

Agrarian Capitalism and Rural Labour: The Hacienda System in Central Chile, 1870–1920*

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Abstract. Using a variety of new sources directly pertaining to different types of rural estate, and contrary to interpretations of rural Chile as a traditional society unaffected by economic modernisation, this article analyses the transition of the hacienda system in central Chile towards agrarian capitalism during the period of export-led growth from the 1860s to 1930. It argues that the expansion of the ‘landowner enterprise’, along with developments in mechanisation and irrigation, resulted in the marginalisation of the precarious ‘peasant enterprises’ operated by tenants and the gradual proletarianisation of the agricultural workforce. The development of agrarian capitalism transformed the collective action of rural workers, which assumed modern forms such as strikes and unionisation, and thus became significant in national politics. The first wave of rural conflicts, which took place in the early 1920s, can therefore be understood as the response of the emerging rural working class to the agrarian expansion that Chile experienced as part of the process of capitalist modernisation.

Keywords: Chile, agrarian capitalism, hacienda system, rural workers, *inquilinos*, Arturo Alessandri, strikes, FOCh

Introduction

Although the transformation of the rural economy and society played a crucial role in the modernisation that Chile experienced from the 1850s to the First World War, historians have hardly studied the agrarian expansion which

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took place in that period of export-led growth.¹ In particular, the response of landowners to the growth of demand from both the external and domestic markets, the extent to which the hacienda system underwent a transition to agrarian capitalism, and, if it underwent such a transition at all, how agricultural modernisation affected rural labour have all proved elusive. Yet the established view holds that neither economic modernisation nor social conflict reached the Chilean countryside. The hacienda underwent no substantial changes, for archaic production methods and labour systems remained in place. As a result, the society of powerful landowners and quiescent peasants entered the twentieth century virtually unchanged. Moreover, it is suggested, the ‘backward’ nature of nineteenth-century agriculture was an ‘obstacle’ to economic development, while the persistence of a ‘semi-feudal’ or ‘traditional’ rural society dominated by retrograde landowners prevented political democratisation. The uncritical reiteration of these notions, which are still prominent in general accounts of Chilean history, is related to the limited development of agrarian historiography.

The agrarian historiography of modern Chile is still centred on interpretations established in the foundational studies that Arnold Bauer and Cristóbal Kay carried out more than three decades ago. These works fell short in terms of supporting evidence pertaining to rural estates; thus they did not examine agrarian expansion at the level of the unit of production, and they presented contradictory accounts of the development of the hacienda and its impact on rural labour. Bauer argued that central Chile was a ‘traditional’ rural society that did not modernise under export-led expansion. As land was abundant and labour cheap, landowners expanded production by bringing more land under the plough, extending the labour tenant system known as *inquilinaje* in a harsher form and hiring more labourers as seasonal peons. Agricultural modernisation was limited to the construction of irrigation channels and the late introduction of machinery in a few model estates.² For Kay, who approached the large estate in Chile from an analytical perspective that draws from late nineteenth-century liberal German

¹ The exception is the pioneering work by Carmen Cariola and Osvaldo Sunkel, *Un siglo de historia económica de Chile, 1880–1930: Dos ensayos y una bibliografía* (Madrid, 1982, and Santiago, 1991); for a comprehensive analysis of agrarian expansion in Chile in this period, see Claudio Robles-Ortiz, ‘Agrarian Capitalism in an Export Economy: Chilean Agriculture in the Nitrate Era, 1880–1930’, unpubl. PhD diss., University of California, Davis, 2002.

² Arnold J. Bauer, *Chilean Rural Society from the Spanish Conquest to 1930* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 101–5; and ‘Chilean Rural Labor in the Nineteenth Century’, *American Historical Review*, vol. 76, no. 4 (1971), pp. 1076–82. Bauer drew his opinion about the lack of mechanisation from Silvia Hernández, ‘Transformaciones tecnológicas en la agricultura de Chile central. Siglo XIX’, *Cuadernos del Centro de Estudios Socioeconómicos*, no. 3 (1966), pp. 1–31. However, Hernández argued that official statistical sources were not suitable sources for estimating machinery imports or stocks, and she did not actually study the mechanisation associated with the export booms or its continuity after 1880.

agrarian historiography, the ‘hacienda system’ underwent a transition from a peasant-dominated *Grundherrschaft* to a landowner-dominated *Gutsherrschaft*, as landowners expanded direct cultivation on the ‘hacienda enterprise’.³ Despite its apparent coherence, Kay’s discussion of agrarian expansion is not supported by empirical evidence, and borrows from what Bauer argued about the period of the boom in exports in the 1860s and 1870s. Thus, Kay’s view on the impact of the agrarian expansion on rural labour is based upon, and actually represents an unorthodox reading of, Bauer’s work. Indeed, Kay transformed Bauer’s point into the opposite, arguing that, instead of settling more *inquilinos* on the estates, *hacendados* began to pay a wage to a number of would-be *inquilinos*, who swelled the ranks of labourers. The hacienda thus began ‘to depend on the external supply of wage labour’, and reduced the ‘relative importance of tenant labour’ supplied by the *inquilinaje* system. Along with technological improvements, these changes set in motion the ‘dissolution process’ of the hacienda system, manifested in the ‘proletarianisation’ of its labour force, especially after 1930.⁴

Chilean scholars have added little research to the early historiography, and their views on the hacienda and rural labour between 1850 and 1930 not only borrow extensively from Bauer or Kay’s arguments and material, but are actually variations of them. Roberto Santana based his discussion of nineteenth-century agriculture on Kay’s work and reiterated the latter’s views on changes in rural labour, presenting the impact of agrarian expansion on the *inquilinaje* system as ‘a case of rural proletarianisation’, which, he added with no evidence, took place in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁵ Gabriel Salazar also briefly discussed the export booms of the 1860s and 1870s, and used Bauer’s material to make the case for a rather ambiguous ‘semi-proletarianisation’ of *inquilinaje*.⁶ Finally, José Bengoa restated Bauer’s

³ Cristóbal Kay, ‘Comparative Development of the European Manorial System and the Latin American Hacienda System: An Approach to a Theory of Agrarian Change for Chile’, unpubl. PhD diss., University of Sussex, 1971; and *El sistema señorial europeo y la hacienda latinoamericana* (Mexico, 1980).

⁴ Kay, ‘Comparative Development’, pp. 92–135. For a summary of the arguments of both Bauer and Kay, see Arnold Bauer and Ann Hagerman Johnson, ‘Land and Labour in Rural Chile, 1850–1935’, in Kenneth Duncan and Ian Rutledge (eds.), *Land and Labour in Latin America: Essays on the Development of Agrarian Capitalism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 83–102; and Cristóbal Kay, ‘The Development of the Hacienda System, 1850–1973’, in Duncan and Rutledge (eds.), *Land and Labour*, pp. 103–39.

⁵ Roberto Santana, ‘Un cas de proletarianisation rurale: l’*inquilino*’, *Cahiers du Monde Hispanique et Luso-Bresilien*, no. 28 (1977), pp. 73–90; and *Paysans dominés: Lutte sociale dans les campagnes chiliennes, 1920–1970* (Toulouse, 1980).

⁶ Gabriel Salazar, ‘Entrepreneurs and Peons in the Transition to Industrial Capitalism: Chile, 1820–78’, unpubl. PhD diss., University of Hull, 1984, pp. 243–5; and its Spanish-language version, *Labradores, peones y proletarios: Formación y crisis de la sociedad popular chilena del siglo XIX* (Santiago, 1985).

‘extension of inquilinaje’, calling it *reinquilinización*.⁷ In sum, there are contradictory accounts of rural labour based on the same material, and although some scholars have proposed that the main trend was toward the proletarianisation of the hacienda workforce, inquilinos included, that argument has never been substantiated.⁸

Last but not least, the study of social conflict remains a conspicuous lacuna in the historiography of Chilean rural society. Except for Brian Loveman’s outstanding works, all accounts of Chilean agrarian history prior to the 1929 Great Depression depict a society in which inquilinos and other hacienda workers were not capable of breaking through paternalistic domination to organise themselves and challenge landowners.⁹ In particular, scholars have regarded rural workers’ first expressions of collective action and mobilisation in the early twentieth century as circumstantial, and point out that, unlike other Latin American countries at that time, there were not massive rural revolts in Chile.¹⁰ Clearly, *El llano en llamas* was in Mexico, not in Chile. However, historians of rural Chile have not studied social conflict in this period; they disregard it *a priori* because it does not fit the interpretation of agrarian history which their works have popularised.

This article presents an alternative interpretation of Chilean rural history. It analyses the transformation of the hacienda system and its impact on rural labour during a period in which the agricultural sector underwent an unprecedented expansion in response to the growth of the internal market. The article thus shows that the organisational and technological changes the hacienda system experienced as part of the modernisation of Chile’s economy decisively transformed labour systems and shaped the collective action of rural workers. In this light the first rural conflicts, which took place in the early 1920s, can be understood as a consequence of the agrarian expansion that the country experienced from 1870 to 1930. In order to analyse that process at the level of the unit of production, the article focuses on three

⁷ José Bengoa, *Haciendas y campesinos: Historia social de la agricultura chilena*, vol. 2 (Santiago, 1990).

⁸ Bauer himself noted these variations on both his own and Kay’s interpretations in the works that Chilean scholars published in the 1980s; see Arnold J. Bauer, ‘Landlord and Campesino in the Chilean Road to Democracy’, in Evelyn Huber and Frank Safford (eds.), *Agrarian Structure and Political Power: Landlord and Peasant in the Making of Latin America* (Pittsburgh and London, 1995).

⁹ Brian Loveman, *Struggle in the Countryside: Politics and Rural Labor in Chile, 1919–1973* (Bloomington, 1976); and *Antecedentes para el estudio del movimiento campesino chileno: Pliegos de peticiones, huelgas y sindicatos agrícolas, 1932–1966* (Santiago, 1971).

¹⁰ Arnold Bauer refers to them as ‘some disturbances’ provoked by ‘the intrusions of urban labor leaders’ in the countryside, which, once these external agitators retreated, ‘remained essentially passive’ until the agrarian reform of the 1960s: see Bauer, *Chilean Rural Society*, p. 169. The same opinion is presented in José Bengoa, *El poder y la subordinación: Historia social de la agricultura chilena*, vol. 1 (Santiago, 1988).

main questions. How did landowners adjust the hacienda system to respond to the growth of the demand for foodstuffs and agricultural inputs? In what areas, and to what degree, did landowners invest in modernising their properties to make the sustained expansion of the agricultural output possible? How did the organisational transformation of the hacienda system in this era of agrarian expansion change rural labour?

In response to these questions the first part of this article discusses how, during the early phase of the development of the hacienda system, hacendados expanded direct cultivation of the 'landowner enterprise' by using labour and other resources from both the precarious peasant enterprises of their inquilinos and through sharecropping. The focus then shifts to the technological improvements – basically irrigation and mechanisation – that allowed landowners to increase the area cultivated and reduce the demand for labour, especially at the peaks in the harvest season. Agricultural modernisation thus emerges as a significant element in the development of the hacienda system because it allowed landowners to marginalise peasant enterprises. This late phase of the system's development, during which the inquilinos' 'peasant-ness' became negligible, is discussed in the final section, where the concomitant process of proletarianisation of the hacienda labour force, in response to which inquilinos and other rural workers engaged in unionisation and strikes after the First World War, is also examined.

The Expansion of Landowner Enterprise

The extension of direct cultivation in the landowner enterprise (or demesne, if we employ the conceptualisation developed for the study of the manorial system in Europe) was the starting point of the transition to capitalist production that the Chilean hacienda system experienced from the mid-nineteenth century to the Great Depression. In the haciendas of central Chile this process intensified with the opening of new markets for wheat in California and Australia. Moreover, increasing demand for agricultural foodstuffs also allowed Chilean landowners to export wheat to England, taking advantage of high prices and reduced freight rates. Between 1850 and 1880, therefore, haciendas in central Chile witnessed their golden age through a series of export booms that reached their peak in 1874, but which ended abruptly amidst the economic crisis of 1874–78.¹¹

¹¹ Sergio Sepúlveda, *El trigo chileno en el mercado mundial: Ensayo de geografía histórica* (Santiago, 1959); Arnold J. Bauer, 'Expansión económica en una sociedad tradicional: Chile central en el siglo XIX', *Historia*, no. 9 (1970), pp. 137–235.

Landowners increased direct cultivation by clearing and improving marginal land on their estates.¹² In so doing, they relied upon the tenant labour system known as *inquilinaje* and sharecropping arrangements with both resident and outside workers. This practice allowed workers to carve out internal peasant enterprises that characterised the early stages of the development of the hacienda system. Normally the process of demesne expansion took several years until fields apt for cultivation could be developed, and it required a considerable labour force that landowners secured by providing workers with access to the hacienda's most abundant resource, land. This strategy reflected the landowners' control of most agricultural land and, therefore, the need of poor rural families to gain access to a small plot, even if that meant enduring the unequal and repressive, but nevertheless secure, social order of the large estate. Thus, even though these arrangements were negotiated from completely unequal positions within the hacienda's system of power relations, they offered benefits to both landowners and workers. The former were able to convert an increasing section of their property into effectively cultivated agricultural land with little, if any, cash outlay, and reduce the costs of recruiting and supervising wage labour. As service labour tenants, workers obtained access to the hacienda's resources in the form of a land allotment for their own crops, rights of pasture, a house with a small plot for vegetables, some cash payment, and food rations. Moreover, as sharecroppers, they gained a surplus of produce, which they could sell or use to supplement benefits they already received as *inquilinos*.

The specific features of the process of demesne expansion, and the role played in it by *inquilinos* and sharecroppers, can be examined by looking at the development of large haciendas located in different areas of central Chile. One case was that of Peñuelas de Arquén, a 2,700-hectare hacienda in the longitudinal valley, near the city of Talca, just south of the Maule River. The owner improved its once-irregular soils considerably through mixed farming works carried out by sharecroppers, who were the hacienda's same *inquilinos*. As reported by a correspondent of the *Boletín de la Sociedad Nacional de Agricultura* who visited Arquén in 1877, the procedure required to improve the soil and prepare new fields for cultivation was quite demanding. First, 'all shrubs were burnt and their ashes spread out to restore fertility to soils', which then 'grew thick grasses after being irrigated and thoroughly tilled'. Next, 'cattle fed on those natural pastures would provide manure that further enhanced the soil', allowing the planting of 'fodder crops such as rye,

¹² This process was first discussed in Arnold J. Bauer, 'The Hacienda El Huique in the Agrarian Structure of Nineteenth-Century Chile', *Agricultural History*, vol. 46, no. 4 (1972), pp. 455–70.

clover, and alfalfa that were fed to animals on the field itself', which thus received more 'manure of excellent quality'. Thus prepared, the fields were:

ploughed and tilled; irrigated by taking advantage of the Maule's overflows; and cultivated with *chacras* (vegetable crops), demanding sharecroppers to follow explicit instructions for improving soil, which, once those harvests (*cosechas chacareras*) have been completed, is in condition of entering into the general system of farming adopted on the hacienda and producing, every four years, after other *chacarera* crops, wheat harvests as satisfactory as those obtained from those fields that can be improved with less work and in a shorter period of time.¹³

As the case of Arquén shows, inquilinaje and sharecropping had an explicit and even thoroughly planned demesne-expanding function that defined their character as social relations. The same role for the system of labour tenancy can be seen on Hacienda Culiprán (or 'Sweet Waters', as its owners called it in the 1870s), where the expansion of cultivation accelerated with the introduction of irrigation early in that decade. In this case, workers were not assigned their land allotments (*raciones de tierra*) on a permanent basis, but only for a year. The purpose of this practice was that through the cultivation of their vegetable crops the inquilinos prepared the fields that were later cultivated with demesne crops. As the owner's grandson recalled, under this method each worker

was allocated by ballot one to four acres of irrigated land for his harvest, and oxen and ploughs ... to work it. He was given seed, too, if he wanted it, but he was expected to return the same amount when his harvest was in. As an overseer or skilled craftsman he would get more land than if he was a simple workman. By this means we cleaned and prepared a field for sowing or re-seeding.¹⁴

Resorting to sharecropping and inquilinaje not only made economic sense for hacendados interested in expanding cultivation, but also reflected the conflict-ridden nature of the relations between landowners and lower-class rural people. In the period of agrarian expansion landowners also used inquilinaje and sharecropping to secure a dependable workforce because it was then, especially in the 1870s with the onset of the nitrate economy, that thousands of men left the countryside and alarmed landowners discussed possible solutions for the 'rural exodus'. Yet, along with repeatedly complaining about the 'shortage of hands', landowners elaborated on their preference for inquilinaje by contrasting it with the risks posed by the 'floating masses' of peons. Thus, for instance, in 1875, at the *Primer Congreso Libre de Agricultores*, an assembly that gathered landowners from virtually all provinces

¹³ 'La Hacienda Peñuelas de Arquén', *Boletín de la Sociedad Nacional de Agricultura (BSNA)* (July 1877), p. 339.

¹⁴ Charles Lambert, *Sweet Waters: A Chilean Farm* (London, 1952), p. 12.

of Chile, Juan N. Espejo voiced a harsh depiction of the peon, stating that not only did he ‘personify all the vices of our working classes’, but also that he brings to haciendas along with his filthy rags the seeds of moral decay and crime. His work is irregular, slow, and sloppy. His demands are exaggerated in all respects; he complains about the wage, food rations, hours of work. He often takes off with tools or other peons’ worthless clothes ... [and] rebels for any reason.¹⁵

In sum, at an early stage of the development of the hacienda system in central Chile, peasant enterprises were not incompatible but functional to the formation and expansion of the landowner enterprise. Yet the expansion of the hacienda system was far more complex than bringing more land under the plough and settling labour tenants and sharecroppers. At the same time, throughout the Nitrate Era, hacendados made substantial capital investments in land-improving and labour-saving technology that would play a major role in the organisational transformation of the hacienda system and the demise of peasant enterprises. Such was the impact of the construction of large irrigation works and the introduction of agricultural machinery.

Both as individuals and through irrigation associations, large landowners carried out a number of impressive and costly projects; the extension of irrigation thus became one of the most significant agricultural investments made during the nineteenth century. The result was the extensive system of canals that criss-crossed the longitudinal valley from Aconcagua to the frontier region by the late nineteenth century. The large areas that these canals irrigated reflect the extent to which haciendas and *fundos* (large estates, but generally smaller than haciendas) intensified. The region surrounding Santiago, for example, witnessed the expansion of wheat cultivation as a number of canals were built to irrigate the rich properties along the Maipo Valley. The Canal del Maipo, the oldest of such works, was actually a network of channels that by 1870 included the Ochagavía Viejo, Espejo, La Calera, Santa Cruz, San Vicente and Arriagada, all tapped from the Maipo Viejo over the northern sections of the valley. Another section included Pirque, Huidobro, Santa Rita, Viluco, Fernández, Molina, Pachacama and Isla de Maipo, which stretched southwards from the Maipo Nuevo.¹⁶ The construction of the Mallarauco canal, for its part, was begun in 1873 and finished in the course of 20 years. It provided irrigation for three large properties, Mallarauco, Pahuilmo and Mallarauquito, which together encompassed 7,500 hectares. Similarly, the 59-mile canal that mining entrepreneur Charles Lambert finished, after buying Sweet Waters in the 1870s, transformed this

¹⁵ Juan Nepomuceno Espejo, ‘El trabajador rural’, *Primer Congreso Libre de Agricultores* (Santiago, 1875), pp. 141–2.

¹⁶ Antonio Yañez, ‘Estudio sobre el fundo de don Francisco Baeza’, unpubl. thesis, Instituto Agronómico, 1879.



Map 1.

40,000-acre fundo next to Melipilla ‘from a dry farm, dependent on the six-weeks rainy season in May and June, into a well-watered property with 18,000 acres of irrigated land’.¹⁷ It was precisely in the Maipo Valley where Julio Menadier, the secretary of the *Sociedad Nacional de Agricultura* (SNA) and chief editor of its *Boletín*, witnessed the process of demesne expansion at its peak while visiting Viluco, a large estate on which the area cultivated with wheat

¹⁷ Luis Correa Vergara, *Agricultura chilena* (Santiago, 1938), vol. 2, pp. 64–5; Lambert, *Sweet Waters*, p. 11. 40,000 acres is equivalent to approximately 16,000 hectares, 18,000 acres to approximately 7,200 hectares.

more than doubled, rising from 706 hectares in 1861 to 1,621 hectares in 1871.¹⁸

Irrigation was also instrumental in the diversification of the production of the hacienda system. It allowed landowners to expand other activities that gradually gained in importance, such as livestock raising, viticulture and fruit growing. The wide diffusion of this process may be shown by looking at its impact on haciendas located in different areas through central Chile. From the window of the train along the recently inaugurated Valparaíso–Santiago railway in the 1870s, Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna praised the influence of the Limache canal, which stretched across the hacienda and valley of the same name. He observed that ‘the principal benefits’ obtained from the irrigation of its once ‘barren plains’ were the five-year-old ‘French vineyard’ that included 115,000 plants and yielded 500,000 bottles of wine, and the ‘new vineyard’, which had 300,000 plants expected to bear fruit the following year. Yet the 70-kilometre canal’s impact was much larger: it not only provided irrigation for 1,400 of the 1,800 hectares of level land on Hacienda Limache alone, but also supplied the neighbouring haciendas of La Palma, Santa Teresa and Loreto, and the city of Limache.¹⁹ Livestock raising also required the extension of fodder crops, such as alfalfa and clover; an early example of this was that of Hacienda Catemu, where several canals from the Aconcagua River allowed for the irrigation of approximately 2,500 hectares of land, which, in the colourful words of Vicuña McKenna, had become the ‘alfalfa Eden’. Another observer noted that, further south, on Hacienda Cauquenes, canals had made it possible to bring into production ‘large plains’ which extended along both shores of the Cachapoal River. One canal alone represented an investment of 30,000 *pesos*, at that time a substantial amount of money, and permitted the irrigation of some 350 hectares that were sown with alfalfa. As a correspondent to the SNA’s *Boletín* noted, ‘all the low vegetation has completely disappeared; only the most robust *peumos* and *quillayes* were left to provide shade and shelter to the thousands of head of cattle’. Likewise, on Hacienda El Guaico, near Curicó, over 4,000 hectares were brought under irrigation, presumably for alfalfa, since livestock raising was the hacienda’s main activity.²⁰ In short, as these examples illustrate, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, irrigation played a central role in the expansion and diversification of the hacienda system’s landowner enterprise.

The expansion of the landowner enterprise also rested on a process of selective mechanisation. This was the landowners’ response to the labour

¹⁸ Julio Menadier, ‘La Hacienda de Viluco’, *BSNA* (April 1872), p. 209.

¹⁹ Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna, *De Valparaíso a Santiago* (Leipzig, 1877).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 329–30; ‘La Hacienda de Cauquenes’, *BSNA* (June 1872), p. 302; Bauer, *Chilean Rural Society*, p. 182.

supply bottlenecks that hindered the functioning of the hacienda system during the export boom of the 1870s, when the emigration of rural workers became massive. In the long term migration reduced the size of the agricultural labour force and the supply of labour, and also integrated the rural areas into the nationwide labour market created by Chile's economic modernisation, leaving haciendas exposed to competition from other activities such as mining in the northern provinces. In the short term migration caused 'labour shortages' in the summer, when the demand for labour reached its peak because a large pool of labourers was necessary for harvesting. Moreover, Chile's economic expansion created alternative sources of employment in the rural areas, such as public works and the construction of railways, which also became more intense in the summer, and thus competed with the haciendas for labourers.²¹ Rural workers took advantage of the seasonal character of the demand for labour and managed to obtain higher wages during the harvest. Analysts of rural society commented on the rise in wages and pointed out that it was a trend that had developed along with the expansion of the hacienda system. In 1873 an article in the SNA's *Boletín* explained the spread of the mechanical reaper by noting that 'as a consequence of the shortage of hands', in many places it was necessary to pay a peon 'at least 60 cents' for reaping one 'task' (*tarea*), namely the area planted with wheat that one man could cut in a day. That wage was twice as much as peons earned in the winter.²² In 1875, in an essay on 'the rural worker' that summarised the discussions of the Political Economy Commission of the *Primer Congreso Libre de Agricultores*, Juan N. Espejo estimated a wage of 50 cents a task when asserting that a worker 'cuts 2 or 3 *tareas*, and earns 1 peso or more'.²³ Similarly, in his *Ensayo sobre la condición de las clases rurales en Chile*, Lauro Barros, a prominent hacendado, observed that the 'wandering peons' did not work 'for less than 50 to 80 cents a day'; this was, Barros asserted, the result of the 'shortage of hands', itself a 'logical consequence' of the increase in the size of the area under cultivation.²⁴ Also, in 1875, a more detached observer, Horace Rumbold (the British minister in Santiago), pointed out that 'the average of wages has increased considerably in recent years', and noted that the daily wages of the 'agricultural labourers' varied

²¹ Julio Menadier, 'El ferrocarril de Talcahuano a Chillán', *BSNA* (Feb. 1872), pp. 183–5; see also John H. Whaley, 'Transportation in Chile's Bío Bío Region', unpubl. PhD Diss., Indiana University, 1974, pp. 124–6, and Robert Oppenheimer, 'Chilean Transportation Development: The Railroad and Socio-Economic Change in the Central Valley, 1840–1885', unpubl. PhD Diss., University of California, 1976.

²² *BSNA* (Feb. 1873), p. 176. ²³ Espejo, 'El trabajador rural', p. 144.

²⁴ Lauro Barros, *Ensayo sobre la condición de las clases rurales en Chile. Memoria presentada al concurso de la Exposición Internacional de 1875* (Santiago, 1875), pp. 18–21.

Table 1. *Agricultural Machinery Stocks in Chile, 1864–1874*

Year	Tilling	Seeders	Reapers	Threshers	Grain cleaners	Hay choppers and balers	Others	Use not reported
1864	46		18	80	266	6	98	34
1865	56	1	21	87	350		125	180
1866	52	7	27	78	348	13	156	213
1867	41	4	13	86	368	19	129	76
1868	39	2	17	137	422	12	154	
1869	47	20	22	285	330	14	159	77
1870	40	41	52	388	372	33	216	286
1871	37	7	121	403	307	16	196	
1872	59	382	204	506	426	43	196	79
1873	77	288	323	725	406	62	310	341
1874	88	382	402	825	496	79	489	273

Source: *Anuario Estadístico de la República de Chile. Estadística Agrícola*, 'Máquinas al servicio de la agricultura', 1865–1874.

'between 25 cents and 40 cents, sometimes rising as high as 50 or falling as low as 10 cents'.²⁵

Landowners gradually introduced machinery as the foreign commission houses increased the supply of agricultural equipment and the development of a mechanical culture facilitated its adoption in the countryside. The official records for stocks of machinery in the *Anuario Estadístico* for the 1840–80 period provide a measure of the impact of the export cycle as a stimulus for agricultural modernisation (see Table 1). Other sources also document the process of mechanisation. In 1878 a comprehensive report on the state of Chilean agriculture stated that there were 1,076 reapers and 973 threshers, 424 steam engines, and 1,391 machines of other types.²⁶ At the peak of the export boom the scale and pattern of agricultural mechanisation in Chile were in keeping with the supply of available technological innovation, and followed a pace similar to that of older cereal-producing countries. The considerable number of reapers, threshers and steam engines shows that mechanisation developed more in wheat harvest operations than in any other stage of the production cycle. Machinery was concentrated on the most economically dynamic haciendas, and in some cases the use of machines and implements extended to the entire production process.²⁷ More importantly,

²⁵ Horace Rumbold, 'Report... on the Progress and General Condition of Chile', *Parliamentary Papers* (1876), LXXVI, p. 390.

²⁶ Martín Drouilly and Pedro Lucio Cuadra, 'Ensayo sobre el estado económico de la agricultura en Chile, redactado para el Congreso Agrícola de París', *BSNA* (May 1878), p. 297.

²⁷ One such estate was Hacienda Viluco, which in 1872 was equipped with '180 Howard & Grignon ploughs, two steam and two hydraulic engines, one Ransomes and three Pitts threshers, two winnowers, ten grain cleaners, a steam-powered mill, a tobacco chopper, a

given the nature of the agrarian structure, the number of properties which adopted the use of farm machinery was significant. According to the law of 18 June 1874, which led to an update of the assessed value of all agricultural properties, 666 estates were considered 'large' (with an assessed value of \$4,000 or more) and 1,513 'medium' (\$1,000–\$3,000).²⁸ Assuming that each property had no more than one reaper, Drouilly and Cuadra's estimates imply that 50 per cent of the 2,179 large and medium estates had reapers.

However, the impact of mechanisation can be more appropriately considered by examining the extent to which the cultivated area was harvested with machines. Various sources indicate that landowners employed agricultural machines to maximum capacity. The harvest was carried out in the longer-daylight summer months, when the number of work hours could be increased. Chilean hacendados also used the same machines on more than one property, thus extending the equipment's actual number of workdays and performance. Furthermore, custom threshing was common among hacendados and smaller landowners, and, as in other rural societies, there were 'contractors' – *gringos* typically – who specialised in providing custom threshing or renting equipment. In central Chile the area harvested by machines was much larger than has been estimated, since the use of threshers was significant. It is possible to estimate the area that could have been mechanically threshed using data from an 1872 article in the *Boletín*, which reported the threshing of wheat on two properties near Santiago. The workers used a Ransome thresher which featured a '54-inch cylinder' and was powered by a 10-horsepower steam engine. Starting on 3 January and finishing on 29 March, the harvest extended for 86 days. There were 11 holidays when work was suspended, and seven days dedicated to other tasks, such as bundling sheaves, chopping straw and fixing the machine; the number of days actually used to thresh was thus reduced to 70, without including six days in the first week of February 'in which we threshed the *inquilinos*' wheat'. The work, the source explains, was 'well-organised, the machine separated the grain from the straw without much loss', but 'it was not always possible to have all the necessary workers'. Under these conditions, the Ransome threshed four fields, two on each property, with a total area of 103 *cuadras* (162 hectares).²⁹ Using this figure, and considering the 825

corn sheller, a Buckley steam-powered saw mill, five Governor & Buckley reapers', and a number of tilling implements. In his report on this estate Julio Menadier also noted that 'the large machinery shops draw attention not only because of their order, symmetry, and good organisation, but also for the smart arrangement of the steam engines, which can power all the machinery': Menadier, 'Hacienda Viluco', p. 209.

²⁸ 'Las propiedades rústicas de Chile', *BSNA* (June 1875), p. 412.

²⁹ 'Del trabajo de las máquinas de trillar y otros datos de una cosecha', *BSNA* (March 1872), pp. 25–61.

Table 2. *Agricultural Machinery Imports in Chile, 1841–1889 (Units)*

	Reapers	Threshers	Grain cleaners	Hay choppers and balers	Others	Steam engines	Agricultural machinery crates*
1841–45		3	239	6	24		
1846–50		2	161	4	33		
1851–55	36	3	248	4	71	5	
1856–60	56	36	523	29	748	57	
1861–65	47	12	78	54	424	27	
1866–70	224	213	261	79	348	450	
1871–75	564	543	311	265	104		
1876–80	161	174	212	128	94	64	
1881–86	347	321	599	465	6		954
1886–89	324	320	68	89			3,946

* Unspecified agricultural machinery (*Maquinaria agrícola en bultos*).

Source: *Estadística Comercial de la República de Chile: Comercio Especial – Importación*.

threshers recorded in the *Anuario Estadístico*, the area mechanically threshed in 1874 would be 133,650 hectares, roughly 30 per cent of the area sown in wheat. In 1878, using Drouilly and Cuadra's estimate of 976 threshers, the area mechanically threshed would increase to 158,112 hectares or nearly 40 per cent.

Agricultural mechanisation continued after the export cycles, when the growth in Chilean agriculture came to depend upon the internal market. The *Anuario Estadístico* ceased to record machinery stocks after 1874, but trends in agricultural mechanisation can be traced through data on machinery imports, which were recorded in the *Estadística Comercial de la República de Chile* until 1889 (see Table 2).³⁰ A second wave of mechanisation developed from the final decade of the nineteenth century as the area under cultivation rapidly expanded and the demand for equipment increased. The importing companies sought to expand their businesses by means of various marketing strategies, including sales campaigns and credit policies.³¹ In 1907 Chile's Board of Statistics resumed publication of the *Anuario Estadístico*, thus providing valuable and comprehensive information on machinery stocks. These data series confirm that the second wave of mechanisation expanded in the first third of the twentieth century (see Table 3). By 1910 iron ploughs, tilling tools and harvesting machines were widely used in the production of cereals in Chile. Mechanisation also extended to fodder crops and vineyards.

³⁰ Agricultural machinery imports were recorded from 1841 in the *Estadística Comercial*, but after 1889 this source ceased recording the number of machines, maintaining a record only of their value.

³¹ Frank von Motz, *Markets for Agricultural Implements and Machinery in Chile and Peru* (US Department of Commerce, Special Agents Series no. 142, Washington, 1917), pp. 34–5.

Table 3. *Stocks of Agricultural Machinery in Chile, 1907–1935*

Year	Seeders	Reapers	Headers	Threshers	Grain cleaners	Mowers	Chaff cutters	Balers	Steam engines	Tractors
1907	1,107		777	2,576	2,799		768	855	2,317	
1908	1,111		778	2,582	2,805		778	870	2,337	
1909	1,156		838	2,673	2,805		852	950	2,404	
1910	1,538		881	2,698	3,238		883	1,060	2,589	
1911	2,077		1,109	3,297	3,279		1,219	1,454	3,296	
1912	2,234		1,163	3,463	3,440		1,309	1,564	3,277	
1913	2,351		1,169	3,705	3,536		1,284	1,608	3,594	
1914	2,138	2,646	1,453	3,739	3,772	4,352	1,347	1,683	3,553	
1916	2,408	3,003	1,443	3,506	3,470	4,555	1,242	1,636	3,298	
1917	2,931	3,138	1,533	3,673	3,752	4,576	1,367	2,547	3,471	
1920	2,127	2,526	2,255	3,465	3,248	4,326	1,080	1,160	3,108	399
1923	1,941	2,149	2,248	3,561	3,287	4,465	1,216	1,285	3,583	752
1926	2,409	2,745	2,897	4,156	3,860	5,140	1,307	1,518	4,011	1,344
1930	3,204	3,110	3,360	4,562	3,771	6,169	1,728	2,061	2,838	660
1935	2,162	2,348	5,366	5,073	4,410	7,057	1,661	2,419	3,602	1,557

Source: *Anuario Estadístico de la República de Chile: Estadística Agrícola*.

Mowers, choppers and balers were extensively employed for harvesting alfalfa and clover, while the growth of the wine-making industry had stimulated the formation of its own capital goods sector, which was supplied by foreign and Chilean manufacturers. In addition, starting with the introduction of the steam engine in the mid-nineteenth century, large landowners and lesser agriculturalists adopted a series of power sources and types of engines that coexisted with each other and remained in use until the First World War, after which they began to be replaced by gasoline-powered tractors. The quality of mechanisation also improved; it extended to ploughing, with the wide diffusion of metal ploughs and the introduction of tractors. Harvesting equipment was also modernised due to the increased use of specialised machines, namely headers, binders and even combine harvesters.

Assessments of rural estates carried out in the 1920s by graduating agronomists at the *Instituto Agronómico* take us closer to the fields to examine mechanisation further. These *informes periciales y tasaciones* included detailed information on the economic and social aspects of all kinds of properties throughout Chile, and provide us with a random sample of cases that constitute one of the main new sources used in this study. These reports show that machines and modern implements were introduced mainly in the cultivation of the landowner enterprise's crops, namely wheat, barley, alfalfa and clover, which were cultivated on a large scale and certainly offered possibilities for successful mechanisation. In addition, special ploughs, cultivators and small tractors were introduced on important vineyards that were part of large estates. In contrast, the use of machines in the cultivation of vegetables

and legumes proved uneconomic or technically impractical, because in most properties these crops occupied areas that were generally very small and required tasks that were too meticulous for a mechanical implement. The use of machinery also varied among distinct types of properties according to their productive structure, which was related to the geographical characteristics of the areas where they were located. Thus there existed distinct patterns of mechanisation in the different agricultural areas of central Chile in the 1920s (Table 4).

At the heart of central Chile, the provinces of O'Higgins and Colchagua formed one of the most representative areas of hacienda-system agriculture. By 1920 the use of threshing machinery was the norm on medium-sized properties, but reaping was frequently done by hand, even in cases where a considerable area was cultivated. This can be illustrated by the Hacienda Antivero, actually an *hijuela* (daughter estate) of the original huge estate of that name. In 1922, when an agronomist, Victoria Tagle, described it as a property 'equipped with the machinery and elements of exploitation necessary in a rural estate managed *a la moderna*', it had the ubiquitous combination of a steam engine and a thresher, but not a single reaper.³² Mechanisation developed most significantly on large haciendas where an abundance of level land and irrigation allowed for large-scale cultivation both of cereals and fodder crops. One such case was the Hacienda La Esmeralda in Colchagua, a province that, because of its shape, was known as the 'oligarchy's kidney'. Indeed, the hacienda was owned by none other than a former president of the SNA, Raimundo Larrain Covarrubias, and was administered by his son, an agronomist who had graduated from the Catholic University. According to José Espínola, the editor of *La Agricultura Práctica* and a professor at the Instituto Agrícola, La Esmeralda had 3,000 hectares (ha), 2,155 of which were under cultivation, the crops comprising wheat (637 ha), barley (411 ha), oats (7 ha), clover (328 ha), alfalfa (198 ha) and *chacarera* crops (450 ha). The case of La Esmeralda shows that even politically conservative landowners, like the Larrains, could be quite progressive when it came to the use of agricultural equipment. Professor Espínola noted that:

practically all sowing is done by machine on soils that are very well prepared and clean, using three Deering seeders. Besides, there are mowers and reapers of the same make ... whose performance is very good. There is also a self-binder, which has not yielded the service it was hoped for. Threshing is done with a Case machine that has given very satisfactory results, and there is also an old-fashioned Ransome thresher used for barley but not wheat because it breaks the grain ... There are three steam engines, one Clayton, one Ransome, and one Brown May; experience has demonstrated that the latter is the best one, because it is very firm, smooth to run,

³² Victoria Tagle, *Tasación de la Hacienda Antivero* (Santiago, 1920), pp. 4–5.

Table 4. *Agricultural Machinery in Properties in Central Chile, 1916–1932*

Year	Name	Location	Total area (ha)	Wheat area (ha)	Iron plough	Rake and cultivator	Reaper	Thresher	Steam engine	Mower	Chopper Baler	Tractor
O'Higgins and Colchagua provinces												
1922	Rincón	Requinoa	157	40	20		1	1	1			
1922	Sta. Berta	Chimbarongo	168	60	11	3		1	1			
1925	Angostura	San Fernando	172		18					1	1	1
1925	San Ricardo	Idahue	267	55	10	3						
1921	Seminario	Llallauquén	392	55	32	3	1	1	1			
1922	Antivero	San Fernando	456	120	11	4		1	1			
1923	Demasías	Peñablanca	520	30	6	2		*				
1923	Molinos	Peumo	593	98								
1922	Sta. Elvira	Placilla	1,130	60	12	2		1	1			
1920	Cocauquén	Cáhuil	1,230	20	16	2	h	ct				
1916	Esmeralda	Rosario	3,600	450	*	*	*	2	3	*	2	
Curicó and Maule provinces												
1931	San Lorenzo	Villa Alegre	270		18	5	1	1	1	3	1	1
1923	La Estrella	San Clemente	270		21	3	1	1	1	1		
1924	La Huerta	Molina	309		*	*	1					
1932	Los Pequeños	Huilquilemu	430		17	6		ct		1		
1932	San Francisco	Curepto	450		4	4						
1923	Camarico	Cumpeo	525	135	20	3	2	1	1	1		
1921	La Lira	Teno	535		25	3	2	1	1	2	1	
1923	La Granja	Parral	662	250	25	1	5	1	1			
1928	Comalle	Teno	706	128	79	17	2	1	1	3	2	2
1925	Flor del Llano	San Clemente	800	120	6			1	1		1	
1929	Santa Ana	Constitución	1,000		12	4						
1932	Los Boldos	Maule	1,099		5			1		1	1	1
1932	San Luis	Linares	1,500	300	63	3	4	2	2	2	1	2
1928	Casas Viejas	Río Claro	3,385	255	38	4						1
1923	Quivolgo	Putú	10,542	282	34	9	1	1	2	1	1	
1931	Huemul	Talca	79,285	299	36	10	3	2	2	1		

* Number of implements not specified in source. h: Wheat reaped by hand. ct: Custom threshing.

Source: Constructed by author using data from *Informes periciales y tasaciones*, Instituto Agronómico.

and easy to regulate ... It has been in service for the past ten years and has never broken down.³³

Farther south, in the provinces of Curicó and Maule, another characteristic agricultural area of central Chile, there were also important variations in the mechanisation of rural estates. The use of machinery was directly related to the scale of farming among medium-sized fundos. Landowners cultivated a larger area of wheat and fodder crops than coastal properties of a similar size, and thus had a greater degree of mechanisation. These fundos' equipment included the usual steam engine and thresher, but also seeders and reapers, as well as mowers, choppers and balers used in the harvest of alfalfa and clover. Some fundos even boasted tractors, an innovation introduced in Chile during the First World War and diffused more widely in the early 1920s. In short, these types of estate showed what may be considered the most characteristic pattern of mechanisation in central Chile before 1930: animal traction for ploughing and tilling implements and reaping machinery coexisted with steam-powered threshing equipment and, occasionally, the use of tractors.

In turn, there existed remarkable differences in the mechanisation of large fundos and haciendas. The use of agricultural machinery was negligible on estates that extended over the foothills of the coastal range. The case of San Francisco, a fundo near the town of Curepto 110 kilometres east of the city of Talca, illustrates this situation. The property comprised 4,000 hectares, but very little land was suitable for agriculture, for 1,200 hectares were 'covered by dunes, 450 [were] pastureland over the *lomajes* that fall toward the sea, and the remainder [were] forests'. Sheep raising was the only economic activity of importance; the fundo barely grew the proverbial *chacras* of vegetables and legumes, which, as virtually everywhere else, were cultivated without any machinery.³⁴ The situation of San Francisco was not exceptional. The coast of Maule was noted for its backward estates. As an agronomist conducting field research observed, 'In this region agriculturalists are individuals driven by routine, enemies of any innovation suggested to improve the old-fashioned methods of exploitation.'³⁵ In contrast, as the case of Fundo San Luis illustrates, some large estates in the valley reached a significant degree of mechanisation before 1930. Located only ten kilometres from the city of Linares, San Luis was owned by the Chilean Match Company and had 1,570 hectares of 'completely level land', 300 of which were planted with wheat, 190 with vegetables and legumes, and 320 with alfalfa and clover, while 220 consisted of dairy pasture. The agricultural equipment was worth

³³ José M. Espínola, 'Hacienda La Esmeralda', *La Agricultura Práctica* (1916), pp. 847–8.

³⁴ Raúl Ramírez, *Monografía del fundo San Francisco* (Santiago, 1932), pp. 35–7.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

30 per cent of the fundo's estimated commercial value, and included two tractors with the accompanying disc ploughs, rakes and cultivators; ploughing, seeding and tilling were thus done mechanically using a variety of John Deere, McCormick, Eckert, Roderick, Hoosier and Rud Sack implements. At the other end of the production process, reaping and mowing were done with eight machines (including two self-binders), while a Case machine powered by a Ransome steam engine was used for threshing wheat and beans (which probably for this reason occupied an unusually large area, 120 hectares).³⁶

Mechanisation had a crucial impact on the agricultural sector. It released labour from agriculture and, at the same time, contributed to economic growth. Indeed, a defining element of Chile's agrarian expansion was the gradual reduction in the number of agricultural workers, from 412,568 in 1885 to 353,808 in 1930. Despite this, the agricultural sector expanded in terms of cultivated area and production and also saw a remarkable increase in labour productivity, which can be illustrated with data for the main crops, cereals. In the case of wheat alone, by far the most important crop, the cultivated area grew from 473,429 hectares in 1885 to 773,253 in 1930, while in the same period production rose from 428,422 to 912,437 metric tons. If we consider wheat along with other cereals, the value of output per worker grew from \$216 in 1885 to \$492 in 1930 (in real pesos of 1910/1914), while the physical output per worker increased from 1,030 to 2,579 kilograms.³⁷

The impact of mechanisation on the hacienda system was closely related to the pattern and historical development of this technological change in Chilean agriculture. Since the introduction of machines was prompted by labour shortages in the harvests, the mechanisation of ploughing and harrowing was less significant; tractors were not introduced until after the First World War, and thus ploughing was typically done with iron ploughs pulled by oxen or horses. Likewise, until late in the nineteenth century reaping was predominantly done by hand; however, it needed to be done in the least time possible to prevent losses that occurred when the grain was too dry and shelled out or, in the south, due to early rains. Thus, in large areas of cultivation, reaping by hand was not suitable because it took too long and required a large number of workers. From the 1870s onwards, different types of mechanical reapers for both cereals and fodder crops were gradually diffused among large estates, thus displacing manual methods of harvesting to small properties, isolated areas, or sharecroppers' and tenants' crops. However, as agronomist Roberto Opazo pointed out in 1916, reaping by

³⁶ Alfonso Acuña, *Monografía cultural y económica del fundo San Luis* (Santiago, 1932), pp. 12–16.

³⁷ Calculated by the author with data from *Sinopsis geográfico-estadística de la República de Chile* (Santiago, 1933).

machine was economic only when the expanse of crops was more than 35 hectares. Thus, except for those properties where the use of mechanical reapers proved not only technically feasible but also economical, reaping frequently remained the work of numerous wage earners, the masses of *peones jornaleros* who came both from within the hacienda and from the outside (the so-called *afuerinos*), the latter moving along the central valley and following the harvests in search of temporary employment. These peons cut and bundled the cereal, and were paid by the number of tareas they completed during the day.³⁸ As Chilean and foreign agrarian experts repeatedly observed, however, threshers were the agricultural machines most extensively used in Chile; nearly every estate that produced cereals had its own machinery and, in addition, custom threshing was widely used, especially in the south, where even small agriculturists pooled resources to hire contractors and their equipment.³⁹

The fundamental change that this harvest-centred process of mechanisation facilitated was the expansion of direct cultivation of the landowner enterprise within the hacienda system, which in turn reduced and marginalised the *inquilinos*' precarious peasant enterprises. The landowner enterprise thus monopolised the production of commercially relevant crops such as cereals and fodder crops. In fact, given the scale that cereal cultivation reached, on most properties threshing was fully mechanised and done by teams of wage earners made up of both *inquilinos* and peons, who performed the numerous tasks required for harvesting wheat and other cereals. In short, mechanisation directly contributed to the proletarianisation of *inquilinos* and the extension of wage labour.

From Labour Tenants into a Rural Working Class

The expansion of the landowner enterprise led to the demise of the social relations that gave workers access to the hacienda system's resources and were the basis of their precarious internal peasant enterprises. In addition to the impact of demographic growth within the lower strata of rural society, this change resulted from technological change in agriculture, particularly the mechanisation of harvests, and the fact that there was a limit to the internal expansion of haciendas and fundos; landowners could not cultivate or exploit all the land on their properties economically. Once clearing and developing new fields ceased to be a pressing need, landowners would not have

³⁸ There was a great variation in the average number of tareas a worker did, but usually a *cuadra* (roughly 3 acres) was divided into 10 tareas, which to Opazo demonstrated 'the slowness at which the work was done when following this procedure'. Roberto Opazo, 'Cosecha de cereales', *El Agricultor* (Jan. 1916), p. 7.

³⁹ *Anuario Estadístico*, 1909, p. 330; Opazo, 'Cosecha', p. 8; Von Motz, *Markets*, pp. 31, 34.

to cede land suitable for cultivation to the workers. Consequently, from the late nineteenth century sharecropping declined and the *inquilinaje* system underwent a gradual process of proletarianisation. As a result, at the later phase of the development of the hacienda system, which had emerged by the turn of the century, landowners carried out the regular operations on different crops by resorting to selective mechanisation and labour provided by increasingly proletarianised *inquilinos*, resident *peons* and, during the harvest season, outside temporary labourers.

As landowners reduced the size and quality of land allotments, the *inquilinos*' capacity to sustain their precarious peasant enterprises fell drastically. In the 1870s these labour tenants' plots of land varied greatly, not only from one area or hacienda to another, but also within the same property. Thus, the labour structure within the hacienda system included several categories of *inquilinos*, differentiated according to the size of their plots and pasture rights.⁴⁰ In the latter decades of the nineteenth century, however, this diversity in land rations and the differences among types of *inquilinos* were significantly reduced. The reports written by agronomy students at the Agricultural Institute in the 1920s show that a typical *ración* was then half a *cuadra* or three quarters of a hectare. In some cases the plots were measured in *tareas* – that is, small units equivalent to the area of wheat that a worker could reap in one day with a sickle. On some properties landowners converted land allotments into nominal rations, providing no land at all but compensating the worker with a payment in money or kind.⁴¹ Thus the *inquilinos*' plots were probably sufficient for the cultivation of vegetables and legumes for the household, but not for producing a marketable surplus of commercially relevant crops such as wheat, let alone fodder crops, which required a large area. Furthermore, as the term *ración de tierra para chacras* (land ration for vegetables) indicates, landowners explicitly assigned these *inquilino* plots for the cultivation of legumes and vegetables, crops which did not compete with their own production.

In contrast, the landowner enterprise became the dominant element in the hacienda system. This can be seen in the reports that agronomy students

⁴⁰ Carlos González, 'Los *inquilinos* de El Peumo', *BSNA* (1875), pp. 306–10.

⁴¹ At San Ricardo, a 267-hectare fundo in the province of O'Higgins, some 100 kilometres to the south of Santiago, each of the six *inquilinos* was given a *ración* of three *tareas*; see J. de la Rivera, *Informe pericial y tasación del fundo San Ricardo* (Santiago, 1925), pp. 5–6. A case where *inquilinos* were paid a nominal ration was Fundo San Javier, in Isla de Maipo, very close to Santiago, to the south. The fundo had 540 hectares, and employed ten *peones forasteros* and only three *inquilinos*. The latter, however, were not given land to cultivate 'because, the property's exploiter [*sic*] considers that they devote too much time to the tending of their *chacras*, and thus he prefers to assign them 1/4 *cuadra* of nominal land which at the end of the year accrues them \$250 in cash or in beans, maize, etc.' Oscar Besoain, *Tasación del Fundo San Javier* (Santiago, 1929), p. 5.

Table 5. *Hacienda Organisation in Central Chile, 1914–1925*

Type	Year	Name	Location	Landowner enterprise			Inquilinaje		
				Area (hectares)	Crops	Pasture	<i>Raciones</i> (total area)	%	Pasture rights
Rancagua and Colchagua provinces									
	1922	Rincón	Requinoa	157	80		7	9	20
F	1922	Sta. Berta	Chimbarongo	168	60	79	13	23	27
F	1925	Angostura	San Fernando	172	131		0	0	0
FV	1925	San Ricardo	Idahue	267	91	60	15	16	12
F	1921	Seminario	Llallauquén	392	103	280	34	33	112
F	1922	Antivero	San Fernando	456	120	273	12.5	10	nd
H	1923	Demasías	San Fernando	520	70		3	4	nd
F	1923	Molinos	Peumo	593	98	10	7	7	nd
F	1922	Sta. Elvira	Placilla	1,130	70	900	3.5	5	15
F	1920	Cocauquén	Cáhuil	1,230	20	1,100	9	45	nd
F	1914	Esmeralda	Rosario	3,600	1,563	1,245	225	14	nd
H	1923	Perales	Machalí	72,000	180	285	20	11	nd
Curicó and Maule provinces									
FV	1929	Bellavista	Linares	165	136	30	0	0	0
F	1921	Las Camelias	Linares	231	68		3	4	nd
F	1930	Viñas Perdidas	Duao	240	80	75	5	6	6
F	1923	La Estrella	San Clemente	270	207	15	13	6	nd
F	1932	Los Pequeños	Huilquilemu	430	80		7	9	10
F	1923	Camarico	Cumpeo	525	165	345	17	10	nd
F	1923	La Granja	Parral	662	350	250	37	11	nd
F	1928	Comalle	Teno	706	158	118	6	4	nd
H	1925	Flor del Llano	San Clemente	800	199	390	25	13	nd
F	1928	Casas Viejas	Río Claro	3,385	345		26	8	nd
F	1923	Quivolgo	Putú	10,542	304	1,522	181	60	126

C: Chacra; F: Fundo; V: Vineyard; H: Hacienda. nd: no data available.

%: Total area of inquilinos' plots as percentage of area cultivated in landowner enterprise.

Pasture rights: Total number of animals that inquilinos were allowed to keep.

Source: Constructed by author using data from *Informes periciales y tasaciones*, Instituto Agronómico.

completed in the 1920s, and is illustrated in Table 5, which shows the scope of both the landowner enterprises and inquilinos' land allotments in a sample of properties located in four contiguous provinces of central Chile: O'Higgins, Colchagua, Curicó and Maule. In the properties in O'Higgins and Colchagua landowner enterprises directly exploited most of the estates' resources (2,586 hectares), while the inquilinos' allotments occupied 349 hectares in total. Thus, inquilino families farmed an area that was equivalent to only 15 per cent of that directly cultivated by landowners; this proportion was, however, actually even smaller, since the area left to fallow was normally at least as much as the area sown in a given year.

The inquilinos held a significant amount of land only in exceptional cases. These were, in general, small properties on which a reduced portion of the

arable land was cultivated; on the other hand, they included Cocauquén, a 1,230-hectare fundo that was ‘exclusively dedicated to sheep raising’.⁴² In contrast, on the estates that cultivated a relatively large area, inquilinos had very little land, as on Hacienda Antivero, or their landholdings had been suppressed, as on Angostura. More importantly, the case of Hacienda La Esmeralda suggests that on very large estates located in the longitudinal valley which cultivated sizeable tracts of irrigated land, landowners had reduced the land allotments of the inquilinos to very small plots. Indeed, rather than being ‘peasant tenancies’, these allotments were too small to grow commercial crops on and were actually only one element among the various components of the workers’ remuneration. Thus, on Hacienda La Esmeralda, the inquilino’s plot was referred to as ‘ración de tierra para chácaras’ and varied between 0.75 and 2.5 hectares.⁴³ In the properties in Curicó and Maule the amount of land cultivated on the landowner’s enterprise was also much larger than the area occupied by the inquilinos’ allotments. On average, inquilinos’ plots occupied an area equivalent to 14 per cent of that cultivated in the landowner’s enterprise. This situation is observable on large estates of over 500 hectares, even though the size of the individual plots tended to be larger than the average. On Fundo La Granja, for instance, which had the largest crop area in the sample, the land ration was 2.5 hectares, but the total amount of land distributed among the 18 inquilinos was equal to only 11 per cent of the cropland cultivated in the landowner enterprise. The only property on which inquilinos held a large amount of land, 181 hectares, was Quivolgo, a coastal hacienda dedicated to timber production, which meant not only greater availability of agricultural land but also less pressure on the landowner to exploit it.⁴⁴ In short, on properties in the Curicó-Maule area inquilinos did not have enough land to sustain significantly productive peasant enterprises. Although in some cases they were allotted up to 1.5 hectares, this sample’s average plot was a *media cuadra* or little more than 0.75 hectares, which seems too little land to make the case for a ‘peasantisation of the haciendas’ or a ‘peasant advance’ over the latifundia.⁴⁵

As contemporary observers noted, the expansion of demesne production and marginalisation of inquilinos’ peasant enterprises would result in drastic changes in rural labour. Already in the 1870s, at the peak of export-led agrarian expansion, analysts of the Chilean countryside repeatedly denounced the oppressive nature of the inquilinaje system. It is significant not only that such criticism came from certain landowners, but also that it

⁴² Guillermo González, *Tasación del Fundo Cocauquén* (Santiago, 1920), pp. 2–7.

⁴³ Espínola, ‘Hacienda Esmeralda’, p. 858.

⁴⁴ Angel Arrigorriaga, *Informe y tasación de la Higuera Segunda de Comalle* (Santiago, 1923), pp. 4–5; Osvaldo Fuentes, *Informe y tasación de la Hacienda Quivolgo* (Santiago, 1923), pp. 11–17.

⁴⁵ Bengoa, *Haciendas y campesinos*, pp. 122–5.

represented a change from the typically paternalistic depictions of rural labour, such as that expressed in the 1840s by the French naturalist, Claude Gay. In his *Agricultura chilena*, which initiated the scientific study of rural society in Chile, Gay considered that inquilinos constituted ‘a true class in the nation’ which ‘through work and purpose’ could attain ‘all the rights of an independent person’.⁴⁶ By contrast, Ramón Domínguez’s law school thesis in 1867 unambiguously stated that the inquilino was ‘a nameless individual, without any relations or future’.⁴⁷ Some hacendados were similarly direct in criticising Chile’s peculiar institution. In 1871, a member of the SNA, Santiago Prado, drew attention to the harsh conditions of the inquilinos in the department of Caupolicán, an important agricultural area to the south of the city of Rancagua. He pointed out that ‘the natural thing is that inquilinos farm their lands poorly and belatedly, that they do not tend their chacras, and pick up their crops when the animals that feed on the fallow are virtually on the field’. In addition, Prado lamented that inquilinos’ relations with authority ‘verged on the impossible’, because ‘in this place the idea of authority necessarily implies the notion of an unchecked power’, and thus ‘the campesino lives exposed to be squeezed like an orange’.⁴⁸

These remarks reflected the profound transformations in rural labour brought about by the expansion and modernisation of the hacienda system, particularly, but not exclusively, in the system of inquilinaje. For the landless rural poor and members of *minifundista* families in need of outside employment, the expansion of demesne production made it increasingly difficult to gain access to a plot of land as inquilinos and farm it as relatively independent producers. For the resident inquilinos, especially on the large rural estates that were undergoing modernisation, the expansion would lead to a process of differentiation that constituted the starting point of a process of proletarianisation of inquilinaje as a labour system. This was, in fact, the interpretation that other contemporary analysts of the Chilean countryside advanced. Thus in 1871 another prominent SNA member, Félix Echeverría, joined the debate about the growing emigration of rural workers by rejecting the notion that the so-called ‘rural exodus’ was the inevitable consequence of the peon’s ‘wandering idiosyncrasy’. Instead, he asserted that the rural worker emigrated ‘for lack of work’. By that he meant the cyclical character of the demand for labour, which in his opinion was the consequence of the

⁴⁶ Claudio Gay, *Agricultura chilena* (Santiago, 1973), vol. 2, pp. 182–3. This is the facsimile edition of the volumes on agriculture in Claudio Gay, *Historia física y política de Chile según documentos adquiridos en esta República durante doce años de residencia en ella y publicada bajo los auspicios del Supremo Gobierno* (Paris and Santiago, 1844–71), 28 vols. and atlas.

⁴⁷ Ramón Domínguez, *Nuestro sistema de inquilinaje* (Santiago, 1867).

⁴⁸ Santiago Prado, ‘El inquilinaje en el Departamento de Caupolicán’, *BSNA* (Nov. 1871), pp. 391–5.

haciendas' concentration on cereals and livestock. Thus while the number of workers employed increased in the summer because of the harvests, it fell drastically in the winter; as a result 'the worker would see his subsistence shrink' and would need 'to undertake other activities'. More significantly, Echeverría explained that 'when a locality's circumstances' did not allow the worker 'to become a small producer' (*hacerse chacarero*) he 'vegetated', waiting for the landowner to provide him with employment again. Under such circumstances, Echeverría concluded, 'lacking work even for only two months, the peon emigrates, which is what happens on the fundos in the south of the Republic'.⁴⁹

A few years later the British minister in Santiago, Horace Rumbold, produced an extensive report on Chile's social and economic conditions, including an incisive analysis of rural labour that was especially illustrative of trends developing in the hacienda system. Rumbold straightforwardly concluded that changes in the system of *inquilinaje* were leading to the formation of a rural working class. By 1875, he was still able to appreciate a clear distinction between 'the two main groups' of rural workers in Chile: on the one hand, 'the *inquilinos*, or settled peasantry, residing on the haciendas', and, on the other hand, 'the great mass of *peones*, or day labourers, many of whom have neither fixed abodes nor regular ties, and are veritable "prolétaires", both in the modern acceptation of the term, and in its original sense'.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the British official had no doubt in pointing to the evident proletarianisation of *inquilinos*, and did not find significant differences between the condition of the Chilean workers under the modified system of *inquilinaje* and that of English rural labourers. Indeed, polarisation among *inquilinos* was pronounced. Although there existed a 'class' of *inquilinos* who had attained 'a rudimentary state of comfort and civilisation', the 'far larger number' of poor *inquilinos* were 'hardly to be distinguished from the mass of day-labourers, except for their having settled homes and being held to a certain amount of unpaid service'. Yet, Rumbold added, even this latter group was changing, since:

the poorer 'inquilino' receives ordinary payment as a day-labourer, and, indeed, in some parts of the country, the unpaid service to which the 'inquilinos' are bound seems to be confined to such exceptional cases as 'rodeos' ... or else 'trillas', or thrashing done by mares where the modern steam-thrashing machinery has not yet been introduced.⁵¹

In light of these changes, Rumbold remarked that:

In general, it would appear as if paid labour were, by degrees, taking the place of unpaid service, the 'inquilino' being thus gradually transformed into a salaried

⁴⁹ Félix Echeverría, 'Las máquinas y el trabajador agrícola', *BSNA* (Aug. 1871), pp. 305–7.

⁵⁰ Rumbold, 'Report', pp. 388–90.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 390.

labour, for whom a cottage and patch of garden are provided, as on many English estates.⁵²

Furthermore, proletarianisation did not exclusively affect men who were heads of inquilino households. The reduction of the inquilinos' land allotments was decisive for the in situ proletarianisation of other members of their households, both relatives and acquaintances living under the same roof (known as *allegados*), who increasingly became a source of permanent wage labour from within the estate. Simultaneously, smallholders were being absorbed as seasonal labourers on the haciendas and fundos, next to which they subsisted with difficulty. There was an increasing flow of seasonal wage labourers from the outside, the mass of peons that, as Bauer observes, 'were absorbed by the transformed hacienda system which required higher labour quotas'.⁵³ Thus, inquilinos not only lost their economic capacity as a precarious peasantry, but also became a secondary component of the estate workforce; consequently, the composition and characteristics of hacienda labour changed substantially in the late nineteenth century. An example of the modified labour structure is Hacienda Quilpué, a large property that comprised nearly 4,000 hectares in the rich lands irrigated by the Aconcagua River. In the early 1890s Quilpué had only 69 inquilino families, but between 200 and 300 permanent peons; furthermore, according to the weekly payrolls, the number of peons fluctuated between 414 in June 1892 and 537 in October 1893.⁵⁴

In the first decades of the twentieth century the impact of these trends became even more pronounced. Although the specific content of labour relations varied almost from estate to estate, the agronomists' reports show that throughout all the agricultural areas of Chile the inquilinos were paid a wage that typically represented at least half of their income, and that all types of properties also had a large pool of both seasonal and permanent waged labourers. The fundamental change that inquilinaje underwent may be illustrated by case material. An agronomist's report on Flor del Llano, a fundo of 800 hectares located near the town of San Clemente and 250 kilometres south of Santiago, is particularly informative. In 1925 the fundo's cropland was devoted to the cultivation of 120 hectares of wheat and a vineyard that occupied another 67; there were also 390 hectares of pasture. In the summer and through the early autumn, when the wheat and then the grape harvests were carried out, the demand for labour peaked because, although a tractor and a thresher were employed, the property had no mechanical reapers. Despite this, there were only 36 inquilinos, who made up roughly one third

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 390.

⁵³ Bauer, *Chilean Rural Society*, p. 132.

⁵⁴ José Bengoa, 'Una hacienda a fines de siglo: Las Casas de Quilpué', *Proposiciones*, no. 19 (1990), pp. 157, 163, 168–70.

of the resident labour force. As the agronomist explained, the reason was that 'in each household there is one man who is the inquilino, but also two or more men who work on the fundo as well'. Thus, he added, 'the fundo has the workers it needs for its exploitation in normal times (100 labourers)', but 'in the harvest season people from the outside come, especially from the coast [120 kilometres distant], and complete the labour pool'. Instead of being a self-contained unit, the property was quite open to a significant flow of labourers. Moreover, the proletarianisation of inquilinos was well under way, since they were allotted a land ration of only 0.5 hectares (*1/3 de cuadra de chacras*), which was part of a mixed remuneration that amounted to \$3 per day and was made up of '\$1.60 in money, \$0.70 for the daily food ration, \$0.30 for the use of a house, and \$0.40 for his chacra'. In turn, the outsiders, or *trabajadores forasteros*, earned \$2.50 a day, and were 'twice as many as the inquilinos'.⁵⁵

The 1935 *Censo de Agricultura* provides a nationwide measure of the increasing importance of wage labour and the diminishing significance of inquilinos in the agricultural labour force. The categories employed by Chile's *Dirección de Estadística* indicate an acknowledgement of the changes that had taken place in rural labour, particularly the inquilinos' increasing dependence on daily wages. The census divided the rural labour force into employees and workers (*empleados* and *obreros*), and classified the latter into three groups. The first group was that of inquilinos, which the census unambiguously defined as 'workers [using the word *obreros*] who receive a house from the fundo and part of their wage (*jornal*) in perquisites'. As in the other regions, in central Chile these proletarianised inquilinos constituted roughly one third of the workers (62,175), and were more than the majority in only six of the nation's 25 provinces. The second group was that of 'peons or *gañanes*, members of the inquilino and employee households', which the census defined as those 'workers who are paid exclusively in money and receive either part or all of their food from the fundo, but no land, house, or pasture rights at all'. This group also included 'workers who are not relatives of inquilinos but live in the latter's houses'. These peons thus made up another third of the rural labour force (68,675 peons) and were clearly more numerous than inquilinos in central Chile. The final category consisted of the outsiders (*peones gañanes* or *afuerinos*), namely those workers who 'live on the fundo regardless of their payment' but who were most likely paid a daily wage. In central Chile these workers constituted 28 per cent of the total (59,109 *afuerinos*), even though the census was carried out at the end of the harvest season, when the demand for labourers tended to decrease. These figures mean that, even without considering inquilinos, if resident and outside peons are taken

⁵⁵ Alberto Castillo, *Informe pericial y tasación del fundo Flor del Llano* (Santiago, 1925), pp. 3–12.

together, wage labourers comprised two thirds of the agricultural workforce.⁵⁶ In short, data from the agricultural census confirm that, as the hacienda system underwent a protracted transition into capitalist production, the gradual proletarianisation of inquilinos and other hacienda workers resulted in the formation of an incipient rural working class.

A Country Road to National Politics

In the early 1920s, through collective action, rural workers gained unexpected significance in national politics. They engaged for the first time in a wave of mobilisation that included unionisation, strikes, petitions to authorities and even participation in political organisations.⁵⁷ Along with structural transformations in the countryside, political and institutional factors played a key role in shaping rural workers' struggles during the first wave of rural conflicts in modern Chile. Indeed, in this regard Chilean politics in the 1920s illustrates John Walton's observation that 'in modern society, collective action is increasingly shaped and surrounded by the state'.⁵⁸ The Chilean state provided a new space for workers' political action with the extension of its institutional structure, basically the Labour Office, established in 1905, and its staff of field inspectors, as well as the Alessandri administration's policy, which was initially aimed at facilitating negotiation in conflicts between capital and labour. Similarly, especially in haciendas located near to urban centres, the growing activism of Chilean Federation of Workers (FOCh) 'agitators' and *pampinos* crowded in the hostels established in Santiago to contain social unrest provided a political language and organisational resources for rural workers to challenge landowners.⁵⁹ Yet, these institutional and political factors operated in a countryside that had changed substantially because of the agrarian expansion. By the time of the First World War inquilinos and other hacienda workers were, as Loveman also noted, more of a 'rural proletariat', as they had become more dependent on wages than on in-kind perquisites.⁶⁰ Moreover, rural workers had come a long way from less

⁵⁶ Chile, Dirección de Estadística, *Censo de Agricultura, 1935-36* (Santiago, 1938), pp. 683-704. The decrease of the inquilinos' share of the workforce was also recorded in the 1920 *Censo de Población*: see Ann Johnson, 'Internal Migration in Chile to 1920: Its Relationship to the Labor Market, Agricultural Growth and Urbanization', unpubl. PhD diss., University of California at Davis, 1978, pp. 241-3.

⁵⁷ Loveman, *Struggle in the Countryside*, pp. 134-41.

⁵⁸ John Walton, *Western Times and Water Wars: State, Culture, and Rebellion in California* (Berkeley, 1992), p. 332.

⁵⁹ This was first studied in Arthur Lawrence Stickell Jr., 'Migration and Mining Labor in Northern Chile in the Nitrate Era, 1880-1930', unpubl. PhD diss., Indiana University, 1979; see also Julio Pinto, 'Donde se alberga la revolución: La crisis salitrera y la propagación del socialismo obrero', *Contribuciones Científicas y Tecnológicas*, no. 122, pp. 115-56.

⁶⁰ Loveman, *Struggle in the Countryside*, pp. 39, 139.

dramatic forms of social protest, such as stealing, work slowdowns or the apparently accidental damage of hacienda resources, all of which were characteristic in Chilean haciendas and which, following James Scott, can be understood as rural workers' everyday forms of resistance.⁶¹ Thus, not only did they typically demand higher wages in labour petitions presented to estate administrators or hacendados, but they also adopted new forms of collective action, such as strikes and unionisation, frequently but not always carried out with participation from the urban proletariat with which they had begun to work through the FOCh's federal councils. A brief description of a strike at Culiprán (the Lambert family's 'Sweet Waters'), a large hacienda near the town of Melipilla, east of Santiago, illustrates the social conflict that was taking place in rural society.

In February 1921, at the peak of the harvest season in central Chile and less than two months after the inauguration of President Arturo Alessandri, the *inquilinos* of Culiprán went on strike and formed a 'federal council' affiliated with the FOCh. Local FOCh activists and a group of *inquilinos* initiated the movement because the administrator had imposed an extended work day and, after the workers protested against the measure, fired three men. The climate created by several strikes throughout the country may explain the authorities' interest in 'solving' the strike at Culiprán. Summoned to a meeting with the governor of Melipilla, the *inquilinos* presented their demands: higher daily wages, 'gradual improvement' of their housing, 'absolute freedom to vote', and the rehiring of the three dismissed workers. The landowner's representatives agreed to all these points, but the hacienda's owner, Mrs Lambert, refused to confirm the agreement. In response, the workers demanded the intervention of the minister of the interior, while the FOCh declared that its provincial councils would meet daily to support the strike. Alessandri then instructed the intendant of Santiago, Alberto Mackenna, to help find a solution to the dispute. Mackenna met with the *inquilinos* on the hacienda a week after the strike began. Although 'several individuals who did not belong to the hacienda' interrupted him with 'yells of protest', the intendant managed to read out the owner's 'concessions'. The owner, Mackenna explained, would not acknowledge the 'federal council' and insisted on firing a worker known to be a 'rebellious individual'. In the evening, after hours of deliberation, a group of *inquilinos* approved the new terms Mrs Lambert had offered and expressed their intention to resume work. An indeterminate number of workers persisted with the strike, however, despite the fact that the government had just sent 'more military forces' to the area, where 'all landowners praised the efficacious and opportune action of the Intendant and the police'. Samuel Infante, for instance,

⁶¹ James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, 1985).

sent a telegram stating that thanks to Mackenna's intervention the situation was 'getting back to normal as more workers from all the fundos on strike have come out [to work]'. Meanwhile, as a commission of workers met with Alessandri and asked him to broker a definitive solution to the conflict, Mrs Lambert sent him a letter calling the strike 'unfair' and 'subversive', and declaring that she refused to recognise the federal council because it represented an unacceptable intervention by the FOCh. In the end, except for that demand, she agreed to all the petitions, and after two weeks on strike, 85 inquilinos and 100 workers in the hacienda's flour mill returned to work.⁶²

The Culiprán strike shows that rural conflicts had a direct impact on national politics during Alessandri's troubled first term in office. The strike also indicates the dependence of proletarianised inquilinos on their wages, which explains why one of their primary goals was to gain a wage rise. More importantly, these movements involved collaboration between campesinos and activists of the national labour movement, which also responded to the FOCh's strategy. Last and by no means least, as part of those campesinos' historical memory, the early conflicts would also inform their role in other struggles in the countryside, such as those related to the agrarian reform of the 1960s. In fact, more than 40 years later, one of those inquilinos would explain his leading role in the 1965 seizure of Hacienda Culiprán by recalling his participation in the 1921 strike:

I was born and raised in this very house. I was ten when Arturo Alessandri Palma was elected, and this hacienda was the first to go out on the strike called by the Federación Obrera de Chile. After that we marched to Melipilla. That night – I was ten and shivering from the cold with my parents – we marched. We marched and we gained a little ground. In those days my father was making 80 *cobres* [cents] as an inquilino on the hacienda, but after the strike he made 1.20 pesos – they gave him a rise of 40 *cobres*.⁶³

The Lamberts had owned Culiprán since the early 1870s, when the mining entrepreneur Charles Lambert began to develop it with considerable investments in irrigation works and, perhaps envisioning the benefits of irrigation, changed its name to Sweet Waters. By 1921 Culiprán had remained in their hands for almost half a century, but in the charge of administrators, as was the case with many rural estates; indeed, in a letter sent to the authorities Mrs Lambert described herself as an estate owner who 'had just arrived to Chile to take care of her businesses after long years of absence'. The strike can thus to some extent be attributed to her inability to fashion paternalistic methods of social control, a problem which foreign landowners may have experienced more frequently than Chilean hacendados. However, as the

⁶² *El Mercurio*, 3–16 Feb. 1921.

⁶³ James Petras and Hugo Zemelman, *Peasants in Revolt: A Chilean Case Study, 1965–1971* (Austin and London, 1972), p. 107.

telegram that the hacendado Lazcano sent to the intendant suggests, the Culiprán strike was neither atypical nor an isolated case.

In fact, the Culiprán strike was part of a wave of rural mobilisation which took place throughout the country and followed a clearly discernible pattern. Workers went on strike not only to confront landowners and administrators, but also to advance their demands through the institutional framework provided by the state's Labour Office, while the FOCh activists worked to integrate the rural proletariat into the nation's growing labour movement. In 1921 there were 2,600 rural workers affiliated to 'federal councils', and in October that year the FOCh organised the *Primera Convención de Campesinos*, whose main demands were an eight-hour work day and a minimum daily wage of \$5.⁶⁴ Also in 1921, rural workers carried out strikes through the year in different agricultural areas scattered throughout central Chile, from the province of Valparaíso to Arauco. The Labour Office documented some of these strikes, as on Fundos Mansel and Las Camelias, next to Hospital, a town south of Santiago (21 January); Hacienda Colcura, in Arauco province (4 February); Fundo La Peña in Quillota (18 April); Hacienda Aculeo, where the inquilinos presented a labour petition and went on strike after refusing to wait until the administrator consulted with the landowner (25 April); Fundo El Escuadrón (20 May); Hacienda El Melón, next to the town of La Calera, where 'agitators' reportedly set fire to numerous hay bales (25 July), and where by September the inquilinos were on strike demanding a daily wage of \$2.80; Fundo Las Chacras, near Valparaíso (8 August); Fundo Con Con, next to Limache, where the inquilinos had formed a federal council affiliated with the FOCh (15 August); in San Clemente, where a strike instigated by 'agitators from the north' apparently failed (15 August); in several fundos in Llay Llay, where an indeterminate number of inquilinos were evicted because they had joined the FOCh's federal councils (19 August); Hacienda La Rinconada de Chena, south of Santiago (24 September); and fundos El Ingenio, Las Higueras and Quebradilla, all in the vicinity of the town of La Ligua and where the strikes were solved through negotiation (26 September). Furthermore, rural unrest in the countryside continued through the summer of 1922.⁶⁵ In response, landowners turned to direct persecution and repression by the police, while the influential *Sociedad Nacional de Agricultura*, the large landowners' main organisation, pressured Alessandri to curtail rural

⁶⁴ *La Federación Obrera*, 7 Nov. 1921.

⁶⁵ See *Oficina del Trabajo* (OT), vol. 67, Comunicaciones enviadas, Oficio n. 64, 1921; idem, notas 123, 376, 1107; Inspector Regional to Labour Office (Concepción), OT Comunicaciones recibidas, vol. 74; telegrama 8/8, Labour Inspector to Labour Office (Valparaíso), OT Comunicaciones recibidas, vol. 80; *El Mercurio*, 16–19 Aug. 1921; 16 Sept. 1921; 26 Sept. 1921; 27 Jan. 1922; 4 May 1922; OT Telegramas, Director Claudio Arteaga to Labour Inspector, 2 Feb. 1922.

activism.⁶⁶ For their part, mainstream newspapers like *El Mercurio* echoed the landowning elite's campaign against what they depicted as the intervention of Bolshevik agitators. Clearly, the social conflict that threatened the stability of Chile's political system in that critical decade had also reached the countryside.

Conclusion

The period from the 1870s to the 1920s witnessed not only the expansion and increasing commercialisation of agriculture, but also the hacienda system's transition to capitalist production. This transformation started in the 1860s and the 1870s, with the opening up of export markets for wheat, the main staple of Chilean agriculture, and proceeded decisively thereafter in response to the growth and integration of the domestic market. It was certainly not completed by 1930, and its development was retarded by the negative impact of the Great Depression. Yet through that period, as landowners extended irrigation and selective mechanisation, they reduced the *inquilinos'* land allotments and restricted sharecropping, thus weakening the social relations that allowed rural workers access to hacienda resources. In this way, as the landowner enterprise came to dominate the cultivation of commercially relevant crops and livestock raising, its expansion led to the demise of the precarious peasant enterprises of the labour tenants.

In the transition to agrarian capitalism in central Chile the formation of the rural working class did not begin with the violent expropriation of an independent peasantry. Instead, proletarianisation was a decades-long process that transformed *inquilinos* from labour tenants into resident wage labourers, while at the same time integrating their family members, outside *minifundistas* and the rural poor into the hacienda system's workforce as seasonal labourers. Although *inquilinos* continued to be paid with a mix of fringe benefits and cash, their subsistence came to depend on their income as resident workers, and, as such, their perquisites were just a part of their remuneration and calculated in monetary terms.

The gradual proletarianisation of the hacienda system's workforce led to the formation of a rural working class. By the time of the First World War, especially on large haciendas which employed a sizeable labour pool, rural labourers worked according to an extended division of labour that rationalised the different production processes on the hacienda, from the preparation of the fields to harvests of various sorts. Hacienda workers were also subjected to a work discipline, signalled by the bell at the property's gate or the harvest machine's whistle. Above all, *inquilinos* and *peons* were

⁶⁶ Loveman, *Struggle in the Countryside*, pp. 134–41.

dependent on an income in which the daily wage or jornal represented at least half, or more, of household income if that of other household members such as the men, women and children also employed by the hacienda is considered. Illustrative of their condition as resident labourers whose subsistence depended primarily on earning wages is the fact that, as we saw in the Culiprán strike, rural workers' petitions invariably placed wage rises for inquilinos, *voluntarios* and women as a priority among their demands.⁶⁷ In fact, in 1929 the Department of Agriculture acknowledged the focus of strikes and the impact on rural wages, attributing their increase during the previous decade to the 'labour movements of 1919 and 1920, which extended strikes to agricultural workers'.⁶⁸ Thus, in the crisis that followed the First World War, labour activists found fertile ground in the countryside because the condition of rural workers had changed substantially with the transformation of the hacienda system. Indeed, the participation of rural workers in these and other collective actions signalled the beginning of a new era in the labour movement. Changes in rural labour systems had ended the precarious 'peasantness' of the inquilinos, and thus left no prospects for 'peasant revolts'. Instead, as FOCh agitators clearly understood, the countryside was getting ready for them to embark on the rather difficult task of integrating rural workers into the mainstream of working-class politics.

Spanish and Portuguese abstracts

Spanish abstract. Usando una variedad de nuevas fuentes directamente relacionadas con diferentes tipos de propiedades agrícolas, y al contrario de interpretaciones de Chile rural como una sociedad tradicional que no fue transformada por la modernización económica, este artículo analiza la transición del sistema de hacienda de Chile central al capitalismo agrario durante el período de crecimiento exportador desde la década de 1860 a 1930. El trabajo argumenta que la expansión de la 'empresa terrateniente', junto con el desarrollo de la mecanización y el regadío, dieron como resultado la marginación de las precarias 'empresas campesinas' de los inquilinos y la gradual proletarización de la fuerza de trabajo agrícola. El desarrollo del capitalismo agrario transformó la acción colectiva de los trabajadores rurales, la cual asumió formas modernas como las huelgas y la sindicalización, y así alcanzó significación en la política nacional. La primera ola de conflictos rurales, que tuvo lugar a principios de los años 20, se puede entender por lo tanto como una respuesta de la emergente clase obrera rural a la expansión agraria que Chile experimentó como parte de su proceso de modernización capitalista.

Spanish keywords: Chile, capitalismo agrario, sistema de hacienda, trabajadores rurales, inquilinos, Arturo Alessandri, huelgas, FOCh

⁶⁷ Loveman, *Struggle in the Countryside*, p. 139.

⁶⁸ República de Chile, Ministerio de Fomento, Departamento de Agricultura, *Estudio sobre el estado de la agricultura chilena* (Santiago, 1929).

Portuguese abstract. Utilizando uma gama de novas fontes diretamente relacionadas a diferentes tipos de propriedades rurais, contrário a visões do Chile rural como sociedade tradicional intocada pela modernização econômica, este artigo analisa a transição do sistema *hacienda* no Chile central em direção ao capitalismo agrário durante o período de crescimento baseado em exportações durante o período de 1860 a 1930. Argumenta que a expansão de empreendimentos dos proprietários rurais acompanhados de avanços na mecanização e em sistemas de irrigação levaram à marginalização de precários ‘empreendimentos camponeses’ realizados por inquilinos, e à gradual proletarização da mão-de-obra agricultora. O desenvolvimento do capitalismo agrário transformou a ação coletiva dos trabalhadores rurais. Greves e sindicalização estão dentre as formas modernas assumidas, ganhando importância, portanto, na política nacional. A primeira onda de conflitos rurais, ocorrida no começo da década de 1920, pode ser compreendida como resposta de uma classe trabalhadora rural emergente frente à expansão agrária vivida pelo Chile que passava pelo processo de modernização capitalista.

Portuguese keywords: Chile, capitalismo agrário, sistema *hacienda*, trabalhadores rurais, inquilinos, Arturo Alessandri, greves, *Federación Obrera Chilena* (FOCh)