

WHM - 38  
Signs of the Times

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Dear Mr. Rogers:

If you want to hear the latest popular dance music, drive past a poster-bedecked house on downtown Lima's Avenida Wilson. You will not have to slow down to catch the words, for the loudspeakers are the noisiest that money can buy in Perú. "Prado será Presidente; así lo quiere la gente", chants the girl soloist as hands clap and guitars stutter in the background. But perhaps you are partial to the dances themselves. In that case, step over to the Plaza San Martín and watch a group go through the paces of a new marinera (a spirited Peruvian dance) entitled "Lavalle es el hombre". The entertainment is free, and the speeches which follow are bound to be eloquent. Yes, the candidates stumble and the candidates fall, but the two favorites in the 1956 political steeplechase are still running strong in an effort to make up for time lost during the doldrums of a few weeks ago (WHM-36). The obstacles in the race are many - postponement of elections, wavering support and mounds of obstructing red tape - but so far Manuel Prado and Hernando de Lavalle are determined to hurdle them all.

Having broken through the confines of the recent political vacuum, the Peruvian presidential campaign is now gathering momentum. Confusion as to what the government plans to do still hangs heavy over the campaigners' heads, but as of this writing they are so busy dodging each other around the country that they have little time to concentrate on the activities in the Palace of Government.

First to break the bonds of political inactivity was Hernando de Lavalle, banker and lawyer, whose rapidly failing program to unite several bickering parties under his banner suddenly caught fire. One by one the politicians came to his house or office to pay their respects and pledge their support. By April twentieth, Lavalle headquarters was able to publish an expensive ad in Lima newspapers listing nine political groups, large and small, which had joined up: the cautious Christian Democrats, the ex-fascist Revolutionary Union (UR), the Decentralists, the Coalición Nacional etc. But Lavalle's real power lay in the support of a party not mentioned in the ad - the leftist APRA party. In its official paper IMPACTO, APRA urged the formation of a "National Unification Movement" with Lavalle as its leader. In hopes of regaining its legal status (APRA was proscribed by Bustamante y Rivero in 1948) Aprismo was placing what amounted in theory to the largest section of votes in Perú at Lavalle's disposal.

While the National Unification Movement was gaining strength, the followers of Manuel Prado were preparing for the arrival of their leader. Pradista headquarters on Avenida Wilson issued a constant stream of propaganda in the form of radio announcements and posters. On April 18th, elderly (67) ex-President Prado

stepped from his plane into the arms of waiting friends (including present Vice President Héctor Boza, himself a pre-candidate) and paraded from the airport to the center of town, stopping now and then to kiss babies and shake hands. Although the victim of a recent heart attack, the candidate gave no impression of tiring under the strain. His arms raised, in his familiar gesture \* which earned him the name of sobaco frío during his presidential term, Prado evinced the skill of a seasoned politician. Four days later he spoke to a huge crowd of well wishers and curious who had gathered in the Plaza San Martín to celebrate both his birthday and his return to Perú. It was clear that no matter what difficulties Prado would encounter with the allegedly government-controlled electoral machinery, his popularity was still considerable. Most important, his support sprang from one party - his party - instead of from a collection of loosely organized political groups such as the one backing Lavalle.

Meanwhile, the machinery of the election had been thrown into gear by the all-powerful National Electoral Jury. Early in April the members of the departmental juries were chosen and, from the chorus of complaints which arose, it was evident that appointees in several Departments were more than partial to the Odría regime and Partido Restaurador. When the complaints took the form of written protests, several men were dropped from the lists and replaced by less controversial individuals. Still, it was claimed that the National Electoral Jury was trying to pack some of its provincial staffs with pro-Restaurador people. According to supreme decree, a Jury appointee could be challenged only once. The replacement appointee could not be removed by popular demand no matter how prejudiced he appeared to be. The furor caused by the publishing of appointment lists in the Departments brought to mind opposition speeches and articles earlier in the year when LA PRENSA and the then active Coalición Nacional attacked the National Electoral Jury on the grounds that its top members were "addicted" to the present regime. (WHM-32). Pedro Rosselló and Pedro Beltrán both pointed out that Jurist Temístocles Rocha was one of the founders of the Partido Restaurador, and that other members owed definite allegiance to Odría. Could such an organization be impartial? In the ranks of the opposition parties, the answer was a loud "NO!". Although the candidates themselves made little mention at first of the questionable impartiality of an organization which must be absolutely impartial in order to guarantee honest elections, anguished howls arose from the party organs.

With the exception of Manuel Prado (whose name had already been inscribed by his supporters) the candidates in the presidential race went before the National Electoral Jury in early May with their official lists of backers. General Carlos Miñano and lawyer Héctor Boza brought in signatures numbering well over 20,000 (the legal minimum). Hernando de Lavalle showed the largest figure to date (70,000). Then came Fernando Belaunde Terry and socialist Luciano Castillo and Carlos Miró Quesada. General Zenón Noriega, once a top official in the Odría government, cried "fraud" and resigned his candidacy. In a message to the nation, Noriega said: "The electoral process is evolving under a law which (lawyers) have described as defective and inclined to promote imposition. Moreover, this law will be applied by an autonomous tribune whose present members do not inspire the confidence of the citizens." In addition,

\* Arms akimbo. Sobraco frío ; cold armpit

said Noriega, "the proliferation of candidates has dispersed and diluted the torrent of civic force" ( a good example of the turgid phraseology so often employed by Peruvian politicians).

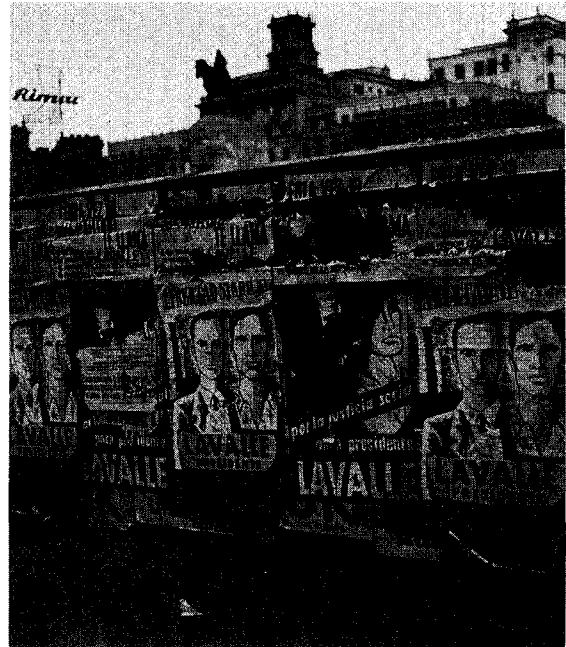
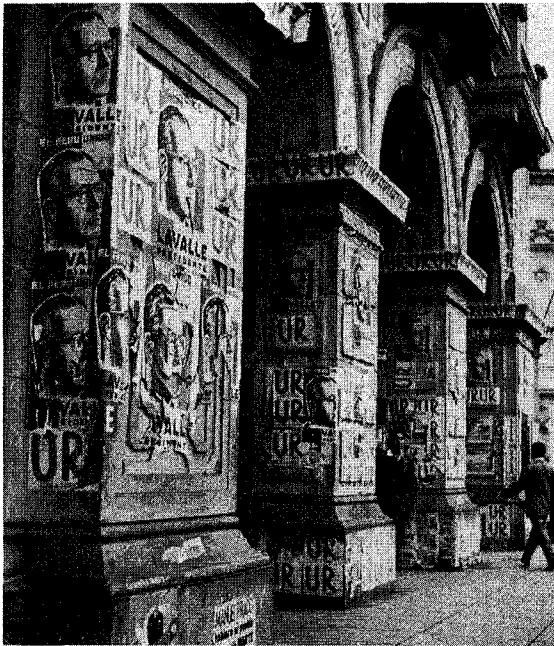
The lesser candidates must have taken Noriega's "proliferation of candidates" phrase to heart, for a few days after their inscription three of them - Miñano, Boza and Miró Quesada - declared themselves out of the running and turned over their support to Manuel Prado. By inscribing themselves they had saved political face; by going over to the Prado camp, they had insured themselves top government positions if Prado is elected. The number of hats in the ring magically dropped to four; of that four, it is quite probable that only Prado, Lavalle and Belaunde Terry will last long. Socialist Castillo does not have the required number of signatures on his subscription petition to be recognized as a candidate by the National Jury.

With party affiliations temporarily straightened out, the campaigns of the two major candidates blossomed. Lavalle and Prado became known as the "millionaire candidates" as a result of their lavish propaganda. Lima turned into a poster city; every available spot - including national monuments and statues - was covered with slogans, portraits and announcements of political rallies. In preparation for Lavalle's maiden speech in the Plaza San Martín his headquarters sent squads of loudspeaker-equipped cars into the suburbs, bought choice spots of radio time and laid yet another layer of posters on Lima's already overburdened walls. A two-storey high painting depicting the working classes of Perú reaching for symbolic unification was set up in the square, and in almost every street intersection of residential Miraflores, the name LAVALLE was printed in white paint. Neon signs appeared on the roofs of tall office buildings - PRADO, PRESIDENTE or LAVALLE ES EL HOMBRE. A light plane hovered over the city trailing a Prado slogan. Songs and dances loaded with propaganda were composed and blared over loudspeakers. Both candidates were reported bidding for a helicopter with which to belabor the unsuspecting voters from the air.

All this political activity was bound to result in a small scale personal war. In Miraflores the Lavalle street paintings were obliterated by red paint. Blocks of Prado posters were disfigured or covered over by Belaunde Terry or Lavalle propaganda, and pictures of Lavalle were rendered useless by the simple expedient of gluing Prado portraits over the lenses of don Hernando's neatly sketched glasses. Attempts were made at uprooting neon signs. Both candidates complained loudly and bitterly over the unethical war, but supporters gleefully continued their antics.

The platforms of the two major candidates are remarkably similar in that both are couched in the most general language possible. (which, in Spanish, is saying a good deal) As I remarked in my last newsletter, Spanish was made for politics; one can say absolutely nothing in an hour of spouting beautiful words, and politicians in Perú are famous for this feat.) Vague promises have been made by

1. Playing hard on the "millionaire" angle, one politico running for a Senate seat described himself in posters as "The poorest in money, the richest in virtues."
2. After which Lavallista papers fabricated a assassination attempt story for publicity purposes.



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### The poster city

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both Prado and Lavalle to raise the standard of living of the lower classes (which are never referred to by so crass a name: "those less blessed by fortune" is preferred). Decentralization of government, an issue which has been much discussed in the press of late, is also on the docket, as is freedom of labor unions. However, in a country which has little or no permanent political organization and consequently no organized articulate public opinion, issues are subordinate to the dynamism of the political leader. The candidates, therefore, are busy being dynamic.

Fernando Belaunde Terry lacks the money to keep up with the "millionaire candidates", but he makes up for it by stumping the country. A young man backed by youth organizations, Belaunde was at one time (and allegedly still is) a close friend of some ranking Apristas. He is evidently interested in bringing the Indian into the national life in record time; his platform includes a promise to inaugurate a Bolivia-inspired agrarian reform program to do away with feudalistic practices still in vogue in Perú. Upper class Peruvians who are not amused by land reform talk, and conscientious students of the Bolivian program scoff at Belaunde Terry. Some of his more outraged opponents have called him a communist. Nevertheless, the young architect-turned-politician has attracted large crowds in his journeys, and his program may be dynamic enough to influence the outcome of the elections.

The clarification of the problem of political support created by the formation of the National Unification Movement and the resignation of the three minor candidates did not last long. When

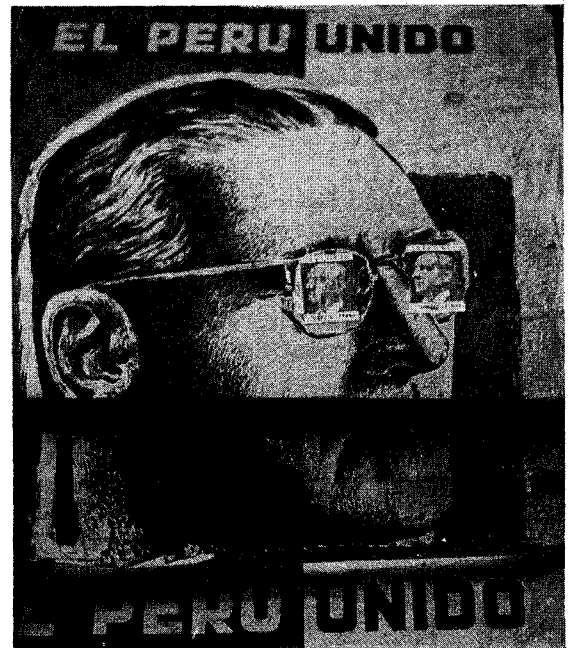


Above left: one of several neon signs put up by the pradistas in recent weeks.

Above right: Lavalley signs of this type are located near important intersections throughout Lima. In addition, there are neon rooftop signs and illuminated lamp post ads.

Below left: An example of the range of the "millionaire candidates" poster campaigns. Pictures show more Lavalley ads due to a recent poster-plastering spree. The next day, many Lavalley posters were covered by Prado propaganda.

Below right: A casualty of the poster war. Another trick is to clip and reverse Pradista stickers saying "PRADO SI; OTRO NO!".



on May fourth the Partido Restaurador announced its support of Lavallo, the Christian Democrats walked out of camp, announced they would back no candidates this year. Lavallo had gone against his promise, said the CD, in that he had compromised the independence of his candidacy by accepting the nomination of an ex-minister of the Odría regime as his First Vice President and by welcoming the support of the Restaurador party. Then, seventeen days after the Christian Democrat walkout, Lavallo's greatest potential source of votes, the APRA party, followed suit.

The problem of the apristas in the 1956 election had always been acute: in hopes of obtaining party legality, the Party of the People had sided with its traditional enemies, the conservatives. After months of holding its members to the Lavallo line by the party discipline which has long distinguished APRA from the rest of the badly organized political groups in Perú, aprista leaders found that their chances for obtaining legalization were no better than before. It was getting nothing for its support of Lavallo. In addition, APRA found that National Electoral Jury would not recognize the validity of the candidacy of an aprista who ran - on an independent ticket - for a seat in Congress. Then too, the party could not publicly declare its support of any presidential candidate; to do so would be tantamount to ruining the legal standing of that candidate. Despite President Odría's statement in his March third speech that apristas "individually can exercise to the fullest their rights as citizens", (WHM-35) the Party of the People found itself hamstrung. In frustration party leaders quit the National Unification Movement, the organization for whose formation they were largely responsible.

The APRA walkout, however, may not be as serious as it originally appeared to be. The day after IMPACTO, the official Aprista organ, published a party communiqué announcing withdrawal of support from Lavallo (or any other candidate), the "free thinking" paper EL VOLCAN, said to represent certain factions of Aprismo, declared that the party had not deserted the Lavallo camp. Out of the muddle of words one point emerged clearly: it was still to APRA's best interests to play along with Don Hernando. The IMPACTO communiqué was exceedingly mild in its complaints and gave the impression that although the party might withdraw its support from congressional candidates - especially Restaurador men - on the Lavallo slate, it would still give tacit backing to Lavallo himself in the hopes of being rewarded with legality. Events of the next two weeks should prove the validity of this argument.

The decision of the Partido Restaurador to join the National Unification Movement, therefore, precipitated the defection of the Christian Democrats and the withdrawal of APRA. Members of both latter groups had on several occasions expressed their enmity for "Los de Monterrico" (an Odría residence) on the grounds that the Restaurador people were planning to rig the elections in order to retain political power in Perú. It is rumored that the more radical apristas were overjoyed to hear the news of their withdrawal from an alliance with the "oficialistas", the conservatives to whose downfall Aprismo was originally dedicated. If the Party of the People were suddenly granted the legality which it seeks or rejoined Don Hernando because of some other tempting concession, party dis-

cipline would in all probability be strained to the breaking point to force these radicals back to the Lavalle fold.

With the APRA at least temporarily out of the picture, the Partido Restaurador locked horns with its next rival in the fight for important congressional seats on the Lavalle "formula" - the Revolutionary Union. LA PRENSA commented upon the rumor that the UR might follow the CD and APRA out of the Lavalle camp because of what it considered extravagant demands on the part of the official party. However, faced with the dissolution of the National Unification Movement, the member parties patched up their quarrel; the Partido Restaurador evidently reduced its demands to a point considered by its "allies" to be reasonable, and the Lavalle campaign once again recovered its balance.

As candidates Lavalle, Prado and Belaunde shifted into high gear in their respective efforts to attract the attention of the voters, the National Electoral Jury and members Rocha, Pinzás and Lengua came under heavy fire. Although the government had directed the army to supervise the elections and had revised the Electoral Statute to curtail the power of the departmental juries, these measures were not deemed sufficient by the opposition. Ex-President Bustamante y Rivero claimed that soldiers could only guarantee law and order at the polls during the actual voting; they could not prevent corruption within the electoral machinery itself. Because of the sweeping powers of the electoral juries and the political prejudices of their members, he said, the 1956 campaign would end in "an election directed by officialdom".

As might be expected, complaints against the action of the electoral juries came from candidates Prado and Belaunde. During the rally celebrating his birthday, Manuel Prado had said: "I put all my faith (in the fact) that the vote will be free and the results unobjectionable". A few weeks later he changed his mind. Pradista headquarters made the following claims: that Departmental Juries were deliberately obstructing Prado's campaign in the provinces; that the National Electoral Jury had delayed the approval of Prado's inscription for two months; that the Jury had ignored the provisions of the Electoral Statute in refusing to allow a Prado representative to be present for an important - and, legally, public - decision having to do with the electoral process. Belaunde Terry grumbled that the Jury was playing cat and mouse with him by refusing to clear his inscription (Belaunde's aprista connections may explain the Jury's reticence). From the opposition side of the fence, it looked as if the Coalición Nacional and Pedro Beltrán had been right all along in their demand that the Electoral Statute be revised.

Government forces claimed that the attacks on the decrees and organizations governing the electoral process were in the main unsound and unfounded. Those members of the departmental juries whose impartiality had been properly impugned had been removed, said Odría spokesmen. What appeared to the opposition to be deliberate delay was really an illustration of the immensity of the task turned over to the Jury. The inscription of each candidate had to be examined, the validity of each supporting signature checked. To accomodate Perú's 1,600,000 voters (more than 500,000 women are

voting for the first time this year) polls had to be set up and staffed. All this took time, said the government. No one was too surprised, therefore, to hear the rumor that the election date might be postponed. On May 15th the rumor was confirmed. The government announced that the National Electoral Jury had asked for more time to complete preparations and, therefore, the elections would be held on June 17th, a postponement of two weeks.

Strongest in their reply to the postponement announcement were the pradistas. Prado headquarters released a communiqué claiming that the delay in electoral proceedings was an obvious attempt on the part of the government to aid Hernando de Lavalle, a man who enjoyed "notorious official favor". Lavalle's slate had been rendered incomplete by the departure of his candidate for Second Vice President (Honorio Delgado, a Christian Democrat, who resigned when his party withdrew support from Lavalle). Postponement gave Don Hernando time to make up this deficit and thereby increase his chances of victory. Behind this argument, however, lay an important fact: the Prado forces had been caught napping by the government and were angrily engaged in redesigning their campaign with the aid of a smokescreen of accusations.

Amidst the verbal battles, the political maneuvers and counter-maneuvers, the Peruvian worker - the "hombre común y corriente" to whom the politicians are paying court - sized up the situation as being completely in his favor. In Lima and the provinces the Juan Fulanos decided that the time was ripe to make a few demands of their own. The middle of April saw the beginning of a wave of strikes and threatened strikes which has kept the government jumping from the Treasury to union headquarters. Even though Peruvian unions are carefully supervised, a surprisingly large percentage of the strikes were successful. First to start the ball rolling was the strongly aprista bank workers' union, most powerful in the country. On April 17th the doors of all but three banks were shut tight. Bank employees attended demonstrations, attacked a few scabs and kept the country's finances bottled up for five days. When another strong employees' union threatened a sympathy strike, the government capitulated. Although many workers were on strike simply because they feared to go against their union, the bank shutdown was a ringing success from the sindicato point of view.

As the bank doors opened again, 72-hour notices were given to management around the country. Mail workers went out on April 25th. The police occupied the central post office in Lima and chased demonstrators into the sanctuary of a church. Again the government gave in to union demands. Public service employees (with the exception of the armed forces and a few other organizations) got basic raises of 300 soles (about US\$ 15.50) and increased benefits. Strikes flared among the civil construction workers, and in Arequipa the Ferrocarriles del Sur presented a preposterous claim to the British management of the railroad (the railway workers won with an assist from local bank workers, who walked out in sympathy). The Federation of Commercial and Industrial Employees of Arequipa threatened a similar move and received big pay boosts; elsewhere in the country private employees demanded and received the same treatment. The workers of Arequipa went out for 24 hours and, even though the strike was declared illegal by the Prefect, the government surprised the strikers - used to haggling - by

acquiescing to almost every demand. As of this writing there are thousands of textile workers on strike throughout Perú, and there is no reason to believe they will not get what they are asking for. Quite probably the wave of strikes will continue up to and, perhaps, beyond the election date.

Why has the government been so obliging? For one thing, the government is as interested as any other politico in gaining favor with the rapidly growing labor class. For another, Odría can turn the strikes to his advantage if necessary; they can be used as an excuse for another postponement of elections or the creation of a military junta. Whatever its reasons, however, the government has incurred the wrath of a good many businessmen, particularly those of Arequipa. A LA PRENSA reporter in the White City was told by several business owners and managers that the new pay rates threatened to kill industry and prevent outside capital from coming to the area.

The elections are now three weeks away, and still confusion hangs over Lima as thick as the city's wintry fog bank. Who will win? Will the election be rigged by the electoral juries? Will there be violence between June 17th and July 28th, inauguration day for the new regime? No one knows, not even seasoned observers. Asking for a prediction is like asking for the punch line of a joke. There is one thing certain, however: regardless of the name of the winning candidate and the events which may follow the elections, the presidential campaign of 1956 will go down in the books here as one of the most unique and mystifying events in Peruvian history.

Sincerely,

*William H. MacLeish*  
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