.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 172-74.

system transitioned to a parliamentary government. The national government experienced a new wave of legislative debates that revealed middle and working class interests; however, despite the expansion of political representation, landowning elites continued to dominate Chilean politics.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the 1874 electoral law, an important legislative reform enacted during the parliamentary period contributed to the women's suffrage debate.

The 1874 electoral law removed property qualifications for voting and stipulated that all literate adult Chileans had the right to vote.⁵⁸ The law did not exclude women specifically. Domitila Silva y Lepe, a San Felipe governor's widow, revived the women's suffrage question when she registered to vote in her province.⁵⁹ The San Felipe Electoral Registry Board supported her registration on the grounds that the law did not prohibit women from voting. Several women in La Serena also convinced their Electoral Registry Board to enroll them in the registry. The Board agreed and justified its decision by stating that the married women received permission from their husbands.⁶⁰ Acknowledging the husbands' consent demonstrated Board members' insecurity with their decision and drew support from the Chilean Civil Code which placed married women under their husband's legal protection and jurisdiction. Board members defended their actions through two different legal measures; the 1874 electoral reform law and the Civil Code.

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 194-97.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p 195; Valenzuela, "Catholicism," p. 15.

⁵⁹ Valenzuela, "Catholicism," p. 16. Valenzuela suggests that other Chilean women had attempted to register to vote in other provinces.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 17.

Female voter registration in the 1870s worried Liberal and Radical leaders who believed the Conservative Party would benefit most from women's suffrage. Liberal and Radical legislators passed a new electoral reform law in 1884 during Domingo Santa María's liberal administration (1881-86). The new electoral law expressly denied women the right to vote, placing them in the company of other disenfranchised groups such as the illiterate, the insane and any individuals who had been condemned to more than three years in jail.⁶¹ This legislative measure retarded women's suffrage, but it did not kill the debate.

Women's Organizations and the Suffrage Question

Women's political organizations in the early 1900s competed against each other to organize and influence Chilean women's political participation. Middle- and upper-class feminist leaders' ties to party agendas separated them and prevented them from agreeing on how and when women's voting rights should be implemented. Conservative women argued for immediate and full suffrage. Liberal and Radical feminists advocated gradual enfranchisement for women. They articulated anticlerical leaders' sentiments that Chilean women needed to be properly educated about civic responsibilities in a secular environment.⁶² Anticlerical feminists delayed women's suffrage throughout the early 1900s because they believed that the Church had too much influence over women, which would give the Conservative Party an electoral advantage.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 19. Under the constitution, Congress had to review electoral law every ten years. One of the main issues debated was the terminology used in the 1874 electoral law that stated all adult and literate Chileans could vote. Conservatives argued that the term Chileans or *Chilenos* in Spanish, reflected both genders, whereas, anticlerical politicians argued the opposite. See Valenzuela, "Catholicism," for a full discussion.

⁶² Valenzuela, "Liberals, Radicals, and Women's Citizenship," pp. 5-6.

Conservative and religious women's groups justified anticlerical fears by advocating women's suffrage and effectively mobilizing women. There were two Catholic women's organizations whose leaders sought to direct women's spiritual, moral and intellectual development: the Association of Chilean Christian Women (*Asociación Cristiana Femenina de Chile*), founded in 1919, and the Catholic Association of Young Women of Chile (*Asociación de la Juventud Católica Femenina de Chile*), founded in 1921.⁶³ Both of these organizations promoted social action activities to improve women's condition and supported women's suffrage. The latter held a conference in 1922 at which speakers discussed women's voting rights and feminism.⁶⁴ Although not at the forefront of the women's suffrage movement, religious organizations such as these represented a commitment among conservative groups to increase women's political participation and to advance their own social and cultural agendas.

Adela Edwards de Salas represented upper-class conservative and Catholic feminist values. She supported women's right to vote and argued that women better understood the social and moral needs of the nation. She cited inaccuracies in legislation concerning the protection of minors and prostitution as being directly related to men's inability to comprehend women's socio-economic conditions. She articulated, "Women's suffrage rights should not be denied, as has been the case until now, so that women may defend themselves."⁶⁵ She believed that because men did not comprehend how these issues affected women, they should not be responsible for addressing them, especially since men were so closely linked to these crimes. For Edwards, and many

⁶³ Klimpel, *La mujer chilena*, p. 239.

⁶⁴ Gaviola, et al., *Queremos Votar*, pp. 35-36.

⁶⁵ Quoted in Valenzuela, "Catholicism," p. 27. Valenzuela explains that Edwards's sentiments were echoed by other Catholic conservative women.

conservative and religious women, through women's suffrage women would increase their legal rights and tackle social ills.

Adela Edwards became a leading Conservative and Catholic female voice. She politicized women's faith and argued that women's moral superiority to men made them better political actors. She founded Chile's White Cross (*Cruz Blanca*) in 1918, an organization devoted to defending young women from abandonment, prostitution, and exploitation.⁶⁶ Her involvement with the White Cross led her to demand protective legislation for women, such as the establishment and enforcement of harsher penalties for those who corrupted minors, and the promotion of equal wages for men and women. Edwards also established the Women's National Action of Chile (*Acción Nacional de Mujeres de Chile*) in 1934. The political Catholic women's organization sought to unify conservative women in an effort to protect the family, especially women and children, and to fight for women's voting rights.⁶⁷ The organization was closely aligned with the Conservative Party and was instrumental in mobilizing women for the 1935 municipal elections.

Despite Edwards' objective to unify conservative women, many Women's National Action of Chile members left to form another conservative and Catholic-based women's organization. Founded in 1935, the Women's Patriotic Action of Chile (*Acción Patriótica de Mujeres de Chile*) incorporated more middle-class members. Its members were less concerned with promoting feminist agendas than with solving social ills according to Catholic social doctrine.⁶⁸ Like Edwards' organization it also had close ties

⁶⁶ Klimpel, *La mujer chilena*, pp. 237-38.

⁶⁷ Klimpel, *La mujer chilena*, p. 240.

⁶⁸ Lavrin, *Women, Feminism and Social Change*, p. 306.

to the Conservative Party and its members supported Conservative candidates in the 1935 municipal elections. Although the two groups' members disagreed about what the most pressing social injustices were and how to challenge them, they promoted women's voting rights.

Anticlerical feminist leaders frustrated conservative women's demand for suffrage in the early 1900s. Although they supported women's voting rights, they backed Liberal and Radical leaders' opposition to women's full suffrage. They challenged ecclesiastic influences and supported secular education as a means to politicize women. Amanda Labarca, a militant Radical Party member and middle-class professional, became a prominent anticlerical feminist voice. A middle-class woman who had benefited greatly from women's increased access to public and university education, Labarca attended Columbia University's Teachers' College and the Sorbonne, worked as a Spanish teacher, and informed Chile's education practices. Labarca had close connections to the Radical Party through her husband, Guillermo Labarca Hubertson, who was a prominent party member.⁶⁹ Her marriage and her friendship with Juana Aguirre de Aguirre, President Pedro Aguirre Cerda's wife, afforded her access to Radical politicians.

In 1915 Labarca founded the Ladies' Reading Circle (*Círculo de Lectura de Señoras*), a secular women's group comprised of educated upper- and middle-class women who wanted to discuss intellectual issues. Although the Ladies' Circle was not founded as a political organization, its members argued that women should engage in political activities. Labarca became a leader of the secular feminist movement, but her vision of women's political rights was not as ardent as Edwards. Throughout the early

⁶⁹ Guillermo Labarca Hubertson held two ministerial posts in 1924 and 1938.

1900s, Labarca maintained that before the government granted female suffrage, women needed to be educated about civil responsibilities and the importance of making individual voting decisions. Her position reflected Radical and Liberal party beliefs that the Church as an institution had too much influence on women.⁷⁰

Both the Ladies' Reading Circle and the Ladies' Club (*Club de Señoras*), founded in 1917, offered secular women a means to discuss intellectual and political matters and generated debates about gender relations. Both groups developed a feminist ideology that reflected national realities.⁷¹ Historian Ericka Kim Verba argued that the feminism that emerged from these two women's organizations had four distinct characteristics. First, feminist ideology was cautious and uniquely Chilean, drawing from foreign feminism, but redefined within Chilean cultural understandings. Secondly, it was rooted in gender frustrations and class positions. The third characteristic it defined women's emancipation as being based on a complementary relationship between the sexes, not as individual equality. Finally, the feminist ideology that emerged from the debate initiated by these two women's organizations categorized women within class divisions. Basically, suffrage should be extended to all people, regardless of gender, with specific restriction on income and education.⁷² Thus, upper- and middle-class women were worthy of the vote, because they exhibited an intellectual maturity that lower-class individuals lacked. The feminist ideology described by Verba illustrated secular feminists' belief that conservative and Catholic forces directly influenced women from

⁷⁰For a more complete discussion of Labarca's views on suffrage see Lavrin, Women, Feminism, and Social Change, and Valenzuela, "Liberals."

⁷¹ Ericka Kim Verba, "The Círculo de Lectura de Señoras [Ladies' Reading Circle] and the Club de Señoras [Ladies' Club] of Santiago, Chile: Middle- and Upper-class Feminist Conversations (1915-1920)," Journal of Women's History 7 (Fall 1995): 6-33.

⁷² *Ibid.*, passim.

the popular classes. They pushed for secular civic instruction and used class divisions to undermine the perceived control the Conservative Party had over lower-class women.

Not all women from the popular classes were at the mercy or tutelage of upper- and middle-class women. Many became politicized without having contact with Church, charity, or social welfare organizations. An early example of working-class women's political activities was the Belén de Sárraga Women's Centers, founded in 1913 in the nitrate region.⁷³ Spanish born Belén de Sárraga attended the University of Barcelona and graduated with a medical degree. At the University she found intellectual fulfillment in feminist thought, anticlericalism and anarcho-syndicalism, ideologies that began to proliferate in Spain at the turn of the twentieth century. During Sárraga's travels in Latin America, she visited Chile in 1913 and 1915. She spoke publicly against the Church, unjust labor conditions, women's oppression, and United States imperialism.⁷⁴

Arriving in Chile in 1913, Sárraga lectured to predominantly liberal and anticlerical audiences. She focused her discussion on themes concerning labor conditions and masculine domination of women, a direct result of what she characterized as the ecclesiastic poisoning of women's minds. Sárraga inflamed a Santiago audience on February 13, 1913, when she attacked Church theology and stated, "At a council during the VI century of the Christian age they put to discussion if women had a soul and this

⁷³ Kirkwood, *Ser política*, p. 96. Sárraga is also spelled Zárraga. For a more complete discussion of Belén de Sárraga and her activities in Latin America consult: Luis Vitale and Julia Antivilo, *Belén de Sárraga*, (Santiago: Ed., Cesoc, 1999); Belén de Sárraga, *El clericalismo en América*, (Lisbon: Ed. Lux, 1914); and Pedro Bravo-Elizondo, "Belén de Sárraga y su influencia en la mujer del Norte Grande," *Literatura Chilena* 13, 47-50 (1989): 31-39.

⁷⁴ Rafael Gumucio Rivas, "Belén de Sárraga, librepensadora, anarquista y feminista," in *Revista Polis: Revista Académica On-Line de la Universidad Bolivariana* No. 9, vol. 3, Santiago 2004. At the end of the nineteenth century the United States defeated Spain, bringing an end to the Spanish American War. As a result Spain lost the last of its Western Hemisphere colonies – the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Cuba – which entered into neo-colonial relationships with the United States.

doubt was resolved by only two affirmative votes.”⁷⁵ According to Chilean historian Rafael Gumucio Rivas, Catholic groups reacted quickly, denigrating her in the Catholic press by accusing her of lacking moral and spiritual decency.⁷⁶ The Chilean public, including middle-class women who believed in mainstream anticlerical measures and women’s emancipation, did not appreciate her message.

Although many women found fault with Sárraga’s anticlerical position, she found an audience receptive to her ideas in the nitrate region. Women’s suffrage proponent and founder of the Socialist Workers Party/POS (*Partido Obrero Socialista*) in 1912, Luis Recabarren invited Sárraga to Iquique in 1913 and encouraged socialists to attend her lectures. He advocated women’s emancipation and argued that women needed to recognize their oppression and put an end to it so they could contribute more meaningfully to society. Sárraga’s popularity grew among women and laborers during that year and created a situation that antagonized clergymen in the region. According to Elena Caffarena, “the parish priests insulted her and contested her from the pulpit, in the streets, and door to door.”⁷⁷ Despite the clergy’s attempts to discredit Sárraga, they did little to hinder the influence she had on women connected to the Socialist Workers Party.

Sárraga’s followers established Belén de Sárraga Women’s Centers throughout northern Chile in 1913. They organized Women’s Centers in Antofogasta, Iquique, Laguna, and Negreiros. Founders sought to unite all women to combat gender oppression and to promote the POS agenda. Leaders recruited women interested in free thought,

⁷⁵ Quoted in Gaviola, *et al.*, *Queremos votar*, p. 28. Her accusations were based on rumors concerning the Second Council of Nicea held in 787. The issue of women having souls was never discussed or voted on at the Council.

⁷⁶ Rivas, “Belén de Sárraga.”

⁷⁷ Quoted in Kirkwood, *Ser política*, p. 101.

working-class concerns, anticlerical issues, and women's emancipation. They encouraged women to participate in strikes and to question the privileged classes' exploitation of the masses. Members discussed issues specific to women, such as alcoholism, gender discrimination, and economic conditions. According to Kirkwood, the Women's Centers were the first women's groups in Chile that linked unjust social practices to women's oppression and actively sought to challenge them.⁷⁸ The Women's Centers close ties to the POS hindered leaders ability to unite with upper- and middle-class women. Although committed to women's rights, they could not overcome class divisions to create a unified women's front. This regrettable situation plagued Chilean women's fight for suffrage until the mid-1940s.

Anticlerical and Conservative politicians ushered women into politics around church-state issues, but newly active women moved beyond those matters.⁷⁹ In the early 1900s, women founded women's organizations in which they voiced political opinions, organized social welfare and educational programs and discussed the terms of their citizenship. Although women disagreed on a time table for suffrage, they all agreed that women should have full voting rights. Their greatest challenges in increasing women's rights were competing political party agendas and upper- and middle-class women's inability to cross social, religious, and class differences to form a united front. By the 1940s, women's organizations increased their presence in the Chilean political landscape. Between 1910 and 1940, 46 separate women's organizations were established.⁸⁰

Although these groups shared the objective to improve women's economic, civil, and

⁷⁸ Kirkwood, *Ser política*, p. 101.

⁷⁹See Lavrin, *Women, Feminism, and Social Change*, about the germination of the suffrage movement in Chile.

⁸⁰ For a list of each group see, Klimpel, *La mujer chilena*, pp. 235-41.

social conditions, their leaders articulated competing visions of women's role in politics. Disagreements over clerical ties, class divisions, and political beliefs concerning women's civic maturity and education continued to fragment the women's movement and delay suffrage.

Conservative and secular women leaders attempted to connect like-minded women's association through umbrella organizations. Conservative groups, such as the Nation Action of Chilean Women (*Acción Nacional de Mujeres de Chile*) and the Patriotic Action of Chilean Women (*Acción Patriótica de Mujeres de Chile*), both founded in 1919, had a strong Catholic focus and promoted legal means to solve social issues. The National Women's Council (*Consejo Nacional de Mujeres*), a secular group founded in 1919, educated Chilean women about civil responsibilities and domestic economic issues.⁸¹ Board members led by Amanda Labarca who advocated gradual suffrage urged politicians to adopt a probationary women's emancipation policy. The Council recruited young women and sponsored classes in languages, civics, hygiene, and literature. Although these groups advocated women's suffrage and the improvement of women's legal and economic conditions, they remained divided over ecclesiastic ties.

The Women's Pro-Rights Committee (*Comité Pro-Derechos de la Mujer*), established by Radical Labarca and Socialist Felisa Vergara in 1933, became an important umbrella organization that attempted to unite conservative and secular feminists in the suffrage struggle. The organization gained strength in the 1940s and began soliciting the government for full women's suffrage. Although the organization

⁸¹ Klimpel, *La mujer chilena*, p. 238.

strove to connect various women's groups, it mostly served the interests of secular women and, ultimately, enhanced the divide among upper- and middle-class women.

The Committee failed to create a strong alliance between conservative and secular women. Leaders also failed to reach out to working-class women, leaving them to search for support in leftist parties. The organization was dormant after Congress passed a partial suffrage bill in 1934, which granted women the right to vote and run for election at the municipal level. The Women's Pro-Rights Committee reorganized in 1941 and formed two separate organizations that shared the Women's Pro-Rights Committee name. María Correa de Irarrázaval established the offshoot of the original organization.⁸² This Committee had a close connection with the Liberal Party, unlike the original organization led by Labarca who was a militant Radical Party member. Correa de Irarrázaval strove to continue women's education about legal rights and civic duties and sought to exert more pressure on political leader and in Congress.⁸³

The Women's Pro-Rights and Defense of the Race Committee/WPDRC (*Comité Pro-Derechos de la Mujer y Defensa de la Raza*), established by Rosa Ester Barra de Jaque in 1941, represented another attempt to unify conservative and secular women from the upper- and middle-classes. The WPDRC articulated a commitment to civil and social welfare that spoke to conservative Catholic feminists. Its advocacy of feminist measures that disrupted the traditional family structure such as divorce appalled religious

⁸² Both Klimpel, *La mujer chilena*, p. 242 and Kirkwood, *Ser política*, pp. 128-29, agree that María Correa de Irarrázaval, President of the Liberal Party's Women's Department, had reformed the organization. Lavrin, *Women, Feminism and Social Change*, p. 302, indicates that the second version had a more feminist stance and was allied with the *Club Femenino América*, an organization established in 1941 that dealt with social and cultural matters. However, Klimpel lists the *Club Femenino América* as being affiliated with the Women's Pro-Rights and Defense of the Race Committee.

⁸³ Kirkwood, *Ser política*, p. 129.

women. WPDRC members petitioned the national government for radical reforms and legislation. They presented the following ambitious demands to Congress:

- 1) Concede the political vote [to women]; 2) Grant full legal rights for married women; 3) Divorce with a dissolution of matrimonial ties; 4) Mandate marital property to be administered by both spouses; 5) Yield family wages to the woman as an irrevocable right; 6) Denounce all acts that infringe judicial orders in favor of women; 7) Oblige all educational establishments to teach the statistical aspects of demographic problems in relation to moral and domestic issues; 8) Protect natality. Establish Maternity Houses (*Casas Maternales*) for women not protected by Law 4054; 9) Solve the housing problem for families with children; 10) Establish Workshop Homes (*Hogares Talleres*) to reeducate women who live a life of vice.⁸⁴

Although conservative women supported social welfare demands, they found it difficult to participate in an organization that promoted divorce. Staunchly Catholic women and the Church actively rejected divorce. Chile was the last Latin American country to pass divorce legislation which took effect in November 2004. The WPDRC's bold agenda limited this group's effectiveness and contributed to women's divisions.

There were also efforts to unite middle and working class women in the fight for suffrage. Founded in 1935 Women's Pro-Emancipation Movement/MEMCh was an important umbrella organization with leftist ties that attempted to connect women's organizations and women's political parties. MEMCh leader Elena Caffarena mobilized women from various social classes to mount a women's rights campaign. Although MEMCh leaders had close connections with the Communist and Socialist parties, they argued that it was in all women's best interest to combine their forces and lay aside

⁸⁴ Quoted in Klimpel, *La mujer chilena*, p. 242. Ley 4054, promulgated 8 September 1924, established several protective measures for laborers, such as medical and dental assistance, subsidies for disabilities due to illness, and maternity benefits for working women.

political differences to fight for economic, legal and social liberation.⁸⁵ Leaders, especially Caffarena, vehemently made clear that MEMCh opposed fascist practices and sought to elevate women's social, economic and political status through established democratic means.⁸⁶

MEMCh leaders articulated a feminist agenda that extended beyond women's suffrage. They sought to transform gender relations, to improve the standard of living for working-class women, to expand public education, to increase protective legislation for women and children, to establish paid maternity leave, and to obtain equal pay for equal work. The leaders' feminist ideology did not reflect all women's notions of femininity and gender relations and caused tensions with Communist Party leaders who questioned the organization's autonomy. This produced internal divisions that eventually led Caffarena and other feminist members to resign from MEMCh in 1940.⁸⁷ The defection debilitated the organization and without moderate representation it lost its suffragist zeal and became an organ of the Communist Party, which separated working-class women from the larger women's movement.

The separation of women along ideological and class lines continued after MEMCh's demise. In 1942 a women's organization with Socialist ties emerged that claimed to address the working-class women's economic and social issues. Advanced Woman (*Avanzada Femenina*) leaders proclaimed to seek real legislative reforms that improved women's legal, economic, and social conditions. Graciela Contreras de

⁸⁵ For a complete study of MEMCh consult Antezana-Pernet, "Mobilizing Women in the Popular Front Era" and Roseblatt, Gendered Compromises.

⁸⁶ Julieta Kirkwood, Ser política, pp. 127-8. Considering the rise of fascism in the 1930s, it would seem appropriate that MEMCh leaders wanted to distance themselves from radical movements.

⁸⁷ For a more detailed explanation of the events that led to this split see Roseblatt, Gendered Compromises, pp.111-114; and Antezana-Pernet, "Mobilizing Women," pp. 335-37.

Schnake, a Socialist who actively participated in President Pedro Aguirre Cerda's Popular Front Government, was the organization's Secretary General and spokesperson.⁸⁸ She explained that their motto, "responsibility and culture," reflected the members' duty to spread the spirit of cooperation and unity among members and to reinforce the feminine culture from which all women drew strength to direct the nature of society's development.⁸⁹ She also claimed that working-class women's economic condition subordinated them to men and incapacitated their ability to be effective mothers.

Advanced Women founding members realized that their ties to the Socialist Party and their feminist stance raised suspicion. Like MEMCh leaders they argued that they believed in the democratic system and would always defend it.⁹⁰ Leaders mobilized working-class women to fight for freedom from gender and class oppression. Although Advanced Woman leaders did not reach out to a broad spectrum of women, they attempted to establish relations with other women's groups. They also recognized the value of maintaining a cooperative association with national and international women's organizations that strove to increase women's rights.

Advanced Woman adopted an organizational structure employed by established political parties. It had an Executive Central Committee and several departments, each of which had a specific function.⁹¹ The main objective was to offer members the resources and means to reach their aspirations.⁹² Leaders sought to educate women about their civic responsibilities and their rights, and to increase women's legal rights. The Cultural

⁸⁸ President Aguirre Cerda appointed her Mayor of Santiago in 1939.

⁸⁹ Avanzada Femenina, "Estatutos de 'Avanzada Femenina'," (Santiago: "Barcelona", 1942), p. 5.

⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 3-4.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 9. The 12 committees were: 1. Political, 2. Cultural, 3. Judicial, 4. Relations, 5. Social Assistance, 6. Finances, 7. Labor, 8. Organization, 9. Control, 10. Press, 11. Propaganda, 12. Social.

⁹² Ibid, p. 10.

Committee had the auspicious function of molding lower-class women's characters by improving their literacy and exposing them to foreign languages, Literature, Sociology, and Psychology, including specific classes on Child Psychology. These classes were meant to elevate underprivileged women's culture and communication skills.⁹³ Although Advanced Woman members' activities seemed similar to those practiced by upper- and middle-class women's groups, they did not appear to be paternalistic. Leaders did not develop classes that instructed women about proper hygiene or religious behavior as were offered by groups such as the National Action of Chilean Women.

Advanced Woman represented working-class women and its leaders did little to forge connections with middle- and upper-class women's groups. It was yet another women's group that sought to alter women's political and juridical subordinate position. Its members allowed class interests and political ideologies to come before gender interests. Individual women's organizations and political parties created an atmosphere of persistent fragmentation. Their agendas prevented feminist cooperation and frustrated attempts by umbrella association leaders, such as MEMCh, to produce an agreement about the terms of suffrage. Failed attempts to forge ties among women from different class and political positions illustrated the unstable nature of coalitional politics. MEMCh leaders were unable to sustain a multiparty union and fell victim to the political fragmentation present in the party system during the late 1930s and early 1940s.

Despite organizational setbacks, Chilean women continued to fight for suffrage. Frustrated by delays in suffrage legislation and competing objectives, women from various organizations and political parties met in the autumn of 1944 to discuss their

⁹³ Ibid.

political situation. The First National Congress of Women convened in Santiago and included representatives from more than 200 separate women's groups.⁹⁴ At the Congress delegates discussed legal options and made a concerted effort to unite for suffrage. They voted to establish an umbrella organization to unite all the women's groups and to develop a strategy to pass a suffrage law. In 1945, delegates founded the Federation of Chilean Women's Institutions/FEChIF (*Federación Chilena de Instituciones Femeninas*). FEChIF had a representative from every political party and women's organizations that wanted to be involved regardless of their religious, political, economic, social or cultural agendas. The Executive Committee included representatives from various political affiliations, such as María Marchant (Communist), María Correa de Irrázavel (Liberal), and Amanda Labarca (Radical) who served as the first president.

FEChIF executed an assertive suffrage campaign that utilized the media to exact pressure on legislators. In April 1945, FEChIF leaders organized a forum to expose the injustice against women present in the Chilean legal and political systems. They argued that this discriminated against those who had contributed greatly to society.⁹⁵ This forum and others that FEChIF arranged served to educate the public and unite women to generate a stronger suffrage movement. FEChIF presented a female suffrage project to the Senate in June 1945 that several senators from various political parties signed that included Arturo Alessandri (Liberal), Pedro Opitz (Radical), Horacio Walker (Conservative), and Salvador Allende (Socialist).⁹⁶ Although the project stalled in the Chamber of Deputies, it generated the most serious women's suffrage debate that had

⁹⁴ Klimpel, *La mujer chilena*, p. 243.

⁹⁵ Gaviola, et.al., *Queremos votar*, p. 46.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

ever taken place in Congress. It also represented a multiparty effort to extend full suffrage to women.

FEChIF leaders did not sit idly by waiting for Congressmen to act. While Deputies discussed the female suffrage issue, FEChIF continued to educate the public about women's economic, social, commercial, and political contributions to the nation. They repeatedly cited the hypocrisy of Chile's membership in the United Nations, an organization whose members vowed to eliminate political inequities based on sex discrimination. FEChIF leaders beseeched President González to force a vote in the Chamber of Deputies whose members stalled the issue by shuffling it from Commission to Commission.⁹⁷ The strategies employed by FEChIF prevailed and the Chamber dispatched the suffrage project back to the Senate for its final approval. On 8 January 1949, after 50 years, suffragists achieved their goal.

FEChIF succeeded where previous umbrella organizations failed. It united women from diverse and oppositional organizations together for one common cause. Its members were not immune from the political and class tensions that had fragmented the Chilean women's movement since its inception. Women did not escape Cold War tensions and the mounting mistrust of Communism. This became blatantly obvious during the Second National Congress of Women in September 1947. At the Congress, presided by Amanda Labarca, many participants chastised President González for not realizing his campaign promise to women by delivering a suffrage law. During the closing ceremony, one militant MEMCh member declared that the people had lost all

⁹⁷ Kirkwood, *Ser política*, p. 132.

faith in the President.⁹⁸ Her statement was directly related to President González's increasing denouncement of Communism and the resentment Communist women felt having campaigned for him. Tensions escalated and led Elena Caffarena, followed the MEMCh delegation to walk out of the ceremony.

President González accelerated the hostility against Communists in 1948 with the passage of the Law for the Permanent Defense of Democracy that banned the Communist Party. The law more commonly known as the accursed law (*Ley maldita*) affected more than just the political party structure. FEChIF, led by Labarca, followed suit and expelled Communist members. Caffarena, FEChIF vice president at the time, resigned because of the executive committee's decision as did all MEMCh representatives.⁹⁹ Caffarena's defense of the Communist Party resulted in her exclusion from the signing ceremony for the women's suffrage law.

Dismantling of a United Front

The Chilean suffrage movement had gained strength after women's organizations united under FEChIF in 1945. For a brief period women prioritized gender interests above class and political ideologies with the exception of the nationwide denouncement of the Communist Party. Umbrella groups prior to FEChIF had limited successes because women's organizations' leaders and the political parties did not agree on the terms of suffrage. The leaders had conflicting understandings of which issues were most pressing to women. Some fought for changes in women's legal status, some wanted to augment women's educational and economic opportunities, some focused on Catholic-

⁹⁸ Gaviola, et.al., *Queremos votar*, p. 76.

⁹⁹ Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises*, p. 248-49.

based social welfare reforms, and others sought to challenge traditional gender constructions.

Class interests presented another obstacle by pitting women from different classes against each other. Lavrin and Roseblatt effectively illustrate that upper- and middle-class women attempted to mold working-class and poor women's feminist consciousness and activities. They found this process difficult because the upper- and middle-class suffrage leaders did not understand fully working-class women's lived experiences. Class differences caused conflicts within the broader suffrage movement and contributed to the wedge that divided women that had begun with the church and state debate. FEChIF leaders were able to mend women's divisions because by 1945 women agreed that voting offered the best means to affect legislation. This enabled women to alter their legal, economic, and social status as individual groups and removed the need for consensus or compromise.

Political ideologies and ties to political parties presented the worst impediments to women's unification. Beginning in 1865, women's alliances with political parties served to separate politically active women. This fact did not change; the women's suffrage movement in Chile was not cohesive. Political parties and their leaders regarded women's suffrage as an important issue, which made them interested parties. They understood that women's votes impacted their agendas directly. Between 1865 and 1930, political parties controlled the suffrage issue and made it an intellectual debate. Women's suffrage organizations, although many had close ties to political parties, operated outside of the political party system. As outsiders they had a limited ability to pressure legislators and party leaders.

During the 1930s the relationship between feminists and the political parties changed dramatically. Many political parties began to incorporate women into the party structure and established women's branches. By 1930, most party leaders recognized that women's suffrage was inevitable. To secure their viability, political parties had to compete for women's electoral support, especially after the enactment of the 1934 municipal women's suffrage law. Party leaders initiated recruitment campaigns to bring female members into their folds and mobilize them around party issues. Most political parties increased these efforts between the 1930s and 1940s. They registered young men and women from the universities and placed them in youth and women's divisions. This offered party leaders a means to indoctrinate a new generation of supporters. For women this generated a new generation of women activists who understood political participation within the party system.

Under President González's leadership the Radical Party advanced women's causes. The President appointed female party members to important political posts, offering women greater access to the national government and opportunities to demonstrate their political abilities. Amanda Labarca became the Chilean Ambassador to the United Nations General Assembly in 1946. Ana Figueroa, a militant Radical Party member and feminist, was the alternate Chilean representative to the United Nations in 1950. In 1951 she became the Chilean Minister Plenipotentiary to the United Nations.¹⁰⁰ President González appointed attorney Adriana Olgún de Baltra, a Radical Party member, to the Minister of Justice in 1952. Olgún was the first woman in Latin America

¹⁰⁰ Chile and the Dominican Republic were the only nations to appoint women to the Ministerial post. The United Nations' General Assembly had female representatives from only eight countries: Canada, Chile, Denmark, India, Iran, Santo Domingo, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

to occupy such a Secretarial post. President González illustrated a commitment to women's political advancement and demonstrated a shift in women's political participation as actors within the party system rather than outside participants.

President González attempted to illustrate the important role women had in the government and society when he established the Women's Bureau in 1949. First Lady Rosa Markmann led the Radical women's petition to create a governmental department that dealt with women's issues.¹⁰¹ The Women's Bureau was directly linked to the President and he held the power to appoint directors and oversee its operation. President González appointed Adriana Olguín as the Bureau's first director, who used it to study women's legal rights and socio-economic status and to develop a strategy to improve women's situations. Like FEChIF the Women's Bureau advanced the Radical Party agenda and did little to create a cross-class women's movement.

FEChIF continued to push for women's rights and reforms to the civil code after suffrage, but leaders found it difficult to maintain coalitional unity. FEChIF embodied Radical ideology because most of its leaders belonged to the Radical Party. They supported legislation that reflected middle-class and feminist interests such as increasing women's social security benefits, extending inheritance rights to illegitimate children, and maternity benefits. These issues reflected middle-class reformers' and moderate feminists' interests. FEChIF enjoyed these successes because of its ties to the Radical Party, which at a time had the ability to negotiate compromises and generate enough congressional support for specific legislative projects. As Radical interests dominated

¹⁰¹ My research indicates that the Women's Bureau existed only during President González's administration.

FEChIF agendas the organization faltered. And, as the Radical Party declined, moderate feminists lost their political clout.

During the 1950s the Chilean women's movement experienced another shift and fell victim to the endemic problems that afflicted the coalitional party system. The ability to compromise and subordinate class differences and party agendas to advance reforms that benefited women as a whole was too difficult to maintain. Women who joined forces for suffrage found little to unite them after they achieved that goal. The newer generation of feminists turned to their political parties for support and attempted to extend their influence in the parties. Women needed to gain male politicians trust and partnership to ensure protective and progressive gender legislation.

Women learned to navigate Chile's political landscape through political party system, especially between 1950 and 1970. They demonstrated their allegiance to and willingness to place party agendas above others interests and understood that this was the best means to gain party support for gender specific policies. Party militancy added to women's ability to foster a cross-class and multi-party feminist movement. Party allegiances and coalitional pacts shaped the nature of political compromise, a political reality women could not circumvent. Men controlled the vehicles of communication and political maneuvering; women learned to operate within the male system.

CHAPTER 3

CHILEAN WOMEN'S ENTRANCE INTO THE POLITICAL PARTY SYSTEM

The incorporation of women into party politics became an increasing concern for political party leaders during the first half of the twentieth century. The matter revolved around women's demand for voting rights and necessitated discussion. Although male politicians stalled female suffrage for several decades, the issues of women's relationship to the parties and the responsibilities they had to each other never abated. Female activists engaged in the debate over women's political participation and approached party leaders as both an interest group and as auxiliary party members. By the early 1950s, women recognized the complexities inherent in their dual method due to their limited party membership and abandoned this strategy. This coincided with the waning of compromise politics during the Popular Front era (1938-1950) and women's inability to maintain a strong presence as an interest group.

The multi-party political system during the Popular Front era enabled interest groups to participate in the governing system. That participation depended on party alliances, agreement, and willingness to compromise.¹⁰² Politicians resorted to political bargaining as a means to secure Congressional seats and legislative measures. As the political climate became more divisive in the 1950s, such political maneuvering relied on

¹⁰² For a more complex examination of how special interest groups operated in Chile during the 1950s and 1960s see Faúndez, Marxism and Democracy in Chile; Francisco José Moreno, Legitimacy and Stability in Latin America: A Study of Chilean Political Culture (New York: New York University Press, 1969); and James Petras, Politics and Social Forces in Chilean Development.

party strength and became increasingly difficult. Chilean women contributed to party polarization which hindered the prospect of a cross-class feminist movement. Political party leaders, male and female alike, put forth the message that party and class issues were far superior to gender demands. Acceptance of these beliefs transformed feminist concerns into secondary objectives for women.

The transformation of the political party system in the 1950s weakened but did not destroy the women's movement. Competition for women's electoral support increased dramatically prior to the 1952 presidential election.¹⁰³ Parties redefined their ideological tenets and increased their support base to include women. This reorganization strengthened and consolidated the party system and created a structure in which smaller splinter parties and interest groups lost their ability to negotiate political objectives.¹⁰⁴ The Senate's decision to expel the Chilean Women's Party leader María de la Cruz discredited the all women's political party and displaced many women activists. Since not one political party or women's organization embodied women's varied ideological and class interests, women had to join political parties that represented their individual concerns. The intense competition that emerged within the multiparty system made it difficult for women to voice political interests without party support.

Party leaders approached gender concerns and women's political participation differently. Radical Party leaders deferred women's suffrage in favor of women's civic

¹⁰³ This was the first national election in which women participated as voters.

¹⁰⁴ Examining the Chilean labor movement provides the best example of how political transformations affected interest groups. Leftist leaders attempted to improve their legislative power by forming the FRAP coalition. Their inability to resolve ideological differences prevented the formation of an effective alliance against right-wing parties. The leftist groups achieved few gains for labor until leaders set aside ideological differences and broaden their support base. See Paul Drake, Socialism and Communism in Chile, 1932-1952, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978); Julio Faúndez, Marxism and Democracy in Chile: From 1932 to the Fall of Allende (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); and James Petras, Politics and Social Forces in Chilean Development (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

education. The party eventually delivered full political rights to women and illustrated through the appointment of women to high-level government positions that women possessed the same qualities as men to make political decisions. Leftists conceptualized women's issues differently, defining gender inequalities as directly related to class oppression. They acknowledged women's subordinate position in society, but offered no specific resolution. Rather, they argued that the capitalist structure created gender discrimination and that its destruction would resolve gender inequality. In contrast, parties identified with the right supported women's suffrage and although they supported women's municipal elections during the 1930s and 1940s, conservative leaders continued to cast women's political role in maternalist terms. These varying understandings of women's political participation contributed to women's inability to function as a unified political group.

The political party system offered the most effective means for women to function in government. Radical Party female members earned political appointments in the 1940s and 1950s as party militants. Post-suffrage attempts to unite women politically failed because women's interests and political goals differed greatly. Radical women in particular tried to sustain women's unification in the early 1950s, but they articulated middle-class values and lacked the ability to generate cross-class alliances among women. Furthermore, the Radical Party weakened and female members lost their political backing. Women, like other interest groups, realized that they had to rely on well-established political parties for representation. This illustrated that women possessed political maturity. Chilean women understood that to gain political power and to attain a political presence they had to do so within the party system. Party concerns

had to be the first priority for all politicians, including women. This hindered women's ability to pursue gender-specific interests in the short-run, but as women's political power increased within the political parties, women politicians promoted feminist agendas.

Political Transitions

Political polarization in the 1950s complicated governing through coalition politics within a presidential system.¹⁰⁵ As interest groups became more politicized, new parties emerged, and the rising tension between leftists and conservatives, nationally and abroad, contributed to political fragmentation. Thirty-six separate parties existed in 1953, making it extremely difficult to attain a majority in Congress and to maintain coalitions.¹⁰⁶ Although this fragmentation placed a strain on the parties, it enabled previously disenfranchised groups to voice their opinions and to place more political pressure on individual parties to meet their demands.

How women fit into Chile's multiparty system is difficult to summarize. The Radical Party and the Chilean Women's Party/PFC (*Partido Femenino Chileno*) became the vehicles for middle-class women's interests during the final phase of the women's suffrage movement. Internal strife and external pressures in the late 1940s and early 1950s severely weakened the Radical Party and destroyed the PFC. After 1949, political parties competed intensely for women members. The PFC and the Radical Party offered women more access to the national political structure than any other party in the early 1950s. Although party tensions and political maneuvering severely weakened the Radical Party and destroyed the PFC by 1953, women made significant gains in Chilean

¹⁰⁵ See Brian Loveman, Chile: The Legacy of Hispanic Capitalism, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), especially chapter 8.

¹⁰⁶ Gil, The Political System of Chile, p. 244.

politics. Examination of how these parties promoted women's interests demonstrates the way that politically active women worked the party system.

The Radical Party

The Radical Party was a centrist political party that held the Chilean presidency from 1938 to 1952.¹⁰⁷ Party leaders adopted a gradual women's suffrage policy in the early 1900s and promoted women's civic education.¹⁰⁸ They began mobilizing and incorporating women more actively in the 1930s and established an official women's branch in 1934, the Radical Women's Assembly/RWA (*Asamblea Radical Femenina*). The RWA, later reorganized into the National Women's Organization/NWO (*Organización Nacional Femenina*), had the same rights and responsibilities as other party subdivisions. The RWA president was a full member of the party's decision-making body, the National Executive Committee (*Comité Ejecutivo Nacional*). Article 1 of the Radical Party Statutes outlined the departments' responsibilities as follows: "The assemblies are deliberative and operative agencies; they constitute the democratic base of the party; their objective is to spread the doctrine, to study economic, political, and social problems, and to execute all activities inside their jurisdiction."¹⁰⁹ RWA members adhered to these duties, especially concerning the spread of Radical platforms and doctrine.

Radical female members promoted the party agenda and used their position to persuade politicians to implement legislation to benefit women, such as labor laws,

¹⁰⁷ Founded in 1863, the Radical Party represented liberal-democratic ideals such as secularism, the defense of civil liberties, universal male suffrage, state control of education, equality before the law, and humanism.

¹⁰⁸ See, Erika Maza Valenzuela, "Liberals, Radicals, and Women's Citizenship in Chile, 1872-1930," working paper Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies, University of Notre Dame, no. 245, November 1997.

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in Guilisasti, *Partidos políticos Chilenos*, p. 138.

changes in the civil code, and suffrage.¹¹⁰ The RWA also aligned with independent feminist and suffragist organizations to put more pressure on legislators. Many Radical women worked with the Movement for the Emancipation of Chilean Women/MEMCh (*Movimiento Pro Emancipación de la Mujer Chilena*), a cross-class progressive feminist organization with ties to the Popular Front government; however, some found it difficult to blend party obligations with feminist concerns. MEMCh's leftist leanings and eventual decline obliged many Radical women to separate themselves from the organization. Women who sought politically active lives found themselves at the mercy of male party leaders to advance their personal careers and to pass legislation that increased women's legal rights. That reliance, in conjunction with women's attempts to illustrate that they could operate within the existing political party system, complicated women's ability to forge a mass movement.

Although many suffragists found it challenging to balance their commitment to party agendas and women's issues, some enjoyed success. Amanda Labarca, a militant Radical Party member, belonged to several feminist and suffragist organizations and worked for party goals. Her loyalty and connections led to a diplomatic appointment to the United Nations in 1946.¹¹¹ Cora Cid, the first female Radical Party member¹¹² supported party platforms and fought to improve women's legal status. She ran the RWA, headed the women's division of presidential candidate Aguirre Cerda's campaign,

¹¹⁰ For a complete examination of the relationship between the Popular Front governments and women's organizations see Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises*. She illustrates that women mainly raised women's issues through political and social organizations such as MEMCh. She analyzes the relationship among middle-class feminists, working-class women, and the Popular Front, and popular front political parties and argues that conflicting agendas and understandings of class needs made their working relationships difficult to manage. She does not delve into the Radical Party and its Women's Assembly specifically.

¹¹¹ Labarca's husband, Guillermo Labarca Hubertson, was a Radical Party leader.

¹¹² Klimpel, *La mujer Chilena*, p. 121.

and was a MEMCh member. Adriana Olgún, Ana Figueroa and Inés Enríquez were party militants who received electoral support and governmental appointments and who fought for women's rights. President González appointed Adriana Olgún as Minister of Justice in 1952, the first Latin American woman to occupy a cabinet position. He appointed Ana Figueroa as alternate delegate to the United Nations in 1950 and promoted her to Minister Plenipotentiary in 1951.¹¹³

Inés Enríquez's militant party participation contributed to her election to the Chilean Chamber of Deputies in 1950. As the first woman elected to the Chilean Congress her victory represented more than women's political advancement. Under the Chilean political system, her election required congressional confirmation. Chile operated under Belgian Victor D'Hondt's proportional representation method, known as the electoral quotient system.¹¹⁴ This system required candidates to be elected with a disproportionate number of votes, which led political parties to enter electoral agreements or pacts with each other to support specific candidates.¹¹⁵ Enríquez won the popular vote, but her seat was not guaranteed without an electoral pact. The Radical Party united with the Conservative Party to secure her election and assumed that the party would be the first to elect a woman to Congress.

Conservative Party members from Concepción, the province that elected Enríquez, attempted to withdraw from the electoral pact and threaten their party alliances. These members questioned Enríquez's ability to represent her constituents, because she

¹¹³ The United Nations General Assembly had eight female representatives in 1950 from Canada, Chile, Denmark, India, Iran, Santo Domingo, United Kingdom and the United States. The UN had two women Minister Plenipotentiaries in 1951 from Chile and the Dominican Republic.

¹¹⁴ Gil, *The Political System of Chile*, p. 215.

¹¹⁵ Major electoral reforms in 1958 and 1962 ended this system and prohibited electoral agreements to be used for elections.

and her husband had separated in a nation that did not have a divorce law.¹¹⁶ This questioned her moral fortitude and reflected a double standard against women by suggesting that women were completed by men and without male support could not function respectfully in the public sphere. The Radical Party under Angel Faivovich's leadership, backed Enríquez and her abilities and argued that the Conservative Party members' actions threatened the Chilean political system.

Faivovich ignored Enríquez's marital status and turned public attention to women's advancement in politics. He sent Enríquez a telegraph to confirm that the Radical Party had registered her as its candidate for the electoral vote. He stated, "This historic event will not go unnoticed by the citizenship that comprehends and valorizes women's participation in the problems that interest the public, precisely for that which they have been conferred the plenitude of political rights."¹¹⁷ He reinforced the Radical Party's commitment to women's legal rights and advancements. Faivovich's statement also sent a message to Conservative Party leaders that they stood to lose substantial public support if they reneged. The Radical Party also used its media connections to showcase Enríquez's political qualifications.¹¹⁸ La Nación described Enríquez as "an extremely intelligent lady. She is commonly esteemed as one of the most prized treasures of national femininity."¹¹⁹ It portrayed her as a respectable woman and worthy politician, stating, "For every question she has an accurate answer and for every answer,

¹¹⁶ Edda Gaviola, Eliana Largo and Sandra Palestro, Una historia necesaria: Mujeres en Chile: 1973-1990, (Santiago, Chile: Aki & Aora Ltda., 1994), p. 22.

¹¹⁷ La Nación, March 4, 1951, p. 15.

¹¹⁸ The Radical Party had access to the La Nación editor. La Nación is a daily newspaper that was the communication vehicle for the government. The President of Chile appointed the editor. Tomas E. Weil, et al., Area Handbook of Chile, 1st edition (D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1969), p. 243. President González was a Radical Party member.

¹¹⁹ La Nación, February 24, 1951, p. 5.

a precise position.”¹²⁰ The Radical Party depicted her as an effective political servant and focused on her electoral achievement.

Enríquez did not defend her marital status and chose to focus the debate on parties’ need to honor agreements. When asked about the Conservative Party members’ challenge, she commented, “I don’t believe that will happen. I have an idea that the Conservative Party’s executive board will order support for my candidacy, because of its decision to enter into a government electoral pact,”¹²¹ suggesting that Conservative Party leaders had a sense of honor and loyalty. Enríquez shifted attention away from political maneuvering and stated that her main legislative priorities were issues of importance to her province: the railway industry, working-class needs, coal workers’ salaries, coal distribution, and keeping coal prices reasonable. By refocusing attention to regional concerns, Enríquez downplayed the Conservative Party members’ actions and identified herself as a serious politician who understood her constituents’ needs.

The Conservative Party announced that it would not order Concepción party members to endorse Enríquez, but maintained that it intended to respect its electoral agreement. Leaders stated they could not force compliance, because neither the Conservative nor Radical Party had ratified the agreement made on October 15, 1950.¹²² Conservative leaders expressed their genuine desire that the Concepción members would vote for Enríquez and urged them to consider the “spirit of loyalty and harmony” that the party coalitions fostered.¹²³ This was a cunning ploy. Conservative leaders demonstrated respect for their members, the Radical Party, Enríquez, and the electoral process. Thus,

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ La Nación, March 9, 1951, p. 7.

they could maintain a good public image. Despite the Concepción Conservative members' threats, Congress confirmed Inéz Enríquez's election and installed its first female member.

Although the Radical Party offered many opportunities for women, it experienced internal conflicts over ideology, treatment of Communists, inflation, and party leadership. These tensions affected the Party's internal structure and its ability to support women's issues. A Radical opposition group formed the Doctrinarian Radical (*Radical Doctrinario*) in 1948¹²⁴ to challenge the Law for the Permanent Defense of Democracy, enacted to outlaw the Communist Party and to weaken Marxism in Chile.¹²⁵ By 1950, party divisions appeared irreparable, illustrating the hold that the Cold War philosophy had taken in Chile. Doctrinarians entered a congressional pact with Socialist, Communist, and Falangist politicians to block President González's programs. President González had a difficult time keeping his diverse coalition together and maintaining order within his own party. Such scrambling represented the political polarization that occurred in Chile during the 1950s.

The conflicts between mainstream Radicals and Doctrinarian Radicals worsened. In February 1952, the splinter group announced its intention to call for a special convention during the first meeting of the newly elected Radical National Council

¹²⁴ FLACSO, *Estadísticos Electorales*, p. 129. The Radical Youth division distinguished the two factions as "demagogic leftism," which represented Marxist elements and "Constructive leftism," which represented party members who adopted a moderate stance on political, social, and economic change. *La Nación*, August 11, 1951, p. 8.

¹²⁵ President González was a Radical elected to the presidency by a diverse coalition of Radicals and Communists as well as a post-election alliance with the Liberal Party. His leftist leanings had already caused a right-wing sector to defect after he received the party nomination. They formed the independent Democratic Radical Party. Unfortunately, severe external pressures, especially from the United States, on which Chile was dependent for an export market, and domestic unrest heightened by the Cold War, González chose to outlaw the Communist Party.

(*Consejo Nacional Radical*). Doctrinarian leaders wanted to modify previous party agreements concerning national, especially presidential, and party elections and relations with the National Executive Committee. The main goals were to reshuffle Radical Congressional representatives to better reflect the party's membership and to keep the National Council in check.¹²⁶

Women party leaders, not immune from the internal tensions, considered the transformations taking place between the National Council and the National Executive Committee. The National Women's Organization/NWO made an effort to postpone its elections, because they weighed their party representation heavily. The NWO president served on the National Executive Committee and the NWO elected two representatives to the National Council.¹²⁷ Unfortunately, women members did not come to an agreement and declared their session a failure. Representatives announced that during informal talks the majority made some concessions to the minority sector. First, the majority agreed to give the Doctrinarian sector the right to voice a second for organizational plans. Doctrinarians also gained the right to name one of the delegates to the National Council and to name the Trade Union Council representative.¹²⁸

Women elected new officers and delegates, although the outcomes were contested. According to party member Ana Ugarte, the Doctrinarian contingent abstained from voting and argued that the majority required unanimous criteria for appointments. This, they claimed, created "an impossible condition for the doctrinarian

¹²⁶ *El Mercurio*, February 19, 1952, p. 11.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *El Mercurio*, February 20, 1952, p. 13.

current to accept.”¹²⁹ Furthermore, the minority’s status went unchanged; they did not obtain their delegate appointments, nor did they acquire the right to voice a second. The friction among women reflected the stark divisions rising within the Radical Party as a whole. Middle-class moderates and leftists could not bridge ideological differences. Radicals could not maintain a stable and unified party amid continued political conflicts; much less hold together a coalition that represented diverse ideological and class interests.

The newly elected NWO president, Raquel García de Zamorano, made a statement regarding women’s actions and party duties that served as a precursor to the conflicts exhibited in the February 1952 sessions. Party tensions mounted over Pedro Enrique Alfonso’s presidential nomination. Alfonso, a government official and former congressman, represented the Radicals’ moderate sector. García argued that Radical women needed to support a candidate that would best reflect “the real sentiment of the *majority* of radicalism.”¹³⁰ Her comment demonstrated that her concern for representing the majority was greater than unifying the party. Had she sought to mend party tensions, even if only among the women, the February 1952 events might have been less divisive. García took sides and attempted to push the majority’s agenda forward. She endorsed Alfonso, maintaining:

Alfonso will be the authentically democratic Chief: strong to defend the country’s spiritual and material goods, prepared to solve the complexities of Power. In this tremendous epoch it is necessary to save the economically weak classes who need a broader outlook in their spiritual horizon.¹³¹

¹²⁹ El Mercurio, February 26, 1952, p. 13.

¹³⁰ La Nación, August 11, 1951, p. 8. My emphasis.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

Without specifically mentioning Communism or Marxism, García alluded to the ideological polarization developing in the Radical Party as well as other Chilean political parties.

Considering the conflicts that manifested themselves in the February 1952 National Women's Organization meetings, women were as divided as men. More importantly, they seemed to have placed party doctrinal concerns above women's issues. Radicals lost the presidency in 1952 and Radical women lost their ability to advance politically. Women lacked a united women's block within the party. This contributed to the internal conflicts that weakened the party and hindered Radical women's political opportunities. President González had brought women to the national government, but the party could not sustain his efforts.

Radicals elected only two women to Congress in the 1950s and 1960s. This low number reflected two important political developments. First, the Radical Party had to contend with debilitating internal division. There were fewer economic resources and less electoral support to allocate for national campaigns. Second, Chile's party system had undergone an intense political fragmentation, especially within and among the longstanding Conservative, Liberal, and Radical parties. The Radical Party's political influence had waned, as evidenced by Alfonso's poor election results.¹³² Dissidents within those parties and the growing cooperation among leftist groups made it more difficult for established parties to maintain their previous political and economic control.

¹³² Without a clear majority in the Radical Party, Alfonso had little chance in succeeding. In the 1952 election, Alfonso received only 19.9% of the vote, coming in third behind Carlos Ibáñez with 46.8% and Arturo Matte with 27.8%.

Women's participation in the internal and external party struggles created a situation that contributed to the political divide and decreased women's ability to forge a united front.

The Chilean Women's Party

The Chilean Women's Party/PFC, led by María de la Cruz, articulated women's demands, although it did not pretend to represent all women. De la Cruz, a social worker, defined women's political activities as being above politics. She founded the PFC in 1946 and enlisted women by offering them an effective means to navigate Chile's political terrain without losing sight of what set them apart from men: their compassion and pragmatism. The PFC identified its main objective to secure women's full civil rights and to generate a strong female political consciousness. De la Cruz issued ten mandates for PFC members that outlined the party's objectives:

- 1) To have full awareness that a woman is not, never has been, and never will be inferior to man, but is his equal; 2) To inculcate the feminine unit as spiritual mystic; 3) To never, for any reason or in any circumstance speak ill of another woman; 4) To never criticize another woman's attitude in front of other persons and do not do it in any form without first being convinced of our constructive cause for the collective or the home; 5) To educate and teach within our abilities, men as well as women, the respect and consideration owed to women for the sole fact of education itself; 6) To never become fanatics of religious or political ideas, because fanaticism is not constructive and limits the field of activity and the evolution of individuals; 7) To be open to understanding human problems and generously forgive mistakes, at the same time relentlessly preventing the mistakes from surviving and the problems from worsening; 8) To see in man neither an enemy nor a tyrant, simply to see in him our just half and to situate ourselves alongside him as another half to form an integral being; 9) To be true to our greatest roles as homemakers, laborers or professionals and to never claim victory or conquests to integrity with forbidden weapons; 10) To understand that in the fulfillment of duties lies life's greatest happiness and the first duty is the respect of our fellow man.¹³³

¹³³ Quoted in Klimpel, La mujer Chilena, pp. 129-130.

These principles illustrated that although De la Cruz believed in gender equality, she mobilized women along feminine lines. She appealed to women's acceptance of normative gender roles which constructed women as spiritually and morally advanced to men.

The mandates addressed the issues of respect, integrity, and decorum. De la Cruz advised that women's political behavior measured the degree to which women were accepted in the political arena. She instructed PFC members to behave as a collective unit. PFC members had to value one another's person and opinion, to command respect for women and regard men as equal persons. Such behavior generated admiration in the political sphere and led De la Cruz to claim that women's political role was superior to men's. The second directive, in particular, identified women's political participation as spiritual. Women, because of their moral sensibilities, were not hindered by ideological constraints. Thus, the political woman was not one of the boys, but was someone who had a higher standard and operated above politics. The PFC's mandates justified women's activism and illustrated that women could participate in politics without tarnishing their respectability.

The PFC's organizational structure was more akin to women's political groups than political parties. There were six decision-making positions and the first women to hold these offices were: President, María de la Cruz; Vice-President, Georgina Durand; Treasurer, Mimi Brieba de Aldunante; General Secretary, Olga Aguiló; and Directors: María Delia Prado and Felicitas Klimpel Alvarado.¹³⁴ The Public Relations Department promoted PFC events and legal struggles. The Department of Organization coordinated

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 131.

outings throughout the country to inform its members about the PFC's projects. The Legal Department confronted legal and social issues and organized a free clinic for those seeking legal advice or social assistance. PFC founders professed the party's mission as "uniting ideas and imposing inside the institution an absolute liberty of thought that required the complete exclusion of politics."¹³⁵ De la Cruz insisted that the PFC did not have a political orientation, because adhering to a specific ideology interfered with one's ability to defend his or her rights.

PFC leaders used lectures, forums and radio announcements to mobilize and educate women about the PFC. It united women to resolve social, economic and legal inequalities by creating "an unbreakable block upon which a new, more capable, less undecided and more useful society sits."¹³⁶ Founding member and historian Felicitas Klimpel expressed that PFC officers hoped to promote women's political awareness.¹³⁷ She argued the party succeeded and became a huge mobilizing force for women's civil rights, boasting a membership of over 60,000.¹³⁸ It offered women who were not affiliated with a party, who rejected other parties' ideologies and who preferred a more feminine feminism a means to participate in politics. Unfortunately, PFC leaders found it difficult to maintain a united membership without a clearly defined ideology.

Instrumental during the women's suffrage movement, María de la Cruz continued to push for women's legal and economic rights in the early 1950s. She used her position as PFC President to launch her Senatorial campaign in 1950. She lost due to insufficient funds and a lack of support from an established party. Despite the loss, De la Cruz

¹³⁵ Alicia Benavides, "María de la Cruz, Primera Senadora de Chile," *Eva*, January 16, 1953, p. 10.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Klimpel, *La mujer Chilena*, p. 132.

¹³⁸ Benavides, p. 10.

believed her campaign represented a moral victory for women. She claimed, “The votes that I received are the cleanest of all. Every one of our votes cast in this electoral battle is a conscience, a beginning, the heart itself of the Chilean woman.”¹³⁹ Her remarks confirmed her belief that women were morally superior to men and represented purity absent from politics. De la Cruz stated that she knew that she would not win, but ran to prove that “women are outside of the infernal circle of politicking.” She never abandoned this principle.

De la Cruz found a like-minded male counterpart in General Carlos Ibáñez del Campo. Ibáñez returned to national politics in 1952 as a populist who eschewed compromise politics and argued that ideologies sullied the political process.¹⁴⁰ His apolitical position fit PFC definitions of political participation well. De la Cruz chose to reinforce her party’s agenda by aligning herself with President Ibáñez and supporting his vision for Chile. Her personal decision to endorse Ibáñez’ presidential bid caused intense conflicts within the PFC.¹⁴¹ De la Cruz’s enthusiasm for Ibáñez’s campaign took her all over the nation, which left her little time to attend to PFC directives. To remedy the situation, De la Cruz appointed Beba Donoso, an Argentine who had recently become naturalized as a Chilean citizen, as National Director of the PFC.¹⁴² This appointment angered many PFC members who refused to allow a stranger to hold a party office. De la Cruz’s insistence on the appointment and her continued work for Ibáñez led some PFC officers to expel her from the party. National PFC President María Hamuy, Vice-

¹³⁹ *Zig-Zag*, December 2, 1950, p. 43.

¹⁴⁰ Carlos Ibáñez, a prominent military and political figure from the 1920s through the 1950s, was elected president in 1927 and in 1952. During his first term he exercised dictatorial powers and left the office in disgrace. He returned to politics as a populist who promised to end political corruption.

¹⁴¹ Klimpel, *La mujer Chilena*, p. 137.

¹⁴² *Hoy*, February 20, 1953, p. 7.

President María Urrutia, General Secretary Ester Carmona, Secretary Silvia Bravo and Treasurer Ida Laffaye announced their decision on October 21, 1951.¹⁴³ De la Cruz refuted their actions and as PFC President expelled them from the party for being undisciplined.

The power struggle led to the formation of two women's parties. De la Cruz maintained control of the Chilean Women's Party which had to compete with the Progressive Women's Party (*Partido Progresista Femenino*). Despite PFC members' belief that adherence to an ideology caused internal strife, they suffered the same political divisions and turmoil that traditional political parties experienced. Although both women's parties supported Ibáñez, he credited De la Cruz for bringing in the women's vote. He offered her a post as Minister of Education, but she declined, opting to make another bid for the Senate in 1953.¹⁴⁴ President Ibáñez and his political coalition, the Agrarian Labor Party/PAL (*Partido Agrario Laborista*), endorsed her.

This time De la Cruz had significant financial and political support. She used her relationship with Ibáñez to influence voters and party leaders to back her campaign. Portraying herself as a populist unwilling to be harnessed by a specific political ideology, she argued against politics as usual and stated that as Senator she would prove herself through actions not words or ideas. She employed the media to present herself as someone who used politics to alleviate the poor's suffering. Hoy, a political news journal, described her as someone who "has sought a public life and political activity as

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 138.

¹⁴⁴ Ibáñez appointed María Teresa del Canto, a PFC member recommended by De la Cruz. De la Cruz ran for the Senate seat left vacant by Ibáñez.

the most efficient means to remedy the necessities of the destitute.”¹⁴⁵ With these types of descriptions, De la Cruz and the President fashioned her as a Chilean Evita, the female counterpart to Ibáñez’s political agenda.¹⁴⁶

De la Cruz won in 1953 and became the first female Senator in Chile. With stronger party support she gained 51% of the vote in a three-way race.¹⁴⁷ Although she employed a very effective political strategy to win, she refused to be portrayed as a politician, claiming it held a negative connotation. She presented herself as a political woman who offered practical solutions, not ideologies. Commenting on her victory, De la Cruz declared, “I have fought against all the political parties: *ibañista* and *anti-ibañista*. This demonstrates that they mean little for the future of our democracy.”¹⁴⁸ She clearly defined the governing that she and President Ibáñez offered as a counterpoint to party politicking, stating, “...this triumph signifies, nothing less, than the triumph of *ibañismo* independent above the *ibañista* political parties.”¹⁴⁹ Although this strategy worked well for her Senatorial campaign, it worked against her in the Senate. De la Cruz did not forge party alliances in the Senate and found that the political support offered by the PFC and loosely connected PAL was weak and ineffective.

Seven months into her Senate career, De la Cruz found herself in the midst of a corruption scandal. Although she professed not to adhere to a political ideology, she

¹⁴⁵ Hoy, December 19, 1952, p. 8.

¹⁴⁶ Both had political connections to President Juan Perón and Eva Duarte of Argentina and admired Perón’s populist philosophy. For more information about President Ibáñez’s administration see, Donald Bray, “Chilean Politics during the Second Ibáñez Government, 1952-1958,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1961); Luis Correa, El presidente Ibáñez: la política y los políticos, (Santiago: Ed. Orbe, 1962); and Tomás Moulian, El gobierno de Ibáñez, 1952-1958, (Santiago: FLACSO, 1986).

¹⁴⁷ De la Cruz won 107,585 votes out of 210,808, beating Humberto Mewes (68,350) and German Domínguez (32,941). Klimpel, La mujer Chilena, p. 140.

¹⁴⁸ Quoted in Klimpel, La mujer Chilena, p. 140.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 141.

publicly embraced Juan Perón's political, economic and social doctrine termed *Justicialismo*.¹⁵⁰ Many Chileans feared that President Ibáñez's connections to Perón would translate into an authoritarian government in Chile. De la Cruz's close connection to Ibáñez, her admiration for Perón's government, and her dealings with Argentine businesses led to her impeachment. Gina Maggi, Matilde Guervara and Loreto Morandé accused Senator De la Cruz of accepting a bribe from a watch manufacturer. Public outrage concerning the accusation led to a formal investigation in the Senate. The three accusers addressed the Senate and declared, "The citizenry faithfully hoped that this woman would bring to the Honorable Senate the voice of wisdom, the austerity, the honesty and the sensibility of the Chilean woman, that she would devote herself to works beneficial for the people, the family and the home."¹⁵¹ Their aspirations for De la Cruz were exactly what she had promised in her electoral campaigns. They explained that they felt betrayed by what they viewed as compromising activities. The Senate voted to investigate through the Constitution, Legislation and Justice Committee (CLJC). Senator De la Cruz denied all charges.

The CLJC also received further allegations from Attorney Carlos Vicuña Fuentes who accused Senator De la Cruz of having ostensible business in a casino and attending *Justicialista* conferences in Argentina as part of Perón's political propaganda. This accusation played on people's fears that Juan Perón meant to extend his authoritarian style government into Chile. Senator De la Cruz defended her trip to Argentina and claimed, "It is not a secret, it is not a mystery that I went to replenish my health....My

¹⁵⁰ *Justicialismo* was an alternative to capitalist and communist systems that incorporated Catholic and Aristotelian understandings of justice and harmony. Perón used this doctrine to outline his brand of corporate nationalism.

¹⁵¹ Quoted in Klimpel, *La mujer Chilena*, p. 143.

health has and continues to suffer profoundly....I never intended to go to the Republic of Argentina to give lectures of any kind.”¹⁵² She explained no matter where she went in Chile people approached her, even just to make her acquaintance. The continued contact with the public, she argued, made it difficult for her to rest fully. Senator De la Cruz also denied accusations that she participated in alleged Peronist plots: “The *justicialista* system that reigns in our sister Republic is not new: it is a system that Jesus of Galilee brought to the world two thousand years ago that preaches one to love others.”¹⁵³ She maintained that she admired President Perón and that her admiration did not make her a Peronist. Rather, she identified herself as a *justicialista*, because she believed in its tenets that had their roots in Catholic social doctrine and in Jesus Christ’s teachings. She emphasized her point, declaring:

I am a Chilean woman who believes in God above all things in life, and that's why, I will never be partial to those clearly materialistic ideologies, which try to turn man into one more beast of nature. No. I am a spiritualist. I believe in God and in a spiritual life beyond this one. That's why I have a sense of Christian morality. I am Christian, and for being so, I am also a *justicialista*, because this doctrine completely lays its foundations on the moral and spiritual principles of Christianity.¹⁵⁴

Senator De la Cruz presented herself as a Christian woman and defended her acceptance of *Justicialismo* as an extension of her spiritual and moral beliefs. To criticize her for following Christ’s teachings, she argued, was pure folly and demonstrated a clear misunderstanding of Catholic social doctrine.

The CLJC found the allegations against De la Cruz to be false and recommended “the rejection of the two solicitations to impeach the Honorable Senator María de la Cruz

¹⁵² Diario de Sesiones del Senado de la República de Chile, Sesiones ordinarias July 9, 1953, p.154.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, July 2, 1953, p. 53.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, July 3, 1953, p. 120.

from her office.”¹⁵⁵ On July 4, 1953, the Senate voted to depose Senator De la Cruz, despite the CLJC’s recommendations.¹⁵⁶ Why the Senate voted against the CLJC is not clear. Right-wing parties held a majority in Congress and some speculated that they initiated the impeachment proceedings against De la Cruz to discredit President Ibáñez and lessen the influence he had over women voters. Thoroughly disgraced, De la Cruz fell from public view and the PFC, unable to escape Peronist association and public scrutiny, disbanded. These events called into question women’s moral fortitude in politics and demonstrated that the PFC did not possess the political intrigue necessary to compete in Chilean politics.

The Radical and Chilean Women’s Parties became the vehicles for middle-class women’s interests during the final phase of the women’s suffrage movement. Internal strife and external pressures in the late 1940s and early 1950s severely weakened the Radical Party and destroyed the PFC. After 1949, political parties devoted more energy to recruiting women voters and incorporating them into their party structures, which created an intense competition among parties for women members. The roles women played in the party system were just as diverse as the political parties themselves. To understand fully the relationship between women and the parties, we must examine how the main political blocs dealt with the entry of women into the political process.

¹⁵⁵ CLJC Session, June 25, 1953. Quoted in Klimpel, p. 144.

¹⁵⁶ This marked the first time in Senate history that Senator’s voted against a Committee’s recommendations.

Conservative Parties and Women's Recruitment

The Conservative Party

The Conservative and Liberal parties controlled Chilean politics from the 1820s to the 1930s. The Conservative Party/CP, established in 1857, represented wealthy landowners and the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁵⁷ Although it supported the Church, CP leaders chose to distance themselves from the Church in the 1930s. This decision led some party members to break from the party in 1938. Despite this split, the CP was not fraught with the same debilitating conflicts as its leftist counterparts.

The Conservative Party established a close relationship with women and supported women's suffrage in the late nineteenth century. CP leaders argued against opponents' opinions that women lacked sufficient civic education to make informed voting decisions. To illustrate their commitment to women's suffrage CP members introduced the first women's suffrage bill to Congress in 1917 and added women's voting rights to the party agenda in 1918.¹⁵⁸ CP leaders effectively mobilized women and supported women's suffrage through the 1940s. They incorporated women into the party structure and nominated women for municipal offices in 1934 after Congress passed a law that allowed women to vote and run for municipal elections. Although many political parties established women's branches in the mid-1930s, the CP did not create a women's section until November 1944.¹⁵⁹ Through the 1950s, CP leaders maintained a

¹⁵⁷ FLACSO, Estadísticos Electorales 1952-1973 (Santiago, Chile: FLACSO, August 18, 1987), p. 122.

¹⁵⁸ Lavrin, Women, Feminism and Social Change, pp. 212-215 includes a discussion of how conservative feminism was understood by conservative political leaders.

¹⁵⁹ Edda Gaviola et. al., Queremos votar en las próximas elecciones (Santiago: Centro de Análisis y Difusión de la Condición de la Mujer, 1986), p. 47.

traditional relationship with their women members, utilizing them to publicize party agendas and to recruit supporters.

The CP underwent a structural transition in the late 1930s which might explain why leaders did not establish a women's branch earlier. In 1938, a group of young Conservative members, whose dogmatic commitment to Catholic social doctrine and fierce anticommunism impelled them to break from the party and establish the National Falange (*Falange Nacional*).¹⁶⁰ CP leaders spent the next several years thwarting rural social movements encouraged by the Falange.¹⁶¹ The immediate threat of Communist uprisings and the increasing appeal of social Catholicism led to another split in 1949. The split created two separate entities, the Traditional Conservative Party/CP (*Partido Conservador Tradicionalista*) that represented landowning elites' interests and the Conservative Social Christian Party (*Partido Conservador Social Cristiano*) that employed Christian social ideals to combat communism.¹⁶² The PC's increased tensions made the establishment of an official women's branch a lesser concern. Notwithstanding party strains, many women received support for mayoral and city council bids.

The CP maintained close ties with women's organizations whose members actively supported the party. Chilean Women's Patriotic Action (*Acción Patriótica de Mujeres de Chile*) and the Chilean Women's National Action (*Acción Nacional de Mujeres de Chile*) members campaigned for Conservative candidates and encouraged

¹⁶⁰ For a complete examination of the evolution of the *Falange Nacional* consult, José Díaz Nieva, Chile: de la Falange Nacional a la Democracia Cristiana (Madrid: Ed. Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 2000).

¹⁶¹ Loveman, Chile, pp. 274-275.

¹⁶² The party was short-lived, dissolving in 1953, re-emerging as the United Conservative Party (*Conservador Unido*) and eventually merging with the Conservative Party. The party lasted until June 1966, when the Conservative Party ceased to exist. Many party members joined with the Liberal Party and some splinter conservative organizations to form the National Party (*Partido Nacional*). FLACSO, Estadísticos Electorales, pp. 122-123.

women to support CP candidates in elections. These connections made the need for a specific women's branch superfluous, because they gave upper-class conservative women like Adela Edwards de Salas, a founding member of Chilean Women's National Action, access to CP leadership.

Once the CP established a Women's Section (*Sección Femenina del Partido Conservador*), it aggressively recruited women. CP leader Horacio Walker Larraín outlined CP female members' duties and argued that the most important role women members had was "not abstaining from contributing to the ballot boxes in town council elections and collaborating in publicity work for parliamentary and presidential fights."¹⁶³ He illustrated that women served a supportive role. Women had marginal representation in the party administration. The CP had an Executive Board and two subdivisions: the Women's Section and the Youth Section. The president of the women's division sat on the Executive Board.¹⁶⁴ The CP allowed only women and men older than 33 years old to register as full members, although the voting age was 21. Persons between the ages of 21 and 32 could join the CP's National Organization of Conservative Youth or the Women's Youth Division.

CP leaders' commitment to women's advancement and electoral bids did not extend to national elections or high-level government appointments. The CP elected only one woman to Congress after 1949. Lya Laffaye de Muñoz represented the CP in the Chamber of Deputies from 1953 to 1957. Party leaders required women to work on national elections, but did little to encourage women to run for legislative seats. The

¹⁶³ *El Mercurio*, 30 November 1944, quoted in Gaviola et al., *Queremos votar*, p. 47.

¹⁶⁴ Sergio Guisasti, *Partidos políticos chilenos*, 2nd ed. (Santiago: Editorial Nascimento, 1964), p. 26. By 1959, the president of the Youth Division also occupied a place on the Executive Committee, *Acción Conservador* No. 7 (December 1959): 20.

President of the CP's Women's Section Margarita del Solar organized women's activities in Jorge Alessandri's presidential campaign in 1958. She mobilized women and argued that President Alessandri restored conservative women's hope, because he represented their interests: "We found in him the indispensable conditions that, in our judgment, the future Commander in Chief had to have: an honest Catholic capable of restructuring the nation's economy and of extracting the moral and financial prostration in which Chile finds itself."¹⁶⁵ Solar articulated that conservative women's main concern was the country's morality and economic well-being. She did not outline a political agenda for women. Rather, Solar stressed that women's function in the party had always been one of service and would continue to be so. CP women operated as helpmates until the early 1960s, during which time they took a more active role in the party's fight against Communism.

The Liberal Party

Founded in 1849, the Liberal Party/LP¹⁶⁶ represented upper-class industrialists and those with substantial commercial interests. Women's participation in the Liberal Party also began in the late nineteenth century as the women's suffrage question became more pronounced. Liberal women had less access to the LP than conservative women had to the CP. They relied on women's secular groups to engage in public affairs. This revolved around Liberal and Radical Party leaders' insistence that a women's suffrage law would benefit Conservative candidates. Liberal and Radical Party leaders distrusted

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 34.

¹⁶⁶ For more information on this early period of Chilean political formation see, Simon Collier, Ideas and Politics of Chilean Independence: 1808-1833 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967) and Ricardo Donoso, Las ideas políticas en Chile, 2nd ed. (Santiago: Facultad de Filosofía y Educación, Universidad de Chile, 1967).

elite women who were connected closely to the Church and the charity organizations it sponsored. Many criticized women's enfranchisement and claimed that the Church had too much influence over women. They argued that clergy members would implore women to support conservatives, because CP leaders opposed anticlerical policies. Liberal and Radical leaders also claimed that upper-class women's loyalties were with the Church and that their beneficence activities allowed conservative women to gain political influence over poor women.¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, women's suffrage worked against liberalism, because the Church and elite women controlled the female vote. Liberal and Radical leaders' opposition to women's political participation forced anticlerical women to create their own political and social organizations.¹⁶⁸

Liberal leaders adopted a policy of gradual emancipation which demoralized some female supporters.¹⁶⁹ That is not to say that liberals did not respect women's issues. Minister of Education and LP member, Miguel Luis Amunátegui, understood women's frustrations, which led him allow women to enroll in the University of Chile in January 1877.¹⁷⁰ Despite Amunátegui's concession, the LP did not support full women's suffrage until the 1930s. Liberal leader, Arturo Alessandri, accomplished little in bringing about gradual emancipation during his presidency (1920-1924). He argued that legislatures needed to alter the Civil Code to adequately protect women's future voting rights.¹⁷¹ Thus, he postponed the LP's need to demand a women's suffrage law.

¹⁶⁷ Maza, "Liberals, Radicals," p. 3.

¹⁶⁸ Organizations such as the *Círculo de Lectura* and the *Club de Señoras* began as literary and social clubs that evolved into political associations.

¹⁶⁹ Liberal leaders argued women needed to be properly educated in civic matters and should "practice" voting responsibly at the local level before assuming the responsibility of electing national officials.

¹⁷⁰ This was an important achievement for Chilean and Latin American women. Eloísa Díaz Insunza and Ernestina Pérez Brahona were the first women to graduate in 1887. Both had degrees in medicine.

¹⁷¹ Lavrin, *Women, Feminism and Social Change*, p. 290 and Maza, "Liberals, Radicals," pp. 23-24.

Like the Conservative Party, the LP did not establish an official female arm until 1944. Hilda Müller Hess initiated and established the Liberal Women's Assembly/LWA (*Asamblea Liberal Femenina*).¹⁷² The party had a hierarchical structure with an Executive Committee comprised of representatives from the subdivisions, including the Women's Assembly and Liberal Youth's (*Juventud Liberal*) national presidents.¹⁷³ The women's and youth divisions were responsible for recruiting members and support for Liberal candidates.¹⁷⁴

The LWA sponsored candidate information forums during the 1952 presidential election. They publicly supported and organized public demonstrations for Liberal presidential hopeful Arturo Matte. Matte lauded women's efforts to elect him and defined their activism as an outgrowth of their loyalty to the greater good. "What to say, women . . . of your self-sacrifice and enthusiasm and of the generous support that you have lent to our cause, which is for no other reason than to save the Republic from its present material and moral disintegration."¹⁷⁵ Matte understood women's political participation as an emotional connection to the nation and its people. Matte illustrated that he viewed women's activism as an extension of their feminine role, asking women to consider: "Which of these four men offers the greatest guarantee...of the tranquility of your homes, the efficient work of your husbands, and the security of your children's

¹⁷² Müller was active in the suffrage movement and belonged to several women's organizations that endorsed political, economic, and social legislation for women.

¹⁷³ Guilisasti, *Partidos políticos Chilenos*, pp. 78-79.

¹⁷⁴ Lavrin, *Women, Feminism and Social Change*, p. 304 indicates that the Liberal youth division in Valparaíso published a journal in the 1930s that served to encourage women to actively support the party.

¹⁷⁵ *El Mercurio*, August 4, 1952, p. 17.

future.”¹⁷⁶ Matte portrayed himself as one who would protect women’s homes and security. He did not discuss women’s legal rights or economic independence.

Few women occupied high offices in the LP, outside of the LWA. Hilda Müller Hess was an active Liberal Party member who became Executive Committee Treasurer. Although she did not have a decision-making position, her election to a party office indicated that women had increased their access to the party’s administrative body. María Correa Morande organized the LWA with Müller and occupied the Secretary and President offices for the National Women’s Assembly. Her party loyalty resulted in her 1957 election to the Chamber of Deputies. Correa’s administrative and electoral duties in the Liberal Party provided her with ample political experience. She was among small group that split from the LP and founded the National Party in 1966.

Müller and Correa’s experiences in the Liberal Party were uncommon. Women’s sole function was to inscribe more women to the party rolls. LP leaders defined women’s role clearly in the LP’s Youth Division’s statutes. Article 33 established that when a women’s party group reached ten or more members, a women’s division would be established.¹⁷⁷ Each branch would have a president, a secretary, and a director of social action and propaganda, whose purpose was to recruit female members and direct women’s assistance with electoral campaigns. The LWA reported to the Director of the Electoral Department, whose objective was to enlist and retain members and direct national campaigns. Party leaders conceived women members as a support network; not as potential elected officials.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., June 25, 1952, p. 28.

¹⁷⁷ “Juventud Liberal: Principios, Estatutos y Reglamentos,” VI Convención Nacional, Santiago: May 6-7, 1950, p. 25.

There were more Conservative than Liberal female candidates elected to local offices from the 1930s to the early 1950s. By the late 1950s the LP met conservative parties' numbers. Between 1950 and 1956, the Conservative Party elected eight women to town council and mayoral seats, compared to three women in the Liberal Party. The LP increased female representation in elected positions between 1956 and 1960: four women candidates elected to local offices and María Correa elected to the Chamber of Deputies in 1957. During the same period, female representation decreased in the Conservative Party, which elected only two women to local seats. Most likely, the decrease in Conservative women elected to office was a result of party divisions. Once most of the traditional conservative splinter parties reunited into the United Conservative Party (*Partido Conservador Unido*), it regained its strength and elected seven women to local offices between 1960 and 1963.¹⁷⁸

Even though the Liberal Party treated women as auxiliary tools in the late 1800s and early 1900s, party leaders did attempt to incorporate women more fully, establishing a Women's subdivision in the 1940s and supporting women's bids for local and national elections in the 1950s and 1960s. As did their counterparts in the conservative parties, Liberal leaders looked to women to attract female voters and to transmit the party message. LP leaders' reluctance to promote women's issues in the 1950s and 1960s resulted in party's loss of female support to the Christian Democrat and National Parties.

¹⁷⁸ The Social Christian Conservative Party, formed in 1949, disbanded in 1953 at which time it reclaimed the Conservative Party as its official name. This is not to be confused with the United Conservative Party, founded in 1953 by traditional conservatives. Social Christian party members attempted to regroup, establishing a coalition political organization in 1955 known as the Social Christian Federation (*Federación Social Cristiana*) eventually, however, it disbanded and most members joined the Christian Democratic Party after its creation in 1957. FLACSO, *Estadísticos Electorales*, pp. 122-123.

Women and Leftist Parties

The Socialist Party

Several small leftist political parties and groups fused together in 1933 to create the Socialist Party of Chile/PS (*Partido Socialista de Chile*).¹⁷⁹ Party leaders advocated anti-imperialist, anti-fascist and syndicalist ideals and the creation of a classless society. Urban workers and middle-class intellectuals who had different understandings of Marxist ideology were the main bases of support. In 1936, the young party joined the Radical, Communist and Democratic parties to form the Popular Front coalition. Many scholars argued that this decision caused the party to compromise its revolutionary agenda in favor of mainstream political participation and limited economic gains for labor.¹⁸⁰

The Socialist Party had a complex and discordant history, because it represented differing interpretations of Marxist ideology. Conflicts ranged from moderate versus revolutionary modes of political change to whether or not to collaborate with Communists and Trotskyists. The PS underwent two major splits in the 1940s that weakened Socialist leaders' abilities to negotiate in the Popular Front coalition and lessened their power in Congress. The first division occurred in 1940, when a far left-wing group broke from the party and recreated the Socialist Workers Party/POS (*Partido Obrero Socialista*).¹⁸¹ The POS adhered to Marxist ideology, although its membership represented differing political philosophies, such as Marxists, Anarcho-syndicalists,

¹⁷⁹ The parties were *Partido Socialista Marxista*, *la Nueva Acción Pública*, *Alianza Revolucionaria Socialista*, *Partido Socialista Unificado* and *Orden Socialista*.

¹⁸⁰ Alan, *Politics and the Labor Movement in Chile* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972); Drake, *Socialism and Communism in Chile*; Faúndez, *Marxism and Democracy in Chile*; Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises*; and Arturo Valenzuela, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

¹⁸¹ Recabarren's POS, founded in 1912, became the Chilean Communist Party in 1922.

Humanistic Socialists, and anti-Marxists.¹⁸² Such diversity and leaders' inability to reconcile members' ideological differences led to another split in 1948.

The issues surrounding the 1948 rift concerned the POS's tenuous alliance with the Communist Party. Many party members believed ties with the PC reduced Socialists leaders' political power.¹⁸³ Another far left-wing faction broke from the Socialist Party and founded the Popular Socialist Party/PSP (*Partido Socialista Popular*). The PSP was a small party with little Congressional clout. PSP leaders supported Carlos Ibáñez's presidential candidacy in 1952 with the hope that aligning with his political coalition would deliver legislative labor reforms. Unable to force its agenda through Ibáñez's coalition, the PSP sought to repair its relationship with other leftist parties. In 1956, it co-founded a left-wing political coalition, the Popular Action Front (*Frente de Acción Popular/FRAP*).¹⁸⁴

FRAP leaders wanted to unite leftist political groups and promote effective political and economic changes for the working class.¹⁸⁵ Socialist Party leaders pledged to work with other FRAP member organizations to promote the social revolutionary cause without abandoning the party's needs.¹⁸⁶ Socialist Party leaders argued that ending the capitalist structure was their main priority. PS leaders were unyielding on that issue, illustrating that there was little room for special interest groups and their specific causes

¹⁸² Gil, *The Political System of Chile*, p. 285.

¹⁸³ For a more complete discussion of Socialist factionalism see, Drake, *Socialism and Communism in Chile* and Faúndez, *Marxism and Democracy in Chile*.

¹⁸⁴ FRAP members included the Democratic Party of Chile, The People's Democratic Party, the Socialist Party of Chile, Party of Work, the Popular Socialist Party, and the Communist Party.

¹⁸⁵ Partido Socialista, Comité Central, "Cartilla del Postulante: Contingente Salvador Allende" Santiago, 1958, p. 11.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

within the Socialist Party. Their unwillingness to compromise worked against FRAP's goals and hindered female members' ability to promote women's issues.

The Socialist Party had an executive administrative unit, the Central Committee, to which the lesser committees reported. Rank and file members participated in disseminating the party's agenda and ideological tenets, but had little voice in major decisions.¹⁸⁷ There were several political subcommittees in the party, including one for youth and women. The women's sector's main responsibility was "to plan, organize, and direct the political work and culture of socialist women."¹⁸⁸ Based on this description, PS leaders conceived women's roles as auxiliary. The heads of national committees served on the Central Committee, including the head of the National Federation of Socialist Women, established in the late 1930s.

The PS incorporated women through a separate women's group that had close ties with the party. Socialist women established the Socialist Women's Action (*Acción de Mujeres Socialistas*) in 1934, but the PS did not recognize it formally until 1937.¹⁸⁹ Socialist leaders' tardiness in recognizing the women's organization suggests that they either reluctantly included a special interest group for fear that it would hinder the class interests, or that they did not realize fully women's political potential. Eugenio Matte Hurtado, a PS founder, raised the topic of women's incorporation at the party's founding, but his comments concerning women received no response. He proposed that the delegates consider three important points, "...1st in the expansion of culture; 2nd woman's

¹⁸⁷ Gil, *The Political System of Chile*, p. 290.

¹⁸⁸ Quoted in Guisasti, *Partidos políticos chilenos*, p. 265.

¹⁸⁹ Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises*, p. 98. For more detailed information concerning leftist women's organizations in the 1930s see, Antezana-Pernet, "Mobilizing Women in the Popular Front Era."

vindication, and 3rd Indo-American economic construction.”¹⁹⁰ He recognized that the party should not ignore women’s claims and argued that they were as important as spreading party doctrine and establishing an American-wide economic restructuring. The other delegates disregarded his remarks about women and chose to focus instead on class issues and international ties alone. To be taken seriously women had to organize separately and make Socialist leaders take notice of their political sincerity and support.

Socialist women received little support from party leaders from the 1930s through the 1950s. Many left-wing male political leaders defended women’s suffrage rights, but women’s issues were not a priority. Leftist women found it more successful to exert political pressure through women’s political organizations, such as MEMCh, rather than through their respective parties. This can be attributed to the tumultuous beginning the PS experienced, Socialist leaders’ inability to unify the various Socialist factions, and the subordination of gender to class issues. Women functioned as a sub-unit in the PS and did not gain a more significant voice within the party until the late 1950s.

The Communist Party

Chile’s Communist Party experienced a conflicted and transformative history, although it did not suffer as many fragmentations as its Socialist counterpart. Organized labor leaders’ disjointed adherence to either Marxist or Trotskyist means to obtain class justice and the competition between urban and rural labor movements contributed to the

¹⁹⁰ “Acta de la session de fundación del Partido Socialista,” April 19, 1933, Cuadernos de Orientación y Pensamiento Socialista, El Partido Socialista de Chile, Vol. II, Archivos Internet Salvador Allende, first digital edition, 2004, www.salvador-allende.cl.

intense competition among leftist political groups for voter support.¹⁹¹ The Communist Party was founded in 1912 as the Socialist Worker's Party (*Partido Obrero Socialista/POS*) and unlike its Socialist counterparts, retained close ties to the Soviet Union. Luis Recabarren, POS founder and main advocate, created a party dedicated to laborers and their needs. The party's main objective was to emancipate workers from the capitalist system by eliminating class distinctions in favor of creating one class of workers who shared in the production and consumption of wealth.

Recabarren recognized gender inequality as a product of capitalism. He included women in party objectives and advocated equality between the sexes and sought to reform the civil code to reflect that equality.¹⁹² The concept of including women and their demands in Communist agendas was not unique to Chile. Vladimir Lenin warned followers to heed women and their distinctive subjugation, which he termed domestic slavery. He argued that the class struggle was equally, if not more important, for women and asserted that their condition could only be transformed through the liberation of the masses.¹⁹³

Advancement to leadership positions generally required party members to be activists and gain executive committee members' support for appointments and elected

¹⁹¹ Angell, *Politics and the Labor Movement*; Jorge I. Barría Serón, *El Movimiento obrero en Chile: síntesis histórico-social* (Santiago: Ediciones de la Universidad Técnica del Estado, 1971); Drake, *Socialism and Communism in Chile*; Faúndez, *Marxism and Democracy in Chile*; Carmelo Furci, *The Chilean Communist Party and the Road to Socialism* (London: Zed Books, 1984); Mario Garcés, *Historia del movimiento obrero* (Santiago: Taller Nueva Historia: CETRA/CEAL, 1983) and Thomas Klubock, *Contested Communities: Class, Gender and Politics in El Teniente Copper Mine, 1904-1951* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1998).

¹⁹² "Programa y Relamiento del Partido Obrero Socialista," *El Despertar de los Trabajadores*, October 8-November 12, 1912. Reprinted in Luis Emilio Recabarren Archivo, First Edition Marxist Internet Archive, Spanish Section, 2002. Digitalization by José Miguel Urzúa Bravo, 2002. www.marxists.org/espanol/recabarren.

¹⁹³ See, Vladimir I. Lenin, *The Emancipation of Women* (Moscow: Progress, 1968) and *Women and Society* (New York: International Publishers, 1938); and Klara Zetkin, *Lenin on the Woman Question* (New York: International Publishers, 1934).

positions. Like the other parties, the POS expected all members to recruit new members and spread party doctrine. One Communist pamphlet indicated that every member had to fulfill quotas of ten new members and ten financial contributions. Leaders offered a means to accomplish quotas: “If every militant secures 10 friends, and if each of those friends delivers a contribution, then the militant will have FULFILLED HIS PLAN.”¹⁹⁴ Party leaders made clear that the party’s future successes rested on its ability to augment its membership rolls and its treasury. They framed party membership as “an honor and a sense of pride....”¹⁹⁵

The POS recruited women through the Belén de Zárrega Women’s Centers. Directors educated women about suffrage rights and workers’ exploitation and encouraged women to participate the labor struggle.¹⁹⁶ After the POS converted to the Chilean Communist Party (*Partido Comunista/PC*) in 1922, leaders continued to advocate women’s participation in the class struggle and touted a commitment to gender equality. PC leaders conceptualized women’s emancipation as a secondary struggle and argued that destroying the capitalist system would resolve women’s subordination. Leftist party leaders claimed that capitalism victimized working-class women, because it forced women to work in order to supplement their husbands’ meager earnings.¹⁹⁷ PC

¹⁹⁴ Partido Comunista, “10 aportes conseguidos por cada militante,” (Santiago: Impresora Horizonte, August 3, 1956), Biblioteca Nacional, Colección Sección Chilena. This membership requirement was repeated in several party statutes and pamphlets.

¹⁹⁵ Partido Comunista, “Estatutos” (Santiago: Impresora Horizonte, 1965), Biblioteca Nacional, Colección Sección Chilena.

¹⁹⁶ The Women’s Centers were very popular in the northern nitrate area, but lacked a national appeal.

¹⁹⁷ Karin Roseblatt argues that Communist Party officials alienated women members from the feminist movement by making claims that the women’s movement was dominated by bourgeois ideology and oppressed the masses. See Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises*, especially chapter 3. See also Elizabeth Quay Hutchison, *Laborers Appropriate to Their Sex: Gender, Labor, and Politics in Urban Chile, 1900-1930*, (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2001), chapter 4.

leaders effectively separated working-class and middle-class women's situations and made it difficult for women to unite.

The PC incorporated women more fully in the 1930s and established local women's departments. The women's divisions became a source of conflict, because leaders had neither outlined a function for the women's departments nor defined female members' duties. Party leaders addressed the issue by creating Women's Commissions (*Comisiones Femeninas*) to outline women's role in the party.¹⁹⁸ The Commissions gave women members the same responsibilities as men: to mobilize other potential female party members, spread party ideals, and garner support for the party's agenda.

Many Communist women sought to accomplish both ideological and gender interests through legal channels. Pioneers like Communist activist and feminist Elena Caffarena believed that women could work together for a suffrage law and Civil Code reforms while working toward their respective parties' goals. Caffarena argued that women had two important political struggles: one as women, struggling for specific legal and social reforms to end gender discrimination; and, another as a member of a larger social group that fought for general legislative reforms that reflected the group's class and ideological needs.¹⁹⁹ The difficulty came with reconciling the two struggles. She lived by example working in the Communist Party and establishing a cross-class women's organization, MEMCh.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises*, p. 98.

¹⁹⁹ Durand, *Mis entrevistas*, pp. 200-201.

²⁰⁰ See Antezana-Pernet, "Mobilizing Women in the Popular Front Era," Olga Poblete, *Una mujer. Elena Caffarena* (Santiago: Ediciones La Morada, Editorial Cuarto Propio, 1993); and Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises*. The women's organization experienced a period of intense activism between 1935 and 1948. Communist and middle-class members divested from each other in 1948, illustrating the anti-communist sentiments that mounted after President González outlawed the Communist Party.

PC members continued mobilizing people after President González signed the Law for the Permanent Defense of Democracy in 1948.²⁰¹ In 1956, two years before it regained legal status, the Communist Party entered into a leftist coalition with the Socialist and Democratic parties to create the Popular Action Front/FRAP (*Frente de Acción Popular*). FRAP enabled the PC to have a voice in legislative politics and to demand the repeal of the Law for the Permanent Defense of Democracy. Salvador Allende, FRAP's 1958 presidential candidate, made the repeal an important part of his platform. His commitment to this issue served to unite the Marxist parties; however, he could not resolve ideological and strategic differences among the coalition parties. Left-wing parties did not make any real efforts to settle such matters until the early to mid 1960s.

Communist leaders sought to politicize women by linking lower-class family issues with the labor movement. They attempted to reach women through the media and leftist coalitional women's organizations such as the Union of Chilean Women/UCW (*Unión de Mujeres de Chile*), founded in 1953.²⁰² A supplement to the PC Central Committee magazine stated plainly, "Women understand more each day that the fight for their demands cannot be isolated from the fight for the material transformations that are needed in the country's structure."²⁰³ The article demonstrated that women's demands

²⁰¹ This law illegalized the Communist Party, prevented it from participation in the labor movement, and established "camps" for subversives. The Communist Party regained its legal status in 1958, shortly before President Ibáñez finished his term.

²⁰² According to Klimpel, the organization developed social work projects within working-class neighborhoods and promoted legislation that favored working women, such as national day care and retirement. *La mujer Chilena*, pp. 244-45.

²⁰³ *Principios* Suplemento, September 1952, p. 21. The following statement appeared on the cover of every *Principios* edition: "A theoretical and political magazine edited by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Chile." Clearly, Communists did not go completely underground after the party was illegalized in 1948.

were directly related to Party objectives and that to struggle for gender issues independently would be contrary to the class struggle. To help women unite their two causes, Central Committee members suggested that housewives organize and demand that the government meet their basic needs, such as providing potable water, electricity, schools, housing, and price controls on basic provisions.²⁰⁴ The underlying message was that the class struggle would eliminate many concerns pertinent to women, especially those dealing with the household and the family. Central Committee members claimed that they understood which issues were important to working-class women; however, they did little to promote day care and women's retirement legislation, leaving such demands to the UCW.

The UCW strove to unite Socialist and Communist women and to bridge the gap between party and women's agendas. At the 1954 National Conference, delegates discussed women's triple subjugation as mothers, housewives, and workers. They decided that eliminating class discrimination was the best way to confront and end women's exploitation.²⁰⁵ This did not mean that women should abandon their feminist agenda completely. Some women advocated that the PC should incorporate more women in leadership positions to ensure the discussion of women's concerns. Julia Campos commended a regional committee in Santiago for realizing women's unfettered support to their parties by devoting more resources to women. She stated that it gave "help in staffing, political concerns, in controlling their duties, economic contributions, and it

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Julia Campos, "El camino de la organización y la unidad de las Mujeres," Principios, January and February 1954, p. 15.

supports two female officials.”²⁰⁶ Campos noted that to make effective party changes, more party cells needed to recognize women’s needs and to support women by committing funds, legal advice and political support.²⁰⁷

The question of where women’s issues ended and labor issues began constituted an important topic among Communist leaders. Central Committee members argued that the labor movement would fail without women’s support. By the mid-1950s, Central Committee members advocated that the party needed to make women’s issues a higher priority. One Central Committee member reiterated Campos’ sentiment, asserting, “The task of developing and amplifying the women’s movement ... is a task for the whole Party and not just for the Communist woman.”²⁰⁸ Leaders understood that women should not be alone in attempting to change their economic and legal situation. Party leaders ensured women’s activism by pledging support to women in their struggle for equal pay, paid maternity leave, day care, price controls, and affordable and adequate housing.

Leaders established Women’s Fronts (*Frentes Femeninos*) at the regional level to better communicate with women members. They also established Women’s Commissions to provide assistance and resources to Women’s Fronts’ directors to increase their effectiveness as liaisons.²⁰⁹ The PC National Central Committee stated that full commitment to the Women’s Fronts enabled them “to overcome our delay...to increase our influence among women, who constitute the most numerous part of and are

²⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 16.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 16.

²⁰⁸ L. Vergara, “Como organizar el cumplimiento de las Resoluciones del XIX Pleno del C.C.,” *Principios*, March and April 1954, p. 14.

²⁰⁹ “Preocupación por el Frente Femenino,” *Principios*, October 1956, p. 29.

of great importance to the Chilean population.”²¹⁰ The PC needed as much support as possible in order to maintain party cohesion while it was outlawed. The PC could not re-enter politics without women’s support. The PC’s survival depended on women.

Leaders understood it would be difficult to convince women to join a political party that had no legal rights. Women had recently earned voting rights and were reluctant to renounce them. To make a compelling case, the PC leaders had to promote ideology and adopt the women’s issues that other leftist parties neglected.

In 1958, President Carlos Ibáñez repealed the Law for the Permanent Defense of Democracy and reinstated the PC’s legal rights. During the tenth National Congress, PC leaders reaffirmed their commitment to women’s issues. Delegates recognized that although the PC had made many positive changes regarding women, more was needed. PC leaders employed the same strategy of linking women’s inferior conditions to class issues. The National Conference pronouncement exemplified this, stating that the PC should act quickly “to propel the women’s movement and clarify the transcendency of its claims as an aspect of our programmatic objectives.”²¹¹ The PC vowed to address gender discrimination and argued that the PC would deliver women from economic, political, and social injustice. This separated the PC from other leftist parties.

PC leaders instructed local and regional committees to establish women’s cells with the same status and function as the other cells to enhance women’s involvement in the party. Few committees provided women with work other than mobilizing other women. Virginia González complained that many local committees formed women’s

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ “Convocatoria al X Congreso Nacional del Partido Comunista de Chile,” Principios, July and August 1958, p. 7.

cells that were “under the guidance of the local committee.”²¹² She also reported that some required women to submit every plan and financial request to the male-dominated cells for approval, which she believed was a grave mistake. Forcing women to fight with their own local committees for support interfered with women’s abilities to strengthen their membership and advance in the party. González lamented that the PC had created a situation that was detrimental to the party. She asserted:

When the majority of the militants of a cell, of a Local Committee or of a Regional Committee understand the importance of incorporating a large number of women into our lines, and, that this is the work of the whole Party and not only of the communist women, the best results are obtained.²¹³

González reasoned that women should not bear the sole responsibility for recruiting other women. PC female members’ inability to affect changes reflected either a miscommunication from the National Central Committee to the local committees or PC leaders’ conflicting messages of how women should participate and behave in the party. Although the PC discussed women’s issues more fully and more often at the national level than its counterparts, it could not overcome gender inequalities.

Conclusion:

The Chilean political party system underwent significant transformations in the 1950s. Women gained full suffrage, Cold War philosophy pitted leftists against conservatives, and popular front coalitions lost their ability to compromise effectively. Chilean political parties began competing more vehemently for women’s votes and political participation after women gained the right to vote for and occupy municipal offices with Law 5357 in 1935. Interest groups and women coped with the changes in

²¹² Virginia González, “La células femeninas,” *Principios* September 1960, Special Edition, p. 31.

²¹³ Ibid.

the political climate by altering their strategies and relationships to the political parties. Tactics employed during the 1930s and 1940s, especially exerting pressure on political leaders through coalitional alliances, no longer worked. Interest groups had to influence politicians from within the political party system. The Radical Party illustrated well how compromise politics faltered as ideological differences became more polarized and party competition for voter support intensified. Most party leaders focused on creating party unity and defining party objectives; therefore, circumventing special interests until they resolved internal conflicts.

Women appreciated their power to affect legislation and remained with the political parties and became more established in the party system by the late 1950s. They worked diligently to secure leaders' support for female political candidates and legislation that benefited women. As they redefined their role in the parties women cultivated a relationship with party leaders who directed how women approached gender concerns to fit within party and class ideologies. They sacrificed progressive feminist agendas for moderate challenges to patriarchal structures.

Although women suffered a setback with María de la Cruz's impeachment, they lost neither the ability to exert pressure on politicians nor the access to the political party system. Women integrated their respective parties more fully and earned leaders' notice and respect through their militancy. Their activism translated into party support for women's issues and the inclusion of gender issues into party agendas. The Radical Party demonstrated this by promoting women to high government posts and elected offices. Communist and Socialist leaders illustrated this by discussing gender discrimination and addressing female members' concerns. Feminists, neither silent nor apathetic, articulated

their concerns to their political parties and persuaded leaders to adopt them. Chile's political climate changed during the 1950s and women's active incorporation into party organizational structures allowed women to adapt to the political transformation. Women learned how to navigate the political party system and by the mid-1960s, they used that knowledge to promote important legislation for women.

CHAPTER 4

CHILEAN WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN THE 1960s

Chile's political climate underwent another transformation in the late 1950s as new political actors emerged and leftists regrouped. By the mid-1960s, Chile had three identifiable political blocs: (1) the left, dominated by the Socialist and Communist parties; (2) center and reformist parties, comprised of the PDC and the failing Radical Party; (3) the right, consisting of the Conservative, Liberal, and National Parties. International events contributed to the continued polarization of Chile's political system. The United States' government modified its Latin American policy after the Cuban Revolution in 1959. President John F. Kennedy proposed the Alliance for Progress to combat the spread of Communism in the Americas. The Alliance for Progress was a social and economic development plan to be implemented by democratic governments with U.S. financial support.²¹⁴ The Chilean conservative right resisted the program's agrarian reform requirements and stalled land redistribution efforts in the early 1960s, adding to political polarization.

The Cuban Revolution had a profound impact on Latin American politics, U.S.-Latin American relations, and Chile's political system. The upper and middle classes and conservative parties viewed the rise of communism as a threat to religion and the home. Students became radicalized and embraced Cuba's example as a means to bring social

²¹⁴ The Kennedy administration also financed a counterinsurgency program in Latin America that modernized the military and police force to combat guerrilla forces and quell communist activities.

justice. Christian Democrats and Radicals attempted to protect family values and the democratic process. President Eduardo Frei's Christian Democrat government implemented Alliance programs and strove to mobilize peasants, students and the working-class. It offered a middle way between capitalist and radical revolutionary means to address the inequitable class structure. Rejuvenated by Cuba's success, leftist parties reorganized and promoted a revolutionary agenda that touted national independence and the preservation of democracy and the family. Political issues that surrounded the integrity of the family and the nation impacted women's political participation and how political parties defined women's role.

The Christian Democratic Party/PDC (*Partido Demócratacristiano*) and the Popular Action Front/FRAP (*Frente de Acción Popular*), both founded in the late 1950s²¹⁵, transformed the political party system. The PDC offered those who adopted Catholic social doctrine a means to combine their religious objectives with political action. PDC leaders also promoted a reformist agenda that was a nonviolent and non-Marxist alternative to the Cuban Revolution that occurred in 1959. FRAP represented a more concerted effort by leftist parties to unify and work toward disabling the capitalist system. Both the PDC and FRAP politicized rural peasants, competed for legislative reforms, and offered women new political opportunities. Their mobilization and electoral successes, coupled with growing anti-Communist sentiments, led right-wing parties to realign themselves with former ideological partners.

²¹⁵ FRAP was a coalition party comprised of the Socialist, Democratic, and Communist parties formed in 1956. Two socially-oriented Christian political parties, the National Falange and the Social Christian Conservative Party joined in 1957 to form the PDC.

The 1960s represented a shift in women's political participation and their relationship to political parties. More women entered higher education with the purpose of developing a career. The decade ushered in a new generation of feminists and female activists who were visible in student political organizations. Increasingly women held positions of leadership in student politics, especially in left-wing parties. Although the 1960s offered women more political and professional opportunities, the Chilean political system and society still upheld patriarchal traditions. As political scientist Elsa Chaney observed, this generation of politicized women found comfort in their role as *supermadres*, women who funneled their traditional roles as mothers and helpmates to the national political arena.²¹⁶

Chaney argued that early feminists failed to attract new feminists and to alter the image of women's proper social role.²¹⁷ Women's political party participation in the 1950s illustrated that early feminists did succeed. Women transitioned from behaving as weak actors both within and outside the party system to integrating themselves fully into the political parties. By the early 1960s, women had become full members of most parties' executive arms. Women were still a minority, but by working within the party system, women effectively brought issues they deemed important to the legislative process. More young women joined political parties and more women held party leadership roles which enabled them to influence party leaders more effectively. This coincided with intense political polarization at the national and international level.

²¹⁶ Elsa Chaney, Supermadre: Women in Politics in Latin America. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979, 20.

²¹⁷ Ibid., p. 76.

Women and many party leaders were acutely aware of gender inequities, but larger divisive issues, such as the Cold War, impeded their ability to challenge them directly.

Women and Left-wing Parties The Socialist Party

Socialist Party leaders consistently argued that women's legal, economic, and social demands were linked to the broader class struggle. In a 1969 party bulletin, party leaders recognized the difficulties social groups faced and connected the solution to their problems with the Socialist cause.²¹⁸ The bulletin read: "The Movement of the Masses is more ample, because housewives, non-working youth, retirees, the jobless, etc. are also integrated, organized not only according to their exploited condition, but according to other needs, housing, education, culture, sports, public health, etc."²¹⁹ Socialist leaders incorporated the groups listed because, like laborers, they occupied an exploited status; however, party leaders maintained their needs were secondary to class interests. They reminded women constantly that capitalism created gender discrimination. Leaders identified their first priority to be ending the capitalist structure. Women had to support party struggles to influence party adoption of gender concerns.

Socialist leaders asserted that the party's success relied on all members' active participation. Only militant members, including women, earned the right to advance to leadership positions. Party directives defined a militant as a member who actively worked for the party, spread its doctrine, and committed him or herself to the Socialist cause. In a 1949 pamphlet, leaders defined acceptable militancy as follows:

²¹⁸ Party advocates never abandoned their argument that equality between the sexes was a necessary goal. As they had since the 1930s, Socialist leaders asserted that the sexes should be united to fight for class interests and once those interests were met, gender equality would follow. See Roseblatt, Gendered Compromises, pp. 98-99 and Antezana-Pernet, "Mobilizing Women in the Popular Front Era."

²¹⁹ "Boletín de Comité Central Partido Socialista", Santiago, July 1969.

The simple intellectual acceptance of Party principles is not enough for a person to be a militant, if this disposition is not joined to socialistic activity. The historical task of making Socialism triumph cannot be realized by a party whose members do not really integrate them to the socialist task.²²⁰

Party members who adopted Socialist ideology agreed to participate in the transmission of that ideology and party programs. The pamphlet also obliged members to place class issues above all others, making class warfare their greatest objective. Any person joined the Socialist Party, including women, understood that the socialist cause was the main concern.

Party organizers educated women and young members about their role in the class struggle and instructed them to work “together with leftist professionals who are adding to our campaign, such that these sectors understand that the true and integral solution to their problems is solely in the liquidation of the current political system to be replaced by a new socialist structure for our nation.”²²¹ Socialist leaders deviated little from the message they presented in the 1930s; the eradication of class conflicts resolved gender inequities. Until the capitalist system was destroyed, no concerted effort would be made to tackle gender problems.

Socialist leaders informed female members that they played a central role in the party’s success by recruiting new members and transmitting the party’s message. As the party gained strength and numbers, leaders rewarded women’s efforts by sponsoring women’s electoral campaigns. Between 1960 and 1973, Socialists elected three women to the Chamber of Deputies and one woman to the Senate: Deputies Laura Allende,

²²⁰ “Directivas Fundamentales del Programa de 1949,” Cuadernos de Orientación y Pensamiento Socialista, El Partido Socialista de Chile, Vol. II, Archivos Internet Salvador Allende, first digital edition, 2004, www.salvador-allende.cl.

²²¹ Ibid.

Fidelma Allende, Carmen Lazo Carrera and Senator María Elena Carrera

Villavicencio.²²² These women illustrated party leaders' effective recruiting strategies.

Salvador Allende's sister Laura joined the PS during her university years. Although she did not engage in militant political activities until the 1960s, he worked diligently toward party goals and became a Central Committee member during the La Serena Socialist Party Congress in 1971.

Laura Allende mentored Socialist youth and taught them how to apply Socialist ideology to resolve social problems. According to Juan Reyes Duarte, a young Socialist member, she invited some junior party members to a women's meeting. She escorted them to Santiago's red-light district where she spoke with prostitutes. Laura encouraged them to discuss their main concerns. She explained:

Forgive me youngsters for not telling you whom I was going to meet. This will serve you as Socialist militants, because you need to understand reality, for how crude it can be. They [prostitutes] are part of this society. You need to help them to better their quality of life, especially the lives of their children.²²³

Her methods were unorthodox, but Laura Allende's actions illustrated her commitment to the PS and its constituents. She took the party message to the streets and attempted to politicize the public, including prostitutes. She demonstrated that all people had access to political power. She taught the Socialist youth that political action had few boundaries and showed them that the party's future relied on their activism.²²⁴

²²² The three deputies did not complete their 1973-1977 terms because the military disbanded Congress in 1973.

²²³ Juan Reyes Duarte, "No olvidar a Laura Allende," *La Nación*, October 8, 2003.

²²⁴ Allende's radicalism and relation to Present Allende resulted in her detention by the military government on 4 November 1974. She was exiled and eventually settled in Cuba, where she spent the remainder of her life. She died 23 May 1981 from cancer.

Carmen Lazo Carrera joined the Socialist Party in 1933 at the age of 13. Through her party involvement she became aware of the daily economic and social problems Chile's lower classes faced. Lazo's party affiliation influenced her professional career choice. She worked for both the National Health Service and the Social Security agency. Throughout her civil service career she continued to devote her time to the PS. Her militant activities allowed her to advance in the party. In 1941 and 1947 she served in the PS Central Committee and in 1943 she won a Santiago City Council seat.²²⁵ Lazo received strong party support for her Congressional campaigns and won three consecutive elections, beginning in 1965. In Congress Lazo exhibited a commitment to Socialist issues: retirement benefits, Labor Code reform, access to health care and education, and universal suffrage without literacy requirements.

Fidelma Allende Miranda, elected to the House of Deputies in 1973, also joined the Socialist Party as a young university student.²²⁶ During the 1960s early 1970s she devoted herself to Socialist causes and her political career. She became the National Director of the Sole Worker's Center (*Central Unica de Trabajadores/CUT*) in 1965.²²⁷ As CUT director she staged general strikes and negotiated labor demands. It was a great achievement for any leftist individual to attain that position and even more impressive for a woman, especially in an era when women held a small percentage of political leadership positions. Fidelma Allende became a member of the PS National Central Committee in 1967 and won a Santiago City Council election in 1970. By 1973 she had

²²⁵ "Reseñas Biográficas: Carmen Lazo Carrera," Biblioteca Nacional del Congreso.

²²⁶ "Reseñas Biográficas: Fidelma Allende Miranda," Biblioteca Nacional del Congreso.

²²⁷ CUT was a national trade union federation.

completed a successful congressional campaign, adding to Socialist representation in the Chamber of Deputies.

Although PS leaders did not advance a large percentage of its female members to national positions, they did support and elect a woman to the Senate in 1967. María Elena Carrera Villavicencio was the third woman elected to the Chilean Senate.²²⁸ Carrera joined the Socialist University Brigade in 1949, and was chair of her local PS center. She coordinated the women's division of Salvador Allende's 1958 presidential campaign.²²⁹ Through her party connections and militancy she earned two significant appointments in the 1960s: National Socialist Agrarian Commission/CONAS (*Comisión Nacional Agraria Socialista*) in 1967 and PS National Central Committee member.²³⁰

Laura Allende, Fidelma Allende, Carmen Lazo, and María Elena Carrera Villavicencio's political careers did not represent most Socialist women's experiences. The PS promoted far fewer women than men to high level positions. These women received party support because of their continuous militant activities and their connections to party leaders. Although they were well educated and paid their dues to the Socialist Party, these four women had an advantage through family and personal connections to party leaders.

PS founders, although reluctant to incorporate a large percentage of women to high level positions during the 1960s, argued that advancement required party militancy. This was a common characteristic for leftist political parties from the 1930s through the 1960s. Socialist leaders informed women that their participation and support were

²²⁸ Carrera filled a seat left vacant by her husband who was also a militant Socialist, Salomán Corvalán González.

²²⁹ "Reseñas Biográficas: María Elena Carrera Villavicencio," Biblioteca Nacional del Congreso.

²³⁰ Ibid. CONAS dealt with peasant issues.

essential to the party's success and future growth. Women's issues were considered important, albeit secondary to party interests, and would be addressed after party objectives were met. Socialist leaders never abandoned this message.

Socialist leaders' focus on party goals and FRAP activities left little room to address women's issues. Their decision to join the Popular Unity party/UP (*Unidad Popular*) further directed their efforts away from women's concerns. The Socialist, Communist, Radical, Social Democrat, Independent Popular Action Front/API (*Acción Popular Independiente*) and Unitary People's Action Movement/MAPU (*Movimiento de Acción Popular Unitaria*) parties established the UP in October 1969. The parties agreed to pursue a socialist platform for the 1970 presidential election with Salvador Allende as their candidate.²³¹ Allende looked to the coalition parties to mobilize voters, especially women.²³²

Women's issues obtained more support after Salvador Allende became President in 1970. He proposed the establishment of the Ministry of the Family to Congress in 1971. The Ministry of the Family joined all government institutions that dealt with family issues, including the National Kindergarten Board and the National Women's Office.²³³ Although Congress did not promulgate the law to establish the new ministry, it would have integrated women more fully in the UP government.²³⁴ In December 1972, President Allende established the National Women's Department/NWD (*Secretaría Nacional de la Mujer*). The NWD worked closely with government institutions to tackle

²³¹ Collier and Sater, *A History of Chile*, p. 327.

²³² Allende did not win the women's vote, but more women supported his election in 1970 than in the previous three presidential elections. See Baldez, *Why Women Protest*, pp. 52-53.

²³³ Teresa Valdés and Marisa Weinstein, *Mujeres que sueñan: Las organizaciones de pobladoras en Chile, 1973-1989*, (Santiago: FLACSO, 1993), p. 64.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 66. According to Valdés and Weinstein, Congress was on the verge of establishing the new ministry when the military overthrew the UP government in 1973.

women's legal rights, price controls for food, health, education, and day care issues.²³⁵ Although President Allende attempted to make the government more responsible for addressing women's concerns, his efforts were short-lived. The coalition parties represented different political philosophies and class interests, which frustrated party leaders' ability to maintain their alliance. Although the UP coalition relied on women's support, the individual parties competed for women members. The 1973 military overthrow halted all government activities, making it difficult to assess how President Allende's policies affected women and gender relations overtime. During the UP's short existence, the coalitional parties repeated past mistakes and failed to bridge differences and unify completely. Although party leaders agreed on a Socialist reform platform, they never abandoned their individual parties' objectives. This failure hindered leftist women's abilities to form even a left-wing women's bloc and to demand gender specific legislation.

The Communist Party

While PC officials and members contemplated the woman question, certain women advanced to national party positions. Despite the Communist's period of illegal isolation, leaders continued to mobilize members and re-entered the political scene with a strong support base in the late 1950s. Female membership increased in the 1960s and party leaders offered female members more electoral support. The PC elected eight women out of 17 elected officials to Congress between 1960 and 1971. Julieta Campusano Chaves, María Maluenda Campos, Gladys Marín Millie, Mireya Baltra Moreno, Amanda Altamirano Guerrero, Eliana Aranibar Figueroa, Silvia Acosta

²³⁵ Ibid.

Espinoza, and Vilma Rojas Alfaro all earned support for their militant efforts to accomplish party goals.²³⁶ Leaders' commitment to advance more women to nationally elected positions than the Socialist Party illustrated that the concern over women's role in the party was more than an intellectual debate.

Gladys Marín, elected to the Chamber of Deputies in 1965, 1969 and 1973, was one of the most beloved Communist representatives. Her older sister Silvia introduced her to the PC when she was in her mid-teens. She explained that the young comrades had well developed opinions and that "they made an impression on me, above all things, for their immense human quality."²³⁷ Her early experiences with the Communist Youth were so positive that she joined the PC and devoted herself to the party cause. She met Jorge Muñoz through the PC and married him in 1963. Together they worked on Salvador Allende's 1964 presidential campaign, became party leaders, and managed to raise two sons, Alvaro and Rodrigo. Marín was a representative of the National Women's cell, a member of the Executive Commission in 1960, a Central Committee member in 1962, and was the first female appointed as General Secretary of the Communist Youth in 1963.²³⁸ Marín's marriage to Muñoz facilitated her party work and enabled her to have both a political and family life.

²³⁶ Eliana Aranibar, Silvia Acosta, and Vilma Rojas did not complete their first terms, because of the military overthrow in 1973.

²³⁷ Lucho Abarca, "La difícil tarea de entrevistar a Gladys Marín," Ramona September 5, 1972, p. 40.

²³⁸ Biografía de Gladys Marín, Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile. Muñoz, the CP's secretary for Santiago, disappeared after his arrest in 1976. He is presumed to be dead, although his body was never found. Marín's political activities caused her to be placed on Pinochet's most wanted list and led to her exile in 1974. Their children remained in Chile and a close family friend raised them.

Marín's commitment to the PC in her youth brought her to the Chamber of Deputies in her early twenties.²³⁹ She sponsored legislation that favored women, children, and the working-class, such as national day care, one year maternity leave, funding for university students, public education, and Labor Code reforms. She promoted the Communist agenda and labor concerns above all others. Adhering to PC policy, Marín explained that all disciplined members, from the newest comrades to national representatives, had to work first toward party goals. She defined discipline as "a mixture of delivery, abnegation, efficiency, study, practice, worry, determination, continuity, and steadfastness."²⁴⁰ Marín clarified that Communist discipline was a conscious choice and reflected an individual's desire to understand political ideology and to apply that knowledge to everyday situations, such as gender discrimination and unfair work practices.²⁴¹ For her achieving Communist objectives led to solutions for other problems.

Julieta Campusano, the first Communist woman elected to the Senate, enlisted in the Communist Youth when she was 16 years old and became a Central Committee member in 1944. Campusano, like other leftist women, fought for suffrage while continuing to participate actively in her party. In 1947, she won a City Council seat, but her term ended when she was incarcerated during President González's period of Communist repression. She became the first Chilean woman to serve in both the Chamber of Deputies (1961-1965) and the Senate (1965-1973).²⁴² She supported gender

²³⁹ Marín's continued militant activities helped to end General Pinochet's dictatorship and led to her election as Communist Party President in 1994.

²⁴⁰ Abarca, "La difícil tarea de entrevistar a Gladys Marín," Ramona, September 5, 1972, p. 43.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² The Military overthrow interrupted Campusano's second term that began in 1973.

specific projects, such as free prenatal care, child labor protections, women laborers' retirement age at 60 years, retirement benefits for domestic servants, national day care, and creating the Ministry of Family and Social Development. PC leadership appointed her to the Secretariat in 1973 and as Communist Party National Manager of International Relations.

Mireya Baltra adopted Communist ideology as a university student and joined the PC after it regained its legal status in 1958. A columnist for the Communist newspaper El Siglo in the early 1950s, she moved into politics. In 1958, party leaders appointed her to the political commission, where she made important connections. She became the national director of CUT in 1957, won a Santiago City Council seat in 1963, and served in the Chamber of Deputies from 1965 to 1973.²⁴³ Baltra's continued activism resulted in an appointment to President Salvador Allende's government as Minister of Labor for two short terms: June 2 1971 to July 2 1971 and July 17 1972 to November 2 1972. As Deputy and Minister, Baltra worked diligently on labor conflict resolutions and issues affecting women laborers, such as national day care and domestic servants' rights.

Baltra balanced her political career with her family responsibilities with the aid of her husband Reynaldo Morales and her four children.²⁴⁴ Her oldest child, María Odette, explained that the family was happy about her mother's appointment and that they all understood the great responsibility of political action. Baltra argued that she would be judged as a political officer and as a woman. She stated, "In addition to fulfilling my duties to the people, to my Party, and to the program of the Popular Unity, I cannot fail as

²⁴³ "Biografía de Mireya Baltra," Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile. She won reelection in 1973, but did not fulfill her term

²⁴⁴ Her children and their ages when she became Minister of Labor: María Odette, 20; Roberto, 19; Rodrigo, 7; and Romanina, 4.

woman.”²⁴⁵ Odette had no doubts that her mother would succeed as a political figure and as a woman. She explained that her mother’s greatest strength was her ability to rely on her family for support: “One of her characteristics is that she never falters in front of her colleagues. But here at home, she crumbles.”²⁴⁶ Baltra found peace and security at home, which allowed her to remain calm and effective at work. Despite her professional and political duties, Baltra maintained a good family life. She ensured that the family ate meals together and reserved Sundays for family. Baltra’s family provided emotional support and contributed to household duties, which enabled her to balance her family and professional responsibilities well. Her daughter stated, “With respect to domestic things, we all cooperate: beginning with my father, who washes briefs and socks every day.”²⁴⁷ Baltra’s family dynamic was progressive for the time.

Baltra’s nomination to Minister of Labor represented advancement for women in Chilean politics. She was the third Chilean woman to head a Ministry and was one of a handful of women worldwide to have such a post. Although Salvador Allende, the Socialist leader of the Popular Unity coalitional government, appointed Baltra, her commitment remained to the PC. Baltra, Marín, and Campusano all advanced in the party ranks because of their militancy and connection to party leaders. Their political achievements in the 1960s also illustrated PC leaders’ commitment to advance women in the party.

Baltra’s conscious choice to adopt Communist ideology and devote herself to achieve party goals exhibited the militant discipline that Marín defined. Baltra conceived

²⁴⁵ Claudia Lanzarotti, “Mireya Baltra: Ministro chora y proleta,” Ramona, June 27, 1972, p. 15.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 16.

her Ministerial role as an extension of her militancy and explained that the Minister of Labor could not operate as a lone activist. Rather, she had to foster a cooperative spirit with organized laborers to achieve success. She explained that her main purpose was “to carry out a great ideological fight in the bosom of the working class,” reflecting an assumption that all laborers shared the same ideological beliefs.²⁴⁸ Baltra transmitted the Communist concept of discipline to laborers through the Ministry of Labor. She understood that she had to reinforce teamwork, activism, and commitment among the workers. She argued that she needed to help laborers demonstrate to the world that their willingness to struggle against capitalist oppression was greater than the will of those who exploited them. She said, “For that they [laborers] must study and should create the mechanisms of participation.”²⁴⁹ Baltra reiterated Marín’s conceptualization of the Communist discipline.

Baltra, like Communist leaders, conceptualized women’s political participation as directly related to their role in society. She argued that women could not sit idly by while the nation’s leaders made decisions that directly affected their lives. She suggested that every woman should involve herself in the country’s economic, political, and social progress and maintained, “for every woman a task is presented.”²⁵⁰ Baltra explained those tasks were related to the working-class movement and explained that although housewives, female industrial labors, female agricultural laborers, and professional women might have different things to offer to the class struggle, they all shared an

²⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 16.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 17.

obligation to use their abilities to sustain the nation's progress.²⁵¹ More importantly, Baltra expressed, "women do not want to be a burden to their husbands or to society."²⁵² The best way to prevent that was for women to become involved in resolving political, social and economic issues. Her message was not to unite women as a group. Rather, she encouraged each woman to unite with other individuals over political and economic issues not gender concerns.

Communist leaders devoted much time to interpreting the role women would have in the PC and the responsibility the party had to women. More than other parties in the 1960s, the PC attempted to weave gender issues into the larger labor and class movement. Leaders chose to augment Lenin's perception of women's domestic enslavement as a condition that was directly connected to the capitalist class structure, to include equality between the sexes. Although the PC discussed women's merits and adopted measures to incorporate women more fully into the party structure, many local and regional cells continued to address women's needs as secondary and to treat female members as mere support personnel rather than equal participants. Despite such setbacks, more women in the party advanced to national party positions than in other parties. Such backing demonstrated that discussions concerning women's political participation and promotion during the 1950s were not just intellectual endeavors; rather, they created a real commitment to producing results.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid.

Women and Right-wing Parties

The Conservative Party

The Conservative Party had long accepted women's presence in party affairs and in politics, whether through official or informal means; however, that did not mean that women's party participation was unquestioned. Select women occupied important and high level positions in the Conservative Party, such as Margarita del Solar and Inés Guzman, both were presidents of the Women's Section, and Paz Merino, President of the Women's Youth Section.²⁵³ These women represented a small percentage of women in leadership positions who instructed the rank and file female members about their responsibilities to the party. They also educated general members about women's official place in the party structure. They accomplished this by utilizing the cultural centers they had established and contributed articles to the Conservative Party's official bulletin that outlined women's duties and contributions. Such communications enabled female party leaders to convey their agendas and to describe their official party capacity.

Conservative women throughout the 1950s and 1960s continued to provide social assistance to the disadvantaged in the party's name. The social assistance programs Conservative women organized ranged from providing food and clothing to the poor to contributing financial assistance to orphanages and housing developments for the poor.²⁵⁴ Female regional directors in the 1960s extended the party's reach to its constituents after an earthquake devastated the central and southern regions of the nation. They raised

²⁵³ Paz Merino was 19 years old when she assumed the presidency of the Conservative Party Women's Youth Section.

²⁵⁴ Acción Conservador No. 11 (June and July 1960): p. 4.

funds for rebuilding efforts and collected clothing and food for earthquake victims.²⁵⁵

Placing social assistance programs under the direction of the Women's Section reinforced women's nurturing role in society and reflected the traditional relationship women had with the Conservative Party. Although women operated the charitable arm of the party, they adopted a new responsibility: to engage in the fight against Communism.

During the 1959 inaugural convention, Margarita del Solar García Huidobro, the national president of the Women's Section and Santiago Councilwoman, reaffirmed conservative women's role to promote the party's agenda and to be spiritual and moral torchbearers. She proclaimed that through the Conservative Party, "Catholic women have been able to channel their anxieties."²⁵⁶ Solar extolled the party for being the only one in which women could incorporate themselves into politics without abandoning their religious convictions or the Pope's guidance. She added, "As Catholics, we are the only denominational party in the country, and therefore, we declare it in the mission statement of our articles of association. As Conservatives, we support a democratic and social tradition based on Christ's doctrine."²⁵⁷ Her sentiments echoed Catholic Church officials' position that the Church was best served through the Conservative Party. At the 1947 Conservative Party Convention, Monsignor Luis Arturo Pérez quoted another prelate: "The Church recognizes the Conservative Party as its better children, those who sacrifice themselves for the defense of its rights, those who confess in public their

²⁵⁵ The earthquake occurred in May 1960 and affected Chile from to Chiloé. Tidal waves and several volcanic eruptions damaged the coast, killing hundreds and leaving thousands without shelter and food.

²⁵⁶ "En el Partido Conservador, la mujer católica ha podido encauzar sus inquietudes," Acción Conservador No. 6 (October and November 1959): 33. Acción Conservador was the party's official bulletin.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

Christian faith without being ashamed of it....”²⁵⁸ Both religious and Conservative Party leaders made it known that they held a shared commitment to upholding Christian values and hoped to spread that belief to Chilean society. Solar argued that her party was the only party that served both Christian values and conservative ideological concerns. Thus, she separated the Conservative Party from the Christian Democratic Party.

Conservative leaders made their relationship to the Pope widely known, despite divisions among conservatives in the late 1940s and 1950s. Women’s Section presidents, including Solar, often referred to the papal bond, reiterating conservative leadership claims. In March 1950, Joaquín Prieto Concha, president of the Traditional Conservative Party, called on all conservative supporters to unite and put differences aside in order to defend Catholicism nationally and globally.²⁵⁹ He urged right-wing leaders like Horacio Walker and Edward Cruz Coke to guide their members to come together, thus heeding Pope Pius XII’s call for all Catholics to unite “to defend the faith and fight for religious ideals.”²⁶⁰ Although Conservative leaders recognized the need to join forces in the struggle against the rising Communist and Marxist parties, certain divisions proved too deep to mend. Senator Cruz Coke articulated his displeasure at the proposition: “It is impossible to unite with the traditionalists. They may return to the fold if they want.”²⁶¹ Unless conservatives could iron out their differences over applying Catholic social doctrine and addressing Marxist expansion, leaders would not be able to restore their previous partnership.

²⁵⁸ Ignacio Arteaga Undurraga, comp., *Partido Conservador XIV-Convención Nacional, 1947*, p. 129, quoted in Ben G. Burnett, *Political Groups in Chile: the Dialogue between Order and Change* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970), p. 178-79.

²⁵⁹ *Zig-Zag*, March 4, 1950, p. 25.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

Paz Merino explained that it was necessary for Conservative women to engage in the ideological struggles against the left. She explained women's role in politics as an extension of domestic responsibilities that included securing the safety of the family and the home. She praised Chilean women's increased politicization and commended women for fighting for basic human and civil rights. According to Merino, the evolutionary journey women underwent had transformed the political playing field so much that women could no longer remain on the sidelines on economic, political, and social issues. "However," she warned, "alongside this amplification [of rights], confusion is produced at the same time: a feminist movement is created that goes against woman's natural self."²⁶² She argued that feminism produced opportunistic women who sought work as a means to "get out of what they call the monotony of the home."²⁶³ Such activity, she claimed, went against women's nature and minimized the political playing field for women. Merino added that political participation should be used for a higher purpose. Her statements illustrated that there were people worried about women's increased politicization and what that might mean for normative gender roles.

Other Conservative Party leaders discussed how women's active political participation affected society and helped in the struggle against Communism. The issue caused some concern for conservative members, especially how to increase women's activities within the party. To tackle the issues raised, the Women's Section used the November/December 1960 party bulletin to introduce women leaders, outline their concerns, and to justify women's purpose in the party. Inés Guzman expressed in the foreword that the Women's Section leaders wanted to introduce their ideals and convey

²⁶² Paz Merino, "La mujer y la política," Acción Conservador (June 1959): p. 19.

²⁶³ Ibid.

how women should participate in the party structure. “In politics especially, it is easy to be misinterpreted, whether it is because people do not know us or more so because adverse elements, interested in discrediting us, present us in a tendentiously unfavorable way.”²⁶⁴ Guzman’s statement suggested that some Conservative members felt uneasy about women’s political activities within the party. She also alluded to political opponents who had discredited conservative women’s political capacity. She commented on speculations that materialism and modernism drove conservative women’s cause: “They [leftist political leaders] do not interpret our consciousness as Christians and as patriots....” Guzman maintained that Conservative women leaders wanted to educate people about their official party roles and defended their adherence to Christian values, claiming that their faith drove their political activities.

Guzman sought to politicize women and persuade them to join the Conservative Party. She tapped into women’s commitment to Catholicism, by calling all those who adopted Catholic values to stop being spectators and to join in the Conservative Party’s mission. Guzman made clear that they would continue the struggle for the ideals that all women held dear, “God, Nation, Justice, and Home,” and that they would carry out that task by “obeying His Holiness Pius XII’s clear instructions.”²⁶⁵ She clarified that political activity, when born from religious principles, was a noble deed that held no shame. Perhaps Guzman used the papal bond to attract new members and to retain supporters who, frustrated by internal tensions, contemplated joining the Christian Democrats.

²⁶⁴ Acción Conservador, (November and December 1960): 3.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

Acción Conservador dedicated many issues to the growing tensions in the Conservative Party concerning Communist uprisings, incorporating Christian social doctrine, and the growth of the Christian Democratic Party. Merino argued that women could no longer occupy a secondary position in the fight against Communism, a struggle that included confronting political groups that viewed tolerance as the best method to contain Communist efforts.²⁶⁶ She argued that politicians wasted time discussing what should be the best course of action, stressing that the nation needed “constructive and practical ideas.”²⁶⁷ Women’s contribution to this struggle should focus on their greatest strengths: their faith and their commitment. “In our difficult, often ungrateful task we follow a doctrine, not a man; because men pass on only doctrines remain.” Merino stressed that the conservative youth, because of their strong faith, would not permit the nation’s people to be swayed by what she felt were erroneous ideals.

Merino called on young conservative women to make their homes, families, and religious convictions the cornerstone of their political activities. She wrote, “We young conservative women do not want to defraud those who expect so much from our attitude; doctrine is the soul that encourages us....because this is the sublime mission for which God has created us.” Merino explained that young women should draw on their deep faith to guide their endeavors in the Conservative Party. Ultimately, their faith helped them to stay loyal to party agendas and Christian mission. Her message was clear: if women committed themselves to God and their political participation was within the confines of their “natural roles,” they would not be misguided by ill-conceived notions.

²⁶⁶ Paz Merino, Acción Conservador (June 1959), p. 20.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

Neither Guzman nor Merino named the Christian Democratic Party specifically nor discussed the mounting friction within party leadership as cause for their remarks. However, their statements illustrated discord in the Conservative Party over how best to confront Communism and to incorporate Catholic social doctrine more fully into the party structure. Party leadership asserted that defeating Communism and achieving a society founded on Christian ideals were their main objectives:

The Party holds as its most supreme aspiration a Christian social order, in which all spiritual, social, juridical, and economic forces cooperate for the common good, according to the dictates of justice and charity....It [the party] repudiates Marxism in all its forms, particularly Communism for being an intrinsically perverse, atheistic, materialistic, and tyrannical system and because its doctrine contradicts natural reason and disregards human dignity.²⁶⁸

Party leaders identified the Conservative Party as a force opposed to Marxist movements that promoted an ideal Christian-based society. Their statement defined Communism as antidemocratic and anti-Christian, whose doctrine should be renounced and defeated. Despite declaring its stance against leftist movements, party leaders did not define the measures they would use, an oversight that caused internal conflicts.

It was no secret that the Conservative Party had a strong bond with the Catholic Church; however, its membership rolls suffered as more young Catholics broke from the party to form the Falange Nacional (*Falange Nacional*) in 1938 that evolved into the Christian Democratic Party in 1957. The Conservative Party had to compete for the Catholic vote with the Falange Nacional and the PDC. Women figured into this equation as a highly prized commodity, both as potential party members and as voters for Conservative candidates. The party could not survive without strong female support,

²⁶⁸ Acción Conservador (May 1959): p. 17.

especially considering the rising strength of center parties and leftist coalitions. The discussions about faith, democracy, and commitment to true doctrines demonstrated Conservative Party leaders' attempts to maintain and recruit female supporters.

Along with Merino's declarations and Guzman's forward concerning Catholic social doctrine, the Conservative Party bulletin focused on women's participation in the party. Some contributors to the special Women's Section bulletin assuaged potential fears that conservative women's leadership sought social changes that interrupted gender relationships. They established a division between female activism and feminist political activities. Ester Ugarte Iriondo, a Women's Section member, alluded to this issue in her commentary titled, "How does the conservative woman approach the political problem?"²⁶⁹ Ugarte opined that women's increased sense of individualism had led to their political involvement. Women's public activities had made obsolete questions of women's rights to education, political expression, and work. Currently, Ugarte stated, conservative women did not pursue grandiose causes. Rather, politics offered them a means to seek social and legal justice and to preserve human dignity. Such interests were not part of a greater feminist plan, a point she emphasized: "Never have we thought about competing with man, except as equals, as a team, with the same ideals and problems, to help us make a better Chile."²⁷⁰ She did not intend to upset gender relations or to reorder society. She explained that conservative women sought to safeguard social welfare and to defend Christianity and liberty in the nation and beyond.

²⁶⁹ Ester Ugarte I., "¿Como enfoca la mujer conservadora el problema politico?" Acción Conservador (November and December 1960): 25.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

Ugarte's commentary also alluded to the growing competition between the traditional Conservative Party and the Christian Democratic Party. She described Conservative Party women members' Christian beliefs as being equal to those belonging to parties that were also deeply rooted in Catholicism. She chastised the other parties because they chose not to create an alliance with her party against Communism and that their actions proved that they, "obviously seek to govern with comfort and align with Marxism."²⁷¹ She concluded that Conservative women, understanding their obligations to the party and to Christian social doctrine, exercised their rights by supporting candidates that best reflected their interests.

An anonymous female member affirmed Ugarte's message by explaining why she embraced the Conservative Party. She articulated that the party was best equipped to defend the nation and had proved that it could protect the integrity of Chile's democratic institutions. She also stated, "Christian social doctrine is the foundation of my concept of life," a concept that she argued the Conservative Party embodied.²⁷² She claimed that elected party officials upheld Christian teachings and preserved the family by opposing divorce and any movements to discredit Catholic education. Above all, her loyalty stemmed from her certainty that party leaders "always attack Communism as the worst enemy of Christian civilization."²⁷³ Her reasons for party loyalty were clear; the Conservative Party shielded Chile from Communism.

Anonymity aside, the conservative woman's affirmations illustrated the mounting tensions in the party and the need to attract and retain female voters. Conservative

²⁷¹ Ibid., p. 26.

²⁷² "¿Por qué es Ud. Conservadora?" Acción Conservador (November/December 1960): 26.

²⁷³ Ibid., p. 27.

leadership strove to appeal to women's religious devotion and their dedication to their families' wellbeing. This strategy served the right-wing contingent well in its fight against Salvador Allende in the early 1970s. Communism lay at the center of the conflict and created tension within the party that exemplified the greater competition among parties at the national level. Conservative Party leaders' inability to agree on how to combat leftist political mobilization and failure to create a partnership with the PDC led to the party's dissolution. This displaced many conservative voters, especially women, whose adherence to Catholic values narrowed their political options. Many looked to the Christian Democratic Party to be their political advocate.

The National Party

The formation of splinter parties and internal conflicts demonstrated the increasing instability present in the Conservative and Liberal parties. Factions from both of these parties and some conservative splinter groups united in 1966 to form the National Party/PN (*Partido Nacional*). PN leaders hoped to combat the growing strength of the Christian Democratic and leftist parties. They proclaimed that they accepted Western Christian values and wanted to preserve Chile's cultural heritage and to reinvent patriotism.²⁷⁴ The mission statement explained: "the National Party is a restoration movement that proposes to reestablish national unity and the robust manner that shaped the Chilean soul."²⁷⁵ Leaders argued that the newly founded party sought to regain political dominance for the traditional right-wing sector. PN candidates earned some

²⁷⁴ FLACSO, *Estadísticos Electorales, 1952-1973*, p. 128.

²⁷⁵ Partido Nacional, "Fundamentos, Doctrinarios y Programáticos" 1966, Sección Chilena, Biblioteca Nacional, Santiago, Chile.

electoral successes in the late 1960s and early 1970s, including two women who served in the House of Deputies.²⁷⁶

María Correa Morande and Carmen Saenz were both founding members and National Party leaders.²⁷⁷ Correa, a major figure in the Liberal Party in the 1950s, had an even larger role in the PN as an Executive Committee member, becoming the first Chilean woman to occupy such a high seat in a political party. Saenz came from a political family, married a Liberal Party leader, and used her familial contacts to enter politics. Her father, Radical Party Senator Cristóbal Saenz (1933-1941), served as President Aguirre Cerda's Minister of Foreign Relations. Her husband Patricio Phillips was a Liberal Party member and PN founding member.²⁷⁸ Saenz was president of the Women's Section and became the National Party vice-president in the early 1970s. Correa and Saenz's leadership positions suggested the PN valued women's political advancement. In reality, few women occupied important positions in the party and the party did little to further women's political participation. Silvia Alessandri was the only female candidate elected to the Chamber of Deputies.²⁷⁹

The PN had an Executive Committee that oversaw all subcommittees and functioned as the party's decision-making arm. An existing separate Women's Branch registered female recruits and aided electoral campaigns.²⁸⁰ Party leaders employed Conservative Party recruitment strategies to attract female members: they appealed to

²⁷⁶ Silvia Alessandri, Arturo Alessandri's granddaughter, served one term from 1969 to 1973. Silvia Pinto Torres de Galleguillos, a party militant, won her seat in 1973, but was unable to complete her term after General Pinochet dissolved Congress.

²⁷⁷ Both women would later become leading figures in the anti-Allende movement.

²⁷⁸ Patricio Phillips served in the Chamber of Deputies from 1957 to 1973, representing the Liberal and National parties. In 1973 he won a Senatorial seat as a National Party candidate.

²⁷⁹ Silvia Alessandri, President Jorge Alessandri's daughter, won her seat in 1969.

²⁸⁰ Partido Nacional, "Estatutos" 1966, Sección Chilena, Biblioteca Nacional, Santiago, Chile.

women's sense of national duty and to their Christian beliefs. PN leaders implored women to join their ranks and to provide a valuable service to the nation. The PN foundational pamphlet stated: "The National Party calls Chilean women: unite with this restoration movement and have a position of responsibility and service. Considering they are the foundation of the Nation and thanks to women's efforts, abnegation, and sacrifices, the country has not fallen in major social and moral disturbances."²⁸¹

Founding members argued that the PN and Chilean women had a shared hope for the future: to protect the home and family values, to maintain a stable economy, and to provide adequate education and well-paying jobs. Party leaders needed female support and asserted that women, "who with their presence and their steadiness should drive the fight in order to conquer these objectives."²⁸² They recruited women to commit to the party agenda and in exchange, the PN promised "to respect their [women's] rights to an absolute equality with men in education and employment."²⁸³ PN leaders, although committed to women's rights, omitted having a respect for women's absolute social equality with men.

In the 1973 congressional elections the National Party joined with the Christian Democratic, Radical Left, and Radical Democracy parties to form the Confederation of Democracy (*Confederación de la Democracia*) coalition.²⁸⁴ The right-wing parties aligned with center-left parties to attain a larger presence in Congress and to block Popular Unity programs after Salvador Allende won the presidency in 1970. The coalition itself represented the parties' individual weaknesses and demonstrated the

²⁸¹ Partido Nacional, "Fundamentos, Doctrinarios y Programáticos."

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ FLACSO, *Estadísticos Electorales, 1952-1973*, p. 128.

intensified political polarization. It also reflected the complex nature of the Chilean political party system held together by fragile alliances.²⁸⁵ Special interest groups had trouble functioning unless they were backed by a political party or coalition. Those unable to form a cohesive political grouping, such as women, found it even more difficult.

Although the Nation Party appointed women to high leadership positions, the party did little to promote women's electoral campaigns or interests. This was a result of its infancy and inability to recruit a large support base and financing for its agenda. The PN devoted much of its resources to fight against the leftist movement, especially the Popular Unity coalition. It scrambled in the early 1970s to solidify political alliances against leftist, which left little room to develop a woman policy or to promote women's issues. The party suffered the same demise that other political parties faced after General Pinochet overthrew the government in 1973, which brought its ability to achieve its goals to a halt.

Women and the Christian Democratic Party

The Chilean Christian Democratic Party/PDC, founded in 1957, had its roots in the National Falange. A centrist party, its members supported the Catholic Church, upheld democratic values, and aimed to attain social justice through moderate reforms. Taking the writings and Catholic social doctrine of French philosopher Jacques Maritain, PDC leaders hoped to fashion a democracy that operated on Christian principles and to bring about a "communitarian society."²⁸⁶ The pillars of this sociopolitical philosophy

²⁸⁵ The Popular Unity, a leftist coalition, also had a very tenuous alliance.

²⁸⁶ See Michael Fleet, The Rise and Fall of Chilean Christian Democracy (Princeton University Press, 1985); Eduardo Frei, Sentido y forma de una política (Santiago: Editorial Pacifico, 1951); Idem,

were humanism and the belief that capitalism and socialism could be blended to produce a more equitable society. Under such a society, the rights of both the individual and the community would be protected. The PDC attempted to widen the electoral base and redistribute wealth more equitably while maintaining individual civil liberties. They referred to their political and social system was a “Revolution in Liberty.”

The PDC’s predecessor, the Falange, broke from the Conservative Party in 1938 and worked with Catholic social action organizations to mobilize rural laborers.²⁸⁷ The Falange remained small and leaders found it difficult to compete with Conservative elements and popular front parties. In 1958, Falange leaders disbanded the party and joined the PDC along with the Conservative Social Christian Party’s (*Partido Conservador Social Cristiano*).

PDC members sought to temper the socialist movement by offering a less antagonistic means for workers to make substantial gains in income and to dismantle paternalistic government. PDC leaders understood workers’ grievances and maintained that the economic, political, and social sectors needed to be altered and stated that they could transform them effectively through democratic or legal means.²⁸⁸ Politicians such as Eduardo Frei, who became the face of Christian Democracy, introduced ideas into the party platform previously presented in Pope John XXIII’s May 1961 *Mater et Magistra*.

Pensamiento y acción (Santiago: Editorial Pacífico, 1958); Idem, *Chile desconocido* (Santiago: Editorial del Pacífico, 1964); Cristián Gazmuri, *Eduardo Frei Montalva y su época* 2 vols. with Patricia Arancibia and Álvaro Góngora (Santiago: Aguilar Chilena de Editions, Leda., 2000); Martínez Gutenberg, *Christian democrat doctrinal foundations*, (Santiago, Chile: Organización Demócrata Cristiana de América, 2002); Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully, editors, *Christian Democracy in Latin America: Electoral Competition and Regime Conflicts*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003); Jacques Maritain, *Man and the State*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956); and Idem, *The Range of Reason*, (London: London G. Bles, 1953); Idem, *True Humanism*, translated by M.R. Adamson, (London: The Centenary Press, 1946).

²⁸⁷ Loveman, *Chile*, p. 274.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 270.

Frei advocated that the state should intervene in the economy and see to the needs of the rural population so as to prevent the spread of Communist activities.²⁸⁹ The PDC promoted agrarian reforms and delivered much-needed services to the rural sector, such as infrastructure, education opportunities, basic utilities and housing. These actions attracted new members, especially those who had become frustrated with their parties. By the early 1960s, the PDC filled the center leadership vacuum left by the waning Radical Party.

After Eduardo Frei won the 1964 presidential election, PDC leaders began to make significant political, economic, and social changes. The party gained the distinction of being the first nascent party to rise to the presidency in such a short time. The PDC won the presidency with the support of women who adopted its vision of social pluralism. The PDC incorporated women in its semi-hierarchical structure. The executive councils (*Juntas*) determined party decisions and oversaw special departments, such as the Women's Political and Social Action (*Acción Política y Social de la Mujer*), the peasant, labor, and youth departments. The departments' national directors served on the National Board (*Junta Nacional*), the party's highest administrative and authoritative organization.²⁹⁰ According to the party's statutes, the National Advisory Board elected

²⁸⁹ John Thomas Hall, "The Christian Democratic Party of Chile," (M.A. Thesis, The American University, 1965) p. 20.

²⁹⁰ Guiliastasi, *Partidos políticos*, p. 205-206. The PDC was more organized about incorporating women formally into the party than the Falange. During the 1952 presidential elections, there were numerous newspaper announcements for *falangistas*, specifically wives of Falange members and those women who were sympathizers. I have not come across any party documentation that described the official women's branch. The only reference was in Gaviola, et. al. *Queremos votar*, p. 95, which listed the *Falange Femenina* founded in 1938.

an additional ten representatives to serve as advisors. Article 28 established that of the ten, one must be a woman and one must be from the youth division.²⁹¹

PDC women politicians outlined female political activity as an extension of women's natural abilities. Deputy Wilna Saavedra, a party militant elected in 1965, 1969, and 1973, argued that PDC female activism reflected family values: "I believe that what is important is the human couple and in reality my fundamental concern is not women, but the family."²⁹² Her work in Congress illustrated that she concentrated on issues important to women; however, she did not identify herself as a feminist. Despite Saavedra's reluctance to be labeled as a feminist, she attempted to awaken women's political awareness. She explained, "I believe that we women should all form a political consciousness; these are not times to remain at the margin, under no pretext."²⁹³ Her call to women reflected the tactic the PDC had taken in other sectors of society. Party leaders hoped to develop a political awareness in the masses and to eventually harness any potential activism toward creating a "communitarian society". Saavedra implored women to take a stand and implied that the current political and social climate was such that it would be folly not to form an opinion.

Although Saavedra was committed to the PDC and, as president of the women's branch sought to increase female membership, she said that forming a political opinion and working in a party that best represented your views was an important decision for a woman to make. She said, "I believe that politics is an indispensable tool for progress of

²⁹¹ Partido Demócrata Cristiano, "Estatutos del Partido Demócrata Cristiano," September 9, 1960, p. 15. There were no other descriptions of women's role in the party. The statutes did not specify the Women's Section's function.

²⁹² "Diez Mujeres al Parlamento," Paula March 1969, p.21.

²⁹³ "Wilna Saavedra, Asistente Social y Líder de la Democracia Cristiana," Eva February 19, 1965, p. 20.

a modern country.... We all must belong to a party and work actively in it....”²⁹⁴ She argued that there was no greater task than protecting what one held most dear and that the best way to accomplish that was to join a political party that represented one’s ideals. Joining a party was not enough: “We should all become militants in politics.”²⁹⁵ For Saavedra political participation meant fully devoting oneself to a party and its cause.

Political activism, whether at the local or national level, became the best means to articulate and defend one’s principles. This was especially true for women, who needed to find a voice in the government to protect their beliefs. Saavedra acknowledged that women were a political force harnessed within the political parties themselves. “Women united and worked for Chile, each one in a party that seemed to have best fulfilled their aspirations.”²⁹⁶ This statement illustrates how she understood women’s political participation as an outgrowth of the party system. The larger significance behind Saavedra’s statements is that she encouraged women to take an ideological stance. She did not encourage women to unite to form a political bloc; rather, she persuaded women to participate in a political system that was becoming more fractionalized.

Saavedra articulated that the party agenda needed to come first. As a Congresswoman she supported every initiative put forth by President Frei. She demonstrated complete confidence in his leadership and illustrated that his program was the party’s agenda. Saavedra stated that PDC congressional representatives had the task of carrying out President Frei’s platform. Doing so would “give form to a program prepared by a party that does not hesitate to sacrifice itself for obtaining a better

²⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 40.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

future.”²⁹⁷ Saavedra made clear that the party and its mission came first, and that following the party’s program ensured a better future.

After meeting the party’s needs, Saavedra claimed that she would work toward her political goal, ensuring that single women were legally protected, especially in old age. She asserted, “If I win, I will do my parliamentary work in accordance with the government’s order and developing the points of my program, in which the protection of the elderly and the single woman are the most important.”²⁹⁸ While she backed the PDC’s agenda, Saavedra outlined her political concerns and said that she would strive to address them legislatively.

Saavedra worked on altering labor legislation, especially concerning a woman’s right to work and earn a decent wage. She said, “Although the law says differently, the truth is that after 30 years of age it is difficult for us [women] to find a job and a decent means to earn a living....”²⁹⁹ She added that this was more difficult as women became older, especially if they did not have a husband or children to help maintain them in their old age. She therefore wanted to raise the issue and put forth a plan to create senior centers to help those without family support and to aid those whose pensions and/or life savings did not keep up with the rising costs of living or inflation. These were not issues specific to the PDC, although they fit well with the party’s commitment to human decency.

Not all women in the PDC identified themselves as party militants. Rebeca Oyanedel, an attorney and PDC member, was appointed as the Sub-secretary of Economy

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 20.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 21.

in 1965, the first Chilean woman to hold a sub-secretarial position. Oyanedel had worked for the Financial Defense Council (*Consejo de Defensa Fiscal*) and other government agencies that dealt with commerce and industry.³⁰⁰ Oyanedel supported the PDC's doctrine and explained that she was not active in the party and never joined the Women's Department. Her family and employment kept her plenty busy, leaving little time for political pursuits.³⁰¹ She shared Saavedra's belief that women needed to align with a political party, stating, "I am registered in the Party, and I believe that all Chilean women should have our political camp... it is not a time to remain as indifferent spectators, especially in a Chile that demonstrates that we [women] are mature enough for the task."³⁰² Like Saavedra, she placed political ideology over women's and gender issues. Oyanedel stated that women should adopt a political stance and join the party that represented their views. Women would then realize their civic responsibility and prove their political maturity, not as women, but as party members.

Oyanedel had a nontraditional view of gender roles and argued that women should join a political party and work outside of the home: "the two circumstances are obligatory these days, where both sexes participate with the same efficiency in the nation's advancement."³⁰³ She pursued a career, had a family, and participated in politics. Oyanedel joined the PDC, but she did not participate in the Women's branch, because her career and family responsibilities left little time for party activism. She insisted that her 20 years of public service, not party militancy, qualified her for the Sub-secretarial position. She and her husband, also an attorney, both worked long hours and

³⁰⁰ Graciela Romero, "La Primera Subsecretario de Economía," *Eva*, March 5, 1965, p. 21.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

³⁰² *Ibid.*

³⁰³ *Ibid.*

shared responsibility for rearing their children. Although her new position also required long hours, she reserved the weekend for her family and regarded those days as time “for me and mine.”³⁰⁴ She used her experience to demonstrate that women could find a means to balance work, family, and political interests. Unlike most PDC female leaders, she abandoned the *Supermadre* complex and illustrated that her political and professional activities went beyond work deemed appropriate for women. Moreover, her family dynamic was not representative of the norm presented in Elsa Chaney’s work. Her husband supported her career and her political ambitions and he contributed to household duties. Oyanedel’s experience demonstrated that there was some change in gender relations, although small.

PDC leaders mobilized most of its women members through the Mothers’ Centers. The Central Coordinator of Mothers’ Centers/CEMA (*Central Coordinadora de los Centros de Madres*), created in 1964, united all Mothers’ Centers in Chile under one central organization.³⁰⁵ María Ruiz Tagle, President Frei’s wife, became the first CEMA director. She said that prior to becoming First Lady she devoted herself to her family. Her work included rearing the children, taking care of the home, and supporting her husband’s political endeavors. Ruiz Tagle represented a woman who viewed her political participation as an extension of her domestic responsibilities. She exhibited the qualities of a *Supermadre*, especially as the CEMA director.

CEMA provided an exciting opportunity and work that Ruiz Tagle seemed to relish. She felt some trepidation about assuming this project, because it made her feel “a

³⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 60.

³⁰⁵ According to Teresa Valdés and Marisa Weinstein, *Mujeres que sueñan: Las organizaciones de pobladoras en Chile: 1973-1989*, p. 56, an October 1966 calculation indicated that over 3,000 centers existed in Santiago and 2,500 in the provinces, each with about 50 members.

dreadful terror, because I did not know what to do.”³⁰⁶ Although she was not a professional, she learned how to operate a government agency. Overwhelming at first, the job gave her a means to participate in her husband’s reorganization of Chile. She proclaimed, “To do it, I have the impression that I am helping Eduardo,”³⁰⁷ thus continuing to fulfill her role as a supportive wife. To balance work and family, Ruiz Tagle claimed that she had to reprioritize her personal and political responsibilities. That was not to say her newfound career did not present some challenges. Her family, although supportive, did have some complaints about her long hours. She said that among the hundreds of letters she received at CEMA, one was from her husband in which he protested her working, playfully chastising her “for having thrown out the house, the grandchildren, and flirtation.”³⁰⁸ Despite their hectic schedules, they attempted to maintain a normal household routine by making time for each other every day. The regularly ate their dinner together, regardless of conflicting demands. Although they had a household cook, Ruiz Tagle maintained responsibility for coordinating meals, which she described as “the worst task of the day”³⁰⁹ because of her and her husband’s differing and demanding schedules. It was important for her to demonstrate that household management was her responsibility and that she applied the same skills in directing CEMA. She proved that although work altered family life, it did not have to take precedence over family.

Ruiz-Tagle’s daunting work involved transforming an existing charity organization into a national enterprise. CEMA was an outgrowth of a social service

³⁰⁶ Paula, January 1968, p. 74.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 75.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

program that provided essential clothing and basic necessities to the poor.³¹⁰ Ruiz Tagle noted that CEMA differed from the previous charity organization in that it did not provide handouts.³¹¹ Rather, it helped women to learn a craft or skill that enabled them to contribute to the family income without leaving the home, allowing them to care for their children and care for their families. CEMA sold goods and equipment, such as sewing machines and fabric, to women at cost, provided payment plans, and helped women sell the finished products. CEMA's success led to the establishment of the *Galería Artesanal* (Artisan Gallery), a Santiago-based gallery where women sold handcrafted items.³¹²

The Mothers' Centers, according to Ruiz Tagle, provided an immense psychological benefit to women. Women felt more connected to their communities and incorporated in the PDC. She described the positive effect the centers had on women's lives:

With their earnings...they buy things to better their homes, they feel useful and productive. And on the other hand it has an enormous psychological benefit: once a week they can leave their homes, their pots, their little ones in order to gather with other women, converse, and work together.³¹³

Through the Mothers' Centers, women became more independent and made valuable connections with women who had a shared experience. The centers also offered women a safe environment to discuss personal, political, economic, and social issues. Like Ruiz

³¹⁰ The *Ropero del Pueblo* had been traditionally headed by the First Lady.

³¹¹ Paula, January 1968, p. 74.

³¹² For information specific to women's experiences with the Mothers' Centers consult V. Oxman, La participación de la mujer campesina en organizaciones: los centros de madres rurales, Resultados de Investigación, no. 12 (Santiago: GIA, 1983) and Edda Gaviola, Lorella Lopresti and Caludia Rojas, "Centros de Madres ¿La mujer popular en movimiento? (1964-1973)," in Nuestro Pasado. Nuestro Futuro, (Santiago, Chile) Special edition (1989).

³¹³ Ibid.

Tagle, women became politicized by extending their domestic responsibilities to their communities. Thus, they maintained a traditional role outside the home.

PDC leaders advocated *Supermadre* political participation for women more than any other political party. Although a few PDC female members held powerful posts, the majority of women leaders were treated as junior partners. President Frei's daughter Carmen Frei became highly involved in PDC politics at an early age. She was president of the Women's Section and was a Senator from 1990 to 1998. Carmen Frei argued that male PDC leaders "were somewhat condescending, paternalistic."³¹⁴ Because male leaders' attitudes toward women were traditional, Frei argued that women had to work harder to overcome antiquated gender ideals. She stated:

To achieve respect and consideration one must prepare more, because they [men] always think that a woman is going to present very vague or very superficial things by virtue of being woman. Basically, for the woman there is a double demand despite all the effort that she makes, many more demands than for the men.³¹⁵

Carmen Frei explained that Catholic social and family values made it more difficult for aspiring women to command complete respect and authority within the PDC.

Traditional gender roles espoused by prominent female leaders, such as Carmen Frei's mother, María Ruiz Tagle, hindered women's ability to achieve more than a supportive role in the PDC.

Conclusion

Chilean women politicians operated under the belief that women's political activism should be a natural extension of their gender roles. Communist and Socialist

³¹⁴ Interview printed in Eugenia Hola and Gabriela Pischedda, Mujeres, poder y política: Nuevas tensiones para viejas estructuras (Santiago: Ediciones Centro de Estudios de la Mujer, 2000), p. 149.

³¹⁵ Ibid. Unfortunately, Frei believed that male attitudes had changed little, claiming that women continued to occupy secondary roles within the party during the 1990s.

political leaders' attempts to equalize women's position in the parties met with failure because of internal conflicts and more pressing national concerns. Conservative Party women members equated gender issues with moral issues, which they defined as preserving family values, protecting religious expression, and promoting national democratic institutions. Christian Democratic Party leaders defined motherhood as a justification for women's political participation. They publicized women's familial responsibilities through Mothers' Centers and created a network for women as a way to connect women to the party's ideological and economic agenda. Despite the image of the politically active woman as *Supermadre*, women politicians improved women's position in the political party system and succeeded in making women's issues part of party agendas.

Women made gains in the political party system throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Political party leaders recognized that women's support as voters and party members was essential to their future success. They expanded women's sections in the parties and supported women's national electoral campaigns. Women struggled to increase their role in the parties through recruitment efforts and providing administrative and electoral support for party candidates. By the early 1960s, women had become full members of most political parties' decision-making bodies, although they represented a minority. By successfully recruiting female party members, transmitting party agendas, and providing administrative assistance for candidates, women earned party leaders' respect and increased leaders' support for women's issues.

Women's party recruitment and restructuring efforts in the 1950s produced two important results. First, women members' attempts to enroll more women attracted a

new generation of female political participants. These newer recruits benefited from the previous generation of women party members who helped to establish women's sections and increase women's access to party leaders. The new generation forced party leaders to define women's function in the party and to increase women's representation in the parties' national committees. Women's voting power in parties' national administrative arms illustrated women's increased political importance and party leaders' increased respect for women as political partners. Secondly, increased female party membership strengthened women's abilities to encourage leaders to adopt and to promote woman-centered legislative projects. As women's enrollment swelled in individual political parties, party leaders' dependence on women's support intensified which made it more difficult for leaders to ignore women's demands. The increased female numbers also produced more women candidates who required financial and political support. This was a process that began in the 1930s, increased dramatically in the 1950s, and began to solidify in the 1960s.

The 1950s represent a crucial period of transition for women's political participation. Women abandoned attempts to forge cross-class and multi-party alliances in favor of integrating fully in the political party system. Limits were placed on women's party loyalty. Male party leaders and legislators welcomed reforms that addressed the many women and children left out of the welfare state. They enacted legislation that made men more responsible for their children even though such reforms stood to reduce patriarchal privileges; however, they rejected any attempts by feminists to equalize gender relations in the law. This was the nature of women's relationship to political parties in the 1950s. Party leaders accepted women as agents in expanding the party, but

not feminist demands. Despite women's weak position within the party system and as feminist ideologues in the 1950s, women's continued integration into political parties brought about significant changes in how women worked with leaders to move on gender-based projects in the 1960s. By the 1960s, women were more visible in politics and government positions and played a more active role in determining party agendas. Party leaders could no longer ignore women's loyalty or demands. In 1969 eleven women won congressional elections compared to only five in 1961.³¹⁶ Having more representation in political party leadership, in the legislature, and in party legislative committees positioned women to influence party agendas and legislative projects, such as national day care.

³¹⁶ Fifteen women won congressional seats in 1973, but the Military government prevented them from fulfilling their terms.

CHAPTER 5

WOMEN'S RIGHTS, THE FAMILY, AND THE STATE

“Women Declare War on Male Privileges,” read the title of a popular Chilean news magazine in 1952.³¹⁷ Adriana Olgún de Baltra, the director of the recently created Women’s Bureau, announced that women’s next battle consisted of challenging male economic and legal privileges. Olgún declared she would continue to push for women’s political and social equality, beginning with Civil Code reforms. Attempting to coordinate public policy on women through the Women’s Bureau, she expected to reform the Civil Code and to eliminate gender discrimination. Given that one aspect of Chilean legislation is hortatory in nature or advisory concerning moral behavior, Olgún pursued appropriate strategies. Her declaration of war proved ironic, especially considering women’s fragmented alliance and weak political position.

During the early 1950s, women’s political groups and parties suffered internal tensions and struggled against each other to define women’s next political battle after suffrage. By late 1953 after the Senate expelled María de la Cruz, more women turned to well-established political parties to advance women’s legal rights. Women and party leaders defined women’s roles and how their respective parties incorporated women’s agenda into legislative campaigns. Women’s roles changed little until female members demanded more access to party leaders and a larger voice in determining party programs

³¹⁷ Vea, January 30, 1952.

and strategies. These changes did not materialize until the early 1960s when women proved their worth to party leaders and forced their way into party leadership organs.

Women's political participation escalated as new political parties emerged and old parties changed how they regarded women's role. Women's ability to influence the party and legislation also should have increased. Examination of welfare and Civil Code reforms illustrates that although women influenced legislative reforms, they were unable to make extensive structural changes to the law that eliminated gender restrictions. During the first half of the twentieth century, Chilean women, feminists and non-feminists alike, sought to improve women's legal rights without disrupting normative gender relations. Several studies discuss how Chilean women negotiated a better political and economic position without compromising the family and women's protective status.³¹⁸ As some women engaged in the political party system more fully, they confronted political contests over increased legal and economic rights for women that targeted the gender order. This was not a unified struggle for women politicians. Women redefined their roles in the parties during the 1950s and chose to gain party support for their agendas rather than launching a cross-class and ideological feminist fight. Although women increased their presence in the political party system, this choice delayed their ability to influence legislation.

Legislative reforms that concerned women's rights raised important questions about gender roles and how Chile's legislative system reflected modern ideals. Chilean

³¹⁸ Eltit, Crónica del sufragio femenino; Gaviola, et al. Queremos votar; Hutchison, Labors Appropriate to Their Sex; Lavrin, Women, Feminism and Social Change; Margaret Power, Right-wing Women in Chile: Feminine Power and the Struggle Against Allende, 1964-1973, (University Park, PA.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002); Roseblatt, Gendered Compromises; and Virginia Vidal, La Emancipación de la mujer, (Santiago: Quimantú, 1972).

welfare policies in the early to mid-twentieth century preserved patriarchy through the family. Chilean reformers and lawmakers engineered a welfare system that promoted the nuclear family unit. Men had legal and economic authority over their wives and children and held responsibility for their sexual behavior. Women gained financial security through their husbands' employment and benefits, such as the family allowance, a government subsidy paid to married workers with children.³¹⁹ Married female laborers with children, not believed to be major wage earners in the family, did not receive a family allowance. As middle- and working-class parties merged to create the popular-front coalition that held power in the 1930s and 1940s, party leaders promised effective social welfare that strengthened the family, provided family allowances and education for children, and promoted strong marital relations. The welfare state that emerged improved social security and health care benefits for laborers and reinforced the nuclear, male-led family unit. Despite attempts during the popular-front governments to reinforce traditional gender roles and enforce moral standards on the working class, nontraditional families existed.

Middle-class Radicals and Socialist³²⁰ reformers continued to refine the social welfare system throughout the 1950s. This decade demonstrates reformers' competing goals which centered on softening the ill effects that industrialization and modernization had on the family. Radical Party women, especially Olgúin and Ana Figueroa, had a strategic goal to push a feminist agenda to equalize gender status in the law, which would filter down to society. Reducing gender discrimination, they believed, empowered both

³¹⁹ North American mining companies implemented a family allowance bonus in the 1920s to help workers with families to keep up with the cost of living. See Klubock, *Contested Communities*, pp. 82-83.

³²⁰ The Communist Party played an indirect role in the reform movement in the 1950s, because it was illegalized from 1948 to 1958.

women and the family. Radical and Socialist lawmakers had more practical objectives: to protect the family through welfare reforms that forced men to assume responsibility for their children's economic well-being and enabled women to have more control over their husband's wages.

Legislators and reformers understood that they had to redefine the family to reflect Chilean social realities. Although the illegitimacy rate fell from 32% in 1930 to 25% in 1950, exacerbated by the lack of an adequate divorce law, reformers worried over the high rate and addressed the issue by altering the terms of legitimacy and enabling unwed mothers to collect support from negligent fathers.³²¹ Middle-class and leftist reformers during the Popular Front Era attempted to regulate working-class morality through legislation and social programs. They sought to normalize male laborers' behavior to make them better husbands and fathers, emphasizing discipline and family responsibility. Social workers offered classes for working-class women to teach them to manage family budgets, to create a stable home environment, and to rear their children.³²² Reformers in the 1950s recognized that their desire to regulate the family necessitated a social welfare system that acknowledged the non-traditional family unit. Their acceptance led to legislation that continued to punish men for their neglect, but also recognized women's reliance on paid labor to sustain their children. This was an important decade for transitioning from promoting the patriarchal nuclear family to the

³²¹ Statistics taken from *Estadística Chilena* and *Anuario estadístico año 1950*, printed in Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises*, p. 150.

³²² For a complete discussion see, Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises*, Chp. 5 and "She's Not a Libertine, He Doesn't Drink: Popular Morality and the State in Twentieth-Century Chile," (paper presented at the 1997 meeting of the Latin American Studies Association, Guadalajara, Mexico, April 17-19, 1997).

state assuming a paternal role in children's nurturing through day care legislation in the 1960s.

The 1950s welfare reforms increased women's access to family allowances and bestowed them with more economic authority and pension reforms protected women from potential abandonment. Changes in the Civil Code addressed legitimacy to offer children economic security and women a greater means to establish paternity. While these modifications empowered unmarried mothers, it limited legitimate wives' ability to protect their own and their children's financial stability. Legislators restructured the welfare state to reflect social realities.

Although legislative reforms presented women with more options and increased their authority over children and household incomes, feminists failed to mount the war promised by Olguín. How did Olguín presume to reform the Civil Code when women held little political authority? How did she intend to bridge class and ideological divisions among women and among lawmakers? These are issues that she either neglected or assumed that the proposed reforms fit in with the social legislation passed during the Popular Front Era. Perhaps she mistakenly believed that Radical Party leaders supported her feminist agenda. Or did she underestimate women's disjointed alliance? We can hypothesize that women's integration allowed women to influence legislation, but there is no clear case. Congressional debates make it difficult to gauge Olguín's ability to shape the reforms. Legal changes during the 1950s were driven by political parties more than women's groups, whose political weight waned. Olguín's efforts to modify the Civil Code proved that feminists articulated their concerns. More importantly, they

demonstrated that without full party support or a unified women's coalition, feminists could not accomplish their goals.

Social Security and Women's Early Retirement

Between the late 1920s and 1940s middle-class Chilean women entered the workforce as social workers. Besides pursuing protectionist legislation for working mothers and children, these newly trained professionals promoted programs and laws that reinforced patriarchal family structures.³²³ In the early 1950s their goals had changed slightly to reflect reluctant acceptance of social realities. Between 1940 and 1960 Chilean women represented 24% of the active labor force. This was a slight increase of 1930 figures in which women accounted for 16.4%.³²⁴ The rate of women in the workforce rose slightly by 1970 to 22.9%, compared to 21.8% in Argentina and 21.74% in Peru.³²⁵ During the 1940s more Chilean women entered into professional careers due to the increase in educational opportunities and the establishment of new professions such as social work. In 1952, 23% of employed women worked in professional or technical fields an increase of 17% since 1940.³²⁶ Society and lawmakers had to reconcile traditional social attitudes that placed women's activity in the domestic sphere with the reality of women's presence in the workforce. Although legislation continued to favor families with male breadwinners, social realities necessitated reforms that acknowledged women as the sole or main provider.

³²³ See Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises*. Also, Hutchison, *Labors Appropriate to Their Sex*, addresses how mutual aid societies, industrialists, and upper-class Catholic women's groups promoted similar programs.

³²⁴ 1930 Chilean census figures reprinted in Lavrin, *Women, Feminism, and Social Change*, p. 64. 1940 to 1960 figures are from Alieto Aldo Guadagni, *La fuerza de trabajo en Chile, 1930-1960*, (Santiago: Universidad de Chile, 1961), p. 36.

³²⁵ Organización Internacional del Trabajo, *Anuario de Estadísticos Internacionales*, Geneva, 1973. Reprinted in Covarrubias and Franco, eds., *Chile: Mujer y Sociedad*, p. 470.

³²⁶ Klimpel, *La mujer Chilena*, pp. 151-152.

Reformers and lawmakers attempted to strengthen traditional family structures while also according women more economic authority in the family. Social security reforms in the 1950s, such as paying family allowances directly to women, illustrated how middle-class female reformers reinforced the traditional gender division of labor and restructured the relation between men and women. Their endeavors, similar to radical MEMCh members' failed attempts to alter women's familial responsibilities in the 1930s, reduced women and children's economic dependence on men, while still holding men accountable to their families. Women obtained greater control over the allocation of funds even though the state regarded men as the primary financial providers.

Legislative changes specifically concerning social security, legitimacy, and parental rights challenged normative gender understandings under the law by granting women more legal and economic authority within the family. Reformers and legislators altered legitimacy classifications to make it possible for women to seek child support and make inheritance claims on behalf of their children and to make men responsible for their children's well-being. Legal reforms in the 1950s also reflected how the debate over women's role in the economy and the family continued to be an area of concern for legislators. Although lawmakers sought to protect women and children and promoted the belief that all citizens had a right to economic survival, ensuring those rights meant disrupting male economic authority in the home. The counterintuitive logic of dismantling traditional patriarchal systems at the economic level while preserving them at the social level required the state to intervene into the family.

The Women's Bureau, under Adriana Olgún's direction, initiated reforms that altered women's retirement benefits and rights to pensions. At issue was Law 4054 that

established a social security system for manual laborers in 1924.³²⁷ Although Law 4054 exhibited very progressive measures, such as providing paid maternity leave, help with labor and delivery costs, social security, and minimum wage, it was enforced inefficiently and many employers found ways to circumvent the law. According to historian Elizabeth Hutchison, the new labor code embodied legislators' and elites' paternalistic understanding of working women's needs. She argues that political leaders agreed that women industrial workers, especially mothers, needed special protections to meet their main responsibility which was to their families.³²⁸ Discussions and attitudes regarding working women continued throughout the decade. MEMCh leaders included discrimination in the workplace, maternity leave, and retirement and pension rights in their legal demands as did the Women's Bureau directors.³²⁹ These concerns continued to be important debates concerning women's legal rights during the 1950s.

The Women's Bureau argued that Law 4054 had inadequate social security benefits for women and limited provisions for women's retirement and pensions. Congress, under pressure from the Women's Bureau, repealed Law 4054 and created a more comprehensive social security system in 1952.³³⁰ Laws 10,343 and 10,383 did not provide definitive solutions to women's economic and legal problems. Nor were they the first legislative attempts to address working women's rights. The two laws underwent several reforms throughout the 1950s, many of which applied specifically to women.

³²⁷ Chile was one of the first Latin American nations to establish a social security system. In 1898 legislators created a retirement pension plan for public employees. In 1924 they promulgated Law 4054 that founded a national social insurance system for blue collar workers. Law 4054 was an extensive labor code enacted by the military government.

³²⁸ Hutchison, Labors Appropriate to their Sex, p. 198.

³²⁹ See Antezana-Pernet, Corinne, "Mobilizing Women in the Popular Front Era"; Lavrin, Women, Feminism, and Social Change; and Roseblatt, Gendered Compromises.

³³⁰ Law 10,383 officially repealed law 4054. Ley 10,383, Diario oficial de la República de Chile, August 8, 1952. Promulgated 28 July 1952.

Maternity benefits and employer compliance were important issues and, beginning in the 1920s, lawmakers addressed working mothers' needs. The 1924 labor legislation guaranteed working women, including domestic servants, 50% of their wages two weeks prior to birth, two months maternity leave, medical expenses for the labor and delivery, and medical care for infants up to 8 months old.³³¹ Although these were progressive for Chile in the 1920s, the benefits were never enforced effectively. Under Law 10,383, professional and industrial women employees received maternity benefits including prenatal and postnatal care. Pregnant employees also had the right to maternity leave and to collect partial pay.³³² Although Law 10,383 readdressed maternity benefits, it did not provide a perfected benefit package as evidenced by the many modifications to the law.

Law 10,343, promulgated May 23, 1952, founded the National Health Service and guaranteed pensions for every manual and salaried laborer equal to *his or her* earnings at age 60 with measures for cost of living increases.³³³ Law 10,343 also established the Social Insurance Service (*Servicio de Seguro Social/ SSS*) and the National Health Service (*Servicio Nacional de Salud/SNS*), a state-run health care system that provided free medical service to laborers and families vested in the SSS. These state-run institutions extended working women's social security benefits and facilitated women's access to their husbands' social security benefits. The National Health Service provided medical and dental care that included prenatal and postpartum care for mothers and infants. It was jointly funded by the government, employee, and employer contributions.

³³¹ Although the 1924 maternity benefits were extremely progressive, they were not enforced effectively and as Hutchison points out employers forced pregnant women and mothers out of industrial work so that they would not have to comply with the new labor codes. Hutchison, Labors Appropriate to their Sex, chapter 7.

³³² Ley 10,383, Diario oficial de la República de Chile, August 8, 1952. Promulgated 28 July 1952.

³³³ Ley 10,343, Diario oficial de la República de Chile, May 28, 1952. Promulgated May 23, 1952.

Although workers had the option to use private medical services, they had to pay into the National Health Service.

Prior to the 1952 social security reforms women had limited pension rights. For example, women who worked in public administration only earned the right to collect pension benefits in 1952. This became an important issue since there was an influx of college- educated women who entered into public administration during the 1920s and 1930s. Many of these women neared retirement in the 1950s and fought for pension rights. 2000 female functionaries presented a signed petition to the Senate in May 1952 to request altering article 184 of Law 10,343 that granted women the right to retire after 25 years of service. Liberal Deputy Carlos Acharán Arce supported women's early retirement and presented a bill to amend the law.³³⁴ Despite his approval, women's retirement benefits generated heated debate.

The female petitioners requested that the Senate approve Deputy Acharán Arce's motion to amend article 184. His project established that all female employees in the public sector have the right to credit one year for every five of service toward their retirement and to retire after 25 years of service. This right applied to female personnel in Public Administration, fiscal enterprises, municipal and autonomous administrative offices, all female personnel that contributed to social security and the National Employees and Journalists Fund.³³⁵ Deputy Acharán Arce argued that his bill addressed the vague wording in article 184 that indirectly neglected professional women's dual roles as mother and employee. His bill allowed women to retire earlier than men for the

³³⁴ Law 10,343 that reformed Law 4054 also included reforms to Title IX of Law 8,282 established retirement for men in public administration at 35 years of service or for those who made 30 years of deposits to the Public Employees and Journalists' Fund.

³³⁵ El Mercurio, May 11, 1952, p. 19.

sole purpose of allowing women, “to return to the home to give the best care and education of her children, precisely at the age of puberty, and for family dignity and the formation of our own nationality.”³³⁶ His argument used discourse present in social legislation during the popular front era: preservation of the family and family dignity. Deputy Acharán Arce also presumed that working women preferred their domestic duties over all others, neglecting the possibility that women’s early retirement might cause economic hardships for families.

The Editorial Staff of the conservative El Mercurio argued that the proposed law affected most Chileans negatively. They argued that if the projected 5,000 women collected pension benefits, it would lower the base salary of the remaining 45,000 female public servants, because it increased their base payments into pension funds. This produced a situation in which women earned less than their male colleagues. The editorial staff asserted that this went against “the equality of civic rights recently gained and other conquests that elevate women’s social condition.”³³⁷ They claimed that early retirement was practically obligatory and prevented women from occupying the high level posts usually gained during the final years of one’s career. They supported a fiscally conservative policy that forced female employees who chose to retire after 25 years responsible for financing their retirement.

Deputy Acharán Arce made clear that early retirement was voluntary, not compulsory. He also addressed financial fears and claimed that a mass of women would elect early retirement and produce a monetary strain on government pension funds. He stated that the majority of women who might elect to retire after 25 years reflected those

³³⁶ Boletín de Sesiones del Senado de la República de Chile. Sesiones ordinarias, June 3, 1952, p. 124.

³³⁷ El Mercurio, May 24, 1952, p. 3.

functionaries whose health prevented them from working.³³⁸ He wanted the Chamber to understand that the first wave of women to retire represented a minimal amount. Deputy Acharán Arce rejected the idea that female functionaries needed to pay a higher percentage into pension funds to compensate for female retirees. He claimed that his bill differed little from Law 8,282 that established retirement benefits for Public Education and Telecommunication employees. Article 121 of Law 8,282 stipulated that all employees had the right to credit one out of every six years toward retirement. He argued that his bill differed slightly because it gave credit for one out of every five years of service. He claimed that his bill produced tremendous positive results.

The United Command of Women Laborers/CUMT (*Commando Unido de Mujeres Trabajadoras*) board praised the women's retirement legislation and assuaged fears that the law produced catastrophic financial problems.³³⁹ The organizations' leaders argued that conservatives used scare tactics to prevent the law's promulgation. They denounced accusations that the costs associated with women's early retirement "signified an astronomical sum."³⁴⁰ Moreover, they argued, the Senate's Finance Commission falsely reported that financing women's early retirement would require annual payments between \$75,000,000 and \$100,000,000 pesos. The CUMT promised to address the legislature "until they hear the anguished cries of these women who have the same political rights as they [the legislators]..."³⁴¹ Judging from the CUMT's arguments the debate concerned equal political and legal rights for men and women.

³³⁸ Boletín de Sesiones del Senado de la República de Chile. Sesiones ordinarias, June 3, 1952, p. 150.

³³⁹ Established in 1949, the United Command of Women Laborers fought for women's right to retire after 25 years of service.

³⁴⁰ El Mercurio, August 2, 1952, p. 17.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*

FEChIF rejected Deputy Acharán Arce's women's retirement project and vowed to publicize its discriminatory nature. FEChIF leaders argued that the project went against their struggle to obtain equal legal rights for men and women and that it foolishly reduced the workforce at a time when the nation "needs the permanent effort of all its constituents..."³⁴² They supported other claims that the bill, as written, discriminated against female public servants because it effectively reduced their revenue in comparison to their male counterparts by requiring female employees to devote a higher percentage of their wages to the retirement fund to finance pensions.³⁴³ This inequality defied a FEChIF principle to obtain equal pay for equal work. FEChIF leaders also argued the bill victimized female public servants because it reduced the years that they paid into social security and pension funds by five without taking into account that those women's salaries were not equal to men who performed the same duties. Moreover, they argued that Acharán Arce's plan reduced women's opportunities to earn high level appointments which enabled women to affect national policy. Obstructing women from higher posts prevented them from obtaining a greater earning potential. These criticisms reflected perceived economic restrictions placed on women and sanctioned discrimination against women.

FEChIF leaders also criticized the psychological and social ramifications Acharán Arce's proposed law had on women. They argued that obligating female public servants to retire after 25 years did not constitute a well-earned privilege. Rather, it removed women's ability to make a valuable contribution to the nation and society. FEChIF leaders asserted that at retirement age, most women had already reared their children and

³⁴² La Nación, July 24, 1951, p. 6.

³⁴³ Ibid.

could devote themselves more fully to their careers. Early retirement might cause “a new and more serious problem for women, who at this age need to have an incentive in their life and to feel like a useful element to the society.”³⁴⁴ Work, FEChIF leaders maintained, filled an important psychological need. The Association of Chilean Female Doctors /AMF (*Agrupación Médica Femenina de Chile*) supported FEChIF’s claim that employment provided a psychological benefit for women. AMF members voted unanimously to denounce the proposed law and argued that it offered little economic or social benefits to women.³⁴⁵ According to historian Karin Roseblatt, MEMCh leaders agreed with FEChIF and Elena Caffarena denounced Acharán Arce’s bill as legislation that appeared to protect women, but resulted in oppressing them.³⁴⁶

FEChIF’s strategy to block the bill proved successful. President González petitioned Congress to study how to finance Acharán Arce’s bill. In his message to Congress, President González stated that female employees needed to make additional payments to pension funds to cover the costs of women’s early retirement.³⁴⁷ He argued that the studies compiled by pension institutions revealed that the additional deposits required posed a great financial burden for female personnel. Although the President did not present any specific studies, he proposed that Congress suspend the effects of article 184. Deputy Acharán Arce took issue with the President’s request and suggested that President González’s solution to allow women in public service to retire after 25 years with 25% of their final salaries was preposterous. He argued that forcing women to

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ *La Nación*, August 7, 1951, p. 6.

³⁴⁶ Roseblatt, *Gendered Compromises*, pp. 83-84.

³⁴⁷ *Boletín de Sesiones de la Cámara de la República de Chile* Sesiones ordinarias July 9, 1952, p. 913.

accept such terms “constitutes an aberration that nobody could accept.”³⁴⁸ Moreover, he claimed that the President’s actions reflected a sincere impediment to women’s rights. Radical Deputy Tomás Ríos Valdivia responded against that accusation and Radical Deputy Arturo Olavarria asked if Deputy Acharán Arce wanted to claim full authorship for the retirement project.³⁴⁹ Acharán Arce argued that authorship was not the issue. Rather, he argued they should focus on bettering families’ economic positions and deciding the scope of the President’s powers. Both the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies rejected the President’s request and broadened article 184 to include all female employees.

The debate over article 184 illustrated a struggle between extending women’s pension rights and preserving normative gender roles. Middle-class feminists shaded their concerns to protect women’s legal and economic rights behind fiscal conservatives’ argument that article 184 posed a governmental financial crisis. FEChIF leaders viewed the article as protectionist legislation that hindered women’s economic opportunities and stifled professional advancement. Although the legislation passed, middle-class feminists continued to voice their concerns. In December 1957, Radical Deputy Ana Ugalde proposed two important reforms to law 10,343. First, to add, “with the final salary,” to the first clause that extended the right to retire to women; second, to require additional pension deposits to raise pension revenues for retired persons by 4%.³⁵⁰ Ugalde argued that allowing the current system to persist produced a social conflict. Mainly, it placed female public servants in a position to forego retirement, because pension benefits did not

³⁴⁸Ibid., p. 955.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 956.

³⁵⁰Diario de Sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados de la República de Chile, Sesiones extraordinarias December 4, 1957, p. 1443.

cover basic living expenses. This, required women to renounce their pension benefits and lose what they paid in, while continuing to deposit into the pension fund. As written the law discriminated against women and forced female employees to choose between their salaries without pension benefits after 25 years of service and early retirement with a pension that was less than their salaries. Congress approved the reforms and promulgated them December 3, 1958.³⁵¹

Law 10,343 also altered how the government allocated dependency and pension benefits. Prior to 1952 the Obligatory Insurance Fund/CSO (*Caja de Seguro Obligatorio*), Chilean social security, paid disability and pension payments directly to the insured, and upon death, required widows and dependents to show proof of kinship. Decree with the Force of Law 245(DFL 245) passed in July 1953 augmented Law 10,343. It stipulated that all insured workers had the right to collect family allowances for their legitimate wives, legitimate adopted or natural children, and invalid family members of any age, including elderly parents.³⁵² The family allowance reforms guaranteed that family pension payments for disabled or ill minor children be paid directly to the mother. The law complemented reform Law 11,051 that granted women the right to seek family allowance payments from husbands who dodged their family obligations.

³⁵¹ Ibid., December 3, 1958, p. 810.

³⁵² DFL 245 defined maternity and sick leave of absence, detailing that the insured individual would receive a monthly stipend equivalent to 35% of their mean salary. Decreto con fuerza de ley 245, Diario oficial de la República de Chile, July 31, 1953. Promulgated July 23, 1953. Lawmakers clarified the terms of pension and dependency allowances with Law 12,401, which stipulated that only one person could collect any given pension or family allowance and that only one pension would be paid per employment. Law 12,401, Diario oficial de la República de Chile, December 19, 1956. Promulgated December 13, 1956. See especially articles 17 and 21.

The change in payment receipt reinforced the belief that women as primary caregivers were more adept at administering domestic finances. Thus, it upheld normative gender roles while also removing male authority over the disbursement of family funds. The law offered women greater control over how to care for their children. In addition to enhancing workers' social security benefits, these reforms facilitated women's, especially married women, ability to collect and spend funds as needed and to meet their and their families' basic needs after retirement or in the event of their spouses' death.

The benefits women gained with the reforms to Law 4054, although well received by the Women's Bureau and initiated by Radical Party Congressional members, met with trepidation by some supporters. El Mercurio's editorial staff commended legislators for granting women the right to receive direct payment of family allowances and claimed the changes would best serve lower-income families and those women whose husbands' abandonment caused economic hardship for families. Despite the reforms' positive effects, the editors cautioned the public about adverse results for the middle and upper classes. They explained, "The danger to which we are referring, and which has been already shown in parliamentary discussion of this project, consists of the belief in certain homes that the family allowances are the only obligation that weighs on the husband and that, once satisfied, nothing else of what he obtains as revenue should pass to the home."³⁵³ To best protect women and families, the editors requested that legislators examine the tremendous impact their reforms might have on women and children from broken homes. The editors concluded: "It would be much preferable to have introduced a

³⁵³ El Mercurio, June 24, 1952, p. 3.

legal reform that makes the judgments for support speedier and with a greater indictment period, in order to protect the situation of the children and women in broken marriages.”³⁵⁴ Their main complaint was that the law did not support the traditional patriarchal family structure. Further study of social security legal reforms reflected an elitist understanding of working-class families. This was consistent with middle- and upper-class reformers’ attitudes represented during the popular-front reform process.

Middle-class Radicals also sought to reform the Chilean Labor Code to extend female laborers’ rights, especially concerning maternity benefits.³⁵⁵ In July 1953 the Senate considered two Labor Code reform projects: one from the Chamber and another presented in the Senate by Radical Senator Isaurio Torres.³⁵⁶ At issue were article 162, and articles 307 to 314 of the Labor Code that granted pregnant women a minimum of six weeks leave prior to birth and six weeks postpartum leave, and a right to subsistence pay at 50% of their wages. Only females employed in public administration had their jobs guaranteed after maternity leave, which placed female laborers in the private sector at a disadvantage. The bill passed by the Chamber of Deputies attempted to equalize maternity benefits among female professionals and laborers. It also addressed employer’s unfair practice of firing pregnant employees so that they did not have to grant maternity leave or pay partial wages.

Senator Torres’ project proposed replacing articles 307 to 314 completely. His bill granted equal maternity rights to all female employees who contributed to social

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ President González initiated these reforms in a message sent to the Chamber of Deputies in 1948. President Carlos Ibáñez supported the measures and signed DFL 245 on July 23, 1953.

³⁵⁶ The two projects were similar and had only minor differences. The Senate Labor and Social Security Commission focused on Senator Torres’ bill.

security, whether they were full or part-time, in the private or public sector or worked out of their homes.³⁵⁷ Of utmost importance to the Senate Labor and Social Security Commission/SLSSC members was protecting women's health during pregnancy. This had been a concern to pragmatic reformers since women entered the industrial workforce in the late Nineteenth Century. The SLSSC reported: "maternity leave directly influences the health of the mother and of the child born, and helps to diminish infant mortality...."³⁵⁸ To reinforce their point SLSSC members proposed changing the statutes' title from "Protection of Working Mothers," to "Protection of Maternity."

This legislative project presented a pragmatic approach to a great social concern: the persistence of a high national infant mortality rate. Between 1950 and 1955, Chile had an average infant mortality rate of 112.4 per 1000 live births. The figures reported: 1955-1960, 109.8/1000; 1960-1965, 100.7/1000; and 1965-1970, 81.7/1000.³⁵⁹ Although the rate declined steadily between 1950 and 1970, it was far higher than in Argentina. The infant death rate alarmed policy makers, medical professionals, and middle-class reformers throughout the Twentieth Century. According to historian Asunción Lavrin, national leaders and public health officials reported in 1936 an infant mortality rate of 252/1000, a figure that greatly embarrassed them.³⁶⁰ This public health problem spawned a movement in the early 1900s to improve social hygiene, access to prenatal care, and to enact Labor Code reforms to protect working mothers and children. Senator Torres' bill, like previous policy measures, offered a practical legislative means to lower infant

³⁵⁷See, July 14, 1953, p. 511.

³⁵⁸ Ibid, pp. 512.

³⁵⁹ Argentine rates: 1950-1955, 61.7/1000; 1955-1960, 56.3/1000; 1960-1965, 55.1/1000; 1965-1970, 52.6/1000. CELADE, *Boletín Demográfico: América Latina Tablas de Mortalidad, 1950-2025*, United Nations: 74 (Santiago, July, 2004), p. 26.

³⁶⁰ Lavrin, *Women, Feminism, and Social Change*, p. 101.

mortality rates. His project did not represent an ideological agenda, it was an issue of protecting the nation and its interests.

Senator Torres asserted that his bill observed the actions adopted by the International Labor Organization/OIT (*Organización Internacional de Trabajo*) during its June 1952 Conference in Geneva. To illustrate the OIT's commitment to protecting maternity Senator Torres repeated French delegate, Mrs. Troisgros' statement:

it seems inconceivable that children are sanctioned from the moment of conception, because they depend on a wage-earning mother who is taxed by strict and sometimes implacable work the child is undoubtedly the essential and most beautiful production of humanity, and by virtue of this living contribution, this capital of intellectual and economic wealth that the mother gives to society, all the hard-working mothers, in the home or in the workshop, they must be considered to be the primary workers of human progress.³⁶¹

This sentiment, Senator Torres maintained, formed the basis of his bill. He argued that maternity leave during the final weeks of pregnancy increased the chances of having uncomplicated births and infant viability and lower infant mortality rates.³⁶² Both the Senate Labor and Social Security Commission members and Senator Torres argued that increasing maternity benefits reduced infant mortality rates and put Chile on par with other modern nations.

The Labor Code prevented employers from firing women during their maternity leave, but did not prevent them from terminating employment earlier. Senator Torres' bill addressed inappropriate dismissals and prevented employers from firing pregnant women altogether. His bill also removed employers' obligations to pay female

³⁶¹ Boletín de Sesiones del Senado de la República de Chile. Sesiones ordinarias, July 21, 1953, p. 526.

³⁶² *Ibid.* Senator Torres referred to studies conducted by Professor Pinard at the Maternity University of Paris. He did not provide dates or the Professor's full name. He also stated that international statistics indicated that Chile had the second highest infant mortality rates in the world. Again, he did not provide specific statistical information or name the agency that compiled the statistics.

employees during their maternity leave and equated maternity leave with sick leave which allowed women to collect subsidies from Social Security funds. DFL 245 stipulated that Social Security pay 35% of the mean salary for those on maternity or sick leave. Further adjustments came with Decree 163 that ensured pregnant employees received full medical benefits during pregnancy, delivery, and postnatal care as well as the right to three months paid maternity leave.³⁶³

Senator María de la Cruz, the Conservative Party and Liberal Party blocs, and members of the National Independent Movement supported Torres' bill and expressed that it was "just and humane".³⁶⁴ Liberal Senator Blas Bellolio argued that this legislation secured married and single mothers' rights to provide for their children's future. More importantly, he stated, "this project of law...fills a gap in the law and gives strict justice to pregnant women."³⁶⁵ Multi-party acceptance illustrated that maternity benefits weren't isolated to the labor or feminist movement, but represented a desire to protect future generations and insure the nation's welfare. The Chamber approved Senator Torres' wording to reflect the maternity protections adopted by OIT delegates in Geneva in 1952.

Other legal reforms indirectly challenged the patriarchal family structure, unlike protective legislation that secured maternity benefits and women's access to social security. Law 11,051 promulgated on October 31 1952 offered women more economic independence within the family. The law stipulated that dependency allowance payments

³⁶³ Decree 163 officially modified Law 10,383, defining maternity benefits and leave as equivalent to sick leave. Articles 23, 24, and 31 dealt specifically with maternity leave. Decreto 163, Diario oficial de la República de Chile, September 13, 1968. Promulgated July 26, 1968.

³⁶⁴ Boletín de Sesiones del Senado de la República de Chile. Sesiones ordinarias, July 21, 1953, p. 528.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 529.

for legitimate wives and natural and adoptive children be paid directly by the employer to the spouse of male workers. In the event of an annulled marriage, family allowances for dependent children went directly to the mother as long as the minor children resided with her. The law provided direct payments to natural mothers of illegitimate children that heretofore would have been paid to the natural father, thereby ensuring support for the illegitimate child.³⁶⁶

Radical Deputy Inés Enríquez originated the motion to pay dependency allowances directly to women. She argued that the law addressed a growing social problem: men who carelessly wasted their wages and family allowances and ignored their dependents' basic needs. This bill reflected social realities concerning the patriarchal family structure; mainly, single mother households resulting from unsuitable divorce laws, illegitimacy, and male abandonment. Enríquez neglected to highlight these facts and presented her project as a means to protect the family. She affirmed normative gender roles and argued that paying family allowances directly to women was appropriate, because women handled household expenses.

Deputy Enríquez claimed that her project was less about increasing women's rights and more about preserving family dignity and harmonious gender relations. She noted that the current system caused a social conflict because it challenged men's masculinity. She asserted that although women had a right to petition employers to pay them directly, their petitions demonstrated their spouses' irresponsibility, which caused adverse consequences. She stated: "I believe that this petition, far from benefiting the husband or father, damages him, since he stands accused precisely by the one who should

³⁶⁶ Ley 11,051, Diario oficial de la República de Chile, November 18, 1952. Promulgated October 31, 1952.

prove his honorability.”³⁶⁷ The women’s accusations, Enríquez asserted, led to employers’ mistreatment of workers, especially if they believed those men did not meet their moral responsibilities. Removing the petition process allowed men and women to maintain their dignity and left the issue of marital irresponsibility within the home.

The proposed law also reflected a class bias. Deputy Enríquez argued that although many men used their salaries and dependency benefits to meet household and family needs, there were “many and painful exceptions, especially among the laborers.”³⁶⁸ Her sentiments supported those articulated by the Labor and Social Legislation Commission/LSLC.³⁶⁹ Commission members presented the project as a means to prevent men’s misuse of family allowances, which they argued, “unfortunately occurs often, especially in the working-class home....”³⁷⁰ They also associated men’s misuse of funds with the rise of women seeking employment and stated that this led to “the consequent abandonment and neglect of children.”³⁷¹ This reform addressed these issues and protected children and the family.

The LSLC members’ report did not represent unity. During a Chamber debate over Law 11,051, LSLC member Liberal Deputy Ernesto Jensen acknowledged cases in which some men selfishly neglected their family responsibilities, but, he argued this represented a small minority. He argued that while this issue might be more prevalent in

³⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 265-66.

³⁶⁸ Boletín de Sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados de la República de Chile, Sesiones ordinarias June 10, 1952, p. 265.

³⁶⁹ The following deputies served on the Labor and Social Legislation Commission that studied this project: Inés Enríquez (Radical); Jorge Errázuriz (Radical); Humberto Aguirre (Radical); Isauro Torres (Radical); Ernesto Jensen (Liberal); Francisco Palma (Conservative); Juan Valdés (Conservative); Albino Barra (Socialist); Vasco Valdebenito (Socialist); and Señor Noguera (unknown).

³⁷⁰ Boletín de Sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados de la República de Chile, Sesiones ordinarias January 22, 1952, p. 1901.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

working-class homes, extending this right to all wives and mothers would produce a disastrous social effect. Deputy Jensen stated: “It can lead us to diminish or lessen the authority that the head of the household should maintain.”³⁷² He claimed that all social legislation should respect and preserve men’s authority over the family, but this bill did neither. He asserted that to deprive men of their familial authority tarnished their reputations, reduced their social status, eroded the gender balance, and, ultimately, destabilized the institution of the family.

Deputy Jensen argued that the state should not behave as a family arbiter and the government had a limited right to intervene in familial affairs. He stated that this project “...is abusive and degrading for a numerous and honorable section of the citizenry.”³⁷³ Moreover, he claimed that the project was redundant, because Law 7, 295 provided a solution for women whose husbands neglected their domestic responsibilities.³⁷⁴ It was impractical and predicated on the basis that all men were of low moral fortitude. He believed that this was a preposterous assumption and neglected the fact that there was a fair share of women who shirked their responsibilities. If the law represented fairness, why then, he asked, has no law been devised to resolve the problem of women who neglected their familial obligations? Deputy Jensen represented a minority in the Chamber and his claims met with limited support. He unsuccessfully attempted to alter the wording of Article 1 to reflect men’s right to dispense with their portion of family

³⁷² Boletín de Sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados de la República de Chile, Sesiones ordinarias July 8, 1952, p. 865.

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ Law 7,295 allowed the Private Employees Social Services Fund to pay family allowances to those who had custody of children and to hear petitions for those who lived in irregular family conditions.

allowances.³⁷⁵ Conservative Juan de Dios Reyes and Liberal Alfonso Campos proposed obligatory judgment entries and Social Services' reports to accompany women or employer's requests for direct payment. They failed.

Article 3 of Law 11,051 stipulated that working women had the right to receive dependency benefits for physically and/or mentally disabled spouses. This article demonstrated that working women were integrated fully into the Social Security System. It also illustrated that legislators recognized women as economic heads of households. There was no published debate about this article, which suggests that most Deputies acknowledged working women's rights to supplement their wages to ensure their families' survival, especially if men were physically and mentally unable to do so. Law 11,051 also offered women greater economic control household finances and altered the patriarchal family structure, despite Deputy Enríquez' claims to the contrary.

Lawmakers continued to adjust maternity, pension, and family allowance terms in the 1950s. Law 12,401 reaffirmed women's right to collect dependency pay during the sixth month of pregnancy.³⁷⁶ All female workers who paid into the social security system received this right. Law 12,462 extended this right to professional and industrial female employees and to the spouses of male employees.³⁷⁷ These reforms illustrated two important issues: 1. Lawmakers continued to protect mothers and children; 2. Legislators clearly considered the unborn as citizens who warranted economic protections and the

³⁷⁵ Boletín de Sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados de la República de Chile, Sesiones ordinarias July 21, 1952, p. 1325. Deputies voted on the bill on July 21, 1952 without contentious debate. They might have discussed this issue the following Chamber session, which was held in secret. See Boletín de Sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados de la República de Chile, Sesiones ordinarias July 22, 1952, p. 1327.

³⁷⁶ Ley 12,401, Diario oficial de la República de Chile, December 19, 1956. Promulgated December 13, 1956.

³⁷⁷ Ley 12,462, Diario oficial de la República de Chile, July 6, 1957. Promulgated July 4, 1957.

right to collect social security benefits. The latter made future attempts to legalize abortion an insurmountable struggle.

Social Security reforms during the 1950s were based on traditional understandings of women's role in society and facilitated women's ability to meet their familial responsibilities. The law reduced women's financial dependence on men and allowed them to have a more direct role in caring for their children and disabled or infirm family members. These legislative measures represented a pragmatic approach to support the family and to reduce infant mortality. Legislators reinforced the patriarchal nuclear family unit and made legal allowances for non-traditional family structures. Although welfare reforms did little to alter gender discrimination in the law, they afforded women more economic authority. This represented a necessary gain for many women, but was a far cry from feminists' goals.

Legitimacy, Child Support, and Inheritance

Of utmost importance to female reformers were the means to establish legitimacy and make a claim for child support. Prior to law 10,271, it was difficult to establish legitimacy for a child born out-of-wedlock and to petition for child support. Legal obstacles resulted in economic struggles, social stigmas, and complicated inheritance claims. A joint effort by the Chilean Institute of Legislative Studies (*Instituto Chileno de Estudios Legislativos/ICEL*), the Women's Bureau, Radical Party, and the Senate

Constitution, Legislation, and Judicial Commission³⁷⁸ launched the reform to the Chilean Civil Code regarding inheritance rights and legitimacy.³⁷⁹

Radical Alfredo Rosende, President of the Chamber from 1941 to 1945 and closely connected to President González's administration, claimed the President's initiative addressed three key issues: illegitimacy, inheritance rights, and current legal regulations. He argued that the reform, especially articles 270 to 272, was innovative because it corrected a flaw in Chilean law: the absence of a legal classification for natural children. He supported the proposed reform and claimed that it favored illegitimate children by extending the means to establish paternity to include a judicial ruling to force parental recognition. This, he stated, "results in the possession of the respectable civil status of natural child."³⁸⁰ By facilitating the means by which individuals could obtain child support, this legal classification lessened women's economic burdens and increased men's legal responsibility to their children, legitimate or not. Deputy Rosende specified that although the project protected illegitimate children, it also preserved legitimate children's rights and "did not place parents who voluntarily recognized their children on equal terms with those who were forced legally to acknowledge paternity."³⁸¹ Law 10,271 favored children whose parents voluntarily recognized their paternity by limiting inheritance rights of those children whose natural status resulted from a court order.

³⁷⁸ Members included the following: Salvador Allende, Socialist Party; Florencio Durán, Radical Party; Raúl Marín, Liberal Party; and Julio Martínez Montt, Partido Democrático de Chile (an offshoot of the Socialist Party).

³⁷⁹ Boletín de la Cámara de Diputados de la República de Chile Sesiones ordinarias August 8, 1951, p. 1685.

³⁸⁰ Boletín de la Cámara de Diputados de la República de Chile Sesiones ordinarias September 5, 1951, p. 2548.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2549.

Illegitimacy, like infant mortality represented a social ill that troubled legislators, religious leaders, medical professionals, and feminists throughout the Twentieth Century. Historian Asunción Lavrin argued that illegitimacy was perceived to be directly related to high infant mortality rates throughout the Southern Cone and became an ethical concern. Feminists and medical experts tackled the problem differently: Feminists wanted legal reforms to force men to be responsible for their children and to regulate gender relations to create more stable families; Medical experts focused on hygienic education, increasing the poor's access to health care, and decreasing the spread of disease. Chilean illegitimacy rates peaked in the late 1920s, reaching close to 40%, and fell considerably during the 1930s and 1940s.³⁸² Lavrin argued that despite this decline, the legal means to establish paternity continued to reflect a system that punished unwed mothers and protected fathers for their sexual behavior. Under the Chilean Civil Code legal recognition of paternity was nonexistent. The double standard of morality reflected in the law was difficult to overcome, especially since the male-dominated legislature refused to disturb patriarchal privileges. Feminists recognized this fact and resolved to influence protective legislation for women and children.³⁸³ Figures from 1952 demonstrated that legislative changes in the 1930s and 1940s produced results: illegitimacy fell to 25%.

Promulgated February 29, 1952, Law 10,271 made men more accountable for their children and increased women and children's ability to establish paternity and seek child support. Although legislators, reformers, and feminists strove to reduce illegitimacy rates, their priority remained to protect the family. The new law clearly established as legitimate all children conceived prior to the parent's marriage, during a

³⁸² Lavrin, *Women, Feminism, and Social Change*, p. 146.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, Chp. 4.

legal marriage or the annulment of a marriage. All other children were deemed illegitimate.³⁸⁴ Even if both parents legally recognized children, if they did not celebrate a civil marriage, the law classified children as natural, albeit illegitimate. Natural children immediately gained legitimacy upon their parents' civil marriage.³⁸⁵ The categorized distinction between natural and legitimate children helped to determine inheritance and child support claims. It also penalized individuals who did not obtain a legal marriage license, making civil marriage compulsory for legitimacy requirements. It also challenged the Roman Catholic Church because it reduced the importance of the sacrament of marriage, which the law did not recognize as a valid marriage.³⁸⁶

Illegitimate children became classified as natural if either or both parents recognized them legally-- by written document, testimony, in the birth certificate or through established paternity. A significant change in the law awarded natural children the right to inherit from either parent, to receive proper care and education from both parents, and to seek child support, despite the father's lack of legal recognition. Legal grounds for child support claims were the following: claimants had to establish parenthood irrefutably; the alleged parents previously provided or contributed to the child's maintenance and education; the parents publicly cohabitated during the time of conception; the alleged father claimed paternity under oath; or if conception fell within

³⁸⁴ Ley 10,271, *Diario oficial de la República de Chile*, Article 35, April 2, 1952. Promulgated February 29, 1952. Such reforms were not unique to Chile. Uruguay modified its legal codes to redefine illegitimacy in 1914, 1916, and 1936. Argentine feminists, medical professionals, and middle-class reformers eventually influenced similar legislation in 1948.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, Article 207.

³⁸⁶ According to Article 103, only an official of the state could legally perform a marriage ceremony and provide a license. *Ibid.*

the dates of the mother's violation, kidnap or rape.³⁸⁷ Arturo Alessandri R., Law Professor and head of the Chilean Institute of Legislative Studies (*Instituto Chileno de Estudios Legislativos/ICEL*), stated: "The desire of legislators has been that the highest possible number of illegitimate children obtains support."³⁸⁸ Law 10,271 illustrated a bourgeois attempt to regulate parental responsibilities and to preserve family definitions. The Chamber of Deputies' Constitution, Legislation, and Justice Commission³⁸⁹ fully supported the proposed reforms and argued that they preserved the integrity of the family.

Law 10,271 greatly increased illegitimate children's ability to demand parental support by easing the means to gain natural classification. It suppressed a Civil Code rule that stipulated that a husband could not claim guardianship over his natural children without the consent of his spouse. Men could no longer claim a legitimate marriage as a legal obstacle to taking responsibility for their children. Although this benefited unwed mothers and their children, it might have caused economic hardships for legal wives whose husbands fathered children outside of their marriages. Although these modifications served to make men more responsible for their children and to benefit children born out-of-wedlock, they protected some women by disempowering a group of women. Prior to Law 10,271 legitimate wives enjoyed a social advantage and legal protection against their husbands' infidelity. Under the new law natural children stood to inherit from fathers whose paternity was established. Articles 983 to 993 regulated the

³⁸⁷ *Boletín de la Cámara de Diputados de la República de Chile* Sesiones extraordinarias January 15, 1952, p. 1708. See Article 280. Senate debates are not included. I was unable to gain access to the Senate sessions that corresponded to this legislation.

³⁸⁸ *El Mercurio*, June 7, 1952, p. 3.

³⁸⁹ The Commission members were the following: Julio Durán, Humberto Enríquez, Carlos Melej, Alfredo Rosende, Jacobo Schaulsohn, and Benjamin Vivanco of the Radical Party; Francisco Bulnes and Osvaldo García Burr of the Liberal Party; Juan Carmona of the Falange Nacional; and Manuela Montalba representing the Conservative Party.

division of husbands' estates. The Women's Bureau recommended allotting a greater portion of the assets to legitimate wives and children.³⁹⁰ This maintained a systemic reward for those who maintained a traditional marital relationship. Although natural children gained inheritance rights, their share did not exceed one-fourth of the estate unless no wife or legitimate children survived.³⁹¹ The natural child had an elevated legal status that reduced the social stigma of illegitimacy, but was not as socially esteemed as legitimate.

Changes in illegitimacy and child support requirements demonstrated continued attempts to regulate familial relationships. Reformers, legal professionals, and feminists sought to resolve legal and social problems that resulted from nontraditional marital unions, such as paternity claims, child support, and infant mortality. They forced fathers to meet financial obligations to their children and reinforced good moral behavior. Although illegitimacy rates fell from 25 to 17 percent between 1952 and 1960,³⁹² Law 10,271 did little to alter the double moral standard reflected in the law or to reduce the need for divorce legislation. Unsuccessful attempts to legislate morality proved that the need for a sound commitment to limit or to end legal gender discrimination.

Marital Possessions and Adultery

Radical Party women led the movement to reform the Civil Code in the early 1950s. Radical President González made women's suffrage a reality in 1949, and as party leader and friend of Radical feminists he ushered in a new era of women's political participation. He integrated women into the national government through political

³⁹⁰ Boletín del Senado de la República de Chile Sesiones extraordinarias November 29, 1950, p. 594.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.2542, article 988.

³⁹² Roseblatt, Gendered Compromises, p. 150 and Chile, Anuario estadística año 1960 (Santiago: Dirección de Estadística, 1960)..

appointments to the United Nations delegates and his cabinet and established the Women's Bureau, a government department to address women's issues. Founded in 1949, at the urging of First Lady Rosa Markmann, the Women's Bureau had two distinct administrative departments. The Juridical Department dealt with the legal aspects of equality, analyzing women's political rights under the Civil Code. The Social Department compiled statistical data concerning women's real economic and social conditions. According to Olguín, the Women's Bureau was "an organization with a technical character that concerns itself with problems that are specific to women: it proposes the means to solve them and serves as an informant and adviser to all the feminine organizations that seek its services."³⁹³ The Women's Bureau received hundreds of solicitations every day from women who needed legal and economic advice and assistance. The ability to provide solutions and services that relieved misery gave people what Olguín described as "the desire to transform oneself into a miracle fairy."³⁹⁴ Her comment demonstrated that the Bureau offered its staff valuable experiences in understanding the law, working in political bureaucracy, and compiling information about women's greatest concerns as well as building their self confidence. The Women's Bureau also helped women with limited economic and legal resources to resolve their specific problems and to gain more access to legal avenues. This, Olguín claimed, allowed women to utilize all the resources available to full citizens.³⁹⁵

Middle-class Radical women and the men who supported them were deeply interested in the woman question. In the 1950s, they articulated a bourgeois agenda

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Eva, August 8, 1952, p. 9.

³⁹⁵ Vea, January 30, 1952.

concerning women and their role in society. Through the Women's Bureau they promoted moderate legislative reforms that supported the nuclear family, held men accountable for supporting their families economically, and increased women's and children's access to social assistance. Female leaders like Olgúin also endorsed progressive legal changes that increased women's position, such as the rescinding of a law that granted husbands the right to kill their wives if they suspected infidelity.³⁹⁶

Olgúin suggested that Chileans should expect changes because women were dissatisfied with their legal status. She claimed that under her direction, the Women's Bureau's primary objective was to reform the Chilean Civil Code, a charge she continued as Minister of Justice.³⁹⁷ The main Parliamentary projects included altering adultery laws, paternal authority and guardianship, inheritance, and administration of marital properties. Explaining the need for such reforms to the Civil Code Olgúin opined, "It is necessary to modify it and to place it in tune with the epoch and its current needs, until women remain on absolute equal legal footing with men."³⁹⁸ Although her statement specifically addressed women's political rights, the types of reforms that she pursued challenged male privileges and contemporary social understandings of gender. More importantly, the legislative debates reflected a shift in how policymakers regarded women and their role in the family and the nation. Roseblatt clearly illustrates that during the Popular Front government, modernizing efforts defined males as productive citizens and women as nonproductive citizens, which made women economically

³⁹⁶ Legal attempts to erode the double standard of morality were not unique to Chile. Women in other Latin American countries had made similar legal challenges.

³⁹⁷ President González appointed her in July 1952.

³⁹⁸ The Chilean Federation of Women's Organizations publicly commended Olgúin's ambitious project and offered its support. *El Mercurio*, January 18, 1952.

dependent on men. In the 1950s, lawmakers began to define women workers, housewives, and mothers as productive citizens. Legislative reforms enacted during the 1950s illustrated this societal change and created a legal system that lessened male economic authority over women.

Other prominent Radical women publicly questioned the extent of Chilean women's legal and economic rights. Ana Figueroa, a Radical politician and Chilean Ambassador to the United Nations, argued that although protective legislation for women existed, measures to enforce compliance were ineffective. For example, Figueroa asserted that legislation requiring paid maternity leave did not prevent employers from firing women at the first sign of pregnancy.³⁹⁹ She claimed that Uruguay had “a magnificent legislation, so perfect that Uruguayan women face the civic responsibility of being on a par [with men] with these juridical structures.”⁴⁰⁰ Figueroa reiterated Olguín's belief that although Chilean women won the battle for suffrage, society refused to acknowledge women's equality. She stated, “Even those who speak of equal rights and capacities, they proceed psychologically as if they did not share these convictions.”⁴⁰¹ Figueroa dismissed such sentiments as a common Latin American trait. She explained that Latin American and U.S. male delegates addressed female representatives differently in the United Nations. North American delegates treated female diplomats with respect. Latin American delegates, according to Figueroa, “do not see us as women who work in this organization, as persons who have...activities that are no different than those of the

³⁹⁹ This argument began in the early 1900s. See Hutchison, Labors Appropriate to Their Sex, chp. 7.

⁴⁰⁰ La Nación, June 2, 1951.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

men.”⁴⁰² She argued that the Latin American diplomats reflected an adherence to traditional gender roles. Figueroa claimed that no matter how diligently women politicians worked to be accepted, Latin American society limited them within the confines of normative gender roles. Like Olguín, Figueroa advocated legislative means to change these attitudes.

Chilean men also critiqued gender discrimination in Chilean laws. Joaquin Edwards Bello, a contributing journalist to La Nación, dedicated a column to discuss the history of the Chilean Civil Code and how it reflected social realities. Edwards offered few arguments for or against women’s rights.⁴⁰³ His article focused on incorrect interpretations of the Civil Code. He argued that it was unfair to classify it as a replica of the misogynistic Napoleonic Code. Its author, Andres Bello, did not model it exclusively after French law. Rather, Bello fashioned the Chilean Civil Code to reflect both modern and arcane laws and borrowed from French, Roman, Greek, and Jewish legal traditions. Edwards asserted that Bello created a document that could be modified, because he understood the evolutionary nature of the state and society’s needs.

Edwards agreed with critics who argued that French law reduced married women to a status equal to minors and the insane: “In Chile we say the same thing, and we are right.”⁴⁰⁴ He asserted that although the Civil Code was designed to be changed, it did not reflect the progression of women’s social, economic, and political demands. Edwards claimed that the belief that a woman should submit completely to her husband was antiquated and unrealistic. He offered no solutions to address the problems in the

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Since 1927 La Nación has been owned by the Chilean government.

⁴⁰⁴ La Nación, June 14, 1951, p. 4.

Chilean Civil Code. Nor did he defend it absolutely. He stated that married women had an unfair disadvantage under the current law and that should be addressed. His column illustrated that the discussion about sex discrimination under the Civil Code included transforming gender relations.

In contrast to the middle-class demand for gender equality expressed by Radical feminists, Socialist and Communist women adopted a public silence. It is not that the members of these parties disregarded women's issues in the 1950s. PS and PC leaders recognized gender exploitation only within the broader class struggle. These parties also experienced severe internal and coalitional fragmentation between the 1930s and 1950s. These conflicts centered on ideological philosophies and how to dismantle the class system. This left little room for advancing women's causes. Communist leaders, although concerned about women's legal, economic, and social subjugation, prioritized party and coalitional stability. The party's illegal status from 1948 to 1958 contributed to leaders' silence on women's issues.

Socialist and Communist women discussed women's rights throughout the 1950s and often raised the topic at national party conferences. Women also made gender a secondary concern to class issues, adopting the belief that gender discrimination would resolve itself once they transformed the capitalist system. Women in the PS and PC also attempted to augment their roles in parties and to gain greater access to party decision-making organs. Their desire to have a greater voice in their parties focused their attentions internally and left little room for public demands for women's rights. Like their male leaders they sought to stabilize their parties and coalitions.

Radical Party women led the movement to achieve more legal autonomy for women. The Women's Bureau, especially, conceived and promoted a set of reforms to the Civil Code which became one of the most important pieces of legislation passed in the 1950s that directly affected women.⁴⁰⁵ Law 10, 271 addressed parental custodial rights and marital property issues. Prior to the reforms set forth in this law, married women had limited custody rights and little control over the administration of communal goods. The 1949 women's suffrage law altered the Civil Code to bestow full citizenship to single women over 21 years old. Married and separated women's civil rights reverted to traditional restrictions defined by a marriage contract. Married women were under their husbands' legal protection; a protection that was to be reciprocated with total obedience.⁴⁰⁶ Article 132 of the Civil Code sanctioned a woman's subordination to her husband through *Potestad marital* or Marital Authority, which conferred the right over a woman's person and goods to the husband.⁴⁰⁷ The law prohibited women from committing adultery, a prohibition that did not extend to men. The Civil Code also forced women to renounce their rights to enter into legal contracts, to testify in court, to take legal action, to take out loans, and to receive or deny an inheritance once they entered into marriage. The law also limited women's custodial rights over their children. Whether or not couples obeyed these laws is debatable. We can surmise that many husbands and wives had a mutual respect for each other that made such legal limitations an annoying inconvenience.

⁴⁰⁵ El Mercurio, June 14, 1952, p. 3. The President of the Institute of Legislative Studies, Arturo Alessandri Rodríguez, made special mention of the important role the Women's Bureau staff had in developing the aforementioned law.

⁴⁰⁶ Código Civil de la República de Chile, article 131.

⁴⁰⁷ Klimpel, La mujer Chilena, p. 53.

Married women had legal authority to administer their own property only if they agreed to a separation of possessions upon contracting marriage,⁴⁰⁸ practiced a profession or trade, worked in industry, held office, or obtained a perpetual marital separation.⁴⁰⁹ Extenuating circumstances granted married women the right to manage their property, such as the husband's dementia, muteness or deafness, a husband's absence, and if he failed to appear for judicial proceedings concerning a wife's claim to obtain legal authorization.⁴¹⁰ Married women practiced basic civil rights only with their husband's express permission or by court order. The Women's Bureau petitioned the legislature to reform the Civil Code to address married women's limited rights. The appeal to change the law suggests that the codes were enforced at some level and that the issue was important to Radical women.

Law 10,271 identified the husband as the head of the household with the right to administer joint marital property and his wife's property.⁴¹¹ Article 1749 outlined clear exceptions that served to protect women against their husband's poor financial decisions. A husband needed his wife's written authorization to transfer real estate. Limitations to how long a man leased his wife's estates were set: eight years for rural properties and five years for urban properties.⁴¹² Longer leases could be obtained with a woman's written permission. Although the reform required a wife's written authorization, men had a right to challenge their denials in court and, thus, make them subject to judicial review.

⁴⁰⁸ Klimpel argues that few women made use of this right and usually it was because of a husband's previous fraudulent administration or misuse of property. Klimpel, *La mujer Chilena*, p. 54.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 55. Perpetual marital separation allowed couples to separate legally, but denied them the right to remarry. Chile legalized divorce in 2004.

⁴¹⁰ *Código Civil*, article 137.

⁴¹¹ Ley 10,271, *Diario oficial de la República de Chile*, April 2, 1952. Promulgated February 29, 1952. See Article 1749.

⁴¹² *Ibid.* See Article 1757.

The stipulation served as a safety valve for men who convinced judges that his wife's refusal was not warranted. With this loophole, men continued to hold a slight advantage over women in determining how to administer marital possessions.

Reforms to articles 1749 and 1757 illustrated an important limitation to men's authority over their wives. Arturo Alessandri R. argued that the ICEL, the organization that drafted the law, restricted men's legal capacity to transfer and administer marital property without their wives' legal authority. The innovative aspect of these reforms was they expanded women's rights within the marital union "without altering the fundamental norms that govern that institution [marriage]."⁴¹³ More importantly, Arturo Alessandri R. noted that the reforms ensured against men's mishandling of marital goods and, thus, protected women. The Senate CLJC members understood these specific reforms as a legal restriction of men's authority in the marital union. The members argued that the Civil Code needed to expand women's rights, especially regarding joint marital property. They also stated that these reforms were important for all women, especially those from the popular classes. SCLJC members asserted that in many cases, women of the popular classes provided all of the marital assets and a husband's potential misappropriation of funds resulted in a woman's complete ruin.⁴¹⁴ Although these reforms specifically protected property-owning women, they also safeguarded working-class and middle-class women's wages. Both the Senate and Chamber CLJC members supported the reforms and recommended adopting them.

⁴¹³ Boletín del Senado de la República de Chile Sesiones extraordinarias November 29, 1950, p. 595.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

The reform to Article 1749 of the Civil Code was characterized as a “most combative” issue.⁴¹⁵ Supporters, such as FEChIF, argued that this stipulation served to protect women and families, especially those of modest means.⁴¹⁶ Arturo Alessandri R. believed that the change to Article 1749 had become a contentious issue for many men: "It is very difficult for them, the husbands, to resign themselves to losing part of their rights, which they maintained for 95 years...."⁴¹⁷ Referring to the apparent novelty of the reform, Alessandri claimed that several nations had increased women’s rights to administer marital possessions, such as Germany, Spain, Brazil, France, China, Uruguay, Sweden, Portugal, Turkey, Denmark, Norway, and Switzerland.⁴¹⁸ Requiring women’s written authorization allowed them to be more involved in their marital financial decisions and, presumably, to exert more control over their economic conditions. More importantly, it forced people to reconceptualize women’s role within marriage as active, although not quite equal, participants.

The new legislation included provisions for married couples to agree on a partial separation of goods. This legal distinction was important for women because prior to this law petitioning for a total separation of possessions was the only legal right women had to protect their assets. The separation of marital possessions resulted in the termination of the marital economic partnership and required women to renounce all rights to inherit from their husband’s estate.⁴¹⁹ Law 10,271 granted marital parties the right to separate the administration of certain goods and property, including earnings, while maintaining a

⁴¹⁵ El Mercurio, June 10, 1952, p. 3.

⁴¹⁶ El Mercurio, June 1, 1952, p. 23.

⁴¹⁷ El Mercurio, June 10, 1952, p. 3.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁹ Klimpel, La mujer Chilena, p. 61.

legal conjugal relationship, which granted women the right to joint marital property and inheritance. It also removed legal punishments against women who sought to protect their families' financial well-being. Although law 10,271 did not establish an equal partnership within marriage, women benefited greatly by its passage; whether they worked or came to the marriage with property or funds.

FEFICH leaders hailed Law 10,271 as an important triumph for women, especially women of modest means. The Women Attorneys Association of Chile (*Asociación de Abogadas de Chile*) agreed and members articulated that the reforms established in Law 10,271 were necessary. Elena Caffarena favored the law because it created a system of joint administration of marital possessions.⁴²⁰ Attorney Laura Müller agreed and claimed that the reforms were necessary. She also argued that women should continue to fight for spousal equality in the law.⁴²¹

Another key fight in the battle against male privileges concerned the double moral standard that existed in the Penal Code. Chilean society did not tolerate women's infidelity. The law reflected this intolerance by establishing men's legal right to beat or kill their spouses if found in an adulterous act. Women were not accorded the same rights under the law, which resulted in a legal gender bias against women that the Women's Bureau staff and the newly appointed Minister of Justice Adriana Olguín sought to correct. Women's struggle against the double moral standard in the Southern Cone began in the early 1900s.⁴²² At issue was the unequal punishment for women and men convicted of adultery.

⁴²⁰ *El Mercurio*, May 23, 1952, p. 23.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*

⁴²² See Lavrin, *Women, Feminism, and Social Change*.

The Chilean Penal Code defined and penalized adultery differently for men and women. Article 375 constituted adultery for women as a married woman who engaged in sexual relations with a man other than her husband. A conviction for female adultery resulted in a prison term between 61 days to five years.⁴²³ Article 381 established the following specific circumstances to convict a married man of adultery: if he brought his mistress into the conjugal home or if he engaged in a scandalous extramarital affair. Men convicted of adultery faced a potential prison sentence from 61 to 540 days (1.48 years).⁴²⁴ Although the Penal Code criminalized adultery for all people, it reflected a double moral standard, providing lesser penalties for men and more lenient definition of the crime.

Minister Adriana Olgún petitioned Congress to review the project initiated by President González to reform the Chilean Penal, Civil Procedure, and Criminal Procedure Codes. She argued that the current legislation regarding judicial procedures were bothersome and hindered judicial personnel from performing their functions.⁴²⁵ The project included modifying penalties for adultery. Altering the Penal Code to reflect equality concerning infidelity necessitated changing social understandings of double moral standards, as evidenced by Arturo Alessandri R.'s comments concerning the matter: "The two adulterers are equally censurable; nevertheless, tones exist from the point of view of reality."⁴²⁶ His view reflected a general uncertainty about altering the

⁴²³ Código Penal de la República de Chile, Libro II, Santiago: Imprenta Nacional, 1889.

⁴²⁴ Ibid. Brazilian lawmakers eliminated such distinctions in the 1940 Penal Codes. See Susan K. Besse, Restructuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil, 1914-1940 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), pp. 81-82.

⁴²⁵ Boletín de la Cámara de Diputados de la República de Chile Sesiones ordinarias September 9, 1952, p. 2520.

⁴²⁶ El Mercurio, June 14, 1952, p. 3.

traditional gender order that privileged men, despite his support for limiting male economic authority.

The male-dominated legislator chose to avoid the issue and to challenge the double moral standard. According to Senate CLJC members, Minister Olguín withdrew her request to decriminalize adultery. They stated that she did so per Senate President Fernando Alessandri's suggestion. Senator Fernando Alessandri believed the Minister's request "was foreign to the principal target of the project."⁴²⁷ Neither the Senate nor the Chamber debated the issue. Although legislators' reduced male authority over their wives and children, they were reluctant to eliminate patriarchal privileges completely. Minister Olguín's decision to abandon the fight to decriminalize adultery is unknown. Perhaps President González and Radical Party leaders refused to support this issue, because there was no public outcry from women to make adultery a key legislative battle.

Legislators made slight modifications to the Penal Code that benefited women, but which were not egalitarian. Law 11,183 promulgated 8 June 1953, repealed article 10 that exempted men from conviction in the event that he killed, beat or mistreated his wife if he found her in the flagrant act of committing adultery.⁴²⁸ Chile was not unique in criminalizing men's crimes of passion.⁴²⁹ Despite repealing this male privilege, lawmakers upheld harsher penalties for women convicted of adultery. Arturo Alessandri R., a Chilean legal professional, professed that the reforms to the Penal Code ended male privilege in marriage. He commented, "Now equality is established as regards the

⁴²⁷ *Boletín del Senado de la República de Chile* Sesiones ordinarias October 14, 1952, p. 2048.

⁴²⁸ Ley 11,183, *Diario oficial de la República de Chile*, June 10, 1953. Promulgated June 8, 1953. See Article 4.

⁴²⁹ Brazil repealed this right in 1940 and France in 1975. The repeal does not reflect enforcement. Many Latin American nations continue to carry lighter sentences for men who commit crimes of passion, such as Colombia, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Argentina.

adultery of a man and of a woman.”⁴³⁰ His understanding of equality reflected a continued double moral standard for women. How could a law that penalized women more strictly than men for the same crime be classified as equal?

Legislators preserved this patriarchal privilege until 1994, demonstrating how Chilean lawmakers defined their society in terms of modernity.⁴³¹ They acknowledged that women should have more economic control over a family’s finances, especially if they contributed with their own wages and property. Legislators also recognized that the law required women to renounce their rights upon marriage. Their willingness to limit patriarchal privileges diminished with reforms that targeted the moral gender order.

Minister Olgún also petitioned Congress to eliminate men’s privileged right to open their wives’ correspondence as established in Article 146 of the Penal Code, which constituted women’s equal actions as a criminal offense. This appeared to be a uniquely Chilean patriarchal privilege and contributed to married women’s legal subjugation to male authority. Senate CLJC members supported the measure, because the virtue of the disposition was not applicable to spouses.⁴³² The Senate and the Chamber passed the law without apparent debate, suggesting that the proposed law posed a limited challenge to patriarchal privilege. Law 11,183 decriminalized women’s offense and repealed men’s exclusive right to open their spouse’s mail and stipulated that privacy in correspondence did not apply to married couples, parents or legal guardians.⁴³³ Law 11,183 lessened men’s control over their wives’ actions and accorded women more autonomy within

⁴³⁰ Jenaro Medina, “Terminan 95 Años de Feudalismo Matrimonial,” *Eva*, June 20, 1952, p. 42.

⁴³¹ Law 19,335 continued to criminalize adultery, but established equal punishments for women and men. Law 19335, *Diario oficial de la República de Chile*, September 23, 1994. Promulgated September 12, 1994.

⁴³² *Boletín del Senado de la República de Chile* Sesiones ordinarias October 14, 1952, p. 2048.

⁴³³ *Eva*, June 20, 1952, p. 42.

marriage. It failed to eliminate gender discrimination in the law, which illustrated legislator's unease in dismantling patriarchal privilege fully.

It would take more than legal reforms to alter social conceptualizations of gender relations and roles. Oscar Aramayo submitted a letter to the editor of El Mercurio in which he cautioned women to be wary of legal reforms that purported to elevate their status. He didn't understand why Chilean women felt offended especially considering the magnificent spiritual position they held in society. He warned women: "to take heed that the reforms introduced to the old legislation neither affect nor tarnish the spiritual world in which she is the grand dame. For it is from this, her wonderful power is sought and extolled; it is there where her personality grows to unsuspected heights and where it is realized fully."⁴³⁴ He continued to exalt women's privileged spiritual position and argued against those women who sacrificed their families in order to have "a life outside of the home."⁴³⁵ Aramayo's position demonstrated a discomfort with the social ramifications that accompanied legal reforms that served to create a more gendered balance in the law. He, like Alessandri, agreed that although legislative changes were necessary, reformers needed to protect certain social relations; mainly the patriarchal privileges. He made a final plea to every woman and feminist: "To open her heart to those whom need her, to whom she belongs, and keep on being, first of all, the mother, the fiancée and the wife."⁴³⁶ Aramayo believed that radical legal changes threatened Chile's well established social structure. His statements demonstrated public unease with modifying social constructions of gender.

⁴³⁴ El Mercurio, June 20, 1952, p. 3.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

Conclusion

A public announcement appeared in the 18 January 1952 edition of El Mercurio that congratulated Adriana Olgún for launching a project to modify the Chilean Civil Code. Although Olgún and the Women's Bureau staff laid a good foundation for increasing women's rights and transforming the patriarchal legal system, their mission was not successful by any means. Policy makers faced difficult choices in the 1950s that concerned women's political, economic, and social condition. They grappled with accepting the persistence of non-traditional family units, despite numerous attempts to legislate morality to protect the male-headed nuclear family. The 1950s represented the slow process from fostering the patriarchal family unit to accepting Chilean social realities. Legislation that reflected this transition altered women's economic and legal status by modifying paternal authority and paying family allowances directly to women. Congressional debates demonstrated that legislators reluctantly reformed Social Security and struggled over how to legalize ethical behavior. Changes in legitimacy requirements, child support, and inheritance illustrated legislators' desire to regulate familial relationships and to enforce morality.

The Women's Bureau staff and Olgún's attempt to end the legal subordination of women to men met with limited success. Married women gained personal independence, but legal challenges to decriminalize adultery failed. Legislators' reluctance to discuss adultery illustrated the difficulty in reversing a legal system founded on a double moral standard. Chilean lawmakers were unwilling to sever completely men's authority over women. Judging by the goals set by the Women's Bureau and the legislation established

one conclusion can be made: The war against male privileges initiated by Adriana Olguín resulted in a male victory.

The government and political party system continued to be dominated by men. Women had a weak presence in political parties during the 1950s. Again, this was a decade of transition. Women slowly abandoned the strategy of establishing cross-class and multi-party organizations to influence legislation. They turned to political parties that best represented their ideological and class needs. Their role in the parties was limited and reflected a secondary status to male members. During the 1950s, women increased their political party participation and began the process of permeating the parties' executive branches. Women's partial public role in the legislative reforms during the 1950s illustrated their weak status in the party system. Continual adjustments to Law 11,051 throughout the decade reflected women's growing political strength and party support for their agenda. By the 1960s, women had a stronger, albeit unequal, presence in the party system and were able to make their demands known and to shape party agendas.

The legislative reforms, initiated by President González, reflected the Radical Party agenda to reform family relations in the modern era. These projects provoked little debate among political party leaders regarding whether or not the law warranted such changes. With the exception of prominent female Radical members, few women engaged in legislative discussions. This reflected congressional realities: women had little representation in Congress and in the party system in the 1950s. As more women won legislative seats and permeated political party executive arms, they became more vocal about women's rights. More importantly, female Radical Party leaders initiated these

reforms. They used FEChIF to generate public support for a women's rights agenda that represented middle-class values and feminism. Two prominent Radical women served as FEChIF presidents, Amanda Labarca (1946) and Ana Figueroa (1949). Other than FEChIF there appeared to be little attempt to unite women on the proposed reforms. The struggle over women's retirement illustrated that women had different views regarding the issue. FEChIF and MEMCh denounced Acharán Arce's bill, while the CUMT, an independent working-class women's group, supported it.

Legislative discussions held centered on class issues to make sure that protective legislation extended to all women, such as the minor debate concerning the administration over marital possessions. The reforms enacted demonstrated how Chilean lawmakers imposed a progressive value system in the law that did not eradicate traditional patriarchal authority. They redefined married women's civil status and marital responsibilities. They also addressed legal issues that arose from marital separation in the absence of a divorce law. Thus, they deferred the moral and highly contentious divorce debate for a short while.

The 1950s proved to be an important moment that foreshadowed women's rights struggles in the 1960s that specifically addressed morality and gender responsibilities: divorce and national day care. Beginning in the 1930s and 1940s, Popular Front governments transformed the Chilean welfare state. Feminists, middle-class reformers, and traditionalists compromised their values and goals to modernize the welfare and gender systems. The legislative reforms enacted in the early 1950s represented a culmination of those efforts. They also showed how women's political culture transitioned from a specific interest group to ancillaries of individual political parties

whose enthusiasm to compromise their ideological values waned. Female politicians proved their commitment to party growth, programs, and legislative campaigns. In the 1960s they demanded party support in return.

CHAPTER 6

PRESERVING THE SANCTITY OF THE FAMILY: NATIONAL DAY CARE AND DIVORCE LEGISLATION

During the 1960s two legislative projects emerged that directly affected gender relations and women's ability to exercise more control over their daily activities: divorce and national day care. Both addressed pressing social needs and represented a means for the Chilean government to demonstrate its commitment to modernity and Alliance for Progress goals. The debates surrounding these two issues forced the legislature to define the family, its function in society, and the government's responsibility to the family. Congressional members explained how such definitions fit into international conceptualizations of the family unit and its relationship to the state. Female politicians participated in defining the family and gender roles and had an added responsibility to find a means to articulate and offer solutions to problems women deemed most important. The individual party strength they cemented during the 1950s allowed women to negotiate these theoretical constructs more successfully and enabled them to voice their agenda through the party more forcefully than the previous decade. Although women played a more active role in determining social welfare programs, their ability to alter gender inequities and moral standards in the law remained limited.

The national day care and divorce legislation demonstrated how the party structure and internal affairs dominated legal discussions and illustrated that while

women congressional members prioritized party agendas over gender, they used their party positions to push woman-centered legislation. I locate the proposed divorce bill and the National Day Care Law within the context of how women politicians navigated and utilized the political party system to advance women's issues. Did policy makers focus gendered legal discussions on equality or social concerns, such as protecting the family? How did women politicians work within the political party structure to support or oppose legislation? How did international democratic principles, such as those articulated in the Alliance for Progress affect the Chilean political party system and the expansion of the welfare state? By analyzing how male and female political party members chose to represent women and family issues to the public and how they informed the discourse, we can gain a better understanding of how women's concerns fit into legislation.

Neither child care nor divorce created new discussions in Chilean feminist, political or public circles. Like upper- and middle-class women reformers in Latin America and the United States during the early twentieth century, Chilean female social activists sought to mold working-class society, especially in terms of how marriages and families should function. Regulating how mothers served their families became a means to implant middle-class social understandings of family and gender relations. In the United States a Day Nursery Movement emerged during the Progressive Era (1890-1920), a time in which U.S. citizens coped with rapid industrial and urban growth. Wage-earning mothers in the United States found themselves increasingly dependent on public institutions, such as child care services, and at the mercy of upper- and middle-class reformers' prejudice. Much like their counterparts in other industrial nations,

Chilean female laborers had little choice but to leave their private lives open to public scrutiny.⁴³⁷ How Chilean lawmakers addressed value issues demonstrated the fine line that existed between feminist advancement and moral responsibility.

Latin American feminists also wrestled with how to address the rising need for child care and nontraditional family structures.⁴³⁸ Argentine feminist and socialist women's groups articulated shared concerns for protecting children and supported programs that ranged from childcare education for young girls to establishing women's organizations that sought to provide care for disadvantaged children, such as the Argentine League for Women's and Children's Rights (*Liga para los Derechos de la Mujer y el Niño*).⁴³⁹ Latin American women representatives discussed similar concerns at the First American Congress of the Child held in Buenos Aires, Argentina in July 1916.⁴⁴⁰ Delegates debated important social concerns that included women and children's labor regulations, health standards and child care centers. Historian Donna Guy argued that the Pan-American Conferences resulted in child welfare reforms that transitioned from a strategy of strong state intervention in the family to state sponsored preventive programs that aided families in protecting children.⁴⁴¹ Although Chile did not

⁴³⁷ Anne Durst, "Of Women, By Women, and For Women": The Day Nursery Movement in the Progressive-Era United States," *Journal of Social History* 39, no. 1 (Fall 2005): 142.

⁴³⁸ For a discussion about the divorce debate and the issue of public day care in other nations consult: Susan K. Besse, *Restructuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil, 1914-1940*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996); June E. Hahner, *Emancipating the Female Sex: The Struggle for Women's Rights in Brazil, 1850-1940* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990); Asunción Lavrin, *Women, Feminism, and Social Change in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, 1890-1940*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995); and K. Lynn Stoner, *From the House to the Streets: The Cuban Woman's Movement for Legal Reform, 1898-1940*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991).

⁴³⁹ Lavrin, *Women, Feminism, and Social Change*, pp. 104-108.

⁴⁴⁰ For a discussion on the role Pan-American cooperation played in generating child welfare reforms in Latin America see, Donna Guy, *White Slavery and Mothers Alive and Dead: The Troubled Meeting of Sex, Gender, Public Health, and Progress in Latin America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000).

⁴⁴¹ Guy, *White Slavery and Mothers Alive and Dead*, p. 51.

send a representative to the 1916 Pan-American meeting, it hosted the 1924 meeting in Santiago, illustrating Chilean feminists' and social reformers' concern over these issues.

Chilean legislators' attempts to pass legislation that addressed these social problems caused serious rifts among feminists, legislators, the working class, and Roman Catholic Church leaders. Middle-class reformers and legislators sought to adjust custody, legitimacy, and financial support issues to prevent the further destruction of traditional family structures. Policymakers had to regulate parental rights, child support, marital separation, and legitimacy. Their task became more difficult to achieve without a proper divorce law. Divorce brought religious and secular understandings of marriage ties into conflict and raised public concern over children's psychological states and the fate of the family. Many divorce opponents considered marriage to be a sacred Chilean institution, making the passage of a divorce law difficult to accomplish. Feminists were divided on this issue, which further compromised divorce advocates' goals. Divorce legislation failed because it produced moral concerns that conflicted with social welfare legislation and the desire to protect the family.

National day care caused fewer ethical concerns because it fit within the social welfare rubric. The issue did present some conflict throughout the twentieth century, because it broadened legal and social tensions among the working classes, industrial owners, upper- and middle-class reformers and legislators. The Cuban Revolution in 1959 amplified these tensions and led to United States and Latin American governmental efforts to halt and reverse the Communist movement in the Western Hemisphere. The Alliance for Progress specifically dealt with limiting the perceived Communist threat in Cuba by promoting more equitable income distribution, increasing per capital income,

and improving health and education in Latin America. Legislating national day care in Chile corresponded to these endeavors. Government-funded and regulated day care increased women's opportunities to work outside the home without draining their resources for childcare. It also provided early education to all Chilean children and improved their future economic and employment prospects. Many legislators believed that increased educational and economic opportunities would quell radical leftist movements.

National Day Care and Nurseries

Government funded day care was not as contentious as divorce, although the road leading to Law 17,301 was long and hampered by political party bickering. The issue of onsite nurseries in factories and child care establishments had begun in the early twentieth century as Chilean society grappled with the social transformations produced by industrialization.⁴⁴² Initial discussions centered on encouraging working-class mothers to breastfeed during the workday. The Women's Union of Chile (*Unión de Mujeres de Chile*), founded in 1953 by leftist women, prepared a plan for national day care centers and nurseries, but it failed to produce national or legislative results. By the 1960s, day care evolved into a national political issue impacted by the Alliance for Progress.⁴⁴³

Day care fit nicely into Alliance goals to establish stable democratic governments and economic development plans. The objectives outlined at the Punta del Este meeting called for significant improvements in sanitation, education, housing, land reform and a

⁴⁴² See Hutchison, *Labors Appropriate to their Sex*, chapter 7.

⁴⁴³ Latin American and United States representatives prepared the Alliance for Progress Charter in August 1961 during an inter-American conference in Punta del Este, Uruguay.

more equitable distribution of wealth. The United States pledged billions in aid packages to this endeavor and hoped to prevent the spread of revolutionary movements, such as Fidel Castro's Cuba. Although the Charter did not address day care or preschool, the education goals obliged nations "to ensure a minimum of six years of primary education for every school-aged child."⁴⁴⁴ Chilean women congressional members moved beyond this aim and initiated a government-funded day care bill that included specifications for preschool education. Through their insistence and cooperation, and key political parties' support President Eduardo Frei signed the National Day Care Law on April 20, 1970.

Five female deputies, representing the Radical, Communist and Christian Democrat parties,⁴⁴⁵ proposed a national day care law on August 7, 1962.⁴⁴⁶ The Deputies articulated that the proposed project of law addressed "an urgent need" for a national child care system.⁴⁴⁷ The Deputies outlined a growing concern for every woman, professional, working-class or domestic employee: tackling "the distressing problem of not having someone who can appropriately look after her small children during her work hours."⁴⁴⁸ The percentage of women in the labor force increased from 24 to 27.5 percent between 1960 and 1970.⁴⁴⁹ The rise of women who worked, compounded with the high rate of nontraditional family units, added to the delegates'

⁴⁴⁴ L. Ronald Scheman, editor. *The Alliance for Progress: A Retrospective*. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1988), p. 24.

⁴⁴⁵ Julieta Campusano, Communist Party; Inés Enríquez and Ana Ugalde, Radical Party; and Graciela Lacoste and Ana Rodríguez, Christian Democratic Party.

⁴⁴⁶ The first day care legislative motion was submitted in 1954.

⁴⁴⁷ *Boletín de Sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados de la República de Chile*, Sesiones ordinarias August 7, 1962, p. 2939.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁹ 1960 figures in Guadagni, *La fuerza de trabajo en Chile, 1930-1960*, p. 56. 1970 figures in Mercedes Taborga, "Aspectos económicos del trabajo de la mujer," in *Chile: Mujer y sociedad*, ed. by Paz Covarrubias and Rolando Franco (Santiago: Alfabetá Impresores, 1978), p. 51.

concern.⁴⁵⁰ They extended the issue to housewives who left their children in someone else's care in order to attend to their daily domestic duties. Their solution was simple: draft legislation for a national government-funded day care system.

The initial bill proposed the creation of kindergartens and day nurseries regulated by the National Health Service. Child care facilities would accommodate children from birth to age seven during the work day, providing appropriate medical attention, nutrition, and education. To impress upon the Chamber members the need for such a government institution, the Deputies offered statistical information compiled in the 1960 Census. In 1960, children under the age of seven totaled 1,373,963, and of those 300,000 were younger than two years old.⁴⁵¹ The number of young children would only rise as infant mortality decreased and the population continued to increase as would the number of women who would seek employment outside of the home. The Deputies argued that lawmakers needed to address the problems associated with a growing population and the increase of women laborers. To illustrate the growing need for day care legislation, the deputies distributed the proposed law to various public forums, including women who would benefit from the law and technicians (presumably preschool educators, Department of Education personnel, and nursery care providers). The response received generated what the deputies reported as “constructive patriotic interest.”⁴⁵² This enabled them to frame the issue as one of national interest and not just a concern specific to women.

⁴⁵⁰ According to Taborga's figures nuclear families represented 70.6% of Chilean households in 1968. Taborga, “Aspectos económicos del trabajo de la mujer,” p. 44.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid. They did not offer any information about how many of those children were placed in child care.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

Although Law 10,383 required industrial sites with more than twenty female employees to provide nurseries, the regulations were neither followed nor enforced properly. The Deputies argued that the most common means of “deceiving the law” was employers’ tendency to hire no more than 19 women, a practice that limited women’s employment options and contributed to working-class economic hardship.⁴⁵³ To further demonstrate the need for day care legislation, the Deputies identified principal causes of noncompliance as negligent enforcement, weak sanctions, the impracticality women faced with transporting their children across the city to work, and the challenge many small industries had financing onsite nurseries.⁴⁵⁴ These problems contributed to discrimination against women workers. Moreover, Deputies believed that inadequate child care during mothers’ workdays contributed to Chile’s intolerably high infant mortality rates.⁴⁵⁵

The Deputies framed children’s education and care as the heart of the issue, for children represented the nation’s future. They demonstrated this by quoting Chilean Nobel Laureate Gabriela Mistral, “The child calls today”; “He cannot wait.”⁴⁵⁶ With this line they charged Congress with approving this bill not just for the children, but to ensure the nation’s fate. They indicated that the first years of life were the most formative and that the State had a responsibility to aid in children’s early development.

To tend appropriately to the early age is then the best means to obtain a balanced and well integrated individual to society. It is also the best preventive means that a State that wants to avoid subsequent expenses in

⁴⁵³ Ibid., pp. 2939-2940.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 2940.

⁴⁵⁵ Chile’s infant mortality rate decreased from 120.3 per 1000 births in 1950 to 109.8 per 1000 in 1960. The Latin American average rates were: 1950: 117.6/1000; 1960: 104.1/1000. CELADE, Boletín Demográfico: América Latina Tablas de Mortalidad, 1950-2025, United Nations: 74 (Santiago, July, 2004), p. 26.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 2939.

every aspect of illness, accidents, education failures, idleness, crime and prostitution can grant to itself.⁴⁵⁷

The State would provide children with the services and attention that working mothers could not during work hours. In return, the State produced a productive, healthy, and well-balanced citizenry. The Deputies argued that lawmakers could not afford to reject a bill that would ensure such promising prospects.

The national day care bill did not move beyond the initial motion in the Chamber. This could indicate that these women politicians could not muster enough support within their individual parties to support their project or that the project itself held minor importance. By 1962, the Radical Party's political clout had waned considerably, the Christian Democrat Party was still in its infancy, and the Communist Party had little power over the leftist coalition. More probably, day care legislation held less importance than the national effort to meet Alliance for Progress measures.

In August 1962 the Pro-Kindergarten Law Commission/PLC (*Comisión Pro Ley de Jardines Infantiles*)⁴⁵⁸ met weekly to strategize. That same month the PLC asked President Alessandri to include the project in an extraordinary legislative session.⁴⁵⁹ It appeared that President Alessandri denied the request. National day care was a lesser concern to the growing national and international preoccupation with the Soviet Union and its relationship with Cuba. During the early 1960s especially, Chilean political leaders, under pressure from the United States and Alliance for Progress officials, had to

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 2940.

⁴⁵⁸ The Commission members were the same five women deputies who presented the initial project of law. Julieta Campusano, Inés Enríquez, Graciela Lacoste, Ana Rodríguez and Ana Ugalde. Politicians used the terms kindergarten, preschool and day care centers interchangeably throughout the struggle for a national child care law.

⁴⁵⁹ *El Mercurio*, September 13, 1962, p. 23.

limit the rising leftist movement in Chile. The debate over a progressive agrarian reform law took precedence, because it directly affected Alliance for Progress aid packages.⁴⁶⁰ Unless day care sponsors could equate their initiative with combating leftist movements in Chile, it would not receive just attention.

In 1965 the subject resurfaced with Decree 27,952, President Frei's education reform measure that provided new regulations for the Chilean education system. The decree established that education consisted of more than imparting information. Education should prepare an individual to be a conscientious and productive citizen and to be "capable of a life of work and to enable him to take part intelligently in the process of the nation's cultural, social and economic development...."⁴⁶¹ The second article specifically addressed preschool education and outlined its primary purpose to be "the integral development of the ideal personality of the child and his intelligent adaptation to social and natural environment."⁴⁶² The decree neither made preschool education compulsory nor made the government responsible for funding. It placed preschool under the Department of Education and articulated its role in a child's education. The decree's significance is that it acknowledged the importance of preschool education, especially in fostering a work ethic and social responsibility in children.

President Frei's executive decree represented an important political ploy. Because he chose to implement part of his education reform package with an executive

⁴⁶⁰ Law 15,020, promulgated November 27, 1962, dominated Congressional debates from July to November, leaving little time for effective discussion of a national day care program. Law 15,020, the agrarian reform law, did not end the agrarian reform issue. President Eduardo Frei's administration would continue to chip away at the hacienda system, although such measures increased the divide between the Christian Democrats and leftist political leaders.

⁴⁶¹ Decree 27, 952. Diario oficial de la República de Chile, December 20, 1965. Promulgated December 7, 1965. The decree established that children were to begin elementary education at age seven.

⁴⁶² Ibid.

decree, he freed the issue from potential political gridlock. This was a bold move, especially by a President who vowed to democratize the nation's political and social structures.⁴⁶³ The executive decree allowed President Frei and the PDC to retain ownership over education reform. The authorship issue haunted the day care bill until its passage in 1970.

PDC Deputies Silvia Correa Marín, María Inés Aguilera Castro, Juana Dip and Wilna Saavedra, Communist representative Gladys Marín, Socialist Party Deputies Laura Allende and Carmen Lazo and Radical Party representative Inés Enríquez submitted another child care project in September 1967. This proposed law echoed the sentiments articulated in the earlier draft and described in Decree 27,952. The Deputies identified the first years of a person's life as the most important especially for environmental exposure and effects on personality formation. The State's intervention during a child's early years contributed to curbing infant mortality and morbidity, vagrancy, crime, and prostitution all of which the Deputies qualified as "the endemic evils of our society".⁴⁶⁴ They endowed the State with a special responsibility to children and the international community.

The Deputies argued that Chile needed to adhere to the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, adopted by the League of Nations in Geneva in 1924. This document provided that children, because of their physical and mental immaturity, were at a distinct disadvantage and should be accorded special safeguards and care that included legal

⁴⁶³ For more information about Frei's presidential campaign platform see Loveman, *Chile*, chapter 9.

⁴⁶⁴ *Boletín de Sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados de la República de Chile*, Sesiones ordinarias, September 5, 1967, p. 3590.

protections.⁴⁶⁵ The United Nations General Assembly in 1946 approved these measures and greatly expanded them in 1959. As a member nation of the United Nations General Assembly Chile had to accept the resolutions. The Deputies argued that Chile had an obligation to meet the Geneva Declaration standards and to produce a productive citizenry.

The bill defined day care as “any establishment or institution that receives during the day a child up to 6 years of age, providing integral attention that is understood as suitable food, education corresponding to the child’s age and medical-sanitary attention.”⁴⁶⁶ Preschool education expanded beyond cultivating a sense of civic duty to include providing medical and nutritional services. The national government increased its responsibility to an individual’s personal life by seeing to children’s basic needs and filling a partial parental role.

The deputies proposed financing national day care through a combination of slight increases in taxes, additional taxes, a small percentage of municipal revenues and a portion of the Department of Education’s budget.⁴⁶⁷ The Deputies also requested that the Minister of Education, the Superintendent of Primary Education and the Director of Primary and Basic Education review their initiative, so that they could offer financial, technical and practical suggestions for implementation.

While the Chamber of Deputies sent the proposal to Committee for further study, Socialist Senators Salvador Allende and María Carrera and Communist Senator Julieta Campusano submitted a proposal to establish an institution to oversee the operation of

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 3591.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 3592.

kindergartens, the Office of Early Childhood Education/OECE.⁴⁶⁸ Although the Senate approved the OECE, PDC Senators abstained from the vote and Christian Democratic Chamber representatives opposed the measure, furthering the divide between the PDC and the leftist coalition. President Frei then vetoed it, citing the Senate had no constitutional authority to establish an institution of public service.⁴⁶⁹ Only the President of the Republic had the right to create governmental departments. President Frei used his executive powers to establish the National Nursery Board (*Junta Nacional de Guarderías Infantiles*) on July 31, 1968.⁴⁷⁰ Frei declared that his actions facilitated the promulgation of the day care bill proposed by Deputies María Inés Aguilera, Silvia Correa, Juana Dip, Graciela Lacoste, Margarita Palus, Blanca Retamal and Wilna Saavedra, all Christian Democrats.⁴⁷¹ They submitted their bill the same day that President Frei created the Council. National day care thus became a one-party project that allotted the PDC and President Frei ownership over this piece of legislation.

Female PDC Deputies presented their project as a means to address both labor and child development issues, claiming that day care centers should offer protection and the means necessary for social and physical development. If the Chilean government regulated the care and instruction of young children, it could play an important role in the formation of “future members of the national community.”⁴⁷² Thus, in exchange for providing adequate medical, nutritional and educational services, the nation gained a

⁴⁶⁸ *Boletín de Sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados de la República de Chile*, Sesión 57, May 10, 1968, p. 5,803.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, Sesión 60, May 16, 1968, pp. 6,225 and 6,235.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, Sesiones extraordinarias, Sesión 20, July 31, 1968, p. 1899. The name would be changed to the National Kindergarten Board (*Junta Nacional de Jardines Infantiles*), presumably to encompass both nursery care and preschool centers.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*

proficient and productive citizenry. The Deputies reiterated this justification and assumption. As with earlier drafts, this proposal was sent to committee for study, but in contrast, it became law because it received full presidential support.

There is no clear evidence to show why President Frei did not establish the National Nursery Council earlier or why he denied Senators Allende, Carrera and Campusano credit for the idea. President Frei had previous knowledge that Congress wanted to create a public institution, having been sent two communiqués from the Chamber of Deputies requesting such an action.⁴⁷³ There appears to have been no response to these petitions or any explanation as to why not. The PDC and President Frei struggled to pass their agrarian land reforms needed to secure Alliance for Progress goals and international aid. Concentrating on those legislative initiatives might have caused a lull in the national day care project. Authorship played a central role and spoke to the growing conflict between leftist parties and the Christian Democrats. President Frei and the PDC hoped to implement the “Revolution in Liberty”, but found it to be extremely difficult as the Chilean leftist movement became more radical and impatient. It also could have been a personal attack against Senator Carrera who “proved to be more aggressively opposed to the government than her ex-husband.”⁴⁷⁴ Whatever the reasons, national day care and preschool regulation became embroiled in the same political discord that affected the entire political party system.

⁴⁷³ *Boletín de Sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados de la República de Chile*, Sesión 33, April 29, 1969, pp. 3459-3460. The first sent in September 1966, requested by Christian Democratic Deputy Aguilera, was to be included in the National Council of Minors Law. Shortly thereafter, Communist Deputy María Maluenda asked the Chamber to petition the President to create a public office for the purpose of establishing a national day care law.

⁴⁷⁴ Cristián Gazmuri, Patricia Arancibia and Álvaro Góngora, *Eduardo Frei Montalva y su Época*, Vol. II, (Santiago: Aguilar Chilena de Ediciones, Ltda., 2000), p. 661. Senator Carrera won the Senate seat vacated by her husband on March 11, 1967 as a result of a fatal car accident. He was also a militant Socialist.

In 1969 the Chamber discussed the fourth and final national day care project. Balancing four separate projects on the same issue added to political tensions within Congress, reflecting the political need to claim credit for delivering this legislation to Chilean citizens. PDC Senator Patricio Aylwin attempted to discredit Salvador Allende's proposal the Senate approved with Communist and Socialist support. He stressed that Senator Allende's project held no relevance, because it had been rejected, vetoed, and found to have been unconstitutional. He also claimed that "the indication has nothing in common with the project in discussion and it will only achieve in delaying it...."⁴⁷⁵ President Frei's Minister of Education Máximo Pacheco attempted to circumvent partisan tensions. He stated that he was present at the July 31, 1968 Chamber session when deputies recognized the PDC women Deputies' day care project and that it was not the President's initiative.⁴⁷⁶ He also claimed that despite the political issues surrounding the bill, he supported national day care and preschool.

As Congress debated the four day care projects, some journalists questioned politicians' motives and ability to run the nation. An editorial appeared in El Mercurio that illustrated Chilean's frustration with political maneuvering in the national government.

in an epoch that evolves under the imperative of efficiency and in a nation that is said to be embroiled in revolutionary changes for the sake of its progress and modernization, we find that the principal function of the State, that of dictating laws, is fulfilled without organization nor agreement, quadrupling efforts, in the middle of the absence of mutual information between the co-legislative powers and under the fortitude of

⁴⁷⁵ El Mercurio, August 2, 1968, p. 27.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

puerile emulation with ends of electoral propaganda, for obtaining parenthood of a project of law.⁴⁷⁷

The editorial staff identified the strife caused by the political “tug of war” over national day care legislation and recognized that those enmeshed in the struggle had little power or desire to put partisan feelings aside.

PDC female Deputies understood that the national day care debate added to serious political tensions. They focused on how Chile could advance early childhood formation through state funding and regulation. PDC Deputy María Inés Aguilera employed the notions of civility and modernity to show how Chile’s national day care system might establish a model for day care and preschool programs. She asserted that categorizing preschool instruction as either a privilege of the upper class or a form of public assistance for the poor “would mean an ignorance that no society who boasts of being civilized should accept.”⁴⁷⁸ She argued that early child education should be directed by specialized personnel, regulated by the federal government and available to all children. Government-funded day care aided working mothers and protected children and national interests. It also created a model for how a government should address educational and day care needs.

Deputy Aguilera reminded the Chamber that the current legislative project would meet measures adopted in the United Nations’ Declaration of Child’s Rights. She stated, “In Latin America, as we know, no legislation exists for child care or for specializing personnel at the university level; and it seems to me that child educator’s care in nurseries

⁴⁷⁷ El Mercurio, August 3, 1968, p. 3. Editorial committees wrote the opinions published in El Mercurio’s Editorial Page. The newspaper did not name the editorial committees. It is nearly impossible to discern which editors authored which opinions.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 3458.

is an innovation in our America.”⁴⁷⁹ Deputy Aguilera wanted Chile to be the pioneer of state-funded preschool care and instruction in Latin America and beyond, a distinction that would bring pride to the nation.

Senator Julieta Campusano agreed with Aguilera’s arguments for Chile’s need for national day care. She addressed the Senate and spoke of the United Nation’s stance on the state’s responsibility to protect children and provide for their future. More importantly, such legislation ensured Chile’s economic and social development. Employing the national day care advocates’ strategy, Campusano argued that the Chilean government needed to prove its commitment to children and their welfare and had an obligation to furnish the Chilean mother “the calmness that she deserves, making sure that while she works or realizes social or political activities her children will be in good hands.”⁴⁸⁰ Her remarks reiterated the message that the proposed law protected children, alleviated mothers’ stress and provided the nation a valuable service. Despite the national day care law’s many achievements, female congressional supporters framed it solely as an extension of social welfare, not as a feminist endeavor.

The Congressional debate over Law 17,031 revealed the crux of center-left divisions as politicians sought to claim authorship over the legislative project. Senator Campusano claimed ownership for the Communist Party. She asserted that while everyone agreed that Chile needed a child care law, nobody could contest the great contribution that Communist congressional members had in drafting the bill. She

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 3459. Deputy Aguilera referred to Early Childhood Education professional degrees and state-funded day care facilities. The University of Chile established its first preschool education program in 1944 with the opening of the School for Preschool Educators. Although many Latin American nations established child welfare services and social work professional degree programs early in the twentieth century, early childhood education programs were in their infancy.

⁴⁸⁰ Boletín de Sesiones del Senado, Sesión 31, August 14, 1969, p. 2263.

claimed that she and her party members were “pioneers of this great Chilean children’s cause,”⁴⁸¹ explaining that they alone had observed the wonderful outcome of a nation’s willingness to devote ample resources for all children as was the case in the Soviet Union and Cuba. Moreover, she affirmed that Chilean Communists made sure that this legislation would provide a benefit for all Chilean mothers and children and not represent “a measurement that favors limited groups, alienating the majority....”⁴⁸² Campusano illustrated Communist support for this bill and made sure the Communist Party received credit for its formation and passage.

Women Communist party members organized around the day care issue and worked with other national day care supporters. During the 1967 Communist Party National Women’s Commission, party members discussed the need to intensify the struggle for a national child care program. Organizers invited preschool and nursery care advocates to discuss strategies. Linda Volosky, Professor of Pedagogy and Methodology,⁴⁸³ addressed the Commission and argued “it is necessary to continue on two paths simultaneously: to fight in any way for the promulgation of a day care law and to be creating them in fact and according to the efforts in the populations, while the law is approved.”⁴⁸⁴ Her approach, both aggressive and sensible, worked on two fronts: one political and the other educational. Eliana Fernández, PC member and director of women textile workers, supported Volosky and acknowledged the growing need for day care extended beyond working women’s situations, stating, “there is an imperious need to

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., 2264.

⁴⁸² Ibid.

⁴⁸³ Volosky, who had ties to the Socialist Party, was also an Association of University Women member and the Chilean Committee of the World Organization for Preschool Education founder. Her connections and strong opinions on Preschool education earned her the appointment as the Department of Preschool Education Director during President Salvador Allende’s term.

⁴⁸⁴ “Hacia nuevos metodos en el trabajo femenino,” Principios October 1967, p. 87.

create day cares so that women may take part more actively in social life.”⁴⁸⁵ Communist women worked with politicians and with preschool educators on this issue. Their goal was practical, offering women a safe and educational environment in which to place their children while they worked or fulfilled important social obligations. Authorship became a lesser concern.

While women planned strategies and augmented organs of support, Senator Allende took pains to show that the bill offered by the PDC women Deputies replicated his previous proposal. He contended that the only major difference was that the PDC initiative had the President’s approval, making it a partisan issue. He argued that the bill under discussion had already been approved by the Senate on May 24, 1968 as provisions to Law 16,840. Senator Allende claimed that the Chamber, under influence from Christian Democratic Deputies, had rejected the day care provisions to Law 16,840. And, more incredulously, the President vetoed it.⁴⁸⁶ Allende’s greatest concern was that there were no vast differences between the draft he coauthored and the one submitted by the PDC women Deputies. He stated that conceptually they were the same, a point he chose to make by examining the two documents article by article.

At the same time Senator Allende conceded that arguing over whose name would be associated with legislation that dealt with children’s care and instruction was “a bad procedure.”⁴⁸⁷ His concern was not strictly authorship, but deceit. To prove his point, he called on Minister of Education Pacheco to identify the difference between the two projects. He also admonished the President for vetoing his project and then adding its

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 88.

⁴⁸⁶ Boletín de Sesiones del Senado, Sesión 31, August 14, 1969, p, 2269.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.

most important components to the PDC Deputies' proposed law, claiming that of the thirty-nine articles they submitted, thirty-two had been conceived in his draft.⁴⁸⁸ Senator Allende showed his frustration by examining the proposed autonomous institutions of public law. His, the "Corporation of Kindergartens," became the Executive's renamed "National Kindergarten Board". He argued that although their titles differed, both were autonomous corporations with a decentralized function. He disputed any claims of conceptual likeness, maintaining, "It is the same syringe- to use a vulgar expression, in order that Mister Minister understands me clearly-, but with a different cannula! It is the same."⁴⁸⁹ He continued to attack the President for his veto and for replacing the vetoed project with an identical one, claiming that Frei's action "implies smallness, in the sense of vetoing an initiative because it did not have the stamp of the Government's party...."⁴⁹⁰ Senator Allende's tone may have been acerbic, but his irritation was understandable. The President, the Minister of Education and Congressional PDC members had appropriated ideas that Allende and his colleagues conceived. This was more than Allende just wanting to gain credit for legislation, although it would help him to gain women voters in the upcoming presidential elections. He wanted President Frei to explain why the law had been retarded for over a year; to which his only explanation could be it was a calculated political tactic.

Despite Senator Allende's attempt to make his authorship known, he credited the Chilean women who worked diligently for this law's passage. He specifically recognized Senator Carrera and her contribution to the development of an autonomous organization

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 2270.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

to direct the operation of kindergartens and nurseries. He once again pointed out that the organizational and juridical quality of Frei's National Kindergarten Board had been "designed for the first time in a motion that on June 26, 1968, the Honorable Senators Mrs. Carrera and Mr. Allende presented."⁴⁹¹ Senator Allende lauded all women's efforts and suggested that the Senate had a responsibility to make national day care a reality, maintaining, "I pay, then, homage to the Chilean woman, who, beyond party borders and doctrine, fought for such a noble cause."⁴⁹² I doubt he admired the PDC women deputies and the role they played in passing this law. Although Senator Allende eagerly acknowledged women's contribution to this effort, in fact he disregarded the PDC women Deputies. He characterized them as President Frei's pawns, denying them their agency in this matter. These women may have taken advantage of their party's political status and power, like their male counterparts had done time and time again, but we must not forget that every day care project presented in the Chamber had at least one Christian Democratic female deputy's signature attached.

The issue of authorship was never fully reconciled and contributed to other conflicts over national day care. Senators Carrera and Allende addressed the practical need for personnel to work in the national day care centers. They proposed creating the Service of Obligatory Preschool Work, a compulsory work program for young, single women. The work program required women between the ages of 18 and 25 to devote three months of service in preschool and nurseries. These young women would be under the supervision and direction of qualified and professional early childhood educators and would function as aides. The Senators' plan addressed the great need for workers in the

⁴⁹¹ Ibid., p. 2274.

⁴⁹² Ibid., p. 2267.

day care system and helped keep costs low. Moreover, Allende articulated that the program offered young women a means to participate in the nation's collective life and fostered a sense of social responsibility and civic duty.⁴⁹³

The PDC's project of law offered a slightly different social service program, proposing that kindergarten labor needs, excluding professional teachers, could be met "by the collaboration of members of the community, through the service of voluntary nursery school work."⁴⁹⁴ Frei's plan somewhat undermined Allende's attempt to draft women into national service and did not adequately tackle the problem at hand, how to finance the daily operation of the day cares while providing enough staff members. Again, Senator Allende accused President Frei of making this a partisan issue by rejecting the work program because a socialist had formulated it. He argued that the difficulties of staffing day care centers and protecting Chilean children "do not have ideological borders..."⁴⁹⁵ The employment question, as evidenced from Allende's protest, was not easily resolved.

National Party Senator Pedro Ibáñez supported Allende's work service plan, but declined to participate in the political conflict between the leftists and the Christian Democrats. He focused on financing national day care, claiming that everyone agreed that the law should be passed. He advised his colleagues to be mindful of how much their generous social program would cost. Senator Ibáñez claimed they had an obligation to find a means to pay for these services, for if they didn't they would merely be "creating one more illusion to gain the support of the electorate moved by social

⁴⁹³ Ibid., p. 2275.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

sensibility.⁴⁹⁶ He celebrated Allende's work program, because it offered a viable means for financing the ambitious national day care program. He stated that it was the most sensible suggestion made and the National Party Senate Committee supported it enthusiastically.⁴⁹⁷

Senator Ricardo Valenzuela, a self-professed militant Christian Democrat, indirectly answered Allende's allegations. He claimed that the PDC was committed to protecting and educating children, which was important for creating a strong foundation for the national community. Because he believed that children represented the nation's future, he fully supported the day care bill. To illustrate that this was not a partisan issue Senator Valenzuela claimed that he ardently backed the creation of an obligatory volunteer program, an idea he acknowledged had been conceived by Senator Allende. Although he agreed with Allende's program, he defended his party members' actions, claiming that such an important legislative project deserved the utmost attention and warranted further study.

For Valenzuela obligatory service for young women represented a fundamental shift in social mentality, because women from all classes would collaborate in a program that would benefit all women and children. Communist Senators did not share his enthusiasm, opting to oppose the measure. Senator Jorge Antonio Montes explained that although the Communist Party Senators agreed with the philosophical attributes of compulsory work service, they believed it would cause undue economic hardships for working-class women. He asserted that few proletariat women could survive three months without pay and if they refused to comply, because of their economic conditions,

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 2278.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 2279.

they would be severely penalized. Montes argued that if the government required women to serve the nation, why not ask the same of young men, “to realize tasks of urban development in the proletarian populations of Chile?”⁴⁹⁸ The Senate approved the measure, despite Communist Party objections. The Senate introduced a revised national day care bill to the Chamber of Deputies that included Title V, which outlined the work service program for day care and preschool centers.

Title V’s compulsory work clause failed in the Chamber of Deputies. Deputy Wilna Saavedra argued the issue of obligatory feminine service should be legislated separately, so as not to impede the national day care law’s promulgation. Spokesperson for the Chamber’s Education Commission, Saavedra explained that the Commission also rejected the proposed work service because it did not take into account a woman’s unwillingness to serve her nation in that capacity. She reported:

The Commission considered that it is not possible to improvise the human element that has to its charge such an important mission, which requires training and personal aptitude. The Commission thought that the problem’s solution must be channeled in the formation of specializing personnel, for which the project arranges initiatives that will make possible the availability of the human element.⁴⁹⁹

The human element was an important component that the obligatory service project neglected to address. The government could enlist young women to work in day care settings, but it could not force them to enjoy working for children, which could compromise children’s educational and day care experiences. Unlike some male Senators, women deputies understood that not all women shared a love of children.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 2286.

⁴⁹⁹ Boletín de Sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados de la República de Chile, Sesión 37, September 2, 1969, p. 3963.

The Commission's understanding of the potential harm that could be caused to children whose caregivers were forced into their roles differed greatly from that presented by PDC Senator Alfredo Macario Lorca. "To my judgment, all women want to take care of children."⁵⁰⁰ He defended his position, understanding that his opinions might appear to be outmoded, by chiding the Senators of over thinking the issue. Senator Lorca stated that the discussion itself appeared "as if we were saying that it would be necessary to threaten women with rifle in hand to force them to take care of children."⁵⁰¹ Senator Campusano attacked his views and thanked him not to interpret women. Like Saavedra she understood that women were far more complicated. Senator Carlos Contreras turned Senator Lorca's position into a class argument, asking him if a woman from the upper classes would "go with affection and care to a 'shanty' population to care for a proletarian's child?"⁵⁰² This question spoke directly to the human element concern the Chamber's Education Commission used to reject the measure.

Although some Deputies supported the altruistic nature of an obligatory nursery/preschool service, many thought that the issue presented too many problems. The Christian Democratic ranks illustrated this difference of opinion. PDC Deputy Eduardo Koenig offered a very practical interpretation of Title V's voluntary service. He asserted that the proposal had unrealistic non-compliance sanctions. Despite his dissatisfaction with the penalty structure, Deputy Koenig argued that the work service program had merits. He cited both Senators Allende and Ibáñez and declared that the opinions they presented in the Senate swayed his own. Because he believed that such a

⁵⁰⁰ Boletín de Sesiones del Senado, Sesión 31, August 14, 1969, p. 2304.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., p. 2296.

⁵⁰² Boletín de Sesiones del Senado, Sesión 31, August 14, 1969, p. 2298.

program benefited Chilean society, Deputy Koenig supported it. Not all Christian Democrats agreed with him.

PDC Deputy Emiliano Lorenzini argued against the program and resurrected the human element issue. His concern was not the probability that some young women harbored ill will against children; it was that they were too young and inexperienced. Lorenzini acknowledged his fear declaring, “I believe, nevertheless, that 18 year old girls ... are not qualified to carry out this very important and extraordinarily delicate work, such as is the care of children. It is doubtful that in three months time these girls could acquire the necessary capability.”⁵⁰³ Rather, personnel specialized in early childcare and education was required in order to ensure the children’s safety and proper development. Deputy Lorenzini shared the Commission’s apprehension of staffing day care centers with untrained and possibly immature women who were forced to realize a job for which they were unsuited. The Chamber agreed with their assessment and rejected the obligatory work service program.

On April 20, 1970, Law 17,301 passed despite the political and logistical conflicts it elicited. The National Day Care Law provided regulations regarding staffing, preschool instruction and construction of nurseries and kindergartens throughout the nation. Article three established that all day care centers provide “integral attention, understood as sufficient nutrition, education corresponding to his [a child’s] age, and medical-dental attention.”⁵⁰⁴ This article illustrated the government’s intrusion into the Chilean family by extending social and educational services to young children. In

⁵⁰³ Boletín de Sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados de la República de Chile, Sesión 37, September 2, 1969, pp. 3978-79.

⁵⁰⁴ Diario oficial de la República de Chile, April 22, 1970. Promulgated April 20, 1970.

accordance with the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child, the Chilean government resolved to protect children and take a more active role in their personal development.

Title V clearly outlined the qualifications necessary for nursery and preschool personnel. Article 23 stipulated that employees had to be licensed to teach in primary or secondary school or obtain equivalent qualifications through the Department of Public Education. To ensure national standards article 31 required all private day care centers' directors to hold degrees in Early Childhood Education or be professors of preschool education. Although these articles did not directly address the human element, they established criteria for professionalized educators to oversee and staff day care centers. The assumption was that such people wanted a career in which they would work with young children and had made the choice to seek proper training. Whether or not these measures appeased legislators' concerns, they delivered an ambitious and progressive day care law to their constituents.

The enactment of national day care legislation illustrated how female politicians successfully promoted woman-centered legislation through the political party system. Despite initial attempts to produce a multi-party day care bill, political polarization impeded joint legislative projects and forced female supporters to divide along party lines. Christian Democrat female members were especially adept at balancing party and gender concerns. Their experience proved how important acquiring strong party support became for influencing gender-specific legislation.

Female day care advocates also understood the problematic relationship between gender and the family and the concern over preserving patriarchy. PDC women

deputies framed the discussion around issues of child rights and education. Communist and Socialist leaders equated the day care issue with national economic and social development. Both tactics approached women as objects, not subjects. Their strategy differed little from that employed by social welfare reformers and legislators in the preceding two decades. Like illegitimacy, day care was a feminist issue that divided people over the protection of children and the family and how they related to women's rights. Day care supporters' ability to divorce the issue from feminist ideals ensured its passage. Attempts to promote legislation that directly challenged patriarchal values, such as divorce, were unsuccessful by comparison. Framing divorce as a means to preserve family integrity met with severe resistance.

The Divorce Debate

Journalist Gonzalo Orrego flatly concluded: "Custom and experience demonstrate two things: a) divorce is disastrous; b) divorce is inevitable."⁵⁰⁵ This statement explained the difficulty politicians, Catholic leaders, and Chilean society experienced in debating the divorce issue. In the mid-1960s the matter produced a polarizing effect in Chilean society, offering little solace to those who sought an adequate divorce law and an embittered reluctance among opponents to forfeit their moral code. Even though Chilean political leaders attempted to modernize the nation's political and legal structures, many worried over the possible social ramifications. Divorce, considered by many to be an inevitable consequence of progressive and just societies, fueled some Chileans' fears that their moral standards and the stability of the family would be the sacrifice for

⁵⁰⁵ La Tercera de la hora, July 24, 1964, p. 3.

modernization. Divorce failed because of this apprehension and the fact that divorce defied social welfare reformer's preoccupation with the nuclear family unit.

Divorce generated a legal and moral discussion that contradicted the ideal conceptualization of masculine and feminine roles within the family. During the popular front era middle-class feminists, politicians and state agents focused on preserving social order by clearly defining gender identities so that the family unit would remain the nucleus of Chilean society.⁵⁰⁶ Social welfare policies tended to uphold and benefit traditional family units and penalized other family structures.⁵⁰⁷ By choice or circumstance, working-class and poor women tended to replace the male breadwinner family model. This alarmed upper- and middle-class reformers who sought to preserve the nuclear family by educating lower class men and women about their proper roles and responsibilities. Divorce conflicted with the family model that social welfare policies hoped to create.

Divorce illustrated the continued political and social tensions between the Church and State over moral and legal authority and over men's and God's laws. Asunción Lavrin explains that the key issue concerning civil marriage in the Southern Cone during the late 1880s and early 1900s centered on secularizing the legal system while maintaining the traditional values established during the colonial era.⁵⁰⁸ Divorce played into this conflict and failed to produce a consensus among feminists. Unlike other feminist legal battles, such as suffrage, social security, and welfare, divorce was a

⁵⁰⁶ Roseblatt examines this issue fully in Gendered Compromises. See Chapter 5 for a discussion of how the state sought to reform morality and regulate the family unit. Similar issues arose in Brazil and Cuba as feminists sought to attain a divorce law. For more information consult, Besse, Restructuring Patriarchy, chapters 2 and 3 and Stoner, From the House to the Streets, pp. 46-52.

⁵⁰⁷ Mimi Abramovits. Regulating the Lives of Women: Social Welfare Policy from Colonial Times to the Present, Revised edition. (Cambridge, Ma.: South End Press, 1996), p.2.

⁵⁰⁸ Lavrin, Women, Feminism and Social Change, p. 227.

sensitive moral issue and did not fit well in the national welfare state or social modernization efforts. Rather, divorce produced a religious conflict that its opponents feared would undermine Chilean moral responsibility. Not until a century later did Chile legalize absolute divorce.⁵⁰⁹

Divorce bills introduced in the early twentieth century lacked broad public appeal, significant endorsement among women and elicited public opposition from Catholic Church leaders who characterized the proposition as sacramental insolence. The Radical Party continually raised the issue of divorce, sponsoring Congressional divorce debates and bills in 1914, 1917, 1924, 1927, and 1933. It should have come as no shock that a Radical Party member would introduce yet another divorce bill in 1964. This particular bill, presented by Radical Party Deputy Inés Enríquez, reawakened the morality debate surrounding divorce and offered a woman's perspective on the issue.

Enríquez, and presumably other Radical Party members, brought up the divorce issue during a presidential electoral campaign and during a time in which the Radical Party suffered a weakened political position. Why they chose this particular electoral period to introduce such a controversial issue is perplexing. Perhaps Radical Party leadership felt that they would lose seats in Congress and believed this would be their last chance to advance their divorce agenda. Leadership might have thought this issue would mobilize women voters away from the Christian Democratic Party. Was it merely a ploy to reinvigorate party membership? Whatever the reasons, the fractious political climate and the importance of moral and religious issues to national security doomed divorce to failure.

⁵⁰⁹ Congress promulgated a divorce law on May 7, 2004.

The proposed law modified the Civil Matrimony Law of 1884 to allow for both temporary and perpetual divorce. The bill stipulated that temporary divorce, better understood as a legal separation, would suspend the common life of the spouses for a period not to exceed five years, whereas perpetual divorce dissolved the marriage completely.⁵¹⁰ The modifications would have ended the existing system of separation and annulment. Hence individuals could not remarry and legal separation made no provisions for financial support. This left many women and children in a poor economic situation and allowed many men to shirk paternal responsibilities. Moreover, the costly annulment process made it an unattainable option for the lower classes. Enríquez argued this point claiming:

The truth is that while the rich or more well-off can dissolve matrimonial ties by what has been termed divorce Chilean style, better said, annulment, the most deprived, in fact, do divorce, by separating and forming other illegitimate households. The working-class man takes his bundle and goes away and the working-class woman gathers her children and faces life.⁵¹¹

The current system discriminated against the poor and served to disable families more than a divorce law.

Conservatives, Christian Democrats, and the Roman Catholic Church opposed divorce. Less easily identifiable were those who supported such legislation. Radical Party members introduced every legislative project in Congress regarding the issue, but leaders refused to back the projects completely or to make divorce an integral component of their agendas. Liberals were divided and FRAP leadership remained neutral on the

⁵¹⁰ Boletín de Sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados de la República de Chile sesiones ordinarias July 21, 1964, p. 1307. See proposed change to Articles 19 and 20.

⁵¹¹ Graciela Romero, "Divorcio para Chile," Eva, August 14, 1964, p. 20.

issue. Although journalists and editors from La Tercera de la hora⁵¹² endorsed divorce and chided those who claimed the current system of annulment sufficed, public outcry for such legislation did not materialize. Feminists left Deputy Inés Enríquez and a handful of political leaders to fight for a divorce law. The lack of feminist support is difficult to explain. Feminist demands for divorce during the Twentieth Century had been lukewarm and were never a priority. Perhaps divorce presented too many ethical problems and complications in reconciling feminist progress with religious values. The divorce debate revealed that Chilean political leaders were unsure how to cope with such a sensitive social issue.

Divorce proponents argued that de facto marital separation existed in Chile and to ignore that fact proved one's foolishness. Understanding that some marriages failed many reasoned that the state needed to legalize and to regulate divorce. Deputy Enríquez put forth a motion that clearly established 12 grounds for divorce ranging from adultery by either spouse to mutual consent. The causes could be grouped into three categories: physical or mental abuse; inability to meet marital obligations; and a desire to separate.⁵¹³ Demands for divorce would not be awarded automatically. The proposal also granted judges discretionary powers, allowing them to order temporary divorces contrary to

⁵¹² Founded in 1950 La Tercera de la hora identified with the center-right and became El Mercurio's main competitor.

⁵¹³ Boletín de Sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados de la República de Chile sesiones ordinarias, July 21, 1964, pp. 1307-1308. The grounds were listed in the following order: 1. adultery; 2. serious and repeated mistreatment by deed or word; 3. one of the spouses is involved in the perpetration or preparation of a crime against the other spouse; 4. husband's attempt to prostitute his wife or either spouses attempt to prostitute or corrupt their children; 5. denial of one of the spouses to fulfill some of their matrimonial duties; 6. deep-rooted vice of game, inebriation or dissipation; 7. serious, incurable and contagious illness; 8. condemnation of corporal punishment of one of the spouses; 9. mistreatment of the children such that it places their lives in danger or threatens their physical, intellectual or moral development; 10. abandonment of the common home for a complete year; 11. incompatibility of characters; 12. mutual consent after five years of the date of marriage.

petitioners' desires. In order to guarantee children's rights, a perpetual divorce judgment would not alter the civil status of the children involved, protecting their rights to child support and inheritance.⁵¹⁴ A divorced woman regained premarital legal rights and the right to financial support from her ex-husband, even if she petitioned for divorce or had given cause for divorce. The proposed law established that an ex-husband's financial obligations to his ex-wife would cease when the divorced woman remarried. It guaranteed child support until the child or children reached adulthood even after the mother remarried. To address concerns that Chile would devolve into a "North American Reno with its scandals,"⁵¹⁵ Enríquez's proposal specified that no one person could divorce more than twice and said person could not use the same grounds invoked in the first demand for divorce. These stipulations would serve to protect women and children economically by regulating paternal responsibilities and would prevent divorce from becoming a safety net for those who entered into marriage too lightly.

The proposed divorce law went to the Constitution, Legislation and Justice Commission/CLJC for review. The CLJC debated the divorce issue while facing internal and external political party divisions and public scrutiny no matter what decision it would make. Many believed the CLJC would keep the project in limbo, fearing that Conservative and Christian Democrat congressional members would bury the project because they opposed "completely...absolute dissolution of marriage."⁵¹⁶ Supporters felt equally uneasy that political parties that favored a divorce law would choose to set the issue aside. The Liberal Party illustrated the unease surrounding the divorce law. Liberal

⁵¹⁴ Ibid., p. 1308.

⁵¹⁵ Eva, August 14, 1964, p. 72.

⁵¹⁶ La Tercera de la hora, July 22, 1964, p. 5.

leaders experienced great difficulties because members had varying views about the project. FRAP leaders, even though they supported such legislation, balked at promoting it with force for fear of alienating the Catholic voters who opposed divorce.⁵¹⁷ From the beginning the CLJC had very intense debates many fueled by Deputies Carlos Morales Abarzua, a Radical, and Fernando Maturana, a Liberal, both of whom ardently supported the initiative.⁵¹⁸

After several heated meetings the CLJC voted seven to four to bring the divorce project to a vote.⁵¹⁹ The CLJC made four specific recommendations to add to the project presented by Deputy Enríquez. The first established that neither spouse could seek a perpetual divorce if they were less than 30 years of age. The second recommendation stipulated “a divorced woman will not be able to contract new nuptials until the children born in the dissolved marriage have reached 18 years of age.”⁵²⁰ No provisions were added that restricted divorced men from entering into a new marriage while their children were minors. The CLJC’s third recommendation established a time frame for remarriage, allowing the divorced to remarry 10 years after the definitive sentence perpetually ending their first marriage. The fourth recommendation addressed the sensitive issues of marital financial obligations and child support. The CLJC suggested replacing Article 756 of the Civil Code with provisions for fixing the woman’s residence during judgment and negotiating jointly the quantity and form of support and payment of court costs in the divorce judgment. In addition all child support issues for minor children would be

⁵¹⁷ Ibid.

⁵¹⁸ La Tercera de la hora, July 24, 1964, p. 5. The CLJC did not publish its debates. Some of the CLJC members chose to inform reporters about debated issues when interviewed.

⁵¹⁹ La Tercera de la hora, July 31, 1964, p. 5.

⁵²⁰ El Mercurio, August 6, 1964, p. 25.

negotiated separately by the Juvenile Court pursuant to laws concerning minors' protection and abandonment of the family.⁵²¹

The CLJC's decision forced political parties to define the family and where they stood on the divorce issue. Rafael Agustín Gumucio Vives, Christian Democratic Party Vice President, announced that the PDC had not yet adopted an official stance on divorce, suggesting disagreements. According to him, PDC members defended the family and thus identified themselves as "enemies, consequently, of legislation that weakened these bonds."⁵²² He advocated that legislators reinforce family values and structures, especially for working-class citizens, in order to protect children. Gumucio offered, "I don't know if a divorce project can be of use necessarily for the popular sectors, where problems are more than the dissolution of bonds...."⁵²³ His opinion reflected earlier Popular Front era ideals in which social workers and middle-class reformers sought to re-educate the working class and to impose middle-class conceptualizations of functional gender relations and familial institutions, hoping to address economic pressures by reinforcing family bonds. Despite his personal reflections on the matter, he argued that PDC congressional members would obey any definitive resolution implemented by the executive committee.

The Radical and Liberal Parties' divisions over the divorce project intensified. Many Radical and Liberal members believed it was polemic, especially during a presidential campaign cycle. Deputy Enríquez's public plea to the Radical Committee in the Chamber of Deputies alluded to this uncertainty. She addressed Deputy Julio

⁵²¹ Ibid.

⁵²² El Mercurio, July 30, 1964, p. 25.

⁵²³ Ibid.

Mercado, the Radical Committee President, arguing she achieved tremendous success for the party when her project passed the CLJC. Notwithstanding this achievement, she asserted, “At this stage it is clear that without determined and energetic action by the Radical Committee and its key men..., we might not conquer the resistance of its opponents.”⁵²⁴ She then requested that Radical Chamber members deny the request for a parliamentary recess, which would put an end to her project. Earlier Enríquez argued that the delay tactics would bury the divorce project, a prospect that went against what she believed to be Congressional members’ duty “of facing social realities and finding a suitable legislation to address them.”⁵²⁵ The Radical Committee also had to face pleas from those who opposed the proposed law.

Liberal Party leaders suffered similar internal discord, making it very difficult for them to draft a resolution. Deputy Fernando Maturano, Liberal Party President (1963-1964) and CLJC member, denounced the Liberal Party Chamber Committee because Alfonso Ramírez, Gregorio Eguiguren, and Manuel Bunster made declarations regarding the party’s opposition to divorce. Maturano argued vehemently that, “the only organism of the Party that can give instruction is the Executive Committee, and that Committee has not made a statement on divorce.”⁵²⁶ He explained that Liberal Party members could not make statements as to the political party’s stance on any subject. Rather, they had to obey the position adopted. Maturano accused the Liberal Deputies of supporting the Conservative Party cause, “defending confessional banners” that had never been part of the Liberal agenda. Doing so, he added, “disfigured the physiognomy of the Liberal

⁵²⁴ El Mercurio, August 20, 1964, p. 23.

⁵²⁵ Ibid.

⁵²⁶ La Tercera de la hora, August 11, 1964, p. 5.

Party, presenting it to the public on one hand as ultra conservative and on the other hand as responsible for paralyzing the legislative action of the Chamber.”⁵²⁷ The Liberal Deputies’ presumptions represented more than an overstepping of bounds for Maturana; they denigrated the essence of the Liberal Party, which he defined as “freedom of conscience, broad-mindedness, tolerance and equanimity.”⁵²⁸

The fissures in the various political parties illustrated the difficult political terrain that the divorce project presented. Internal party divisions also made discussion about Enríquez’s bill extremely challenging. The Chamber of Deputies held a divorce forum among invited politicians, journalists, and two experts, psychiatrist Ruperto Murillo and attorney Luís Claro Lagarrigue. Deputies asked Murillo and Claro Lagarrigue to present information and opinions about the legal and social ramifications of a divorce law. Neither offered a solution to Chile’s marital separation problems, but both argued that the current system needed modification. The CLJC neither participated in the forum nor presented a report. The night before the forum Florencio Galleguillos, CLJC President, called a midnight meeting, hoping to finalize its divorce report for the Chamber. His tactic backfired and resulted in the whole Liberal Party Congressional Committee to resign from the CLJC. The CLJC did not publish any of its findings and failed to make a formal recommendation to the Chamber because Deputies called their session in recess. That decision tabled the divorce discussion indefinitely. Despite problems within the CLJC and the Chamber, the forum demonstrated how divorce presented problematic social concerns.

⁵²⁷ Ibid.

⁵²⁸ Ibid.

Attorney Claro Lagarrigue proclaimed that he was a practicing Catholic and that he favored establishing a divorce law, asserting that it was not a matter that Congress should make too hastily. He stressed how important it was to make changes claiming, “the current situation has given validity to ‘concubinage’ and ... that the current divorce in Chile without dissolution of ties ends up being no more than a liquidation of conjugal society and a formula to avoid the sorrow of adultery.”⁵²⁹ These problems would not cease just because a divorce law did not exist; therefore, Claro Lagarrigue argued that there had to be a serious legal means to end a marriage. He added that the social reality of divorce required regulation so that the divorced could go on with their lives. He warned that divorce should be something that couples enter into seriously and not be contemplated as a joke. Because a divorce law should be considered critically and that grounds should be rigid, it should not be reduced to a mere political issue and should not be considered during a presidential campaign. He expressed, “I believe that it should be legislated, but in its opportunity without prejudice, without passion. It is a serious matter that has implications in the family and that affects third persons, the children.”⁵³⁰ Claro Lagarrigue agreed that divorce affected the family and society and because of that Congress needed to create a divorce law that everyone would find amenable.

Dr. Murillo declared himself neither in favor nor against a divorce law, offering his professional opinion on how divorce affects individuals and the family. He believed that although marital difficulties were a reality, they did not present as large of a problem as many professed. He stated that in his own practice about 60% of his patients’ marital

⁵²⁹ Ibid.

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

conflicts could be worked out with the help of psychotherapeutic professionals.⁵³¹ As for the remaining bad marriages, he made no recommendations as to how the legal system could be altered to accommodate them. Children of divorced parents served as his main concern and he claimed that they suffered more when parents separate, explaining, “That ...causes more traumas for the children when their parents get divorced than when they keep on living together, although they do not agree.”⁵³² Although Dr. Murillo did not state explicitly that he opposed a divorce law, he made clear that the best option was for couples to find a means to stay together for the benefit of their children.

Dr. Murillo presented some statistics from the United States, stating that divorce proceedings in the first year of marriage rarely occurred, but that divorces did exist in the second year and continued in an ascending curve up to five years of marriage.⁵³³ After five years, he informed, the divorce rate fell and virtually disappeared after the eighth year of marriage. The conclusion he drew from the United States experience was that although divorce was a viable option, most couples worked out their problems and opted to continue with the marriage. Alarming, he pronounced that “divorce tends to repeat itself for the person who has obtained one.”⁵³⁴ This statement alone would have spoken to opponents’ fears and made supporters of a divorce law wary. He offered no statistical information regarding divorce in Cuba and Uruguay, legalized in 1918 and 1907.

Supporters and opponents of the proposed divorce law framed their concern for maintaining dignity for families. According to Enríquez Chile’s annulment system

⁵³¹ Ibid.

⁵³² Ibid.

⁵³³ Ibid. The article did not specify from where Dr. Murillo obtained this statistical information or how it was compiled.

⁵³⁴ Ibid.

hypocritically served to erode the family and public morality more than the proposed divorce law.⁵³⁵ She asserted that couples whose exhaustive attempts to repair marriages failed had little recourse but to separate and commit adultery. She argued that Chilean society lacked a clear understanding of the post-industrial modern family. She maintained that the industrial revolution transformed the national landscape, introduced new modes of production and altered demographics. Enríquez explained that women's participation in the workforce and economic role changed which affected the family structure.⁵³⁶ Women fulfilled both an economically productive role by working outside the home and a consuming role by overseeing the household. Marriage had become less about economic and political alliances and more about love. Deputy Enríquez claimed, "1964 does not present a family tied by economic bonds, and in its origin there does not exist that paternalistic ancient authority that 'had established the girl'..."⁵³⁷ She argued that the modern woman married for love, contributed to the family's income and participated in economic decisions. Laws, she maintained, needed to keep up with social changes. Social moral traditions did not transform as easily or as quickly. This explained why the majority of people did not consider divorce a viable option. It violated the terms of women's work and role in the family.

Catholic Church leaders vehemently opposed legalized divorce. Rather than make hasty claims, archbishops met to discuss the divorce project and stated that they would make an official public pronouncement. Church leaders fully recognized the legislators' right to create civil laws, especially those that would "furnish a solution to a

⁵³⁵ Ibid.

⁵³⁶ La Tercera de la hora, August 4, 1964, p. 21.

⁵³⁷ Ibid.

problem, like that of insoluble conjugal disagreements....”⁵³⁸ The National Bishopric met over a few days and delivered a statement on August 6, 1964. The Chamber of Deputies had little time to discuss these recommendations before Catholic Church leaders entered into the divorce debate.

The National Bishopric produced a public announcement that contained nine specific points that outlined the Chilean Catholic Church’s position on the proposed divorce law. Cardinal Archbishop Raúl Silva Hernández, the official spokesperson, argued that as “pastors and citizens’ the Bishopric served as moral and spiritual leaders for all Chileans, not only Catholics, who “sincerely and effectively worried for the common good of our nation.”⁵³⁹ The second point demonstrated that the Church understood divorce to be a potentially divisive initiative that required serious and exhaustive debate among legislatures, the Catholic Church and all avenues of public opinion. The National Bishopric warned legislators against passing any legislation that would have disastrous effects on society. Cardinal Silva Hernández stated that some nations with legalized divorce had begun restricting applications “based on the painful experience of its bad effects.”⁵⁴⁰ Regrettably, he offered no specific examples, neither naming countries nor defining what constituted a bad effect.

Cardinal Silva Hernández explained the National Bishopric had three main issues surrounding divorce: 1) the understanding of marriage; 2) the integrity of the family; and

⁵³⁸ *La Tercera de la hora*, August 4, 1964, p. 4

⁵³⁹ *El Mercurio*, August 6, 1964, p. 25. The statement was also published in *La Tercera de la hora*, August 6, 1964, p. 4. Although the National Bishopric’s announcement appeared in both *El Mercurio*, a conservative daily, and in *La Tercera de la hora*, a left leaning newspaper, only the latter carried full coverage of the debate between Deputy Enríquez and the Catholic Church.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

3) the Church's jurisdiction over Catholics. He articulated their views on marriage, stating

We affirm that the dignity of human love prevents us from considering marriage to be any contract, the validity of which depends exclusively on the will of the parties. Has not 'forever' been the spontaneous disposition of all those who committed themselves to conjugal love? The same ease with which the project of law admits divorce, and the endurance of some of its dispositions, contradicts with excessive violence the nature of a truly human love.⁵⁴¹

This statement illustrated the crux of the issue, mainly, jurisdiction over marriage. The Catholic Church clearly understood marriage as a sacrament, a holy vow made between two people to God. Civil law could not presume to reduce the sacrament to a mere contract. This was an issue that had caused conflict between the Catholic Church and anticlerical politicians since Chile became a nation. The 1884 civil marriage law established marriage as a civil act, an act to be regulated by the state, but the Church maintained its spiritual authority over the institution of marriage.

The Cardinal, operating under the understanding that marriage was under the purview of the Church, stated that the National Bishopric sought to gently remind Chilean Catholics that they had a responsibility to observe Catholic canons. He contended:

They know that Christian marriage is a sacrament, instituted by Jesus Christ, and that its bonds are indissoluble. They should recall the clear and definitive words of God: 'That which God has joined, man will not separate.' Therefore, no Catholic will ever be able to *take refuge* in a possible law that allows divorce and to contract a new marriage.⁵⁴²

⁵⁴¹ Ibid.

⁵⁴² Ibid. Italics mine.

Cardinal Silva Hernández drew the metaphorical line in the sand, illustrating the Chilean Catholic Church's authority over a majority of Chilean citizens. Although the state had the right to institute divorce, the Church would not allow its members "to take refuge" in what it recognized as an unacceptable technicality. As such, the Church trumped the state's authority by denying Catholics the right to take advantage of a civil divorce law. Those Catholics who supported a divorce law and ended their civil marriages received a clear message that to do so placed them in full defiance of ecclesiastic law. Such defiance would result in denial of Holy Communion and the right to be absolved of the sin of divorce. Despite issuing this veiled threat, the National Bishopric argued that it did not seek to impose its view on the state. Rather, the Church merely had a responsibility "to clarify the conscience of its children and to remind them that as citizens they have to be opposed to all that poses an outrage...."⁵⁴³ From this the Catholic Church clearly outlined its strategy. It would not influence legislatures directly, but would incite public opinion against the divorce law.

The National Bishopric admitted that many marriages experienced serious difficulties, a condition that caused complex problems. To address this regrettable reality the Cardinal stated that a pastoral collective would be organized in order to "put forward Christian doctrine on love and sex, marriage and family, and its basic importance in the constitution of a healthy society."⁵⁴⁴ Basically, the Catholic Church sought to educate people about marital relations and responsibilities. The Church promoted not only conjugal partnerships, but also families and society as a whole. The Cardinal explained that the Church viewed the family as the most important unit of society. A divorce law,

⁵⁴³ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid.

in his estimation, would not provide an adequate solution for bad marriages. More importantly, a divorce law “would constitute, undoubtedly, a serious blow to the stability of the family and would be, therefore, a serious threat to the common good.”⁵⁴⁵ To stabilize families, society, the state and the Church needed to unite and valorize the family, which would require protecting it at all costs. To do otherwise, Cardinal Silva Hernández maintained, placed society in jeopardy.

The National Bishopric announced craftily that a family-based society was essential for national stability and progress. To debase the family, in their view, would “debilitate the nation.”⁵⁴⁶ Divorce, argued Cardinal Silva Hernández, caused adverse social problems because of the psychological damage children underwent when their parents divorced, echoing Dr. Murillo’s opinion. The Cardinal painted a horrific scene in which children from broken homes wielded a deep resentment not only toward their parents, but against society, which ultimately produced unproductive citizens. Their resentment stemmed from being denied “the love and safety that they needed and to which they had a right,” things that every society owed its children.⁵⁴⁷ Divorce only served to harm society and the nation and, according to the National Bishopric, should be opposed by “responsible” citizens. The only adequate solution, offered the Cardinal, was “to contribute, from all levels, to a healthy and solid valorization of this fundamental nucleus.”⁵⁴⁸ The National Bishopric revealed its cause to be the family which needed protection, thus, preserving its dignity.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid.

Deputy Enríquez argued against the National Bishopric's claim that divorce led to the degeneration of the family. She reasoned that divorce legislation protected families by regulating civil responsibilities and allowing all individuals the means to procure appropriate marital separations. She also claimed that the ability to dissolve marital bonds did not make divorce compulsory. An editorial in La Tercera de la hora stated: "stubborn objectors of the above-mentioned project of law should take into account that its precepts are not compulsive; that is to say, that just because the divorce law exists in Chile people will be forced to get divorced."⁵⁴⁹ Enríquez responded to the National Bishopric's concern that a divorce law would lead Catholics astray by claiming that it was never her intention for her civil divorce project to be applied to religious marriage. She argued that those whose faith viewed marriage as a sacrament would enter into indissoluble marriages.⁵⁵⁰ A La Tercera de la hora editorial reiterated her sentiment offering this opinion, "no Christian matrimony and observer, if it is consistent with his creed and faith, could resort to divorce, annulment or separation. The situation is different for the spouse whose consciousness does not feel obliged to respect Christian dogma."⁵⁵¹ Although supporters may have respected the Catholic Church and its position on divorce, these statements illustrated that they also respected the separation of church and state and sought to promote legislation that would serve the entire citizenry. This allowed individuals to place religious restrictions to their own lives. Further challenging Catholic Church authority, Enríquez asserted, "I am ready to recognize Christ's maxim of 'Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God,' and in

⁵⁴⁹ La Tercera de la hora, August 6, 1964, p. 3.

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.3.

equitable reciprocity, one would like that the Bishopric would recognize Parliament's jurisdiction to dictate temporal laws."⁵⁵² Clearly, she sought to remind Catholic Church leaders that their opinion mattered, but, ultimately, it was the state that had authority to make and enforce laws.

Enríquez agreed with Cardinal Silva Hernández's argument that divorce be deliberated seriously among all valid parties. "I share this position, lamenting that the Conservative Party is preventing this parliamentary debate that I wanted and that the Bishopric demands."⁵⁵³ Conservative Deputies called for a legislative recess, which, if granted, would stall the legislative project indefinitely. Enríquez alleged that the Conservative Party's action politicized the issue, prohibited Congress from debating it, and inhibited the public voice. She also charged the Conservative Party, which she claimed was the political spokesman for the Catholic Church, for not providing solutions to the existing social condition in which broken homes existed. She argued that that both she and the National Bishopric contended this condition was lamentable and harmful.

Supporters argued that marital separation was inevitable and that the current law weakened the family, society, and the nation more than an adequate divorce law. They made claims that married couples had to make serious efforts to ensure a good marriage and a stable home for their children. However, the organization of modern society made it extremely difficult to predict that one's conjugal union could last forever and happily at that. Gonzalo Orrego, a La Tercera de la hora editor, concluded that divorce and what he termed "the absurd and immoral system of 'separation' or 'annulment'" produced

⁵⁵² Ibid., p. 2.

⁵⁵³ Ibid.

identical results - the breaking up of a family.⁵⁵⁴ For him the issue was not religious, but a matter of semantics. No matter how a married couple chose to separate separation caused grief and sadness and would always have an adverse affect on children. Orrego opined that the desire to separate was as much human nature as the desire to unite; therefore, conjugal separation was inevitable and should be subjected to proper legal procedures. In another editorial Orrego reiterated this opinion and maintained that divorce should be a last resort.

Orrego argued that the existing “annulment” system in Chile created a farce. Wealthier Chileans could obtain an annulment through legal trickery by contracting an attorney to argue that a registration error occurred during the marriage ceremony and persuade witnesses to commit perjury. This bred a legal system that made it difficult for individuals to make an honest case for separating, leaving only options that required, “hypocrisy and truncated deceit or legal tricks....”⁵⁵⁵ Orrego agreed that a proper divorce law was more agreeable than “the so-called annulment come by the tricky pettifogger....”⁵⁵⁶ His statements reflected a frustration with a system that made a mockery of marriage and provided a legal outlet for the wealthy. He echoed Deputy Enríquez’s lament that the system denied lower-income families the same means to solve their marital difficulties and validated concubinage.

Divorce legislation in 1964 proved to be unattainable. The Chamber of Deputies disagreed on the issue which intensified the already fractious inter- and intra-party relations. Divorce suffered its first loss during the August 10th Chamber session, a

⁵⁵⁴ La Tercera de la hora, July 24, 1964, p. 3.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁶ La Tercera de la hora, August 4, 1964, p. 3.

session that led to Liberal Party disagreements and made the Radical Party more cautious. As one journalist described, “all political activity yesterday was centered on this polemic project....”⁵⁵⁷ Facing numerous political obstacles, Inés Enríquez failed to convince the Radical Party Congressional Committee to deny the recess. The recess buried the divorce project, but it did not silence divorce supporters. Despite her unsuccessful attempt at establishing a divorce law, Enríquez declared, “I can assure you that I will always be ready to fight in this matter, which I consider of urgent social, moral, and juridical necessity.”⁵⁵⁸ Her divorce project met the same fate as previous divorce projects and remained in a state of limbo.

The desire for absolute divorce continued, especially among Radical Party members. On August 12, 1969, Deputy Alberto Naudón Abarca and Senator Carlos Morales Abarzúa, both Radical Party members, presented a motion for divorce legislation to the Chamber of Deputies. Much like Enríquez’s project, this one established strict grounds for divorce and made provisions for alimony and child support. Naudón and Morales’ motion did not create a heated congressional debate or public uproar. It failed to even be sent to committee for study. This reveals two important things: 1) that the political party system had become so polarized that even congenial discussions over matters of public interest generated difficulties; and 2) that the Radical Party, although it had lost its political clout, continued to be the main proponent for divorce. Political polarization made it difficult to construct and manage compromises and the Radical Party had lost its ability to wield the political center, making it powerless to push through its agenda. The Christian Democratic Party also contributed to the divorce bill’s failure.

⁵⁵⁷ La Tercera de la hora, August 11, 1964, p. 5.

⁵⁵⁸ La Tercera de la hora, August 20, 1964, p. 5.

The PDC became stronger throughout the 1960s and offered practicing Catholics a means to work for social justice while maintaining traditional social mores. Not considered a social justice issue divorce went against religious doctrine, making it an undesirable proposition. Lack of feminist support contributed to its demise and slowed feminist progress on issues that directly challenged moral values and patriarchy.

Conclusion

Absolute divorce, which had become a hallmark for the Radical Party, signified a societal unwillingness to part with tradition and accept the social ramifications of industrialization. Politically it represented an issue that did not fit into nation-state policies that strengthened the family, increased women's economic independence, and empowered the state to regulate family dynamics. During the first half of the twentieth century, Chilean politicians grappled with the impact of modernization and struggled to maintain the integrity of the family unit, while restraining the labor movement. Women reformers and political activists contributed to this endeavor by attempting to resolve the social question through labor legislation that promoted motherhood and prioritized the family. As the Radical Party's influence waned and as leftist parties began collaborating more effectively, it became more difficult for middle-class reformers to impose their value system on the working class and the poor. And, as I have shown, Radical Party leaders could not compete with the Catholic Church and the authority it wielded over society. This competition intensified and the arguments for and against divorce changed little over the next forty years. After decades of debates and stall tactics divorce advocates eventually succeeded in 2004.⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁹ Law 19,947 was promulgated on May 7, 2004 and took effect on November 18, 2004.

Chile represented a trend in Latin American to uphold traditional religious social mores, especially regarding marital bonds. Chile's struggle over divorce was similar to that experienced in Argentina and Brazil. Argentine President Juan Perón legalized divorce in 1954 only to have it repealed by the military government that succeeded him. After undergoing various congressional motions, the Argentine legislature legalized divorce law in 1983, nearly twenty years before Chile adopted an absolute divorce law. Although Brazilian divorce advocates began their struggle at the turn of the twentieth century, they faced a Church-led opposition that secured a marriage indissolubility clause in the 1934 Constitution. A 1977 Brazilian Constitutional amendment guaranteed divorce and legislators passed a strict divorce law. These experiences differed greatly from Uruguay and Cuba whose lawmakers produced absolute divorce laws by 1918.

Deputy Inés Enríquez's failure to resolve the divorce issue sustained the stigmas attached to the double-standard of families. For as she and other divorce supporters argued the rich could attain divorce and the absence of legal marital dissolution forced working-class and poor individuals into adulterous affairs. Unlike their Argentine and Brazilian counterparts in the mid-twentieth century, few Chilean feminists engaged in the debate, making Enríquez the lone female voice for divorce. Why didn't Chilean women and feminists fight for divorce? Were they that far removed from feminist movements in countries, such as Cuba, the United States, and Europe? Radicals Adriana Olgún and Ana Figueroa made no public statements supporting divorce, despite their forceful demands for gender equality a decade earlier. The reasons for their lack of support are unclear. Perhaps their power to influence Radical Party

leadership ended after President González's presidency. Their experiences might have left them disillusioned with the political system that left them bereft of power. Women who supported feminist causes, like their male counterparts, viewed divorce as problematic because of the moral and religious debates it generated. And few willingly jeopardized other gender legislative projects, such as day care and child support, for such a divisive issue.

Although women had incorporated effectively in the political party system and influenced party agendas, their experiences with divorce legislation illustrated that gender concerns remained secondary and to challenge patriarchal structures directly were limited. Leftist parties and women's cells believed divorce important, but prioritized other social needs, such as job security, prenatal care, child labor protection, and labor rights. Divorce advocates had little power to redirect political party agendas and national welfare policies that solidified the family unit. Although middle-class feminists and reformers struggled for legal gender equality, they also sought to preserve the family through legislative means. Divorce contradicted deliberate attempts to strengthen women's position within the family and to reorient wayward men to their familial responsibilities. These possibilities, the Roman Catholic Church's social influence, the lack of feminist support, the decline of the Radical Party, and the rise of the Christian Democratic Party all contributed to retarding divorce in Chile.

Although Chilean legislators did not produce a divorce law, they did offer a very progressive national day care law. Law 17,301 addressed issues that had troubled Chilean upper- and middle-class reformers since women entered into the industrial workforce: how to maintain women's familial and maternal responsibilities while

working outside the confines of the home; how to obligate employers to aide in that endeavor; and how to enforce compliance. Article 33 established that all public and private enterprises that employed 20 or more women had to furnish nurseries adjacent or near the worksite that would be run independently and regulated by the National Kindergarten Board. Article 43 modified the Labor Code, implementing harsher penalties for employers who negated their duty to provide offsite nurseries for working mothers. Those employers who were accused of noncompliance could be jailed for up to fifteen days and ordered to comply within a reasonable time or he or she could face more jail time. Since nurseries and preschools were now regulated by the state and partially financed by the government, which reduced employers' economic contribution, many more employers complied with the law.

The struggle for national child care legislation is significant because it illustrated the intense political competition that had evolved and had produced a fractured political party system. As evidenced by the congressional debates, even those politicians who supported the project refused to agree on the terms, fighting over proprietorship and impeding the bill's promulgation. Women legislators had originally presented the project as a united group, representing leftist and center parties. As the political system became more polarized, congressional women representatives aligned with their respective parties, rather than pulling together as women to push through this important piece of legislation.

Women in the legislature behaved more as politicians, working to advance party agendas, rather than working as a block gender group. This behavior illustrated women politicians had learned to work within the existing political party structure. Gone were

the attempts to orchestrate women's groups and organizations to effect legislation beneficial to women and families, as was the approach employed during the suffrage movement. The push to create a more active role for women in the political parties during the 1950s, by clearly defining the women's departments' relationship to and function in the parties and by incorporating women into the parties' hierarchy, had produced some positive results. Women politicians secured a means to advance debates and legislation that directly affected women and the family and they did so through their political parties.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Radical Deputy Alfredo Duhalde gave an impassioned speech to the Senate in December 1950 in which he argued that political fragmentation was the greatest threat to Chile. He pondered if historians in the year 2000 would characterize Chile favorably. Would they conclude Chile was a nation with an educated society and great potential or would they see a precarious economy, a chaotic political system, and a disorderly society?⁵⁶⁰ He warned that political bickering led “to the segmentation of parties and to the formation of small groups that circulate as wandering asteroids, without a precise place, that puts national unity itself in danger.”⁵⁶¹ His words were prophetic. During the 1950s and 1960s, Chile’s political party system became fragmented and ideological inflexibility led to party splintering and fostered a political environment that was not conducive to compromise. His postulating neglected the import role gender played and how women’s increased participation in politics contributed to ideological divisions and internal party tensions.

Unlike the “wandering asteroids” Deputy Duhalde identified, women found a precise place in politics. Suffragists defined women’s political involvement through establishing goal-oriented interest groups that exerted pressure on party leaders. During the 1950s and 1960s, a newer generation of female political participants exhibited a new

⁵⁶⁰ Boletín del Senado de la República de Chile Sesiones extraordinarias December 12, 1950, pp. 696.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid., p. 697.

phase of women's political involvement. They eschewed interest group tactics and recognized that political power necessitated party support and resources. These new female politicians became more involved in party politics and demanded more representation in the parties' executive arms. They secured a place in the political party system and through party organs they promoted feminist agendas.

As women earned party support and as social conceptualizations of women's political participation changed, women's representation in Congress rose. During the 1950s, five women served in Congress and during the 1960s, 21 women served. Although women still constituted a minority, they did not occupy a secondary position. Women contributed to all levels of the legislative process. An examination of the Commissions on which female congressional members served demonstrates that although women tended to occupy positions on committees considered appropriate for women, they were not relegated to such posts. The five women in Congress in the 1950s occupied posts on the following commissions: Juvenile Vagrancy (1), Public Works (1), Social-Medical Assistance (3), Housing (1), Public Education (1), Labor and Social Security (4), and Constitution, Legislation, and Justice (1).⁵⁶² The CLJ was the only commission that represented a non-feminine task. As women first entered the legislature their political responsibilities reflected an extension of their domestic roles. This trend changed dramatically in the 1960s.

The 21 female congressional members that served in the 1960s occupied a wide range of posts. They continued to work on commissions that defined their political

⁵⁶² Numbers represent how many women served on the commission.

activities in maternal terms, including the Budget and Finance Commissions.⁵⁶³ Chileans considered women to be adept at these tasks because they represented an important aspect of home economics. Law 11,051 that paid family allowances directly to women illustrated that lawmakers believed that women handled family finances far better than men.⁵⁶⁴ Women's roles in the legislature changed in the 1960s and showed a more equitable assignment to commissions. Female congressional members also earned assignments to the following commissions: Sports (2), Mining (1), Constitution, Legislation, and Justice (4), Economy (2), Interior Government (5), Commerce (1), Agriculture (1), National Defense (4), Exterior Relations (5), and Latin American Integration (1). There was a more equitable distribution of women serving on female- and male-centered commissions. Twenty-five female congressional members worked on commissions that handled feminine issues and twenty-six served on commissions that carried out masculine tasks. This represented a transitory time in how Chileans defined women's political responsibilities and illustrates that women incorporated themselves fully into the legislative body. Women did not behave as outside actors, they were full participants who functioned as congressional members, not female members.

Gender informs politics and is present at every level of state formation. This included the political party system. Party leaders in the 1950s and 1960s discussed gender inequality in the parties, the law, and society. Communist Party members especially wrestled with how to address gender oppression in the party and in the nation. Women's subjugation became a part of party discourse, which then brought the issue to

⁵⁶³ Housing (8), Public Health (2), Labor and Social Security (3), Social and Medical Assistance (4), Public Works (1), Public Education (4), Budget (1), and Finance (2).

⁵⁶⁴ See also Chaney, Supermadre.

national politics. Women's ability to push feminist agendas and woman-centered legislation predicated on a party's political clout. Radical Party leaders endorsed Civil Code and Social Security reforms in the 1950s and prominent Radical women urged their leaders to advance woman-friendly legislation. By the mid-1960s, the PDC and the PS and PC coalition emerged as strong political forces. This helps to explain how the Radical's divorce project failed and the PDC and PS and PC supported Day Care Law succeeded. The struggle over who authored day care legislation illustrated the combative relationship between the PDC, the PC and the PS. This argument moved beyond women's agendas and represented how political fragmentation stalled legislation. Although women's inactivity as a group retarded feminist goals, such as national day care and divorce, their involvement in the party system delivered a day care law.

Women's gains in Congress and the party system are only a part of the ongoing process to obtain equality. This study shows that equality had different meanings. Some women and lawmakers fostered protective legislation and preserved patriarchal privileges, such as social security benefits, women's early retirement, and upholding gender specific definitions of adultery. Other reformers challenged the patriarchal system and supported legislation that they argued protected women and children, but also limited male authority in the home. Law 11,051 and Law 10, 271, which redefined legitimacy and inheritance rights, offered women greater control over household finances and a better means to collect child support from men who abandoned their paternal responsibilities.

Civil Code reforms also afforded women more power over marital assets and expanded their custodial rights over children. These laws might have equalized marital

relations and limited men's absolute authority over their wives and children, but they did not eliminate patriarchal privileges completely. They illustrated that women fought for varying degrees of equality. More importantly, they show that as women defined their goals, they joined political parties that best represented their objectives. Congressional debates demonstrated that legislative reforms were party specific. Women's prominence in individual parties affected their ability to effect changes and push gender-specific agendas.

The 1950s represent a cultural transition from supporting traditional gender roles to recognizing the practicalities of women in the workforce. Popular Front governments strove to impose the patriarchal family structure on all levels of society and supported legislation that defined women as secondary laborers and men as heads of the household. During the 1950s, legislators passed reforms that increased women's rights in the marriage and identified alternative family structures. The laws reflected social realities and served to address issues such as male abandonment and households supported by women. By the 1960s, lawmakers accepted non-traditional family arrangements and recognized women as primary laborers. The National Day Care Law signifies the culmination of the cultural shift in gender conceptualizations wherein the State supported women as workers and assumed some responsibility *in loco parentis*.

Chilean women's experiences illustrate that neither women's driven parties or political organizations nor the political party system brought about change to normative gender relations. Women's party affiliations and class interests hinder their ability to forge a unified women's movement during the first half of the twentieth century. Although Civil Code and social welfare reforms in the 1950s increased women's

authority in the family, were driven more by political parties than women's groups. Women's active role in day care legislation during the 1960s demonstrates that women in power were cognizant to male leaders' concern over patriarchy. Male dominance of the political party system sustained their ability to protect the family and to preserve patriarchal privileges. Despite women's success in integrating the party system, they were unable to achieve equal status. The Chilean case proved that a significant challenge to gender discrimination necessitates both women's strong presence in the parties and independent women's groups to define and to steer feminist demands.

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El Mercurio

Eva

La Nación

Paula

Principios

Ramona

Zig-Zag