

approach underscores the agency of local actors, from individuals to collectives, in shaping the reception and ultimately the relative success of the reform in each region.

The final chapter explores the collective memory of the agrarian reform, building on the work of scholars like Enrique Mayer. Drawing on rich interview material and other sources, Cant shows how the highly polarized memories of the reform are repurposed and operationalized politically, as the postponement of *La revolución y la tierra* and debates around Castillo's electoral victory clearly demonstrate. In short, this book is an innovative and welcome study, as well as a timely one, of the 1969 agrarian reform that has much to teach us about the reform itself and its continuing importance to Peruvian politics and society.

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## EMPLOYMENT, UNDEREMPLOYMENT, AND UNEMPLOYMENT IN CHILE

*Fighting Unemployment in Twentieth-Century Chile.* By Ángela Vergara. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2021. Pp. 256. \$50.00 cloth.  
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In 1925, when the director of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Albert Thomas, toured Latin America, he supposedly described Chile's new labor laws as the most perfect and comprehensive code on this subject. The laws offered workers legal protections against abusive employers and insurance provisions against death, disability, illness, and old age. But as Ángela Vergara points out, this most perfect code rarely delivered to workers as promised. More importantly, Vergara makes clear that the country particularly failed to develop a coherent employment policy that could address the issue of more central concern to Chilean workers themselves: the problem of job security caused by both cyclical and structural unemployment and underemployment.

Overall, the book tells the story of unemployment policy in Chile from the early twentieth century through the Pinochet dictatorship. It begins with the story of transnational policy discussions from 1900 to 1920 concerning unemployment, and describes how Chilean policymakers adapted these international views to local realities. It then moves on to describe how unemployment presented itself in Chile in the early decades of the twentieth century and documents some of the early, stillborn attempts to create policy solutions.

Three middle chapters on the Great Depression describe various small-bore programs established to address specific problems of employment brought on by the global crisis,

while noting how strong political and bureaucratic opposition blocked the creation of a system of unemployment insurance. A consistent theme in these chapters, indeed throughout the book, is how employers evaded measures meant to address the subsistence issues raised by unemployment, and how government officials failed to enforce them. The chapters on the post-war decades offer further examples of failed policy experiments. Particularly revealing is the story of how the Frei government reacted to the transformation of global thinking in the 1960s about the relationship between unemployment and development that saw the ILO reject long-held assumptions that employment opportunities naturally increase with economic growth.

This new thinking inspired legislation aiming at “job stability” for workers, and through various examples Vergara illustrates how these new measures failed to provide security to workers because employers were given too much latitude. In Vergara’s telling, this failure, and those of all the previous administrations, helped incline workers to support more radical solutions offered by the Unidad Popular. The final chapter on the dictatorship describes the dismantling of labor protections, the reduction and decentralization of benefits, and the failure of the new neoliberal labor market to create sufficient employment opportunities—all of which contributed to a near-continuous subsistence crisis for many workers through the end of the 1980s.

The book does a nice job of marrying stories of policy generation to examples of both successful and failed application of these policies—down to the level of individuals and small groups. Central to Vergara’s story is how moments of economic crisis (especially World War I, the years 1920–21, and the Great Depression) helped generate the belief that the Chilean state needed to do something to resolve problems of mass unemployment, but also that the proposed responses were often limited both in scope and imagination.

More importantly, Vergara demonstrates time and again how there was never enough political and policy consensus to execute even these limited programs well. She makes several arguments as to why Chile failed to develop more effective and comprehensive unemployment policy. Many employers, politicians, and social service practitioners sustained traditional beliefs that Chilean workers were inclined towards idleness and thus did not actually suffer from true unemployment—in the sense of involuntary exclusion from the workforce—and so feared that generous benefits would deter workers from productive labor. In addition, many policy makers clung to the assumption that economic growth would eventually solve the employment problem. And while this view began to decline in the 1960s, it enjoyed a resurgence in the neoliberal era that did lasting damage to many Chileans.

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