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CHILI - PRESSE INTERNACIONAL

VOIR REVUE DE PRESSE SPÉCIFIQUE

CHILI - PRESSE CHILIENNE

THE **SANTIAGO TIMES** : Chilean students end symbolic occupations after 6 months : Student 'toma's' over in Chile's most prestigious public university and high school - Thursday, 22 December 2011 22:55



Photo by MonsieurS/Flickr.

Written by Joe Hinchliffe

Students have voted to end occupations at two of the most symbolic institutes of Chile's public education system, but have vowed to continue demonstrations after months of protests have failed to achieve significant reforms to the country's highly privatized, class based education system.

In the early hours of Wednesday morning students began cleaning up the Casa Central (Central House) of the Universidad de Chile in the heart of downtown Santiago after nearly seven-month-long "toma" or takeover.

They took down the enormous banners that turned the historic building's facade into an ever-changing mural, pulled off the hood of that covered the face of the statue of university founder Andrés Bello, and began removing the possessions of students who have maintained a constant presence on site for over half a year.

Their move was a significant one as the Casa Central had been the country's focal point of the student movement, serving as a forum for ideas and discussion and a place where the student movement interacted with the general public. Street lectures and concerts were held in front of the building and radio programs broadcast from inside, including the popular "cultural barricade"

show, which interviewed passers-by and gave them free books.

But all that came to an end when representatives of the Fech, the university's student federation, officially relinquished the building to university authorities after students decided to end the "toma" and initiate new forms of protest.

"The leadership council of the Fech decided to end the occupation of the Casa Central and return it to the administration of the entire community," said the new Fech president [Gabriel Boric](#), "so that repairs, dating back to the [February 2010] earthquake, can be made."

Fech representatives - including vice president Camila Vallejo, who was [recently voted](#) "person of the year" by readers of The Guardian - reached an agreement with university dean, Víctor Pérez. The building will now go through a period of repairs that have been pending since the devastating 8.8-magnitude earthquake of 2010.

Boric stressed that the hand-over of the building did not signal the end of Chile's student movement, but was rather the beginning of a new phase of demonstrations.

"This doesn't mean that the student movement is over," said Boric. "There are still many issues pending. The demands that we have made as a student movement were not achieved this year. From here and into the future, the Casa Central will be open for different activities and to continue with demonstrations, but always open to the community."

Meanwhile Chile's most prestigious public high school, Instituto Nacional, also voted to end its occupation this week, which lasted 195 days.

"It was no longer an effective instrument of pressure," said José Soto, president of the school's student group.

After opening its doors to the public, the school was inspected by the Santiago Mayor Pablo Zalaquett and school principal Jorge Toro.

Toro, who described the school as "unpresentable" and accused the protesters of "having no love for the school," told La Tercera that students who caused damages would be identified and have their enrollment "examined."

Mayor Zalaquett said that he would not ask for money from the Education Ministry unless the whole school community agreed to undertake a public commitment to take care of the school.

The mayor said that he would review school admissions for 2012, saying, "I can't open the school to admissions that will allow what happened this year to repeat itself, in the most emblematic public school in Chile, were young people and their families dream of studying."

The school's student group agreed to help pay for repairs, but president Soto denied that the ending of the "toma" was a blow for the student movement.

"If this is a defeat, it is a defeat for the whole country," he said.

The end of occupations of the Instituto Nacional and the Casa Central of the Universidad de Chile comes as high school representatives [announced](#) that 70 schools around the country would remain in "toma" over the school holidays.

In the district of Instituto Nacional, Santiago Central, eight of 16 public high school remain in "toma."

Meanwhile students are set to end the year's demonstrations with a Christmas-themed protest in Plaza de Armas, Santiago, at 5 p.m. on Thursday, when students of the Universidad de Chile will hand "Santa Claus" a letter asking for a better education.

"The government is not listening," read a Fech communique, "so we have to ask for our dream [of quality education] from Santa."



THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Chile's school seizures to continue over summer break : Dozens of schools to maintain 'tomas' despite the majority deciding to return to class - Tuesday, 20 December 2011 20:42



Photo by Francisco Javier Argel / Flickr.
Students block campus entrances with chairs as part of school seizures

Written by Joe Hinchliffe

Occupations will continue in dozens of Chilean high schools throughout the summer holiday's,

as students persist with a movement for education reform that has quieted down in its seventh month.

School seizures, or "tomas," in which students take over school buildings and maintain a constant on-site presence, have been one of the main forms of protest this year, putting a stop to regular academic classes and throwing the school year into chaos.

Cristián Pizarro, spokesperson of the National Coordination of Secondary Students (Cones), told La Tercera that "at least 70 schools around the country are in 'toma.'"

That number, however, is much lower than the 700 schools that - at the peak of the movement, between June and August - were once occupied by protesting students. Most universities, which had likewise halted classes in demand of reform, have also since returned to class.

Pizarro said school officials are using different techniques to bring the "tomas" to an end, inclu-

ding denying enrollment for the following year to protesting students.

"There are schools where they have cut water and electricity, and because of this, students had to end the 'toma,' because you can't maintain a presence in those conditions," said Pizarro.

High school protesters have been largely overshadowed by their university counterparts, whose representatives have regularly appeared on Chilean television and grabbed headlines in all the major newspapers of the country and abroad.

The students are demanding a structural reform of the nation's class-based school system, which is currently administered by local municipalities. They seek a federally-administered system with national quality standards aimed at improving the country's beleaguered public school system.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : The Guardian names Chile's Camila Vallejo as person of the year - 23-year-old student leader chosen in reader poll held by the influential British newspaper - Tuesday, 20 December 2011 01:42



Photo courtesy of Camila Vallejo/Facebook.
Camila Vallejo, surrounded by teargas canisters used against student protesters.

Written by Joe Hinchliffe

Chile's 23-year-old student leader, Camila Vallejo, has been chosen as the person of the year in a [poll of readers](#) of British newspaper, The Guardian.

Vallejo, the international face of 2011's student protests in Chile, topped the poll with an overwhelming 78 percent of votes.

The result came a week after Vallejo was awarded the same title in a [survey](#) by Chile's

Radio Cooperativa in conjunction with a polling company and local university.

The Guardian, one of the United Kingdom's most influential publications, played a key role in the publication of thousands of un-redacted United States State Department cables released by Wikileaks. The paper was also at the forefront of investigations into the News of the World phone hacking scandal. The paper, well known as a major progressive voice in the British media, has already written extensively on Vallejo.

In a recent profile, entitled "[Latin America's 23-year-old new revolutionary folk hero](#)," Guardian journalist Jonathan Franklin described Vallejo as an "eloquent and attractive young woman who exudes self-confidence and style."

Franklin said that Vallejo had been the "face" of a "wildly popular student uprising that has transformed the nation's political agenda."

This most recent accolade confirmed Vallejo's position as an international media icon, a rise from obscurity that has spanned her term as president of the student federation of the Universidad de Chile in 2011 and spokesperson for the university student movement.

Over the course of the year, Vallejo was invited to form part of a delegation that [met with Brazilian president](#) Dilma Rousseff, [went to Europe](#) to meet politicians and intellectuals, held a series of [meetings](#) with Chilean ministers, and convened marches that drew hundreds of thousands to the streets.

Vallejo has been a social-media phenomenon, with more than 355,000 followers on her [twitter account](#).

The person who received the second highest number of votes, claiming 14.9 percent of the total, was Mohammed Bouazizi, the Tunisian street vendor who set himself on fire, an act that sparked uprisings around the Arab world.

Tariq Jahan, who called for calm in the community of Birmingham after his son was killed in rioting, had the third highest percentage of votes with 1.7 percent.

The people of the Japan's Fukushima area, which was devastated by a nuclear melt-down after a powerful earthquake and tsunami, received 1.3 percent of the votes while German chancellor Angela Merkel scored 1.2 percent.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Camila Vallejo voted Chile's Person of the Year - Student leader tops national poll that also declared education the defining theme of 2011 - Tuesday, 13 December 2011 17:40



Photo courtesy of Camila Vallejo Dowling / Facebook.

Written by Joe Hinchliffe

Twenty-three-year-old student leader Camila Vallejo was named as Chile's Person of the Year, topping President Sebastián Piñera, award-winning poet Nicanor Parra, soccer superstar Alexis Sánchez and the popular Defense Minister Andrés Allamand in a national poll released on Tuesday.

The geography student has been the most prominent face of the Chile's student movement.

The movement, which has dominated news coverage in Chile for over seven months, has spurred demonstrations at a magnitude not seen since the country's return to democracy in 1990. Vallejo's appearance at the top of the poll comes after her [campaign](#) for re-election as president of the Universidad de Chile failed last week.

Poll respondents were asked which of the five figures their families regarded as the most important person of 2011, with 35.3 percent opting for Vallejo, and 20.4 percent naming Chile's head of state.

Parra and Sánchez scored 14.8 and 14.7 percent respectively, Allamand 13.6, with the final 1.2 percent opting for none of the above.

The candidates for the position have been Chile's most prominent newsmakers of 2011. In December, [Parra received the Premio Cervantes](#), the Spanish-speaking world's most prestigious prize for literature. In July, Sánchez [signed](#) on to play for Barcelona, the world's best soccer club, and in September, Allamand [oversaw the search and rescue](#) operation in the Juan Fernan-

dez archipelago after the tragic plane crash that claimed 21 lives.

Just under half of all respondents (46.6%) voted for education as the defining issue of the year. Another 20.8 percent voted for the broader category of social movements, making it the third most important issue of the year according to respondents.

The demands of the student movement also received further popular endorsement in the poll, with 81.9 percent of respondents in favor of the call for an end to the for-profit educational system, 66.2 percent in favor of changing the municipally administered high schools to a federally administered model, and 60.3 percent supporting students' demands for free, universal higher education.

Still, the student movement and other social movements have all suffered at least slight declines in support after peaking in the same poll in September.

Overall support for the student movement declined significantly, down from 67.8 to 55 percent. Support for the [movement in opposition to HidroAysén](#) dropped from 67.2 to 59.7 percent,

and support for indigenous Mapuche activists dropped from 59.7 to 41.8 percent. With 25.3 percent of the vote, delinquency was considered the second most important issue of the year. Forty percent felt that the current government has been less successful in handling delinquency than previous administrations, while 46 percent believed there has been no difference.

The economy was voted the most important issue of the year by 5.4 percent, with institutional reforms receiving 1.8 percent of votes. The government's [extension of post-natal leave](#) was considered by the majority of families to be the best news of the year. The survey was jointly undertaken by [Imaginación Consultores](#), a privately owned polling company,

Radio Cooperativa and Universidad Técnica Federico Santa María. [The study](#) was conducted between Dec. 8 and 10, and was based on interviews with respondents at 1,217 randomly selected phone numbers. It has a margin of error of 2.9 percent and a 95 percent confidence rate. The full results are available [here](#).

THE SANTIAGO TIMES: Chilean student leader releases English speech on Youtube - Giorgio Jackson accepts invitation to the World Economic Forum's annual summit in 2012 - Sunday, 11 December 2011 22:30

Written by Joe Hinchliffe
The World Economic Forum ([WEF](#)) has released a self-made video of Giorgio Jackson, current president of the Universidad Católica student federation and one of the highest profile leader of Chile's student movement of 2011, giving a short talk in English. Jackson will join the newly created "Global Shapers Community," which aims to provide a "global platform" of 20 to 30 year old leaders and use their "tremendous energy and enthusiasm" to "shape. . . a more peaceful and inclusive world." WEF [describes](#) the "shaper" community as "young, extraordinary individuals with great potential for future leadership roles in society" who adhere "to the highest standards of moral and intellectual integrity."

"This year something special happened in Chile, thousands and thousands of students, workers, families, joined into a cause. The cause is to reform our education system," Jackson says with pretty good command of the language. At just under two minutes, the video shows Jackson introduce himself and outline his aims on attending WEF's annual summit in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland, to be held from Jan. 25 to 29. Called "The Great Transformation: Shaping New Models," [this year's summit](#) aims to help community leaders from around the world to find solutions to global problems that "require new models, bold ideas and personal courage to ensure that this century improves the human condition rather than capping its potential." WEF was founded by Klaus Schwab, the German economist that Forbes Magazine [described](#) as

"indisputably [the] most powerful connector in the world." It is an independent international organization that brings together "leaders of society" to shape "global, regional and industry agendas" and is "committed to improving the state of the world." All of the "shapers" were asked to submit a video in which they outlined the problems in which they were engaged in challenging. In his video Jackson spoke of Chile's unequal economic growth and the country's "democratic crisis," and said the nation's political system had failed to respond to months of popularly endorsed protests. "As youth, as the new generation, we we need to face this problem, this challenge, to join into these [political] processes and make some changes for a sustainable development," Jackson says.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES: The new face of Chile's student movement: an extremist shift? - After leadership changes, speculation mounts of a radicalization of the student movement - Thursday, 08 December 2011 19:11



Photo courtesy of Creando Izquierda.
Gabriel Boric, president elect of the Universidad de Chile's student federation.

Written by Joe Hinchliffe
As the dust settles after the [defeat of Chile's emblematic student leader](#), Camila Vallejo, in the Universidad de Chile student federation's (Fech) presidential election at the hands of Gabriel Boric, the country's major news outlets and media pundits have declared the result signifies a shift toward "extremists" and a fracturing within the movement. "Defeat of Vallejo a blow to the PC [Communist Party] and radicalization of the student movement," read the headline of the front page of La Tercera, one of the biggest national newspapers in Chile, on Thursday morning. "[Boric] has a much more radical view of the movement, and combined with the regional leaders, who also are much more radical, this can be perceived as a shift toward much more radical educational demands," Felipe Vergara, of

the political marketing branch at the privately-owned Universidad Andrés Bello, told BBC Mundo. The pundits point toward Boric's election campaign promises to distance the Fech from Chile's political institutions. This policy would sharply contrast with the strategy employed by student leaders over the last few months - including Vallejo as spokesperson for the movement - [to engage in dialogue](#) with the government and [work with the Concertación](#), the opposition center-left alliance. "We are not Bachelet's youth brigade," was a phrase reiterated by the leader of the Creating Left party throughout his successful campaign, in reference [to former Chilean president Michelle Bachelet](#), of the Concertación. Boric's early statements as president-elect of the Fech are also more confrontational than those of other student leaders, such as former Universidad Católica student president Giorgio Jackson. Jackson [treaded carefully](#) when speaking publicly, emphasizing that the student movement was not specifically opposed to the government of President Sebastián Piñera, but Chile's less-than-democratic political institutions and educational system. On the morning of his electoral victory Boric identified Piñera's government as the "adversary" of the student movement and signalled that he would not seek to work with any of the political parties - including the parties of the Concertación - that "don't represent" the university and high-school students that initiated a movement for "transformational" change in 2011.

"All throughout this year the government has violently repressed students that have marched," said Boric in an interview with El Mostrador, referencing [the violent confrontations](#) that have been a feature of the student protests; "the government has identified the citizens that have mobilized as adversaries to their interests, as adversaries of the economic and business elite that govern Chile today." "All throughout this year the government has been against this social movement, all throughout this year the government has been prompting the expansion of an educational model [of privatization and student loans] that we do not share, as we have a different proposal within the social movements," said Boric. "For this reason we are not being deceitful when we say that our adversaries aren't in the federation within the Universidad de Chile, but in the elite class." Boric denied claims of a splintering within the movement, and called on students to adopt a unified position after the somewhat [contentious election campaign](#). He highlighted the fact that all the members of the Fech leadership will be composed of left wing representatives, with Vallejo taking on the role of vice president. "Every member of this board [Fech leadership] is of the left and we are going to advance toward shaping a grand social movement for the transformation not only of education but of the economic and political model that prevails today."

THE SANTIAGO TIMES: Camila Vallejo, Chile's iconic student leader, loses election - Left-wing candidate Gabriel Boric elected to lead Universidad de Chile student federation - Wednesday, 07 December 2011 20:31

Written by Joe Hinchliffe
Camila Vallejo, the highest profile student leader in Chile and the international face of the country's student movement of 2011, was unsuccessful in her [re-election](#) campaign for president of the Universidad de Chile student federation (Fech).

The election results were announced in the early hours of Wednesday morning, following two days of voting that saw a record turnout at Chile's most prestigious public university, which has become a focal point of the seven-month-long movement for education reform.

Gabriel Boric now becomes Fech president-elect and will assume the top job in 2012 after his party, "Creating Left," obtained 4,053 of the 13,280 valid votes. Vallejo will remain in a position of leadership as vice president of the Fech, since her party, the



Communist Youth, came in at second place with 3,864 votes.



Photo courtesy of Creando Izquierda.
Gabriel Boric is now president-elect of the Universidad de Chile Student Federation.

On the morning of his victory Boric paid tribute to the students that he will replace for their work in initiating the student movement, but signaled that his party would be more ambitious in its policy direction.

"We want to acknowledge the outgoing administration," Boric told Radio Cooperativa, "they made a great effort to reposition the Fech [in the process of Chilean politics] and initiate the student movement. We are aware of the historic responsibility that we hold to be part of a movement that not only aims to change the education system, but also to change Chile."

Vallejo was philosophical following the election results, saying that the university's 2012 leadership would be made up entirely of "representatives of the left."

Vallejo said that the election result demonstrated "that a left-wing majority expressed itself in this vote and obviously represents what has been a great majority in this movement, both within the university and externally."

"This is all pretty positive for us," said Vallejo. "We are very content and very optimistic. But this is a task that calls on all of us to continue working."

Both leading parties obtained more than twice as many votes as the third place party, "Fighting to create a university for the people," which received 1,816 votes, meaning the two leading parties will also have a place in the Fech committee of directors.

Creating Left's Andrés Fielbaum will assume the role of communications secretary, while Julio Maturana of the Communist Youth will take up the office of executive secretary.

Chile's government was quick to comment on the Fech elections, with spokesperson Andrés Chadwick declaring that the government "respected the democratic decision of the students of the Universidad de Chile," and hoped to the work together with the new president.

"The government doesn't prefer one candidate over another," Chadwick told Radio Cooperativa, "the government looks to have the best possible

relationship with all of the student leaders, whatever their policies or political stripes."

Still, Boric rejected the minister's comments by declaring that the students' "adversaries" were not "within the university" but "in Congress and in the government."

In an interview with Radio Cooperativa Boric signaled his intention to disengage the student movement from Chile's political institutions and instead seek to change the institutions themselves.

The new leader's position puts him at odds with the strategy employed over the last few months, of which Vallejo was a central figure, to work with the opposition Concertación alliance to exert pressure on the government.

"We don't want to answer to the traditional political parties, but rather to create new sectors that represent the discontent of the people who no longer feel represented by the right or by the (center-left) Concertación," said Boric.

Boric said his party is committed to work with other "social actors" to create "new political sectors. . . because the current institutional framework in Chile doesn't have the ability to deliver on the demands of the student movement."

"We are no longer willing to continue delegating this new call for transformation to the politicians of yesterday," he said.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES: Chile's education system excludes and discriminates, UNESCO says - The Chilean system favors private education, leading to selective and segmented schools - Wednesday, 07 December 2011 18:30



Written by MERCOPRESS

The Chilean education system promotes inequality and exclusion, according to a report from UNESCO regional office released in Santiago, based on comparing education legislation from Argentina, Uruguay and Finland

The report points out the "weaknesses" of Chilean legislation to confront "inequality" as one of the greatest challenges for Chile.

"The system which characterizes Chilean education is geared to privatization processes which tend toward segmentation, exclusion, discrimination and highly selective mechanisms," says the report compiled by the former UN rapporteur on education rights, Vernor Muñoz.

"There are no doubts that the admission tests establish criteria and differentiation effects which in practice lead to selectivity and probably to stigmatization," adds the report which nevertheless points out that Chilean legislation bans discrimination in the treatment of students.

According to UNESCO the scholarships and system of subsidies for voucher-based private schools in Chile "protects and benefits private initiative" which excludes the interpretation of the concept of education understood as an asset of public interest.

This is contrary to education legislation in Argentina and Uruguay which is explicitly clear regarding profit-oriented education or in Finland, where the law ensures opportunity guarantees, the UNESCO report said.

"In Chile, legislation deposits in parents and community a high degree of responsibility in terms of ensuring education, impeding discrimination or offering a quality education, thus downgrading the role of the State which should be the guarantee of the right to education," argues the report.

Finally the report underlines that Chile has signed international treaties, more specifically the International Pact on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which requires states to take "immediate and not delayed" measures to ensure gradually that secondary and tertiary education are free.

By MERCOPRESS

THE SANTIAGO TIMES: Leader of Chile's student movement seeks reelection - University of Chile student vote will test support of emblematic student leader, Camila Vallejo - Sunday, 04 December 2011 23:20



Photo courtesy of Juventudes Comunistas de Chile/Facebook.

Written by Joe Hinchliffe

The support of Chile's highest profile student leader, Camila Vallejo, will be put to the test this Monday and Tuesday when elections are held at Universidad de Chile. Vallejo, a 23-year-old

geography student, first won the post a year ago by less than 100 votes, and her re-election is far from certain.

As president of the student federation of the Universidad de Chile (Fech), the oldest and one of the most prestigious public universities in the country, the charismatic student leader has been the point person for the student unrest, commanding T.V., radio and newspaper interviews with both national and international media. A series of student strikes led by Vallejo and other student leaders drew hundreds of thousands into the streets and threw the academic year into turmoil. The largely creative protests oftentimes went viral on the Internet.

Vallejo, joined by other student leaders, took the students' message to international forums, meeting with Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff and [touring Europe](#) to talk to leading intellectuals and politicians. She has been profiled by the some of

the world's most important media, including the BBC. [The Guardian](#) called her "Latin America's 23-year-old new revolutionary folk hero."

But Vallejo's high profile has not dissuaded challengers in the Fech elections. As a Communist Party (PC) youth leader, her decision to seek re-election was reportedly first vetted by the PC central committee. She registered for re-election at the very last minute.

"We recognize the political capital that Camila has, I think that she is one of the most important figures that the Chilean left has had in some time," Gabriel Boric, leader of the Creating Left party and one of Vallejo's strongest competitors, told Radio ADN. "But we think that her leadership, particularly within the university, is being seriously questioned because of the lack of work she has done here on the ground."

The student federation employs the proportional representation electoral system which encour-



rages the entry of a wide range of parties. Representing the Communist Youth, Vallejo is one of the more moderate voices among a string of left-wing groups. In last year's election, Vallejo won the election by 79 votes over the Creating Left's Boric. Boosting Boric's chances this time around is the support of current Fech vice president Francisco Figueroa, one of the most highly respected leaders among Chile's students. The two conduct interviews together to highlight their campaign message that students themselves should have a greater voice in movement decisions and that

the movement should not be centered around a single individual. "We understand that Camila is a media figure, but the movement was constructed by everyone," Boric told local newspaper The Clinic. "What is happening in Chile has nothing to do with one person, rather it's a process that has exploded." Vallejo has pitched her campaign as a continuation of the movement, proclaiming her goal of achieving student demands in the coming year. Still, Boric is critical of some of Vallejo's tactics as head of the Fech and spokesperson for the

movement, saying that it's "not enough to have a march and a press conference." "The continuity of the movement isn't what's at stake," Boric told The Clinic, "what is at stake is the strategy that should be adopted in the coming months." The Creating Left party says their strategy is to expand the movement from its focus on education to a larger range of issues "that are excluded from the current political scene" such as healthcare and environmental issues. One of its main platforms is creation of a university movement that will "change the country."

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Education budget approved by Chile's Congress - Government courts independents' support in deal that student leader describes as 'shameful' - Tuesday, 29 November 2011 19:55



Photo courtesy of Cámara de Diputados de Chile. Written by Joe Hinchliffe
Chile's controversial education budget for 2012 was approved by the Chamber of Deputies on Monday evening, with an injection of an additional US\$420 million after the proposal was initially rejected by the lower house last week. The center-left opposition once again voted as a block to reject the proposal, but the support of three key independent deputies saw it pass with 58 votes in favor, to 55 against. The decision of the Chamber of Deputies means that the education item has now been officially ratified by Chile's Congress, after the Senate approved the budget last Friday, when opposition senators abstained from voting. The additional funds mean an increase of 10 percent in education spending from 2011 levels to US\$12.1 billion overall, including a rise of 26 percent in higher education spending. In contrast, education spending rose by an average of

13 percent in every year of the previous administration of Michelle Bachelet, and higher education funding rose by 30 percent in her final year as president. President Sebastián Piñera said key elements to the budget to include increased access to preschool education and an increased number of university scholarships. He said the bill had been tailored to the needs of all Chilean students and not just the protesters that made education a divisive issue in 2011. "We know perfectly well that the preschool and primary students, the youngest children, have not marched and don't have the capacity to apply pressure," Piñera said. "But I want to be crystal clear that the voices of these children, especially in preschool education and especially the most vulnerable children, have always been heard by the government." The budget allocated funds that will provide preschool and kindergarten education to the poorest 60 percent of Chileans by 2014. There are currently 79,000 children in this income bracket that do not have access to preschool education. That figure is much higher in the country's nurseries, where 303,000 children are not covered. The budget aims to provide funding for 19,000 of these children by 2012. During the four years of the Bachelet presidency, 70,000 new spaces were created in the nation's nurseries.

The number of higher education scholarships will rise by 35 percent in 2012, from 178,000 to 240,000. The majority of that growth is concentrated in scholarships for Chile's private universities, which will increase from 1,800 to 20,000. Scholarships at technical institutes will rise from 82,000 to 121,000 and in the traditional universities from 52,000 to 99,000. The scholarships will cover university tuition for the nation's poorest 60 percent, though only 25 percent of that university-age students in that economic bracket achieve the grades needed to enter a university. Camilo Ballesteros, the president of the Universidad de Santiago student confederation, described the additional scholarships as a "slight of hand to deceive the poorest" and rejected the budget as a continuation of a failed system. "We understand that this is a process that will continue, but it seems a shame that after more than seven months of demonstrations in which thousands of Chileans have been advocating for change, today the parliamentarians have legislated for continuity," he said. Students have been protesting for the restoration of an all-public education system, free higher education and an end to government-backed loans that lock students and their families into debt.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Chile's Senate approves budget after historic 29-hour session - Impasse ends as opposition senators abstain from voting on controversial education bill - Friday, 25 November 2011 23:05



Photo courtesy of Senado de Chile. Minister Bulnes advocates for the proposed education budget. Written by Joe Hinchliffe
After the longest parliamentary session since the country's return to democracy in 1990, Chile's Senate approved the government's proposed budget for 2012. The marathon session lasted 29 hours, and approval came just one day after senators failed to reach an agreement. Approval of the most controversial part of the budget - the education bill - came 27 hours into the second day of debate after opposition Concertación senators refused to vote on the issue. The bill was passed with 15 votes from senators of the governing rightist Alianza coalition, against

two opposition votes from independents Carlos Cantero and Carlos Bianchi. "The government got the budget that it wanted," said opposition Sen. Ricardo Lagos Weber. Lagos Weber explained that the Concertación's decision not to vote "transferred responsibility onto the government." "The government argued that its proposed budget was sufficient to account for the demands of citizens," he said. "[But] this small and unambitious budget can't solve those problems, so we took the decision to neither block nor endorse the government's proposal." Education has been a contentious issue in Chile after seven months of massive protests and school strikes that have focused public debate on the nation's highly privatized education system, which critics say reinforces the country's vast inequality. The government hailed the Senate's decision as the first step toward addressing these concerns. "In this room, the government has presented a draft budget which is undoubtedly the first concrete signal that there will be changes in our educational system," said Sen. Hernán Larraín, of the right-wing Independent Democratic Union. Larraín called on the opposing bench to offer "greater humility and acknowledge its responsibility before demanding achievements in one year

that could not be done in 20," an allusion to the prior two decades of center-left governments between 1990 and 2010. But Larraín's remarks ignored the defacto veto power exercised by the right during those years, thanks to Chile's controversial binomial majoritarian election system. After initially trying to work with the government to reach an consensus on the issue, opposition leaders cited their frustration as government negotiators refused to meet their demands for an increase in resources for education. "As Christian Democrats, as members of the Concertación and as the opposition we considered the government proposal in education insufficient," said DC party president, Sen. Ignacio Walker. Walker said that the Concertación could not accept the government proposal because of its commitment to deal with the education issue "face to face" in cooperation with the students, "and not behind the back of the student movement." Education Minister Felipe Bulnes hailed the decision as a victory for his government and the nation's education system, citing the proposal's plan to increase the number of scholarships awarded to state-funded universities from 52,000 to 99,000, to technical training institu-

tions from 82,000 to 121,000 and to private universities from 1,800 to 20,000. "We are increasing [education funding] from US\$10.87 billion to nearly US\$12 billion," said the minister, adding that the comparative in-

crease was twice as much as that of entire budget. The education part of the budget proposal passed by the Senate will now be reviewed by a special committee of deputies and senators in

order to iron out differences in the legislation passed by the two chambers.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Chile's Senate expected to vote down proposed education budget - As student protests for free higher education go intercontinental - Thursday, 24 November 2011 18:51



Photo courtesy of CongresoChile/Flickr.

Written by Joe Hinchliffe

After hours and hours of debate, Chile's Senate on Thursday - for the second day in a row - was unable to reach agreement on the nation's education budget.

The fierce debate follows the decision by the Chamber of Deputies - the lower house of Chile's bicameral Congress - to [reject](#) President Sebastián Piñera's education budget, notwithstanding weeks of negotiation between political parties, student leaders, members of the education system and government representatives.

Government ministers and Concertación opposition leaders met only moments before Thurs-

day's Senate session to try to hammer out a last minute agreement, with Concertación representatives saying it was the government's responsibility to offer new measures to appease the demands of Chile's student movement. Student demands, which include quality public high school education and free university tuition, enjoy high levels of popular support.

For its part, the government maintained an optimistic line in the lead up to the discussions. "There is a desire within the government, Concertación and the (pro-government) Alianza to resolve the education issue," said Sen. Hernán Larraín, of the conservative Independent Democratic Union. "We aren't going to make deep reforms, but we can take the first step toward transforming the education system."

But opposition figures remained skeptical, with president of the Party for Democracy, Carolina Tohá, claiming that discussions on education had "come to a standstill."

"There have been no new developments, we have only been given answers that postpone and prolong things, and lose precious time," she said. Meanwhile, student protests continue to put pressure on the political process in innovative ways. On Wednesday a group of students, the majority of them completely naked, painted flags

from American nations on their bodies and marched through the city streets of Concepción.

The protest was designed to draw attention the "Latin American mobilization" protest that will take place simultaneously in various countries of the continent, including Peru, Mexico, Brazil and Colombia.

In an interview with Radio Coopertiva the spokesperson of the student movement in Colombia, Laura Lagarreti, said that Chile's student movement was a "benchmark" for students in her country.

"When we proposed in the different universities this day of demonstration, people were really excited, because it [free and quality education] is a claim that many young people on the continent have today," she said.

In Santiago, students received the approval of the regional governor, who must give permission for public protests, to march from the symbolic Plaza de Armas at 6:30 p.m on Thursday evening, after initially being refused.

Secretary General, Andrés Chadwick, called the march "completely unnecessary."

"Why are they marching. . . we are holding intense conversations on the Senate to see if we can arrive at an agreement over education," said Chadwick.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Local officials defy plan to punish Chile's student protesters - Thousands of high school students forced to repeat the academic year under ministry plan - Wednesday, 23 November 2011 20:10



Photo by Ariel Cruz/Flickr.

In Santiago's prestigious Instituto Nacional 2,300 students, or 50 percent, would be forced to repeat under the governments plan.

Written by Joe Hinchliffe

Local mayors and school officials across Chile are defying a controversial government plan to finalize the academic calendar of 2011 that would force thousands of students to lose the school year.

The government plan is an attempt to close a year that has been severely disrupted by strikes and school seizures in a wave of protests for education reform.

Despite being named "Let's save the school year," the plan would force 50,000 high school students to repeat the year, because they chose not to sign up for the plan before the deadline.

that deadline was initially set for Aug. 31, but was extended on the last day because only 40 percent of high school students enrolled across the country. It was extended again before being officially closed to registration on Sep. 26 by which time the ministry said that 98 percent of students across the country had signed up.

However that percentage ranges broadly across the different schools and municipalities. In the Instituto Nacional, the oldest and most prestigious public school in Chile, 50 percent of students would be forced to repeat under the government plan.

The controversy surrounding the plan was heightened on Monday after the General Comptroller's Office - the independent government body charged with state's administration - confirmed the legality of the government plan, following questions about its constitutionality.

The decision led teachers and local authorities to take immediate legal action. The courts of San Miguel and Concepción both received applications for the protection of thousands of students that would lose the year under the government plan by seeking to force the education ministry to recognize alternative local plans.

The announcement has also led the National Teachers Union to draft a standard form to be made available to all local authorities that wish to pursue legal protection.

Meanwhile many local municipalities announced that they would not enforce the government plan.

"We have students who enrolled in the plan and have not worked at all and others who did not register but they have (worked). So we are going to look after those who actually worked and have grounds to pass the course, whether or not they are registered," said Karla Frauenberg, director of education in the municipality of Providencia, Santiago.

The director's statements were at odds with the municipality's mayor, who caused an uproar in September when he ordered police special forces to evict student protesters from local schools and declared that any student who was not enrolled in the government plan would "lose the school year without a second thought."

In Valparaíso, Mayor Jorge Castro asked principals in his municipality to "welcome and help" students who have not signed on to the government plan but who wish to take the final exam. Castro also requested the schools allow the "maximum flexibility possible" when scheduling times of the exams.

Some local authorities, however, have declared the Comptroller's decision as a legitimization of the government plan.

In the municipality of Talca, although 50 percent of high school seniors opted not to sign onto the government plan, local schools had planned to open the year-end exams to all students.

Yet following the Comptroller's announcement, the director of Talca's education portfolio, Carlos Montero, said that students who had not signed the plan would lose the year regardless of their exam results.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Chile's lower house rejects education budget for 2012 - Opposition approves every budget item except for the controversial education portfolio - Tuesday, 22 November 2011 18:15



Photo courtesy of the Cámara de Diputados de Chile.

Written by Joe Hinchliffe

In the early hours of Tuesday morning Chile's Chamber of Deputies rejected the government's proposed education budget for 2012, despite passing every other budgetary item.

The center-left Concertación alliance united with other unaffiliated opposition parties and independent deputies to reject the proposal with a vote of 54 in favor to 58 against, after a tense 12-hour meeting.

The decision follows the earlier rejection of the education budget by a [preliminary mixed committee](#) of senators and deputies, which sparked weeks of negotiation between the two major political blocks to try and reach an agreement in the nation's bicameral National Congress.

Socialist Dep. Carlos Montes, who headed that education subcommittee, said the latest vote by opposition deputies was coordinated with opposition senators so as to force changes to the education budget that would lead to structural reforms of the education system.

The governing Alianza coalition described the tactic as "blackmail."

"We made an additional effort and they can't expect to get 100 percent of what they are asking for," said Dep. María José Hoffmann, a member of the conservative Independent Democratic Union, part of the Alianza coalition.

"We all agree that the system needs to be fixed, but it has to be done with fiscal responsibility and this is something that we aren't seeing from the Concertación parliamentarians," said Hoffmann.

The negotiations within Congress have been marked by high profile [demonstrations](#) as Chile's student movement continues to exert pressure on the country's political class. The movement has featured nearly seven months of marches, strikes and school occupations that have devastated the [approval ratings](#) of both major political alliances in the country.

Opposition leaders claimed the government proposal did not have the resources required to fund the kind of structural reforms that students have been demanding. In the negotiations the opposition had requested an increase of US\$1

billion in funding for 2012, a figure which was flatly ejected by Finance Minister Felipe Larraín.

Under the current [proposal](#), the education portfolio would receive US\$11.65 billion, more than a sixth of the entire budget, which is projected at just over US\$60 billion.

Actors within the student movement welcomed the parliament's rejection. Spokesperson for the confederation representing university students (Confech), Patricio Contreras, called on the government to respond with a "real proposal." Bárbara Figueroa, spokesperson for the National Teachers Union, qualified the decision as a "po-

tent signal that vindicated. . . the path that we have taken." However Figueroa went on to say that the next step should not just be focused on debating amounts of money allotted to education but achieving "structural reforms and profound changes."

The education budget will be passed on to the Senate for amendments on Wednesday, where the scenario appears equally difficult for the government as the opposition holds the majority in the upper house as well.

Dep. Hoffman called on the Senate to "display a different kind of logic" and not try to "achieve in one year what could not be done in 20," a reference to the 20-year period beginning in 1990 during which the now-opposition Concertación coalition governed Chile.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Protests in Chilean capital mark second day of national strike - As government offers extra US\$350 million to pass education budget proposal - Sunday, 20 November 2011 23:38



Photo courtesy of Carlos Navarro, @caldostrong/Twitter.

Written by Joe Hinchliffe

Thousands of student protesters took to the streets in Santiago on Friday in the second of a two-day national strike for education reform that was supported by Chile's largest workers confederation and the National Teachers Union.

The march partially closed la Alameda, the main artery of the capital, and passed in front of the La Moneda presidential palace. It had a carnival atmosphere, occurred without incidents and ended with a concert in the Club Hípico equestrian club.

"We're trying to get the people to fall in love with the student movement again," said Scarlett MacGinty, who is acting president of the student confederation of Chile's Universidad de Chile, after high-profile former leader Camila Vallejo stood down to [run for re-election](#).

After enjoying an approval rating as high as 80 percent the movement experienced a [sharp drop](#) in support in the month October, which the influential Adimark poll attributed in part to violent confrontations seen at student marches and played up by the nation's conservative media.

After the concert the crowd dispersed peacefully. But in the aftermath there were isolated incidents between Carabineros police and masked vandals.

The protest followed a march on [Thursday](#) in the port city Valparaíso, which houses Chile's National Congress where the education debate is now underway.

The two-day national strike was aimed at putting pressure on parliamentarians to deliver an [education budget for 2012](#) that will go toward satisfying the demands of the student movement, which has been holding massive strikes and protests for over six months.

Negotiations between the government and opposition parties continued Friday, with La Moneda offering an extra US\$350 million for the 2012 education budget.

The amount represents a third of what the opposition Concertación alliance and unaffiliated opposition parties petitioned for in their proposal, which listed eight points they want included in order to pass the budget.

Opposition negotiators called the latest offering insufficient and reiterated their target of an extra US\$1 billion for education.

Left-wing Sen. Alejandro Navarro called the offering "totally insufficient" and said it wouldn't

achieve the demands of the student movement and opposition.

"I thought that the government had become sincere," said Navarro. "They said that they wanted a [grand agreement on education](#), an agreement in its budget. But until now all they have done is offer crumbs that wouldn't even make a loaf of bread."

But Carolina Tohá, leader of the center left Party for Democracy, called for perseverance and hoped that the government continues to negotiate in good faith.

"We are going to continue with our effort, because these are just the first conversations and we think that the government can make a better effort," said Tohá, adding that "the country should invest more resources to advance educational reform."

Meanwhile, Secretary General Andrés Chadwick denounced the opposition's negotiation approach as "unnecessary, inappropriate, and politically motivated." Chadwick said he hoped "the issue be resolved next week."

Even if the parliamentarians finally reach an agreement on the amount of funding for the 2012 education budget, it will most likely not satisfy the protesting students. They are demanding the government make a radical shift away from a mostly privately funded education system, towards a high quality, state funded system. More money fed into the current system, they say, will simply consolidate Chile's class-based education system and put more Chilean families further in debt.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Thousands march on Chile's Congress - Two-day national strike coincides with ongoing education budget discussions in Valparaíso - Thursday, 17 November 2011 22:26

Written by Joe Hinchliffe

President of the National Teachers Union, Jaime Gajardo, headed a caravan of 80 buses from Santiago to the Chilean National Congress in Valparaíso as thousands took to the streets of the port city in the first march of a two-day national strike.

Thirty buses carrying teachers from other parts of the country joined the convoy, bringing the number of teachers to 2,500. Organizers claimed the total number of protesters was 50,000, while Carabineros put the number at 10,000.



Photo courtesy of Jaime Gajardo/Twitter.
The president of Chile's teachers union stops for a photo with protesters.

The teachers union convened the strike in support of the student movement - which has been protesting for education reforms for the last six months - just as Congressional [discussions about](#) the government's proposed 2012 education budget are being debated. Chile's largest work-

ers union (CUT), university confederation (Confech) and organizations representing high school students also participated.

Gajardo said that the objective of the march was to restore public education and reform the education system without handing it over to the private sector.

The march ended without incident. But in the aftermath, hooded protesters clashed with Carabineros, who used water cannons and teargas to disperse them.

On Wednesday Chile's government [announced its intention](#) to provide scholarships that would fund the higher education of 60 percent of Chile's students.

The opposition Concertación alliance has put forward its own proposal, seeking 70 percent coverage.

Still, many student leaders have expressed their disappointment with the process.

Guillermo Petersen, president of the Universidad de Concepción, described the parliamentary debates as belonging to "the big players" that

are "negotiating behind the backs of this movement."

"Many people may be deceived into thinking that they embody the demands of the students when they talk about giving free education to 70 percent," said Petersen. "But they are talking about continuing with a system of scholarships without ending the financing system, which will maintain household debts."

The national strike will continue with a second march on Friday, this time in the capital, and organizers hope for an even larger turnout. It will depart from the Universidad de Santiago at 11 a.m. and will end with a concert at the Faculty of Engineering of the Universidad de Chile.

Meanwhile, La Tercera reported on Thursday that 21 of the 25 traditional universities that are represented by Confech have returned to classes to begin their second semester. The semester's start has been delayed by months of strikes and school seizures that have derailed the academic year at the university and high school levels.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Chilean president promises to increase university grants - As students, teachers and workers announce two-day national strike - Wednesday, 16 November 2011 21:35



Photo by Alison Silveira/Santiago Times.
Written by Joe Hinchliffe

On Tuesday Chile's Secretary General Andrés Chadwick announced that the government would "move towards" a system of university grants for 60 percent of students in a bid to reach a consensus with the opposition alliance, the Concertación, and pass its proposed education [budget for 2012](#) through Congress.

"The government is ready. . . to guarantee scholarships to 40 percent of the most vulnerable families and make every effort to rapidly and decisively advance that figure up to 60 percent of the most vulnerable and middle class families," Chadwick told a press gallery at the governmental palace, La Moneda.

The minister outlined the government proposals to be contained in a bill that would be drafted "before Nov. 30," if it can secure support from the opposition for its education budget.

The promises also included a "sharp increase in preschool funding," a "change" in the administering of primary and middle schools and and more

resources for infrastructure and equipment in technical colleges.

Education Minister Felipe Bulnes described the proposed reforms as "radical."

"If, in fact, we are able to reach an agreement that would cover 60 percent [of university students], we would be making a radical change from the current system of student loans."

Minister Bulnes refused to rule out extending the grants to 70 percent of students - as the Concertación and other non-aligned opposition parties proposed earlier this week - although he said such a system would be "very difficult" to achieve.

The opposition's proposal also includes state regulation of the private university system, an overhaul of the municipally-administered high school system and tax reforms to fund the education budget's increased costs, all measures the student movement has demanded.

Under the Concertación's proposal Chile would continue into 2013 last year's business tax hike of 3 percent to 20 percent - designed to pay for the reconstruction of the devastating earthquake in February 2010.

The Concertación is seeking an immediate start to tax reform discussions. By 2013 it wants to have implemented long-term tax reform to sustain the education budget into the future.

On Tuesday night President Sebastián Piñera met with senior ministers to formulate a response to the opposition's proposal and a strategy toward reaching an agreement before Nov. 30, when the deadline for Congress expires.

On Wednesday morning the ministers faced the press and outlined their major concern with the opposition's proposal: tax reform. The ministers

insisted that the topic would not be involved in the budget discussions.

"I insist that, once the budget is approved it's a topic that will be approached," said Min. Bulnes, "but it will not happen in advance."

"It [tax reform] isn't necessary," said Minister Chadwick, "because the government has already planted the idea, [so] once the budget has been approved, the government will be willing to evaluate a possible modification of the tax system, if that is necessary."

Meanwhile Confech - the student organization representing university students from Chile's publicly funded universities - announced on Tuesday that it would join a national strike called for by the National Teachers Union.

The strike, which is supported by Chile's biggest workers union, the CUT, will be held this Thursday and Friday, with a march planned for both days.

The first march will be held on Thursday in the port city of Valparaíso, where protesters will march on Congress from Plaza Sotomayor at 11 a.m.

"We hope to continue applying pressure to obtain more resources," said Confech spokesperson Camilo Ballesteros, "with the aim of strengthening public education and achieving greater regulation of the private sector, where there is also a large quantity of students."

Friday's march will be held in Santiago. Protesters were refused permission by the regional governor to march from Plaza Italia, in the city center, and instead will depart from the Universidad de Santiago at 11 a.m. It will end at the Faculty of Engineering of Universidad de Chile.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Chile announces private university regulator - As government attempts to pass education budget through Congress - Wednesday, 16 November 2011 21:03



Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Education.
Written by Joe Hinchliffe

President Sebastián Piñera signed a proposal on Friday that would introduce a new regulatory body to oversee Chile's burgeoning private university sector.

Beginning in 2012, the regulator would "very strictly monitor the for-profit sector" - which has come under intense scrutiny over the last six months of [students protests](#).

The protesters are mainly organized by Confech, the student body representing Chile's 25 traditional universities, which wants the profit-based sector abolished

The proposed bill is part of a government [effort to reach a consensus](#) with the opposition alli-

ance, the Concertación, in order to pass its education budget for 2012 through Congress, by addressing the concerns of opposition politicians and protesters over the quality of the higher education system.

"This Superintendency is going to. . . protect students from abusive charges and surprise bills," Education Minister Felipe Bulnes told Radio Cooperativa, "which is a topic that's frequently presented to the Ministry."

"Students often claim that in order to sit for an examination or obtain a particular certificate they are required to make payments that were never previously announced. The Office of the Superin-

tendent will be responsible for monitoring and punishing such abuses," said the minister. The government also intends for the regulator to publicly provide information relating to its academic staff and their work conditions, the nature

of the institution, its infrastructure, programs, and the employment rate of its graduates.

"In this way students and parents can have the most complete information possible with respect

to the institution they choose and the perspectives that it offers," said Bulnes.

The regulator will oversee private universities, centers for technical training and professional institutes.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Changing of the guard in Chile's student movement - University leadership elections in Chile could lead to a change of faces, and strategies - Tuesday, 15 November 2011 14:35



Photo by :::mediActivista:::/Flickr Francisco Figueroa, Giorgio Jackson and Camila Vallejo in the European Parliament..

Written by Joe Hinchliffe

In a last-minute decision at 11 p.m. Monday, Camila Vallejo confirmed that she would run again for the position of president of the student federation of the Universidad de Chile (Fech), the oldest and one of the most prestigious universities in the country

Although Vallejo has led Chile's high-profile student protest movement for more than six months, her re-election as Fech president is far from certain.

"If Vallejo decides to run again. . . it is most likely that she would lose," said her main competitor for the position, Gabriel Boric, several days before. Boric has the backing of current Fech Vice-President Francisco Figueroa. "There is discontent with how she worked on an internal

level and because of the work she's done with her party, the Communist Party," said Boric.

The Fech elections, set for December, come as university students around the country vote on who will lead their institutions, and ultimately the nation's student movement, into the coming months.

The current cast of leaders in the high profile student movement have been deeply engaged in [discussions](#) with the nation's political leaders, including the president, and have gone on [international tours](#) to spread the word about Chile's student movement and to put pressure on President Sebastian Piñera. Their successors will no doubt carry on in the same vein.

The first leadership change will come on Nov. 25 when Giorgio Jackson, president of Universidad Católica's (UC) student federation (Feuc), is replaced by his successor, Noam Titelman.

Titelman, the new leader of Jackson's party, the center-left New University Action party, won the student body elections with 52.7 percent of the vote. Over 75 percent of the student body, or 13,967 students, the largest student voter turnout in Fech history.

The election was highly symbolic as the UC, one of Chile's most distinguished universities, is traditionally considered a bastion of conservative politics. The university also produces many of the country's leading politicians, a career path that outgoing Jackson has not ruled out.

The president of the Federation of the Universidad de Santiago (Usach), Camilo Ballesteros, is another student activist who has been touted as

a future leader. Ballesteros is yet to announce whether he will seek reelection in the Usach elections in early December, although he sees changes to the student leadership as a "healthy" way to avoid "image fatigue."

In the Universidad de Chile's election in December, Vallejo will face nine other candidates. She is pitching her campaign as a "continuation" of the movement so far, saying that it would lead to concrete realization of student demands over the next year.

"This student movement has led to a new spring for Chile's people," said Vallejo. "We feel responsible for ensuring that this blossoming (movement) translates into real reforms for the educational model, for society, for the development model, all issues that has been brought into question by this movement."

But Boric, her main rival, is critical of the [recent agreements](#) between governing and opposition politicians and could represent a very different approach for the movement.

"We understand that the reforms that we have been seeking are profound, they are structural and they will not be possible to achieve in totality within the current institutions," Boric said. "Therefore, we want to project the student movement into a longer term fight. The interests of the majority of people who have taken to the streets. . . are not represented by the current institutional

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Chilean government predicts 'grand agreement' on education - Opposition skeptical as controversial education budget debate continues - Monday, 14 November 2011 18:50



Photo by Cristóbal Córdova.

For over six months hundreds of thousands of protesters have taken to the streets to demonstrate for education reform.

Written by Joe Hinchliffe

Chilean President Sebastián Piñera declared that the country has arrived at a "moment of truth" in its long-running conflict over education reform. Speaking at press conference of international reporters at the [Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation](#) forum in Hawaii, the president said he was

"confident" about reaching a "grand national agreement" with opposition parliamentarians, now that the [education budget for 2012](#) is in Congress and the Concertación opposition alliance has submitted its own proposal.

"I think that the government, Congress and all of the country has a challenge and commitment

with history and with our youth that we can't miss," said the president.

"The hour of truth has arrived, it has been too many months, too much intransigence and too much violence," he said of the more than six months of protests that have put the issue at the forefront of national debate.

Both the [president](#) and [senior ministers](#) of his cabinet have been accused before of speaking positively about the movement to a foreign audience while discrediting it at home. However Piñera's optimism was yet again reiterated by Secretary General Andrés Chadwick on Monday.

"Now that the opposition is seeking an agreement on this document [the budget] and have handed in their own proposal, all the preconditions have been met," he said in an interview with Radio Cooperativa.

The Concertación's proposal includes stricter state regulation of the private university system, free higher education for 70 percent of students and tax reforms to fund the education budget's increased costs.

That figure is not far from the government's proposal of funding higher education for 60 percent of students. Yet Chadwick ruled out the idea of tax reform, saying there isn't time to broach the issue before Congress' Nov. 30 deadline to pass the budget.

for the market."

"We have no more than 15 days to advance in reaching an agreement on education," said Chadwick.

Opposition leaders did not share the government's optimism. Carolina Tohá, president of the left wing Party for Democracy, said that she viewed an agreement with the government as a "distant" reality.

"The government speaks of reaching a grand agreement, but the truth is that this hasn't translated to anything concrete. . . and there are no other signals than those seen in the budget, which doesn't provide the amount of resources that are needed," she said on Monday in an interview with Radio Agricultura.

Tohá tried to align her party with the student movement, while remaining open to compromise with the government.

"We are not going to reach an agreement that betrays the principle that has generated all of this momentum," she said. "However it is one thing to betray and another to take a step forward,

and then another, because you can't achieve everything at once."

Meanwhile Camila Vallejo, spokesperson for Confech - the organization representing Chile's top 25 universities - said that student leaders were not going to support an agreement that did not go further toward achieving the students' demands.

"We are not going to come to any agreement that betrays this movement," she said on the television program Tolerancia Cero on Sunday night. "We are not going to arrive at any forced agreement that would signify a betrayal of the principles of the right to quality public education and a regulated and non-profit private system."

The student leader maintained that the government had still not addressed the fundamental concerns of the student movement and had not articulated its vision for education in Chile.

"What is at stake here is the role that the state is going to have in education, and whether we want to create human beings or professional commodities

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Police evict students from Usach in Chile's capital - Fifty-seven arrested, including minors - Saturday, 12 November 2011 00:02



Photo by Ocvlaris/Flickr.

Written by Joe Hinchliffe

Early Friday morning Carabinero special forces stormed the Universidad de Santiago (Usach) to evict students illegally occupying the building to protest for fundamental reform of Chile's highly privatized education system.

Though Usach Dean Juan Manuel Zolezzi requested the eviction, Carabineros entered the premises earlier than expected - between 4 and 5 a.m. - after claiming that they were attacked with Molotov cocktails by a group of "encapuchados" -- or masked vandals -- near the university.

Col. Pedro Cancino said the eviction was "efficient" and that "there was not any sort of attack or struggle against the Carabineros."

Still, he claimed that officers found Molotov cocktails and containers of acid and fuel inside the building.

Student spokesperson Laura Ortiz, an interview with Radio Cooperativa, denied students had Molotov cocktails or "terrorist material" charged that the Carabineros had conspired to make the students look bad.

The arrested students were released hours later by the public prosecutor. They were charged with public disorder, but were not charged for having explosives.

Francisco Avilés Salas, president of the student federation of the Department of Agronomy, was at the university when Carabineros arrived. He could not confirm or deny the allegation about explosives, but offered his own explanation for the chemicals.

"It could be that these things were in the building," Avilés told The Santiago Times, "but this is a university. Two years ago police evicted students from the university and then brought out some big knives to show how violent the students were supposed to have been. . . but the knives belonged to a Brazilian dance group that used them in their performances."

The Usach building was seized on Thursday evening by a group calling themselves the Popular Students Assembly. They rejected the verdict of a student vote held last week to end the occupation of the university, but maintain the strike.

Prior to their eviction the president of student confederation of Usach, Camilo Ballesteros, denounced the seizure as non-democratic and labeled those responsible as a "dictatorial alternative."

School seizures -- or "tomas"-- have been one of the primary forms of protest employed in the student protests of the last six months by high school and university students. But universities are normally occupied only after being ratified by a student vote.

"We have to respect the democracy that we have within the university," said Avilés, who did not support the occupation. "An illegal toma is not good for us because it starts to break the movement from inside, and forces from outside the movement - like the government - will try to use that."

The democratic nature of Chile's student movement has been one of its key strengths. Every decision taken by Confech - the organization that represents students from Chile's 25 top universities - is voted on a campus-by-campus basis,

and the organization's policies are formed in open and transparent assemblies.

In recent weeks seizures have begun to extend from educational to governmental buildings. On [Oct. 20](#), a group of students and environmentalists seized the venue of a parliamentary committee on the proposed 2012 budget for education, while [last week](#) high school students occupied Santiago's City Hall.

Still, the increase in these more radical protests appears to have jeopardized the high level of public support for the student movement.

A [recent poll](#) found that the public support for student strikers fell 12 percentage points in the month of October, down from 79 to 67 percent; while approval of the forms of protest fell to just 38 percent.

Meanwhile, student groups [accuse](#) the government of President Sebastián Piñera of trying to "criminalize" the movement by associating it with fringe groups within the movement and criminal elements in Chile's society.

With the student movement at a crucial point of waning popularity and apparent radicalization, Usach students were expected to vote on Friday on whether to return to classes, remain on strike or once again seize the university.

Avilés said that he expected the university would remain on strike, but said that he would be advocating a return to class.

"The government is trying to create divisions out of this kind of thing, so we have to change the way that we are protesting," he said.

But the student leader was adamant that while the movement needed to change, it also needed to maintain its momentum.

"This is not protesting for protesting's sake, this is not me complaining because I want a better situation," he said "We are fighting so that the country can have a better situation, we are fighting for our future kids."

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Thousands protest as education budget enters Chile's Congress - Opposition seeks united front with students on budget issue in a 'new way of doing politics.' - Wednesday, 09 November 2011 18:34



Photo by @israeliasdiaz/Twitter.
Students congregate in Valparaíso Sotomayor Plaza.

Written by Joe Hinchliffe

Thousands of students, teachers and workers marched in the streets of Valparaíso, the port city that houses Congress, as discussion began in the Chilean political establishment over the [education budget for 2012](#) and a possible solution for the student movement that has now entered its sixth month of protests.

University students undertook the nearly two-hour bus trip from the capital to be present at the march, and students from other regions around the country likewise joined the protests. Organizers claimed 20,000 protesters took to the streets of Valparaíso, while officials put the figure at 7,000.

The protest was approved by the Regional Governor of Valparaíso, Raúl Celis, however it was not allowed to march on Congress, as had been the intention of student leaders.

A perimeter of two city blocks was maintained around the building by a force of mounted police, special forces, dogs and armored vehicles.

Gov. Celis said that he refused students permission to enter the area because of violent elements associated with the student movement.

"They have demonstrated their absolute, complete and total inability to control the 'encapuchados,'" he said, referring to masked vandals that often appear at large demonstrations in Chile to destroy public property and engage in conflicts with the police.

"As they have demonstrated this inability, it's clear that we can't allow them to arrive at Congress."

Student leaders denounced the governor's decision, saying that it was an attempt by the government to incite violence and distract from the demands of the protesters, who seek fundamental reform of Chile's highly privatized education system.

"It is clearly a provocation," said Sebastián Farfán, spokesperson of the confederation of university students (Confech), who said that taking the demands of the movement to Congress "was the reason that the protest was convened."

While the march was peaceful, in its aftermath there were confrontations and a preliminary Carabinero police report said that at least 10 arrests had been made.

As the protest was occurring Confech leaders held a meeting with members of the opposition to adopt a united strategy in dealing with the budget proposal, which the president of the Senate Guido Girardi - from the left-wing Party for Democracy (PPD) - described as "a bluff and a lie . . . designed to strengthen the private sector."

Leaders from both parties sought a "binding" commitment which would oblige the opposition parliamentarians to coordinate with students leaders to create a united position in dealing with the budget proposal, as well as constructing their own proposals for structural reforms in the educational system.

"This is a new way of doing politics," said Ignacio Walker, president of the center-left Christian Democrats, after the meeting "face to face with the student movement and not behind its back."

The meeting came after emblematic student leader, Camila Vallejo, called on opposition parliamentarians to refute government overtures toward a "consensus approach" between the two political alliances.

Vallejo issued the call in a column written for Radio Cooperativa, in which she denounced the political system in Chile that had "evolved over the past 20 years [since the return of democracy] between four walls and behind the backs of the citizens."

Vallejo wrote that the political system had fostered a "status quo . . . that only benefits large economic interests, to the detriment of the rest of the country."

The meeting prompted criticism from within the government's ruling coalition.

"If they want to be subservient to some student leaders instead of facing a problem, it is their own irresponsibility," said Sen. Jovino Novoa, of the right-wing Independent Democrat Union party. "They can't evade the fulfilment of their obligations hiding behind the skirt of a student leader."

PPD president Carolina Tohá denounced Novoa's comments as "ridiculous and chauvinistic."

Tohá, who has been one of the [leading voices](#) for reform of the unpopular left-wing alliance, said the Concertación had to frame its policy in collaboration with Chilean society and the student movement, and called on the government to do the same.

"The only way forward is for us to rebuild the trust and ability to collaborate between the political and social worlds and hopefully this government will enter into this spirit."

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : High school students seize City Hall in Chile's capital - Mayor to press charges against the youths, accusing them of seeking "class warfare." - Monday, 07 November 2011 20:40



Photo courtesy of ACES/Facebook.
"Education is a right and we will continue the fight."

Written by Joe Hinchliffe

Around 50 high school students occupied Santiago's City Hall on Monday morning in a protest that ended with 44 arrests, after apparently being allowed in by municipal workers sympathetic to Chile's student movement.

The group seized the building just before 8 a.m. and hung banners from its balcony that overlooks the capital's central square, Plaza de Armas.

The protest lasted for an hour until Carabinero special police forces entered through a side door and forcibly evicted the students. Eighteen of those arrested were female and 26 male. La Tercera reported minor damage to the building. Mayor of Santiago Pablo Zalaquett -- who ordered Carabineros to evict the protesters -- said

that he would press charges against the students, who he accused of trying to "polarize the country and initiate class warfare."

A declaration posted on the website of the organization responsible for the protest, the Coordinating Assembly of Secondary Students (Aces), said that the "peacefully occupation" of the municipal building was designed to "reiterate the demands of high school students, that have been set aside by the government and by the entire political class."

At the scene of the occupation Aces spokesperson, Alfredo Vielma, said that the students wanted to draw attention to the theme of demunicipalization of Chile's secondary school system.

Chile's municipally administered system was created under the military dictatorship of Gen. Augusto Pinochet and is criticized by students as leading to inequalities in education between areas with high levels of wealth and power and those without.

Reform of the school system to a federally administered model has been a key demand of high school students, however it has been largely overlooked in [recent debates](#) by politicians and media pundits, who have instead focused on the allocation of resources.

Mayor Zalaquett refuted the claims and legitimacy of Aces.

"The mayors have said that we are open to the idea de-municipalization," said Zalaquett. "They [Aces] do not represent the Chilean youth or what should be promoted, which is a quality education."

"They [Aces] lie Vielma has lied shamelessly, there are two options, either believe me or believe him," he said.

Zalaquett said that he would not prosecute any municipal worker found to be responsible for allowing the students to enter, but that he was going to start "an internal inquiry to determine if someone had a role in the seizure."

President of the student federation of the Universidad Católica and one of the most prominent members of the student movement, Giorgio Jackson, attributed the seizure to the "desperation" of sectors of Chilean society that "don't have opportunities."

"There is a level of desperation for transformative changes in Chilean society. We see that in students from the peripheries of Aces, that live in precarious situations and that are no longer prepared to wait forever."

While Jackson was critical of the current administration's handling of the student protests he argued that inequality is an entrenched issue in Chilean society that had its roots "not only in this generation, but in many (past) generations that have not been able to access opportunities to escape the cycle of poverty."

The student leader stressed that he did not seek to justify the seizure, but called for an analysis of its causes.

"How is it that our society has arrived at a point where violence is seen as a way to protest these things? In Chile there isn't a level of social justice that would permit everyone to be able to express themselves in the proper way."

Meanwhile Vielma -- who also led the occupation of the Río Mapocho on [Oct. 28](#) -- warned of further confrontational demonstrations.

"We are going to continue this type of protest week after week, because we have seen the shutting-out of the student movement," he said.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Chilean president to inject further US\$1.2 billion to education - Sales of state health assets directed toward stalled education budget - Saturday, 05 November 2011 06:00



Photo by Gobierno de Chile/Flickr.
Education Minister Felipe Bulnes [left] and President Sebastián Piñera.
Written by Joe Hinchliffe

Chile's President Sebastián Piñera will inject a further US\$1.2 billion in the education portfolio of the 2012 budget, according to a report by La Tercera citing an unnamed "high" government source. The move comes after the preliminary education budget committee -- comprised of senators and deputies -- [rejected](#) the US\$4 billion proposed education budget because it did not go far enough toward achieving the kind of reforms that have driven Chile's student protests for nearly six months. The injection of money will come from the sales of five state-owned water treatment companies, which collectively amounted to US\$1.6 billion. "The idea is that the resources will go to educational infrastructure, to new laboratories, new technologies and new libraries," said government spokesperson Andrés Chadwick. The La Tercera report claimed that the government would officially reject further privatizations

of the state's education assets, an idea floated by Secretary General Cristián Larroulet earlier in the week.

Larroulet's suggestion drew immediate controversy even from within the minister's governing Alianza alliance, notably by Finance Minister Pablo Longueira.

However the extra money is unlikely to appease student protesters, given that the movement has sought fundamental structural reforms, not simply additional resources, and especially because the intensely privatized education system has been one of the students' core grievances.

The congressional debate over the education budget will begin on Wednesday.

Student representatives have called for a protest in the port city of Valparaíso, where Congress meets, and students from the capital are expected to make the hour-and-a-half bus trip to take part.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Universidad de Chile orders striking students to return to classes - Emblematic university set to return to class despite student vote to maintain strike - Wednesday, 02 November 2011 19:11



Photo by Joe Hinchliffe/Santiago Times.
The Central House of the Universidad de Chile has become a focal point of Chile's student movement.

Written by Joe Hinchliffe

The vice-dean of one of Chile's most prestigious universities, the public Universidad de Chile, has ordered its students to return to classes after nearly six months of strikes to pressure the government into reforming the country's highly privatized education system.

The message was posted on the university's website on Wednesday afternoon, and although only a paragraph long, it was loaded with significance for university students across the country.

"Reporting to the university community that in accordance with the institutional mission... and in order to ensure the quality training of our students, the second semester of 2011 will take place in the period between Nov. 2, 2011 and March 15, 2012, for those academic units not yet started," the statement read.

The university has been integral to Chile's student protests and the leader of its student confederation, Camila Vallejo, one of the most recognizable faces of the movement.

Its central campus is one of the 52 faculties across the country that have been seized by students who maintain a constant presence on the site, while over 90 faculties are on strike, with many facing the possibility of losing the academic year if they do not return to classes.

The vice-dean's message came just days after Universidad de Chile students voted to maintain their strike, despite those risks.

Chairman of the school's election tribunal, Cristóbal Lagos, said that the student vote was conducted in "an atmosphere of respect and appreciation for democracy, where all the students of the university had the opportunity to be a part of such an important decision."

The university-wide vote was extremely tight, with just over 50 percent of students opting to maintain the strike, while around 48 percent voted against it. The vote was also marked by a relatively low turnout of just over 13,000 students or 47 percent of the total student body.

Not all of the Universidad de Chile's faculties voted to continue the strike, however, with students in the engineering, economics and law schools voting to resume classes.

The decision reached by the Universidad de Chile students means that 12 of the country's top 25 universities have declared their intention to maintain strikes.

The 25 universities collectively constitute the organization of students called Confech, which has been the most active in this year's student protests.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Police evict protesters from river bank in Chile's capital - Interview with student rep. attempting to camp in city center in protest for free education - Saturday, 29 October 2011 07:00



Photo by action datsun/Flickr
Río Mapocho runs through central Santiago.
Written by Joe Hinchliffe

Police special forces descended the concrete embankments of the Río Mapocho on Friday morning to forcibly evict a group of around 30

high school students trying to establish a campsite on the banks of the river that dissects the Chilean capital.

What started as a small symbolic protest became a major debacle as the bridge connecting the bohemian district of Bellavista with Plaza Italia -- a focal point for many of the city's public gatherings and protests -- swarmed with dozens of riot vans, hundreds of armored police and hordes of journalists and onlookers.

"We wanted to take the river, literally, and set up a camp," Alfredo Vielma, spokesperson for the Coordinating Assembly of Secondary Students, told The Santiago Times.

"But at around 7:15 a.m. Carabineros launched a violent police strike with 16 armoured police trucks," said Vielma. "The repression was tremendous; they struck a protester in the back, they hit a female student and dragged her by the hair."

Vielma said that the protest was designed to "reinstate the theme of free education" -- one of the core demands of the student movement -- into the debate about education reform that has been raging in Chile for nearly six months.

Recent comments by Education Minister Felipe Bulnes and President Sebastián Piñera have centered around increasing support for students in Chile's private universities, who represent around two thirds of the student population.

The student leader also spoke about his distrust of the political system, which he said had "swindled" students in the 2006 "penguin revolution." In that year high school students ended their strikes to engage in dialogue with the government of former President Michelle Bachelet, but failed to achieve the deep reforms that they sought.

"The debate about education has passed into the political class," he said, "and it seems the role of

the citizen has been lost. The main objective of this [protest] is to restore the role of citizens." In a month that has seen global protesters capture headlines with occupations and marches around the world, the student leader also had a message for the outside world. "In Chile we have a profit driven education system, we have a municipally administered and privatized model which is better for the rich and worse for the poor," he said, reflecting the con-

cern about inequality within the system that has been one of the core grievances of students. "So our message to the world is to fight in solidarity with this movement of the Chilean people for free education and for a change to a more just society." Reflecting recent comments of student leaders from Chile's public universities, the high school spokesperson also indicated that the student movement might be expanding beyond the theme of education.

"This is also a movement of the [indigenous] Mapuche people in their historic fight for the land that the Chilean state took from them, it's a movement for health care, it's a movement for housing, it's a movement of many movements that will change the nature of our society and change our vision of society," he said. "Education is the first step to changing society but we also have to change a way of life."

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Chilean minister praises student movement to foreign journalists - Glowing report for the movement from one of its most outspoken critics - Wednesday, 26 October 2011 19:10



Photo courtesy of Gobierno de Chile. Chile's government spokesperson Andrés Chadwick

Written by Joe Hinchliffe
At Tuesday's inaugural Congress of South American Correspondents at the privately-owned Universidad Diego Portales in Santiago, Secretary General Andrés Chadwick gave the audience a resounding endorsement of the Chile's current political situation and its student movement for education reform.

"They have been able to express themselves in a very powerful way... that has raised the profile of a cause that has a very high level of public support," said the government spokesperson of the students that have been protesting for nearly six months with strikes, school seizures and marches that have drawn hundreds of thousands into the streets across the country. "I think we've arrived at an extraordinarily interesting, attractive and dynamic moment in our country," he said. Minister Chadwick has previously been among the government's most vocal critics of the protests, and the address stood in stark contrast to his statements made to the Chilean media. "The student movement is not directly concerned with the theme of education, but with agitation and generating violence," Chadwick said to a press gallery on Oct. 8.

"We regret enormously that the student movement. . . . has been captured, co-opted and lead by. . . . the most extreme of the most extreme, the most intransigent, the most ideological, the harshest of the harsh." The minister's about-face continues this government's record of saying one thing abroad and something different to its domestic audience. On Sep. 22 President Sebastián Piñera also lauded the student movement in an address to the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York, describing it as a "noble, grand and beautiful cause," and said that it the government shared its "vision." On the very same day in Chile, one of the largest marches of the movement so far prompted Minister Chadwick to declare that "one more march is not going to change the position of the government."

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Education subcommittee rejects Chile's university budget - Senator warns that social tensions will be inflamed if budget is not improved - Tuesday, 25 October 2011 21:02



Photo courtesy of Carlos Montes. Socialist Dep. Carlos Montes presided over the hearing.

Written by Joe Hinchliffe
The parliamentary subcommittee charged with reviewing the education portfolio of Chile's 2012 budget rejected the government's proposal for higher education in a tense six-hour meeting on Monday. The mixed committee was composed of both deputies and senators, three from the left-wing Concertación alliance and two from the ruling Alianza coalition. The representatives voted along party lines. The session began with the president of the subcommittee, socialist Dep. Carlos Montes, offering an official apology to Education Minister Felipe Bulnes, who was insulted by protesters that stormed the subcommittee's first hearing to demand a plebiscite on the environmental and

educational issues that have plagued the presidency of Sebastián Piñera. After initial formalities, however, proceedings quickly deteriorated for the minister, with the three members of the opposition Concertación alliance launching a barrage of criticism against the government's proposed education budget and the minister's handling of the controversial portfolio. Montes said that since Bulnes took the position in July, after a cabinet reshuffle by President Piñera to arrest plummeting approval ratings, the discussion on education had not "advanced a centimeter." The three opposition parliamentarians justified their decision to [block the budget](#) as a response to the inflexibility of the government in the face of the student protests of the last five months. They alleged that budget negotiations were the only path toward achieving higher resource allocation to the education portfolio. Sen. Andrés Zaldívar of the center-left Christian Democrats (DC) warned Minister Bulnes that social unrest would escalate if the budget was not improved in the wake of the subcommittee's decision. The criticisms were compounded by those invited to give presentations at the hearing. Dean of the Universidad de Santiago, Juan Manuel Zolezzi, argued that the proposal did not fulfill the agreements reached between the Rectors' Council and President Piñera.

The meeting also heard presentations from high-profile spokespeople of the organization representing Chile's public university students (Confech), Giorgio Jackson and Camila Vallejo. Jackson said that the budget -- despite an increase of over US\$1.7 billion from last year's -- was "a provocation," while Vallejo described it as "shameful." Meanwhile Sen. Ena Von Baer, who represented the right-wing Independent Democratic Union (UDI) at the subcommittee, said that while she agreed that scholarships needed to be increased, the subcommittee could not "reform the entire education system." Von Baer accused the opposition parliamentarians of putting student scholarships at risk by not approving the budget. Minister Bulnes responded to the criticism and launched a strongly-worded defense of his plan to raise government support for students at private universities. "In this country there are students of primary and secondary concern," said Bulnes, referring to public and private students, respectively, "but this budget will not discriminate between them." However the minister did not reject the possibility of raising the proposed resources for public sector of higher education. The debate will now continue in a joint committee hearing on Nov. 2 before entering the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : President of Chile's Senate: principles more important than title - Girardi defies colleagues' request to pursue legal action against last week's protesters - Tuesday, 25 October 2011 20:47

Written by Steve Anderson
Political tensions escalated Tuesday afternoon when Senate President Guido Girardi backed off from an agreement with Christian Democratic party leaders and said he would not file a lawsuit against the 60 individuals who occupied the old Senate building last Thursday in downtown Santiago.

"I am ready to leave my position as Senate president, rather than go against my principles," said Girardi. "I'll let the Senate have the last word regarding the censure vote." Girardi insisted he made the right call when dealing with last Thursday's demonstrators by "dialoguing rather than resorting to violence."

The demonstrators were demanding a national plebiscite on environmental and educational issues that have rocked the nation the past five months, with hundreds of thousands of protesters demonstrating against Chile's class-based education system and the government's support of the US\$10 billion HidroAysén dam and power-line project slated for southern Chile.



Senate President Guido Girardi, right, pictured with Marco Enríquez-Ominami.

Demonstrators interrupted a congressional budget meeting during their occupation of the building, unfurling a sign demanding "Plebiscite Now" and humiliating Education Minister Felipe Bulnes, who grimly left the room.

As president of Chile's Senate, it was Girardi's call on whether or not to summon riot police that had been offered by Interior Minister Rodrigo Hinzpeter.

But Girardi declined, saying he did not want to see a repetition of the violence that had occurred just one day earlier in the Chamber of Deputies when Chamber President Dep. Patricio Melero forcibly evicted protesters in the galleries. Late Thursday evening, after considerable discussion with Girardi - a strong supporter of education reform and environmental causes favored by the occupiers - the demonstrators peacefully left the old Senate building

Girardi's refusal to remove the protesters brought angry criticism from conservative politicians - who immediately called for his removal

from the Senate leadership position - and some members of Girardi's own center-left opposition Concertacion coalition, particularly leaders of the more conservative Christian Democratic (DC) party.

DC leaders convened over the weekend and decided they would not vote in favor of a resolution of censure against Girardi, so long as he agreed to apologize to Bulnes and bring legal action against the demonstrators.

Girardi initially appeared to accept the deal, but then backed off Tuesday after meeting with maverick former socialist deputy and 2009 presidential candidate Marco Enríquez-Ominami and other Socialist Party leaders. Girardi belongs to the Party for Democracy (PPD).

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Chile's opposition set to reject education budget - Budget committee reconvenes after last Thursday's meeting was broken up by protesters - Monday, 24 October 2011 19:32



Photo by guidogirardi/Flickr.

Written by Joe Hinchliffe

A subcommittee that will vote on Chile's proposed 2012 budget for education met in Santiago's ex-Congress building under heavy security on Monday, after last week's meeting was brought to a dramatic end when protesters seized the building.

The bi-partisan committee -- consisting of three senators from the opposition Concertación alliance and only two from the ruling Alianza block - is set to vote down the proposal, which the opposition senators describe as "insufficient" to meet the demands of Chile's student movement, now into its fifth month of an intense campaign for drastic reform of the country's education system.

"I am going to vote against the budget for higher education," Dep. Pepe Auth of the Party for Democracy told La Tercera. "At least until there are very significant changes to the ministry's position."

The senators heard presentations from the dean of the Universidad de Santiago, Juan Manuel Zolezzi, high profile representatives of the student movement Camila Vallejo and Giorgio Jackson and the minister of education, Felipe Bulnes, who was expected to continue his defense of the privatized university sector, which students want abolished.

"There are no primary and secondary Chileans for me," Minister Bulnes said as he argued for the need to match scholarships at private universities with those given to students of the public system. "There are no public Chileans that deserve all of the state's resources because they go to public universities and private Chileans that don't deserve support because they go to private universities."

The meeting had to be rescheduled after a previous meeting was hijacked by protesters, who entered the building to voice their demands for a national plebiscite on education, environment, a new constitution and electoral system, among other issues.

The 2012 budget was unveiled on Sep. 29 by President Sebastián Piñera, who declared the

budget's proposed allocation to education as "historic."

Under the proposal the portfolio of education would receive US\$11.65 billion, more than a sixth of the entire budget, which is projected at just over US\$60 billion.

Still, it has been roundly criticized by educational leaders, by activists within the movement for education reform and by opposition politicians. Student leaders are calling on senators and members of parliament to reject the budget until it incorporates the demands made by the student movement.

Sen. Carlos Montes of the Socialist Party and a member of the education budget subcommittee has been one of its more vocal critics, describing it as offering less to public education than previous budgets.

The rest of the budget will face similar scrutiny over the coming month as a joint commission of senators begins its review process.

The commission is chaired by Sen. Eduardo Frei - former president of the centrist Christian Democrats -- and the balance of power favors the opposition with 13 parliamentarians from the Concertación, 11 from the ruling Alianza coalition and one independent, Miodrag Marinovic.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Student flight from Chilean public schools - Only 37 percent of students enrolled in public schools as months of strikes take their toll - Monday, 24 October 2011 17:46



Photo by _P_ / Flickr.

Written by Joe Hinchliffe

Enrollment in Chile's municipally-administered schools could fall to as low as 30 percent in 2012, according to the president of the education

commission for the Chilean Association of Municipalities, Johnny Carrasco.

Carrasco -- also mayor of the Pudahuel borough in Chile's capital -- raised his concerns in an interview with El Mercurio on Sunday, in which he said that although classes had resumed at some of the public schools in his district, attendance levels are at around 50 percent.

The mayor speculated that many may have switched to the private sector, which has not seen anywhere near the level of student mobilizations that have severely disrupted the academic year in Chile's public sector.

Strikes and school seizures have been going on intermittently since May, as Chile's high school students have joined forces with their counterparts in the public university sector to demand a

reform of Chile's highly privatized education system.

"Everyone likes the fair, but nobody wants to host it on your street," said Carrasco. "Education is the same. Everyone supports the demands, but no one wants their children to lose the year."

Though enrollment in Chile's public schools is in decline it has been low for decades. In 2002 the municipal sector concentrated just 52 percent of students nationwide. In the United States that figure is just below 90 percent.

One of the core demands of high school students is a raise in teacher salaries and a plan to recruit talented people to the profession, to address what students call a substandard quality of education.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Protesters occupy government building, demand national plebiscite - Old senate building briefly occupied, government condemns Senate president Girardi's failure to seek police intervention - Friday, 21 October 2011 09:18

Written by Steve Anderson

About 60 students and environmentalists occupied the former Senate building in downtown Santiago on Thursday afternoon to call for a

national referendum on educational and environmental issues.

The "toma" or takeover interrupted a meeting between members of congress and Education Minister Felipe Bulnes, resulting in Bulnes' deci-

sion to retire from the meeting room, at one point almost stumbling.

The students left the building voluntarily late Thursday evening after opposition legislators promised to support plebiscite legislation for a



nationwide vote on environmental and education issues.



Photo courtesy of www.guidogirardi.cl
Chile's Senate President Guido Girardi.

A YouTube video of the student "toma" and Bulnes' exit from the hearing was posted on the Internet almost immediately after the takeover occurred. The occupying students also broadcast their takeover live over the Internet by webcam. Special police forces had gathered just outside the old Senate building, but only Senate President Guido Girardi had the authority to allow them to enter.

Interior Minister Rodrigo Hinzpeter called the occupation shameful and condemned Girardi for not calling in police forces to secure the old Senate building premises.

Girardi responded, saying he preferred a government "that would not hesitate to defend the

rights of its citizens" to a government that "would not hesitate to repress its citizens."

"These young people abandoned the building peacefully, after talking the issues through," continued Girardi. "They were not forced to leave because of government repression."

Later, in an interview with CNN Chile, Girardi directly criticized Hinzpeter and President Sebastián Piñera, saying "their greatest mistake has been to not respond to what the entire country is asking for."

Girardi called the Piñera government "intransigent" and said it would never succeed in imposing "the Labbé doctrine." Providencia's Mayor Alberto Labbé, a former personal guard of Gen. Augusto Pinochet, earlier this month ordered special police forces to remove protesting students from a public school in his borough.

Girardi met earlier in the afternoon with the protesters and said he supported their demands. "Chile needs a new constitution," he said.

Chile's current 1980 Constitution was written by former dictator Gen. Augusto Pinochet.

While modified in recent years to eliminate its most draconian anti-democratic features, the 1980 Constitution does not permit national plebiscites, only local plebiscites for land-use related reasons. Pinochet's constitution was ratified by a national plebiscite in 1980, however, even though organized opposition was not permitted, nor were voter registration rolls used.

Girardi said he would not call in police forces because he did not want to repeat an incident that occurred Wednesday afternoon at the Chamber of Deputies in Valparaiso, where police forcefully - and violently - evicted student protesters.

Hinzpeter condemned Girardi's decision. "This is a terrible precedent," he said. "Enormously

serious." The interior minister vowed to take legal action against the protesters and to contest Girardi's handling of the situation.

Meanwhile, Luis Mariano Rendón, the environmental activist who led the takeover of the old Senate building, urged citizens throughout Santiago to join them to show their solidarity with the call for a national plebiscite on environmental and education issues. Roughly 600 demonstrators gathered near the old Senate building to show their support for the occupiers, but police did not allow them access to the building. Nearby neighbors, however, went to their windows to beat on pots and pans, a traditional show of support for the protesting students.

Students have been protesting Chile's class-based education system for more than five months and talks between student leaders and the government have broken down.

Chile's protest movement first kicked off last May when environmentalists objected to the government's decision to green light the controversial HidroAysén dam project in Chilean Patagonia.

National polls show 80 percent support for the students' demands for free, quality public education; support for the environmentalists' opposition to HidroAysén polls at 74 percent. Meanwhile, support for Chile's President Piñera has plummeted to between 20 and 30 percent.

The HidroAysén dam project is now being challenged in the courts, but appears to be moving forward.

Earlier this week students concluded a two-day national protest that brought hundreds of thousands of supporters to the streets, but negotiations between the students and the government are deadlocked.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Editorial : Chile's student uprising: part of a global trend?- Chilean protesters are not alone in their discontent with the status quo - Thursday, 20 October 2011 15:10



Photo by ssoosay/Flickr.

Written by David Pedigo

Tuesday and Wednesday saw one of the longest single demonstrations to date throughout the protests that have characterized daily life in Santiago for over five months. These demonstrations aim to pressure the government into passing deep reforms to Chile's unequal education system. While these protests aim for solutions specific to Chilean society, the movement in Chile is far from an isolated incident.

In Greece and throughout the European Union, protesters are reacting to harsh austerity measures undertaken by their governments. The "indignados" of Spain have been protesting since

May 15 of this year. In the United States, the "Occupy Wall Street" movement that originated in Manhattan has spread to cities across the country and has inspired similar movements such as "Occupy London."

These protests are not all necessarily connected. The indignados have been protesting their government's failed economic policies. Occupy Wall Street was formed in response to frustration with the elite banking class. Most of the protests in Chile have been specifically focused on the country's education system.

Still, these movements all share several underlying themes. Frustration with the political economy is an issue everywhere, and inequality and youth unemployment are also common undercurrents. The Economist published a [useful chart](#) chronicling the global spread of these movements, revealing similar economic situations in those countries witnessing protests today.

Neither these similarities, nor the potential for increased cooperation that they bring, have been lost on the leaders of the student movement. On Saturday, Chile's students participated in an [international day of action](#) coordinated by Spain's Indignados, and on Wednesday leaders of the Confederation of University Students of Chile (Confech)

returned from a [trip to garner support](#) among sympathizers in Europe.

The similarities have played out in the business community as well. Felipe Larraín, president of Ripley S.A., a Chilean retail and financial company, recently voiced his support for a tax reform that would increase business taxes, calling for his colleagues to "give a little more" in order to help resolve the problem of inequality in the country. Larraín's words were reminiscent of those of U.S. businessman Warren Buffett, chairman and CEO of Berkshire Hathaway, who suggested in a [New York Times op-ed](#) that taxes be raised on his own income bracket.

Referring to the international movements, Camila Vallejo, one of the Chilean student movement's main leaders, told BBC Mundo: "They all have their own particularities... But they are seen all together. It is a fight of those who have woken up in order to construct a social model that is distinct on the national and international level. Coherence exists, and that is a resistance to a (social) model of privatization."

Vallejo interviewed with the BBC from Paris during the tail end of her European travels. Vallejo also stressed the importance of creating a distinctly Chilean movement.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Chilean executive proposes higher business taxes for education - Felipe Larraín suggests tax raise could help fund expanded education and health care - Wednesday, 19 October 2011 21:58

Written by Steve Shea

The Association of Exporters and Manufacturing (Asexma) held a conference Tuesday where influential Chilean businessman Felipe Larraín proposed a new tax formula that would provide a

solution to Chile's education and health care problems.

Larraín is the former head of Copelec, Chile's leading fuel company, and Sofopa, the country's leading business lobby. He is currently the presi-

dent of Ripley, one of the largest retail companies in Chile.

Currently, businesses in Chile pay a [20 percent tax on earnings](#). Consumers are responsible for a value-added tax (VAT) of 19 percent, which is a tax added onto purchases.





Photo by Ryan Greenberg/Flickr.

Lamarca is proposing that the tax on businesses be raised and the VAT lowered, to ease the strain on citizens. He believes the additional funding would solve the nation's education and health care problems, while redistributing some wealth in one of the world's most unequal societies. "He who has more should pay more," Lamarca said at the conference. He was very forward with

his remarks about his tax reform ideas, going onto say that businesses are the key for solving some of Chile's most serious problems.

"We need more justice, to spread the wealth more," Lamarca said. "It does not matter if our economy grows by five or six percent. It is more important that our children can go to school, have a quality education."

Small and medium-sized businesses, under Lamarca's proposed plan, would be taxed less than larger corporations, to foster their growth as well. According to Lamarca, this means only the businesses that could afford to pay higher taxes would pay them.

Roberto Fantuzzi, president of Asexma and another of Chile's best known business leaders, agreed with the formula put forward by Lamarca at the conference.

"No one likes to raise taxes," Fantuzzi said. "But we must address the serious problems we are experiencing, we must create a change."

Higher taxes on businesses will not be a popular cause for most politicians, but National Renovacion Sen. Francisco Chahuán joined with Lamarca to submit a formal proposal to the government for the tax reform.

Other politicians have been slow to join in support for tax reform.

Lamarca and Chahuán will lay out their plan in more detail during a seminar in November at the National Congress in an effort to win over other businessmen and politicians. One of their stated goals is to show that the changes will improve the distribution of income.

"We (businesses) are lucky," Lamarca said at the conference. "But we need tax reform to improve health and education."

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Massive protest in Chile's capital ends - again - in violence : March begins with festivities, ends with burning barricades, tear gas and clashes with police - Wednesday, 19 October 2011 22:04



Photo by Joe Hinchliffe/Santiago Times. Musicians and dancers try to flee from Carabine-ro water-cannons.

Written by Joe Hinchliffe
Chaos reigned in central Santiago Thursday afternoon as Carabinero special forces and hundreds of "encapuchados" (hooded vandals) fought a guerrilla war on the second of a [two-day demonstration](#) for education reform.

Thousands of Chilean students and their supporters were trapped in the alleyways behind the Universidad de Chile's engineering campus as they tried to flee the violence.

Amidst the pandemonium, some tried to hold their ground and continue to protest peacefully. Bands played to enthusiastic crowds in the narrow streets, even as bottles and stones thrown by encapuchados flew past their heads and teargas made the air around them almost unbreathable.

"What we are trying to say is that the street is a public space for everyone," said a young girl with a bass drum strapped to her back in the traditional Chilean "chinchinero" style, "and that violence is not the only way to protest.

"We are pacifists," she said as groups of encapuchados, numbering into the hundreds, roamed the alleys, lighting fires and pelting police vans with stones.

At times police were forced to retreat under a hail of stones, glass bottles and paint bombs, but then backup forces would arrive and the encapuchados would be forced to retreat under heavy bombardment with water cannons and tear gas.

As has often been the case at Chile's student protests of 2011, the day could be divided into two distinct events.

At the beginning -- as two separate marches wound their way through the city toward the meeting point -- the march was more of a street party than a political rally for free university education.

The crowd was diverse in age, numbered into the tens of thousands and was littered with bands, dance groups, colourful banners and effigies.

"We want to open the eyes of the people so they can see that this movement involves not only students, but also teachers, school officials and the entire society," Rosalbina Muetis, a primary school history teacher told The Santiago Times. People watched on from their balconies above the march, some of them banging on pots and pans in a traditional Chilean protest.

Under sweltering heat on what was the first genuinely hot day of spring, marchers began to cry out for water from the people above them.

Many obliged and threw buckets of water from the twenty-something-story buildings onto the crowd that danced in gratitude below. Others looked on from the sideline with less enthusiasm, as business owners worried about possible damage to their stores and the graffiti that prevailed on the busy city streets.

"It's their right [to demonstrate] and hopefully they achieve something," said one store owner, "but it's terrible for my business and it will inevitably end in violence."

While not good for traditional enterprise, the march was a boon for an army of street vendors and entrepreneurs that sold cold drinks, soy hamburgers, flags, shirts and badges with slogans and lemons for the tear gas.

One creative vendor hovered around conflict zones at the end of the day selling "anti-fascist water" to those doused with tear gas. Aside from businesses, commuters were also heavily impacted by the resulting congestion and horns resounded through the streets of Santiago for most of the day.

Although it must have been a tough day to be a taxi driver, not all were opposed to the protest. Dinson Espinosa's cab was trapped in traffic, just feet from a procession of marchers that went for over an hour.

"Never have I seen a movement so big," said Espinosa, clearly impressed.

Espinosa -- a Cuban immigrant who came to Chile 16 years ago when he married a local -- described his country as a "natural prison" sandwiched between an entrenched and undemocratic government and U.S trade embargoes.

"Cuba is a country that is really poor and without natural resources" he said, "but education is free there. So I can't understand why a country as rich as Chile, with as many resources as it has, can say that they can't fund education for the middle class and the most poor."

Free university education for all Chileans is a primary demand of the student movement, as is the transfer of government subsidies from private institutions to public universities.

When the two marches finally converged at around midday, there was a brief performance of bands and speeches, broken up early by the conflict that ensued.

The first signs of violence came when fans of two of Chile's biggest soccer clubs, Colo Colo and Universidad de Chile, engaged in a fight.

Students -- led by a protester dressed like a police officer but sporting a wolf mask and water-gun -- tried to break up the fight by forcing themselves between the two groups of soccer fans.

Musicians and dancers then filled the gap and began playing and dancing, but within minutes Carabineros began dispersing the crowd.

In perhaps the most dramatic stand-off of the day, a single elderly woman armed with only a Chilean flag held off an armoured police vehicle and water-cannon as she was pelted with tear gas.

"I am Chilean, I am a patriot, and they cannot damage this flag, it's prohibited," she told The Santiago Times. "But they do, they shoot water at us, they shoot tear gas just as they did to me, and I'm only here with my flag."

The woman, a primary school teacher named Louisa Espinoza, was clear on which side was to blame for the violence.

"They are the aggressive ones, they are the ones that seek violence," she said, pointing at the Carabineros. The young people are only defending themselves against aggression.

"They are oppressing the people, when they should be looking at what is causing this movement, social inequality and poverty," she said.

"That's what they should be concerned with, but they are only concerned with repression."

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Divergent viewpoints emerge on Chile's student movement - Violent demonstrations are condemned, but student movement continues to gain support. - Wednesday, 19 October 2011 19:05





Photo by Ministerio Secretaria General de Gobierno/Flickr.
Government spokesperson Andrés Chadwick called the national protest a "complete and total failure"

Written by David Pedigo

Student protesters marched in the streets of Santiago Tuesday and Wednesday, continuing over five months of protest against Chile's class-based education system. The most publicized event in this week's demonstrations was the

burning of a local bus, which drew heavy criticism from the government.

Government spokesperson Andrés Chadwick, denounced the demonstrations, calling them a failed initiative.

"Today (Tuesday) this effort to shut down the country has not been achieved," he said. "It been a complete and total failure, and thank God the country is continuing on with its normal daily business activity."

This fits the [narrative outlined several days ago](#) by the Chilean NGO Educación 2020, which predicted that the student movement may become increasingly violent. Educación 2020 called for students to cease their protests and return to classes, as has the Chilean government.

Violence notwithstanding, the policies championed by the student movement have gained important national and international support.

Business leader Felipe Larraín, president of Ripley S.A., a major Chilean retail and financial company, has called for tax reform. "The tax on businesses in Chile is far below the global average, and raising taxes would not affect our competitiveness," [Larraín said](#).

The results of a citizen-led national plebiscite were delivered to the government Tuesday morning. The plebiscite showed that 90 percent of respondents supported the students' de-

mands. Several national polls have put citizen support of the students and their demands at 80 percent.

The students have also received strong international support. Wednesday, Kyung-wha Kang, the UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, wrapped up a three-day visit in Chile and endorsed the student movement. "Their demands are within the minimum of international norms," she said of the students.

Kang also took direct shots at the Piñera administration. "Education is not a commodity," she said, in reference to President Piñera's [characterization last month of education as a consumer good](#). "It is a right of human beings and it should be progressively free, but there are many people who do not want to accept that in this government."

Kang's visit comes on the heels of students' latest efforts to internationalize their movement. Student leaders returned Wednesday morning from a four day [visit to Europe](#) where they met with numerous international organizations. They also spoke to students of multiple nationalities in the Parisian Université Panthéon-Assas, where they were received with applause and shouts of support.

THE [SANTIAGO TIMES](#): What to expect from Chile's two-day protest, Tuesday and Wednesday - Massive crowds, creative protests, pitched battles, vandalism and police brutality all anticipated - Tuesday, 18 October 2011 20:09



Photo by Joe Hinchliffe/Santiago Times.
Crowds burn an effigy of at the two day national strike, held on the Aug. 24 & 25, which attracted massive crowds.

A two-day national protest began in Chile Tuesday morning, called for by organizations representing university students (Confech), teachers, high-school students (Cones), labor unions (CUT) as well as environmental and civil rights groups. The protests come at a time when talks between students and the government have [collapsed](#) for a second time.

Guillermo Salinas, undersecretary of the CUT, Chile's biggest confederation of labor unions, asked workers to initiate assemblies, marches, protests, and "cacerolazos" (by banging on pots and pans) -- to take on whatever form of protest necessary to demonstrate support for the student movement for education reform, now into its fifth month.

The official protest agenda began on Tuesday morning, as representatives of student and teacher organizations presented the government with the results from a [citizens' plebiscite](#) on education held last week.

Organizers called on workers and students to conduct various assemblies and meetings around the country during Tuesday, which is set to end at 8 p.m. with the banging of pots and pans, or "cacerolazos" -- a form of protest that has its origins in the opposition to both the policies of former President Salvador Allende and the dicta-

torship of Gen. Augusto Pinochet -- to ring out from plazas and balconies across the country.

However, Camila Vallejo, president of the federation of students at the Universidad de Chile (Fech) and spokesperson for the student movement, said that Tuesday would be merely a precursor to "the grand march of the 19th."

Students submitted a proposal requesting authorization for four separate marches from different points in Santiago to converge on Plaza Italia, in the city's downtown area.

Plaza Italia -- which is considered to represent the boundary between the capital's richer neighborhoods toward the Andes from the poorer ones toward the coast -- is a central gathering point for many public gatherings, protests and celebrations. It is also a central point for public transportation, with two major metro lines and countless buses passing through the area.

However Perez refused to allow the protesters both to finish at the Plaza and have the luxury of four marches, instead allowing two to meet at the engineering faculty of the Universidad de Chile on the corner of Blanco Encalada and Beauchef.

One of those marches will begin from Plaza Italia and head down Avenida Portugal, while the other will start from Estación Central and progress through Avenida España.

The events are set to be drawn to a close with another cacerolazo at 8 p.m. Wednesday evening.

Wednesday's "grand march" will bring the tally of mass street protests for education reform in Santiago to 40 since May this year.

It will be the second two-day protest in two months to be backed by the CUT, after a national strike on the Aug. 24 and 25, although the organization stopped short of calling on a full-scale strike as they did on that occasion.

"We have not convened a strike, but a march, and those that cannot come can hold assemblies or discussions in their workplaces, or can 'cacerolazo' on their lunch-break," said Salinas.

The August strike is probably a strong indication of what to expect this time around.

On that occasion, the first day of strikes was a sedate affair, despite incidents of violence on the outskirts of the city, which are fractious areas at the best of times.

The second day saw one of the largest marches of the movement to date, with an enthusiastic and diverse crowd that organizers put at 300,000, although police cited 50,000.

On that day, dance groups, bands, costumes, effigies and banners gave the march the feel of a street party.

Though it descended into violence and vandalism -- as is often the case in public demonstrations in Chile and nearly always so in large student demonstrations -- even the government admitted that it was a comparatively peaceful event.

However more recent protests indicate that tomorrow might be a more violent affair than last month's.

On [Oct. 6](#), Plaza Italia witnessed scenes of violence that were declared "unprecedented," even by the standards of the ongoing student conflict.

Violent scenes on Tuesday morning seem to indicate that Wednesday's march could be worse still, as masked vandals completely torched a bus in the community of Macul, and both a inner-city kindergarten and primary school were forced to evacuate after police used tear gas to clear the streets of people erecting barricades.

While pitched battles are sure to be waged in the streets again tomorrow, the most critical battle will be waged in the control of public perception and the medias narrative.

By midday Tuesday, the government had already declared the "strike" a "total and complete failure," echoing the words used to describe Aug. 24 and 25, and focused on scenes of violence.

Students are trying to distance themselves from the predictable violence on Wednesday and focus on demands that they are making in the streets, which polls indicate enjoy overwhelming popular support.

Cones spokesperson Rodrigo Rivera -- who said that his organization had reached an agreement with Carabinero police to maintain order if the police did not "interfere" in the demonstrations -- denounced in advance "any act of violence from

whatever sector that wants to infiltrate the march, and at the end of the day tarnish an activity that the great majority of people support."

THE SANTIAGO TIMES: Chile's student leaders strike back from Paris - 'The truth hurts,' says student leader prior to meeting with the OECD on education - Monday, 17 October 2011 21:20



Photo Courtesy of Fech/Facebook.
Chile's university student representatives at an "indignados" march in Paris.

Written by Joe Hinchliffe

Giorgio Jackson, president of Universidad Católica's student federation, issued words of warning before heading into a meeting with representatives of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in Paris on Monday.

"The state is going to have to explain why there is discrimination in education that contradicts the treaties that Chile has signed," said Jackson.

Still, the student leader -- who is in the French capital as part of a [European tour](#) by Chile's confederation of university students (Confech) -- rejected government accusations that the students' visit to Europe would "damage the country's image."

"We have not come to tell lies, we won't say anything other than what the OECD has already

[put on the table](#)," Jackson told Radio Cooperativa. "But we are trying to tell the Chilean experience, and if this damages the image of the country, well, the truth hurts . . ."

Jackson also denied that the tour was aimed at damaging Chile's government, asserting instead that the point was to bring about changes to the state institutions and the "inequalities that those structures reinforce."

"This [tour] does not have to do with [President] Piñera or any government in particular," said Jackson. "They have managed the situation very poorly, that's clear . . . [but] the problem has to do with society and the state."

On Sunday student leaders -- including Confech spokesperson Camila Vallejo, who was a last-minute addition to the team -- met with two famous French intellectuals, Stéphane Hessel and Edgar Morin.

Hessel, the French philosopher, is credited with inspiring the "[indignados](#)" movement with his book "iIndignaos!" that has sold millions of copies around the world. The 91-year-old greeted his guests with enthusiasm and reportedly spoke for the greater part of the 90-minute meeting.

He told students that "no oligarchy, political or economic, can be permitted as they don't further democracy or democratic systems."

Hessel warned the Confech representatives, however, that, "The only thing that we [as protesters] cannot permit is violence in any of its forms."

For his part, Edgar Morin told students that "superior education, university, should not be handed over to the market nor to financial speculators, since there is no counterweight that can control them in the world."

He also advised the Chilean student representatives to learn from other movements around the world including the "extreme case of Egypt, that overthrew a dictator."

Sunday's meeting with the French intellectuals came a day after "Global Revolution" protests, inspired by the "indignant protesters" movement that began earlier this year in Spain, which were also convened in [Santiago and around Chile](#).

Chile's student leaders took part in the protests in Paris on Saturday, and were honored by locals who unfurled an enormous Chilean flag. Camila Vallejo gave a speech to thousands of protesters. Two other student leaders, Francisco Figueroa, vice-president of Universidad de Chile's student federation, and Gabriel Iturra, representing Chile's high school students, arrived on Monday in Geneva to meet with representatives of the United Nations.

They also held a meeting in the faculty of humanities at the University of Geneva.

Student leaders plan to return first thing Wednesday morning to take part in the second day of a two-day national strike planned for this week to begin Tuesday.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES: 'Indignants,' Catholics and Zombies swarm Chile's capital - Saturday's marches brought together an estimated 100,000 for three very different causes - Monday, 17 October 2011 21:13



Photo by Nina Arazoza/Santiago Times.

Written by Nina Arazoza

"Indignant" political posters, Christian rock bands and fake blood may seemingly have nothing in common. All three, however, were scattered across the streets of Chile's capital this past Saturday as part of a succession of separate marches.

The festivities began at noon with a "zombie walk." This global phenomenon has been going on since around 2001 and is usually accompanied by not only intense costumes, but some sort

of musical performance and at times political motives. Although Santiago's latest contribution to the trend went on without a distinct organized message, it did draw 2,500 "zombies" to the Plaza de Armas in the center of the city.

At the same time, just a few subway stops away a march was already underway to celebrate "the joy of being Catholic." According to [government estimates](#) close to 40,000 Catholics, participated in the event. The group moved down the Alameda, Santiago's main artery, and ended at the nation's oldest church, the Iglesia de San Francisco.

A few hours later and a couple blocks down the Alameda, a reported [60,000 people](#) made their way to Casa Central, the main administrative building of the Universidad de Chile. This final march was part of the [day of global activism](#) as declared by the world wide "[indignant](#)" movement.

Santiago's participation in the international demonstration was marked by a variety of voices. Flags supporting everything from gay rights, feminism and veganism, to economic reform, a new constitution and the ever-present [student fight](#) rippled above the crowd.

Despite the variety of causes at hand, there was unifying theme in the air: change.

The mood was best reflected in the rotation of popular chants such as "Liberate, liberate, the Mapuche struggle," which references the ongoing struggles of Chile's largest indigenous group, and "Piñera, understand, Chile is not for sale," a critique of the President Sebastián Piñera's economic policies.

Perhaps the most pertinent cry from Saturday's demonstration was an extremely common call for the "fall" of the education system established by former dictator Gen. Augusto Pinochet's 1980 Constitution.

Pablo Peñaloza, spokesperson for Chile's United Collective for Global Change, echoed this plea for change. He told Chilean news site El Mostrador that he believes "many of Chile's problems lie in the constitution."

The march was not only attended by young activists such as Peñaloza, but by a high number of families, including young children. This family atmosphere was accompanied by a low level of conflict, particularly when compared with ongoing education protests that often end violently.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES: Education NGO calls on Chilean students to lay down arms - Educación 2020 says that student strikes destroy the very institutions they aim to protect - Monday, 17 October 2011 00:12

Written by Joe Hinchliffe

Educación 2020, a non governmental organization that claims over 80,000 adherents, has laid out its proposal to reform the Chilean education system and resolve the long-running conflict between students and the government; and the plan does not include a role for students other than ending their strikes, which in some schools dates back to May.

"We cannot ask for more from a student movement. Let alone a movement that has responded to the government [handling of the situation] by adopting a far left position," said the organization's national coordinator Mario Waissbluth in an interview in Friday's La Tercera. "The government needs to take the next step."

Waissbluth, a professor of chemical engineering at the Universidad de Chile, leads Educación 2020, a non-governmental organization that

seeks an overhaul of the Chilean primary and secondary education system.

Its agenda is to create a system by the year 2020 that is of a higher quality and offers more equal opportunities for all Chilean students.

On Wednesday the organization took out a full page insertion in the newspaper La Tercera, calling on students to return to classes and outlining what actions the government needs to

take to begin the process of reform to the education system.

The insert offered a dire assessment of the current state of Chile's education system, which it said had "suffered the abuses of a deregulated market."

"The permanent fall and destruction of the system of public education is not accidental nor recent," it read, "it's the result of series of inadequate policies that, over the last 30 years, have deteriorated this system, a system that is vital for the development of our country."

Still, Weissbluth claimed that the current high profile student protests -- now into their fifth month -- had worsened the situation.



Photo courtesy of Educación 2020.

"We can not ask for more from a student movement... the government needs to take the next."

Mario Weissbluth, National Coordinator of Educación 2020.

"The situation [of the last five months] has gravely threatened the continuation of public education, that paradoxically this movement is trying to defend," he said. "The prolongation of

the conflict has not only threatened the education of many students and the financial situation of their families. It has inflicted almost irreparable collateral damage on the financial situation of public schools and many of the traditional universities."

While asking students to return to classes, the organization called on "political parties, parliamentarians, mayors, school financiers, professors and academics" to urgently formulate proposals that would resolve the situation.

To this end it issued a seven point proposal, that called primarily on explicit promises from the government to improve the quality of teaching, make education free for children from the age of two until middle school and to assist in financing education from that point.

It also requested stricter regulation of for-profit education sector, assistance with student loans and scholarships, and a fundamental overhaul of the higher education system.

Weissbluth criticized the government's current proposals as "trying to cover up the sun with a finger," and offered a direct warning to the current administration.

"If they don't rescue public education, the government will live in conflict," he said.

Weissbluth was critical of elements within both the government and student representatives, blaming the [breakdown of talks](#) on "ultras" -- extreme ideologues -- on both sides, the "childish revolutionaries" of the left and those of the right whom he likened to the North American Tea Party.

He called on the "pragmatic and conscientious" factions -- specifically naming student leaders

Giorgio Jackson and Camila Vallejo -- to tame the more intransigent within their camps.

However his prediction as to the outcome of the situation was pessimistic.

"I see three scenarios," said Weissbluth, "one of which is a brutal escalation of the conflict. The second depends on the government, and it is to combat the childishness of students with a series of proposals that would lead to an agreement. The third, and I believe most probable, is a conflict of moderate intensity until the end of the presidential term. Students have passed the point of no return. In all three scenarios, public education will be gravely injured."

Meanwhile on Thursday education minister Felipe Bulnes announced that he has assembled a "commission of experts" to evaluate alternative proposals for financing higher education.

The team of twelve consists of eleven economists from Chile's major universities.

Juan Manuel Zolezzi, president of Chile's Association of Professors, criticised the commission as being "excessively technical."

"My concern is that there are eleven economists in this commission and there aren't student representatives, academics that aren't economists, anyone from the humanities, any representatives of parents nor school officials who have been on the side of the students," said Zolezzi.

Min. Bulnes responded by blaming the students who he said were "determined not to proceed with talks."

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Free university education in Chile may cost US\$2.5 to 6 billion - Estimates done by private universities, free market think-tanks and NGO's - Thursday, 13 October 2011 19:08



Photo courtesy of Movilh Chile/Flickr.

The number 1,800 has been a key platform of student protests, symbolic of the \$1.8 billion that they claim would fund free higher education

Written by Joe Hinchliffe

Along with five months of protests that have thrown the academic year into chaos and severely damaged the presidency of Sebastián Piñera, the Chilean student mobilization has popularized the number 1,800.

Protesters ran for 1,800 consecutive hours around the presidential palace, have held 1,800-seconds-long "kiss-a-thons," drawn 1,800 pictures and played 1,800 minutes of consecutive football -- as well as done other colorful things involving the number.

Why? The figure represents the US\$1.8 billion amount that a study by economists who support Confech, the confederation of Chile's public university students, estimate would fund free higher education in Chile's traditional 25 public universities.

Public funding of university education is one of the core demands of the student movement and was the primary reason talks between student representatives and Chile's education minister -- who refused to concede to this demand -- broke down on Oct. 6.

However a study released on Thursday has thrown the figure of US\$1.8 billion dollars into question and put the amount required at between US\$ 2.5 - 6 billion dollars annually.

The study was organized by the El Mercurio, a newspaper that -- through a system established during the dictatorship of Gen. Augusto Pinochet -- receives [state subsidies of US\\$5 million per year](#) for publishing official legal announcements and often toes a strongly conservative editorial line.

El Mercurio convened a group of specialists from Chilean private universities, free market think-tanks and NGO's.

The lowest of the estimates was the US\$2.5 billion given by the director of education policy at Educación 2020, a non-government organization that advocates social equality and improvement of Chile's elementary, intermediate and high schools.

The director -- Valentina Quiroga -- said that "education should be free in pre-school, elementary, junior high and high schools. In higher education, we support 70 percent of the financially poorest receiving free education."

Under a current government proposal state funds would pay tuition fees of the poorest 40 percent of the population, while opposition senators are [threatening](#) to derail the 2012 budget unless that percentage is raised.

Claudia Sanhueza, a researcher at the Institute of Public Policy of the University Diego Portales -- a private, non-profit university in Santiago -- estimated that the cost of funding university education at state and private universities would be US\$3.28 billion.

Of that figure US\$600 million would go to professional institutes and technical training centers, a figure which Sanhueza said "could gradually advance."

María Paz Arzola, of the Institute for Liberty and Development, put the figure at US\$4.43 billion for all Chile's currently enrolled students, but said it would rise to just below US\$6 billion if "all vacancies offered in higher education were filled."

The Institute for Liberty and Development is a free market think-tank set up in 1990 -- the year of Chile's transition to democracy -- by former ministers of the Pinochet regime Luis Larráin Arroyo and Hernán Büchi and current secretary of the Piñera administration, Cristián Larroulet.

According to Harald Bayer, subdirector of the Centre for Public Studies -- a nonprofit organization established in 1980 -- the figure would be US\$4.64 billion.

Chile's 2012 national budget, which is yet to pass Congress, currently has a total of US\$60 billion in public expenditures.

It allocates over one-sixth of the budget to education, to a total of US\$11.65 billion.

However a [recent IMF report](#) has recommend that Chile raise corporate taxes and end "generous tax concessions" to increase spending on public services and meet the "unsatisfied needs" of the country's middle and lower classes.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Editorial : Does Chile truly want free higher education?: A closer examination of the big debate in Chile , by David Pedigo - Thursday, 13 October 2011 14:23





Photo by Elibertaria/Flickr.

Administration and the confederation of university students of Chile (Confech) were [broken off once again](#) over the crucial issue of free education in Chile, on which neither side was willing to budge.

It seems to me that this issue is the foundation for the profound disagreement between the students and the government, and as such, it will become more and more crucial as negotiations, or lack thereof, continue. In light of its increasing relevance, I think it deserves closer examination. Several cases already exist of countries that have implemented tuition-free education for students through the university level, and luckily two of them are here in South America: Brazil and Argentina. For the purpose of this article, however, I will focus mainly on Argentina, as it has a more similar income bracket and socioeconomic make-up compared to that of Chile.

Not surprisingly, Argentina has one of the highest higher education enrollment rates in Latin America due to its tuition-free system (70 percent as opposed to 55 percent in Chile). However, according to a 2007 UNESCO report, the completion rate is also lower, with graduation rates of only about 12 percent compared to 26 percent in Chile. More than 40 percent of first-year students in Argentina drop out of their university.

Last week, negotiations between the Piñera This dilemma represents the incentive problems that both systems face. The highly privatized Chilean system makes it difficult for many students to enter because of high costs. Still, these same high costs encourage students to finish their studies so as not to waste their investment. Meanwhile in Argentina, where almost all students are granted free and easy access to education, students often lack motivation to complete their studies on time or at all.

Of course, the fundamental motivation behind Confech's demand for free education lies in the issue of student debt. According to the World Bank, public university students bear about 25 percent of the financial burden in Chile (more

than in any other Latin American country), while this number in Brazil and Argentina hovers very close to zero.

President Sebastián Piñera makes two main claims to support his opposition to free education: number one, that it would be impossible to implement free education in Chile; and number two, that it would result in poor students subsidizing free education for rich ones. Let's examine these claims in more depth.

The first point is extremely broad, so it is difficult to properly examine. Assuming that Piñera means to say that Chile cannot commit the financial resources, his claim does not hold up. Chile spends around 2 percent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on higher education, which is 1 percent more than Argentina. A calculation of the per student expenditure in both countries, based on government reports and World Bank GDP estimates, reveals that Argentina spends around US\$2,000 per university student while Chile spends more than twice as much.

Despite this spending deficit, Argentina continues to be a regional leader in higher education. According to the [Quacquarelli Symonds rankings](#), five of the top 20 universities in Latin America are in Argentina, while only three are in Chile. Another eight (including the number one-ranked University of São Paulo) of the top 20 are in Brazil.

This is not to say, however, that Argentina is without its problems. In fact, Argentine universities suffer from chronic underfunding, which, according to a 2005 World Bank report, leads to "a lack of investment in infrastructure and equipment, very low salaries, and a low percentage of full-time faculty."

Therefore, while an investment of US\$2,000 per student is enough to stay competitive, it would be desirable for Chile to maintain its current level of investment so as to avoid underfunding issues. Keeping this level, however, means more than simply maintaining the status quo.

Chile's private sector contributes to 85 percent of the total national investment in higher education, with the government paying the rest (only 0.3 percent of total GDP). That is to say, taxpayers actually pay far less in Chile to finance public universities; it is the students and their families who pay most of the costs directly. If Chile adopted a free system, the government would have to either find new sources of revenue or divert existing ones to make up the difference. As economists say, there's no such thing as a free lunch.

This brings us to Piñera's second and much more important point. While it seems counterintuitive to say that free education would cause poor

students to subsidize rich ones, the claim does have some reason to it.

Free education does not mean universal education, and the poor are still underrepresented at educational institutions in Argentina and Brazil. This is partly because higher education has a number of other hidden costs (school supplies, relocation and housing expenses, etc.) and partly because university admission requires a certain level of academic preparation. These factors both continue to prevent poorer students from entering. In Brazil and Argentina, 70 percent of university enrollment is represented by the richest 20 and 40 percent, respectively.

Meanwhile the government has to pay the bill. Taxes will ultimately have to be increased or redirected, and Piñera's second claim rests on the assumption that the tax burden will necessarily require a commitment from the middle and lower class. The students would beg to differ.

Confech recently released a plan to maintain the current level of expenditure on education (and thus theoretically evade the underfunding problems befalling Argentina) while simultaneously shifting the costs over to the government. While the plan avoids raising taxes on the middle and lower class (and wisely calls to decrease Chile's inflated military expenditures), it involves some questionable economic policies such as nationalizing Chile's copper mining industry and increasing taxes on foreign companies. Chile is seen as a regional economic hub in large part due to its open business environment, and policies that undermine that image would worry investors and possibly encourage capital flight.

Chile has much to gain by expanding access to education, but a tuition-free system may not be the answer. While the students are right to question the current system, they have not provided convincing evidence that the entire financial burden can be shifted all at once to the government without creating severe shocks to the economy.

Education reform should be targeted, not broad, and the government should offer incentives, not free rides. This could be done in a number of ways (subsidized loans for students, merit-based scholarships, diverting state funds from private to public universities, etc.), but it would require more flexibility regarding the demand for free education. However, reform should be deep as well, and the offers that Piñera has put on the table, such as [expanding state scholarships](#), could be a good start but are not exactly drastic reforms. For the time being, there is a large amount of middle ground that remains untouched.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Chile's government speeds up education legislation - After talks with students leaders collapse Piñera turns back to his earlier proposals - Wednesday, 12 October 2011 17:01



Photo by ffuentes/Flickr.

Government set submit bills in the portfolio of education to congress

Written by Joe Hinchliffe

President Sebastián Piñera finalized two key education bills over the long weekend, as the government looks to re-engage its legislative agenda in the portfolio of education, according to a report in Wednesday's La Tercera.

The president returns to his agenda despite the fact that talks with student leaders broke down [last week](#).

The move will likely further distance the Piñera administration from student leaders -- who have been vigorously campaigning for education reform for over five months -- considering that one of the student [requirements](#) to engage in dialogue was for the government to freeze its proposed bills concerning education, which were drafted without student or teacher input.

One of the bills would begin the process of transferring the administration of schools from the municipal level of government to the federal,

which would end a system -- set up under the dictatorship of Gen. Augusto Pinochet -- that has been one of the fundamental grievances of the movement.

The other would lead to the creation of a superintendent of higher education that would regulate the for-profit education sector. Students have called for the for-profit education sector to be abolished all together.

Government officials have indicated that these bills will be submitted to parliament for approval by the end of next week.

"We are going to move through institutional paths," said government spokesperson Andrés Chadwick -- who has blamed the collapse of talks on "intransigent and ideological" students leaders -- on Tuesday.

"That's why the projects already sent to Parliament, and those that remain, are going to be sent in the coming days."
 In a message delivered through a press conference, the spokesperson said that although the bills will be in congress the government would continue to offer a "table of dialogue" to the student representatives.
 "The doors to the Minister of Education are always open, they [student leaders] know very

well they are always open. But from now on we are going to concentrate on progressing through Parliament, in Valparaíso, to search for agreements with the different sectors of parliamentarians, and thus be able to advance the bills that we have today."
 The same institutions that Chadwick spoke of were found to have a remarkably low confidence rating in a national poll released by the Universidad Diego Portales on Wednesday.

The poll found that only seven percent of respondents had confidence in Chile's political parties and 11.1 percent in the Congress. It also confirmed the consistent trend of the nation's [major polls](#) that place government approval ratings at lower than 30 percent with a finding of 27.6 percent, down from 51.6 percent in 2010.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Spain's 'indignant' protesters seek to unite movements worldwide - Chilean activists are among those expected to participate in Saturday's worldwide marches - Wednesday, 12 October 2011 17:00



Photo By Calafellvalvo/Flickr.

Written by Nina Arazoza
 This Saturday, organizers of Spain's "indignant" protest movement are calling for an international day of action they've dubbed "United for Global Change."
 Tying the Spanish experience to citizen movements in Tunisia, Egypt, Spain, Greece, Chile, Israel, India and the United States, organizers declare on the event's [website](#), "It's time for us

to unite...It's time for them to listen... People of the world, rise up!"
 The Spanish movement began in May as a way to vocalize discontent over national debt, high unemployment and ineffective political agendas. Chilean protesters likewise began in full force in May, first protesting the approval of a major dam project in Patagonia (HidroAysén) and now rejecting the nation's class-based education system.
 The joining of agendas of the "indignant" protesters with the revolutions of the "Arab Spring," the environmental and educational movement known as the "Chilean Winter," and the New York protests against Wall Street, referred to in [some circles](#) as the "US Autumn," helps demonstrate that every uprising brings with it new momentum.
 Their message is clear: international restlessness has reached an uncontainable level. The Spanish protesters are calling (in 18 different languages)

on "the people" to demonstrate through "a global non violent protest" that this "intolerable situation must end."
 Chilean society is no stranger to activism, and [Chile's student movement](#) has participated in nearly 40 major marches over the last five months.
 The site provides information on planned events in 662 cities from 79 countries across the world and offers an interactive map with links to specific information about each event.
 At least 10 events have been organized and shared across Chile on the "United for Global Change" website. They stretch from Arica in the north to Valdivia in the south. In Santiago, a [demonstration](#) has been planned by activist group Alerta Chile for Saturday that is scheduled to lead marchers several from centrally-located Plaza Italia to Parque O'Higgins.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Former president Bachelet breaks her silence on education debate - The former president looks to the future, but her critics are skeptical of her past - Wednesday, 12 October 2011 16:06



Photo by Alex E. Proimos/Flickr.

Written by David Pedigo
 In an interview last Friday with Radio Cooperativa, former Chilean President Michele Bachelet voiced her optimism regarding the student movement that has gone on for over five months in Chile. The socialist former president was interviewed from Zurich, Switzerland after attending a meeting in her current post as [head of UN Women](#).
 "Today Chile has an enormous opportunity to better the education system, something that during my government we tried to do, but in that moment we did not have the support of all the political sectors," the former president said, speaking on the subject for the first time.

During the beginning of Bachelet's four-year term in 2006, tens of thousands of high schools across the country participated in widespread protests, which are sometimes referred to as the "Penguin Revolution" because of the black and white school uniforms worn by the protesting students. These protests were characterized by school takeovers and marches on the capital, much like the movement taking place in Chile today.
 The Penguin Revolution was focused primarily on high school students, while the 2011 protests have seen a much higher level of participation and coordination from university students. Both movements have criticized the PSU, the standardized college entry exam in Chile, and called for the end of Chile's school voucher system, which allows private schools to compete with public schools for state funding.
 Bachelet gave emphasis on the obstacles that faced her administration. "We sent legislation to Congress, but several of them are still in committees," she explained.
 Still, many of Bachelet's political adversaries accused her of skirting responsibility for today's educational impasse.
 According to Dep. Cristián Monckeberg of the center-right National Renewal party (RN), "The

students would not be marching today if Michelle Bachelet had resolved the problems with education that the penguins complained of."
 Dep. María José Hoffman of the conservative Independent Democratic Union party (UDI) also criticized Bachelet. "She was irresponsible not to more strongly urge Congress to act," said Hoffman.
 Hoffman credited former Education Minister Joaquín Lavín with coming up with the votes necessary [to pass Bachelet's agreements](#) nearly five years later. Hoffman is the current president of the Commission of Education of the Chamber of Deputies.
 Regardless of the shortcomings of her administration, Bachelet remains optimistic about current trends.
 "Throughout the world, what is being observed is a country that is mobilizing, but for something that is very important, because it doesn't only have to do with the present, but also with the future development of the entire country," she said.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Chilean student movement leaders set to meet in Europe Thursday - Giorgio Jackson aims to demonstrate movement's seriousness - Wednesday, 12 October 2011 16:05

Written by Steve Shea
 Leaders from the student movement in Chile will travel to meet with various organizations in Europe on Thursday to help [raise awareness](#) of their goals on an international level.
 Giorgio Jackson, president of the student federation of the Universidad Católica (FEUC), will head the student delegation, along with FEUC vice-president Francisco Figuero.
 Relations between the student movement and Chile's government have [remained tense](#) with

government spokesperson Andres Chadwick telling La Tercera on Monday the movement "has been taken over by the most extreme in ideology."
 Chile's student leaders will be meeting with the UN Commission on Human Rights, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and with several European parliament representatives.





Photo by Marcos S. Gonzales Valdez/Flickr. Jackson and Figuero will also give two lectures regarding Chile's student movement, one at the Sorbonne in Paris and one in Geneva. Jackson sees the trip as a learning experience, telling El Mercurio, "We want to learn about other experiences, perceptions and diagnosis of student conflict, in addition to presenting our opinion."

FUEC hopes this trip will illustrate the seriousness of Chile's educational reform movement. "What concerns us as a movement is how to orient the education system towards greater development opportunities for Chile," Figuero told El Mercurio. "And for that we must be open to recommendations." Giorgio and Figuero also plan to participate in the Global Revolution that is being organized by "[indignados](#)" on Saturday, Oct. 15.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Opposition politicians plan to block Chile's 2012 budget - The Concertación holds budget hostage until student demands and tax reform addressed. - Tuesday, 11 October 2011 20:15



Photo by Mabel Flores/Flickr.

"The only way that we can help the youths in the street is to reject this budget," Socialist Party president and Senator Fulvio Rossi [pictured].
Written by Joe Hinchliffe

Three senators from Chile's opposition coalition, Concertación, have threatened to reject President Sebastián Piñera's [2012 budget](#) unless it is redrafted to include input from Chile's student movement for education reform. Socialist Party president Fulvio Rossi, Alejandro Navarro of the left-wing MAS party, and president of the Education Commission, Jaime Quintana of the Party for Democracy (PPD), said that they would not approve the budget if the senate did not first debate tax reforms that would assure free higher education for a more significant proportion of Chileans. In making their declarations public, the senators were endorsing student representatives who called on senators and members of parliament not to approve any bill that did not have the explicit approval of representatives from the ongoing education movement that has been protesting for over five months.

Students made the call on Monday after their talks with the government broke down on [Oct. 6](#). Student leaders had been enticed to those talks in part by the hope that they could influence the allocation of education resources in the budget, but pulled out when the government discarded that scenario. Another major cause of the breakdown was the government's refusal to consider funding higher education for all citizens, instead offering an allocation of resources sufficient to cover the fees of the poorest 40 percent of students. This figure was considered unsatisfactory by the senators. In his declaration, Sen. Rossi echoed three of the core demands of the student movement: an end to municipally administered public education in favor of a federally administered system, free higher education for "at least 80 percent of the population" and an end to for-profit educational institutions. "If these conditions are not met, as the opposition, the only way that we can help the youths in the street is to reject this budget," said the senator. Sen. Navarro said that the number of students receiving free education needed to be "at least all of the students whose families cannot pay for their studies." Navarro called on other parliamentarians to reject the budget, "if it does not include the resources that students are demanding." Sen. Quintana referenced the International Monetary Fund (IMF) report [released last Thursday](#) that recommended Chile raise corporate taxes so as to increase spending. "Tax reform is necessary," said Quintana, "and those who oppose free education do so because they oppose reform, because for many in the high wage sectors in this country it is much

easier to pay the fees of their children instead of paying [higher] taxes." The government responded firmly to these declarations. Secretary General Cristián Larroulet said on Tuesday that while the tax system was not perfect, now was no time to change it. "We don't want to say that the tax system couldn't be improved," he said, "but we are not going to have a discussion about the budget that would introduce the uncertainty of a tax debate, especially in a moment of grave economic uncertainty in the world." Larroulet responded to the IMF report saying that the government "doesn't see the basis" of the arguments of the report, which he characterized as "analysis without rigor." President Piñera called on the "patriotism, compromise and goodwill" of the parliamentarians to pass the 2012 budget. Interior Minister Rodrigo Hinzpeter publicly denounced the opposition senators. "It's a grand irresponsibility to condition any law on facts outside congress," said the Interior Minister, "although, this case is especially grave, because this law is the vehicle through which to distribute public resources for social policies that permit thousands of compatriots to obtain subsidies, housing, pensions, health and education, among others." Meanwhile Hinzpeter also called directly on opposition senators to approve the government's proposed [anti-crime laws](#) that would criminalize the occupation of schools, which are forms of protest that students have employed to pressure the government into reforming Chile's education system. Hinzpeter called on the opposition to join the government's position to "not accept that our country is governed by looters."

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Chile's student movement prepares action plan - After five months of protests, the students show no signs of letting up. - Tuesday, 11 October 2011 20:12



Photo by Claudia Mazuela/Flickr.

Written by David Pedigo
Leaders of Chile's confederation of university students (Confech) met Saturday in Valdivia, a city in southern Chile, to plan a strategy for the future of the student movement. The meeting comes after a failed dialogue with the government, which was [abandoned](#) last week after

disagreement over basic issues relating to free education for all students. "We have decided to call upon all the students of Chile to put forth as much effort as possible, to not start a second semester, to radicalize the movement and to prepare themselves for difficult times," David Urrea, representative of the Universidad Arturo Prat (UAP) student federation, told La Tercera. Public universities and high schools throughout the country have been shut down for over five months now because of national student protests that demand deep reforms to Chile's class-based educational system. Both the government and students have expressed their desire to end this conflict and return to classes as soon as possible, yet neither have budged on the primary demands of the movement. Student leaders shows no signs of giving in. The students plan to enhance their coordination with other actors, such as politicians, university ad-

ministrators and international organizations in order to pressure the government. Students aim to establish a dialogue with national senators and deputies to get their support. They have asked legislators to block the passing of education bills not previously discussed and approved by leaders of the student movement. Opposition politicians have already threatened to [reject the 2012 budget proposal](#) if tax reform to fund free education isn't factored in. Some student leaders have started [traveling abroad to solicit international support](#), chief among them Giorgio Jackson, president of the student federation of Universidad Católica. The students will make their case before the UN, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the European Union's Commission of Higher Education. "We have a powerful international agenda to show what is happening, so that the eyes of the world fix themselves on the educational crisis in



Chile," said Jackson on Monday in an interview with the Spanish newspaper El País. The students will also take a more aggressive stance toward university administrators. The document that was drafted by Confech on Saturday said university authorities would be asked to explain "the repressive policies against their students" and to decide "which side they are on."

Although government spokesperson Andrés Chadwick claimed Sunday that the student movement had been taken over by "ultra" extremists, President Sebastián Piñera has continued to say that he hoped the students would return to talks. Confech said it would consider returning to talks "as soon as the government speaks our lan-

guage." The Confech document drafted this weekend placed the blame for the broken negotiations squarely on the government's shoulders for promoting a law to criminalize school takeovers (tomas) and for refusing to discuss baseline issues like putting an end to education profiteering.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Preliminary results from Chile's education plebiscite - Organizers predict over a million and a half votes; so far, 90 percent support students. - Tuesday, 11 October 2011 20:04



Photo courtesy of Magisterio Nacional/Facebook. Written by Joe Hinchliffe With counting still underway from the [national plebiscite for education](#) on Oct. 7 and 8, organizers -- including the National Teachers Union and education activists -- have declared a turnout of over one million and expect that figure to go up by 50 percent when the final votes are tallied. With 56.7 percent of the ballots counted, organizers claimed a tally of 1,016,827, 90 percent of which responded in favor of the three questions

about changes in the education system and the call for a legally binding plebiscite. The three questions related to fundamental demands of the student movement, now in its fifth month of strikes and protests. The first question asked if voters supported students' demand for free higher education, the second question asked if voters were in favor of a federally administered school system, and the last question asked for an end to profiteering in education. "It is the first time in the history of Chile that a national plebiscite has been organized by the citizens. It's the first time in Chile's history that the citizens of thirty cities have been consulted. It's the first time Chileans from abroad have voted, and never in Chile has a voting system been established on the internet," said Edgardo Condeza, president for the Movement for the Consultation and Civil Rights. Jaime Gajardo, president of the National Teachers Union, said that organizers would take the figures to "La Moneda [the presidential palace], the electoral service, the Supreme Court, the

Chamber of Deputies and the Senate," until they had a legally binding plebiscite. "We are going to say that there are countries in which 500,000 signatures obligates the state to recognize a plebiscite. We are going to give them one million and a half, we are going to say; please let's establish a binding plebiscite," said Gajardo. Meanwhile the government played down the validity of the plebiscite. "A serious country is not governed by plebiscites in the style of Cuba and Chavez [president of Venezuela]," said Sen. Víctor Pérez of the right wing Democratic Union party (UDI). "A plebiscite where there is no type of control, where people can vote multiple times, in person or on the internet, is an instrument with little validity and is more of a media stunt," said Pérez. Organizers dismissed the criticisms of their figures and hope to have them finalized and confirmed during the week.

THE VALPARAISO TIMES : Special forces end university occupation in Valparaíso, Chile - Police cleared one university Monday after months of occupation by protesting students. - Tuesday, 11 October 2011 18:09



Photo by nasmo/Flickr. Written by Kerstin Doerflinger Chilean police forces cleared the economic department, administrative building and central campus of the Universidad Católica de Valparaíso on Monday.

The police action lasted from approximately 3 p.m. until 4:45 p.m. following orders by the university rector. The university had been occupied by its students for four months in the framework of the nationwide student protests, which started in May 2011. The clearing was observed by hundreds of students who gathered around the Catholic university in order to show their solidarity with students occupying the building. The police action shut down traffic on the avenues Brasil and Argentina for several hours, and was reportedly conducted without any major aggressions. The police force nevertheless employed water cannons on several occasions to disperse protesting students. The special police forces includ-

ed approximately 60 officers and two police buses. Canisters with highly flammable chemical products, bags of stones and a number of fire extinguishers were found in the building, according to the police. After their removal, the students signaled that they are considering a reoccupation of the school grounds. Student leaders said the clearing signifies a lack of dialogue from the side of the university administration. Later in the afternoon the police also cleared the engineering department. The students now fear more evictions of other departments, such as the ones on the Curauma campus where the departments of sciences and philosophy are located.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Internationalizing the student movement - Chile's student leaders to meet UN staff in Europe, IMF report backs student demands - Sunday, 09 October 2011 00:00



Photo by Simonon/Flickr. Written by Joe Hinchliffe Representatives of Chile's confederation of university students (Confech) will travel to Europe next week to seek international support and

raise the profile of their push for sweeping reforms to the nation's education system. Student representatives will include Giorgio Jackson, president of the student federation of Universidad Católica, and Francisco Figueroa, vice president of the student federation of Universidad de Chile (Fech). The student leaders will meet with representatives of the human rights commission of the UN and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and speak before the Commission of Higher Education of the European Union. Their itinerary also includes meetings with the provincial government of Paris and legislators in Berlin, as well as a press conference at the University of Humboldt. "Confech is thinking about internationalizing (Chile's education) conflict and the first step will

be the trip of some of our representatives to Europe," said José Ancalao, leader of the federation of Mapuche students. The delegation to Europe is a continuation of previous Confech efforts to collaborate with student and labor organizations in other countries of Latin America. At the end of August Camila Vallejo, the charismatic president of the Fech, travelled to Brazil to attend student demonstrations and meet with the President Dilma Rousseff. Vallejo has called on students to start taking the student movement in new directions, away from the marches, strikes and occupations of schools that have characterized the campaign for the last five months. "This movement, this fight, is not only for this year," she said. "It has to continue and obviously we can't be on strike for three years, so we

are going to have to look for an appropriate way to continue demonstrations."

Chile's government is also attempting to manage international perceptions of the student movement, after President Sebastián Piñera told a general assembly at the U.N in [September](#) that he "shared the vision" of the nation's "noble" student movement.

On Friday Foreign Minister Alfredo Moreno said he intended to raise the topic at a council of the European Union in Brussels, noting he would speak of "the problems and underlying causes" of the protests and the "path forward" for the country.

Students are hoping that they can capitalize on Chile's international profile and the government's concern about international perceptions of the country. At [Thursday's](#) unauthorized march -- which became quite violent as Carabineros dispersed the crowd -- students told the Santiago Times of their high hopes for the delegation's trip to Europe and the internationalization of the movement.

"[When the Confech delegation travels to Europe] the world will know that the situation in Chile's education system is terrible," said Fernando Amaya, a high school student at Santiago's most prestigious public school, Instituto Nacional. "And that is something that the government doesn't want the world to know about."

"The movement is not only a local now," said university student Carlos Castañeda. "But it has crossed the borders, and various countries around the world have shown their support, like Mexico, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Spain, and even Germany and other European countries. So if the leaders of this movement go overseas to talk with international organizations... they can see how vulnerable our basic rights are, rights that are well established in other countries and which Chile can easily afford to finance."

"I think it's great that they [Confech representatives] are going abroad to meet with these people [representatives of international organizations] so that they can know about this movement," said University of Chile student Gonzalo Acosta. "But they need to take care. The student

leaders have to take care that they don't leave when there is a crisis here."

Meanwhile, student efforts to internationalize the issue were given a boost Thursday when a report by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) recommended that Chile's government raise taxes on corporations and increase spending on public services.

The report on [economic perspectives for Latin America and the Caribbean](#) said the corporate tax in the country was "relatively low" and that more resources were needed to pay for "social necessities and infrastructure" and to address the high level of "inequality" and the "unsatisfied" needs of a middle class, which is in "rapid expansion."

Written under the direction of economist and former Chilean finance minister Nicolas Eyzaguirre -- the report found that Chile "should consider the possibility of increasing direct tax rates being paid by companies up to international standards and reducing generous incentives and tax concessions'.

THE [SANTIAGO TIMES](#) : Activists promote national plebiscite on education in Chile : Vote this weekend centers on core demands - Friday, 07 October 2011 08:15



Photo by makitaestilo/Flickr.

Written by Joe Hinchliffe

Activists seeking radical change in Chile's class-based education system have convoked a "national plebiscite for education" for Oct. 7 and 8.

Public approval for the student movement seeking radical change in the nation's education system has been consistently high, with 79 percent of respondents of the latest [Adimark](#) poll saying that they supported the student movement.

Still, the plebiscite will attempt to gauge the level of support amongst the general public on the students' four most fundamental demands.

The first question asks if respondents agree with the demand for high quality, free education at all levels, funded by the state.

This demand was one of the fundamental reasons that talks between the government and representatives of education system [broke down](#) on Wednesday, as students insisted upon it and the government refused to consider the demand.

The second question of the plebiscite relates to the issue of municipal management of schools

and seeks to gauge public support for a decentralized public education system headed by the Ministry of Education.

This has been one of the fundamental demands of Chile's high school students, who want to roll back the current system -- developed under the Pinochet dictatorship -- to one in which schools would be federally administered.

The third question relates to the issue of profit in the public education system, while the final question gauges support for a fully binding national plebiscite on education.

The plebiscite this Friday and Saturday is open to all Chilean citizens over 14 years. Voting may occur on-line or at public institutions around the country.

THE [SANTIAGO TIMES](#) : Talks break down: Chile's student-government rift escalates - Student charge bad faith, announce more demonstrations for Oct. 6 and 19 - Thursday, 06 October 2011 10:20



Photo courtesy of Mineduc

Written by Steve Anderson

Upset with the government's rejection of free, quality education for all as an option for Chile's public high schools and universities, student leaders Wednesday evening withdrew from negotiations with the government and announced protests for today, Thursday, and for Oct. 19. Today's march has not been approved by local authorities.

Wednesday afternoon's talks were aimed at breaking the student-government impasse on education reform that has resulted in five months of [school takeovers](#), [massive national demonstrations](#), a [lost semester](#) for many students and poor poll numbers for President Sebastián Piñera.

Students claimed bad faith by the government, saying Education Minister Felipe Bulnes refused to consider their demand for free and quality education throughout the public school system.

Bulnes confirmed the government's commitment to help the most poor students, but added, "The students are insisting on 100 percent free education for students attending traditional state universities. We don't think that's good state policy, to make education free for the rich. It's not right for the poor to subsidize the rich, and this is a fundamental difference in our respective position."

The students are also calling for a radical overhaul of the nation's tax system -- including the re-nationalization of Chile's copper wealth -- in order to equitably finance free, quality education in the public schools.

The dissolution of Wednesday evening's negotiations came after four hours of discussions between Bulnes and student and education leaders. Student leaders from the technical institutes were the first to call it quits, followed by student leaders from the public high schools. University student leaders then followed suit, bringing the talks to an unhappy close.

"We decided to come to the negotiating table in spite of all the doubts we had," said student leader David Urrea of Universidad Arturo Pratt.

"But the government didn't make a single concession towards our demands. It's been five months now of demonstrations. We've come forward with our own position papers, we've suffered the [death of a student](#) -- Manuel Gutiérrez -- at the [hands of the Carabineros](#) [police], we've decided to go ahead and finish the first semester and we have dismantled our school takeovers. But the government hasn't ceded a thing."

Camila Vallejo, the president of the Universidad de Chile student federation, confirmed that university students had broken off the talks, a decision she expected to be ratified at Saturday's national Confech (student confederation) meeting in Valdivia. "We lament the government's unwillingness to move forward," said Vallejo.

Catholic University student leader Giorgio Jackson also expressed his frustration with the government's position. "The government today is trying to make it appear that we want to have either everything, or nothing," said Jackson. "But what we are seeking are mid- and long-term plans, with completion dates to be debated and set now. I am very, very frustrated. They are painting it as 'everything or nothing' because we are questioning the very foundation of the current education model."

[I LOVE CHILE](#) : Education major topic for Chile's 2012 budget proposal -- Friday, September 30, 2011



Posted by: [Avery Cropp](#)

SANTIAGO — President Sebastián Piñera presented the budget for 2012 last night, Sept. 29. President Piñera presents the budget proposal on Sept. 29, 2011. Photo credit: Presidencia de la República

The budget total is US\$60 billion, an increase of 5 percent from last year. The budget includes the largest allotment of funds for education in the country's history, according to the president.

"In the past year we have crossed through a world of uncertainty and even in the economic crisis, our economy is growing at over 6 percent," Piñera said. *"It has created more than half a million jobs, wages are rising, and investment, exports and productivity remain dynamic."* The president said that he seriously considered the plight of the middle class and vulnerable in Chile with this budget proposal.

Parts of the budget with the largest concentration of the funds include: education, health, support of the lower class and safety.

Education

After five months of student strikes, education was allotted US\$11.65 billion. This is an increase of 7.2 percent from last year and accounts for 25 percent of the public spending.

President Piñera said that the government is committed to making education in Chile of better quality, allowing financing access on all levels and strengthening of public education. A kindergarten and preschool program will be guaranteed to all people. An education fund of US\$4 billion will be established this year as well.

This education fund, according to Piñera, will go towards scholarships, a just system of financing and a free education.

Minister of Finance Felipe Larraín said that scholarships will be guaranteed to 40 percent of the country's most vulnerable and a combination of grants and loans will exist for the other 20 percent who would be eligible. Interest will be lowered for credits from 6 percent to 2 percent. In addition, loan defaulters can reschedule their payments.

"I do not want any young person who has the interest, motivation and talent to run out of education," Larraín said.

Education reform in regards to teaching and curriculum will also take place.

Health

On the health front, the budget will increase spending in preventative medicine. Twenty-four primary health clinics and 30 family health centers were proposed to be built.

Thirty-eight inversion projects will take place in hospitals and seven reconstruction projects will take place as well.

Resources will be implemented to add 200 more medical specialists in all regions with the goal to eliminate the long waits for the ill.

The program that the first lady has been working on for the past year, *"Elegir a vivir sano"* or *"Elect to live healthy"* will be implemented. The focus is on preventative medicine, eating well and exercising.

Fight against poverty

The *"Ingreso ético familiar"* or the **"Ethical Family Income Act"** will be implemented with this budget.

The goal of the act is to supplement the incomes of 170,000 families.

The program began as a project that focused on families in extreme poverty. About 30 percent of the population was included in this social strata, though it is said that it also includes the emerging middle class.

The object of the program is to help people get out of poverty by themselves and establish an alliance of mutual compromise between the state and the families.

The plan includes three pillars which you can access at the link above.

There is also a part of the budget which will give tax breaks to small businesses who are the creators of employment and according to Piñera, this will demonstrate the country's loyalty to those who create opportunities.

An extension of utilized taxes will occur. Rebates will be extended to the lower-class and stamps for the program Chile Paga will be extended as well.

Safety

The fourth part of the budget is about the border battle against delinquency and drug-trafficking. The president hopes to provide security to families and prevent young people from entering into drug use.

This fight will take place on the northern border to prevent drugs from entering Chile. The presence of law enforcement on the border will increase by 2,000 *carabineros* and 200 officials of the PDI.

Members of law enforcement will also increase in 134 communities through the *"Plan barrio en paz,"* or the neighborhood peace plan, and will be put into 100 of the most vulnerable neighborhoods.

The goal of this plan is to better the dignity, security and capacity of jails. There is also talk about creating new laws to increase the protection for *carabineros*.

The budget is expected to be approved by Congress within the next week.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Piñera's popularity continues to plummet, CERC poll finds - Near total support for student demands; 67 percent 'believe little if anything the president says - Tuesday, 27 September 2011 13:29



Photo by the Presidencia de la Republica de Ecuador/Flickr Written by Steve Anderson

A poll from the Center for the Study of Contemporary Reality (CERC) released Tuesday confirmed that Chile's beleaguered President Sebastián Piñera continues to lose popular support. Outright rejection of the President grew by 13 points to 66 percent, while those approving of his work fell 13 points, to just 22 percent, the poll found.

This is the lowest approval rating ever seen by a sitting president in the 25-year history of CERC polls and confirms the result of a recent Adimark poll that also found Piñera's support going from

bad to worse: dropping to 27 percent, according to the Adimark poll.

The CERC poll also found that 67 percent "believe little if anything" the President says, up from 57 percent last May. Another 16 percent "more or less" believe the President, while only 14 percent "believe a great deal" of what he says.

The CERC poll was based on interviews of 1,200 adults from all over the country taken between Aug. 10 and Aug. 28, a time when the nation was riveted by continuing student protests that are supported by the vast majority of the nation.

The CERC poll also shows a sharp change in public perception of the most important issues now facing the nation: 74 percent cite education as the primary challenge to the nation, up from 24 percent last May. The poll determined that 89 percent of the public supports the ongoing student strikers/protesters, with 71 percent supporting a plebiscite initiative as a way to resolve education policy differences.

"Today, people from all the different social strata are naming education as the primary issue facing Chile," said CERC director, Carlos Huneeus.

There was also a sharp increase in the number of people agreeing that the current government

"works only for the business community," - up to 71 percent, compared to 64 percent in the previous CERC poll.

The CERC poll also examined the state of Chile's political parties. Support for opposition parties grew from 40 to 45 percent, even while another 43 percent continue to give a negative evaluation of the opposition parties.

Meanwhile, support for the center-right governing parties dropped from 29 percent to 22 percent.

An election between the top-ranked opposition figure (former President Michelle Bachelet) and the top-ranked rightist leaders (Public Works Minister Laurence Golborne) would result in a 59 percent to 22 percent victory for Bachelet, the CERC poll found.

When people were asked who they believe will be the next president, Bachelet received 32 percent, Golborne 28 percent, and center-left dissident Marco Enriquez-Ominami (a former presidential candidate in 2010) 3 percent.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Thousands of students protest school closures in Chile's capital : High school students protest and university students vote on government's dialogue proposal - Monday, 26 September 2011 20:32



Photo by Fabrizio Contreras / Twitter.
Thousands of students marched down to the municipal department of Providencia protesting Friday's closure of two schools by mayor Cristián Labbé.

Written by Joe Hinchliffe

The 25 universities of the Confederation of Chilean Students (Confech) held meetings across the county on Monday to determine if they will accept the government's invitation to enter working groups to resolve a conflict that is only days away from entering its fifth month.

Voting was held in each of the universities in response to an email message from Education Minister Felipe Bulnes, who offered a new set of guarantees after the government previously refused to accept all [four of the guarantees that students originally required](#) to enter discussions. The minister's two-page email came after a Confech national assembly was postponed by a

blackout that plunged most of the country into [darkness on Saturday night](#).

The assembly will re-convene on Tuesday, when representatives from the student federation of each university will present their decisions in order to determine Confech's official response. In his email, the education minister offered four concessions to student leaders.

Bulnes promised to remove the order of urgency on two proposed laws that would change the financing of student loans; laws which students had demanded the government withdraw.

Another concession regards withholding a bill to Congress that would change the administration of public schools from municipal to federal control for another 60 days.

The minister indicated that the delay of these bills would allow students to have a say in shaping them, should they engage in the proposed working groups.

Bulnes also reiterated the government's commitment to making the working groups transparent -- through live coverage, public minutes and public participation -- and promised the ministry's "best efforts" at re-programming the academic year, which has been extremely disrupted by demonstrations and strikes.

According to Chile's two mainstream papers -- La Tercera and El Mercurio -- the first reactions of student representatives were relatively positive.

Still, there was a contingent that saw the offer only as a "political gesture" that would offer no clear results.

"This is an advance from the first response to what is being proposed now, but we want de-

tails," Student Federation President Patricio Contreras at the Universidad de Los Lagos told El Mercurio.

The education minister was attempting to distance himself on Monday from the actions of Mayor Cristián Labbé of Providencia, who on Friday [sent riot police into two schools](#) in the Santiago borough to disperse students who had seized the schools and ended the school year.

"I want to categorically deny what mayor Labbé said yesterday, that he had informed me of the decision he took on Friday," Minister Bulnes said on Tuesday morning.

Bulnes said although he didn't like the measures, he could understand the frustration felt by the mayor. As to what action he would take, the minister indicated that his department would first assess the legality of the mayor's action.

Tension had escalated by Monday, when at least 2,000 high school students protested in the streets of Santiago. At around 9:30 a.m., the students gathered in Plaza Italia with parents and teachers and marched to the municipal building of Providencia.

Early reports indicated that 16 students were arrested after police cracked down on the march, which was not authorized.

President of the student federation of University of Chile and one of the most emblematic leaders of the student movement, Camila Vallejo, responded with a post on her twitter account.

"The repression of students in Providencia is outrageous: first they closed the schools and today they strike the students."

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : President praises Chile's student movement as 'noble' at UN - Draws criticism of double standards from teachers, university and high school leaders - Sunday, 25 September 2011 22:24



Photo courtesy of Presidencia de Chile.
Chilean President Sebastián Piñera addresses the U.N. General Assembly.

Written by Joe Hinchliffe

On Thursday Chilean President Sebastián Piñera addressed the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York, touching on the controversial topics of the Bolivian demand for access to the Pacific on Chilean territory and Palestinian claims for statehood -- which he endorsed.

However it was the president's comments regarding the Chilean student movement that stirred the largest amount of debate at home.

"In the last few weeks, thousands of youths have taken to the streets to demonstrate in my country, for a noble grand and beautiful cause, that is

to give quality education for all children and youths," said the President.

"Our government shares this vision and has provided the most sweeping reform and the highest quantity of resources to improve the quality and expand infrastructure and access."

He also drew extensive references to the development of technology and the idea of a knowledge society, in which he said "education is the true mother of all of battles, unfortunately it is also the Achilles heel of some countries."

The speech, however, came at an awkward time for President Piñera.

On the very same day the country was rocked by protests, in what was one of the largest demonstrations in a movement for education reform that has gone on for more than four months and enjoyed public approval ratings of up to 80%.

And at the same time as the president was lauding the popular movement on the international stage, his secretary general, Andrés Chadwick, was declaring adamantly that the government would not be swayed by public demonstrations.

It was a contradiction that drew sharp criticism from leaders of the movement of which the president spoke.

"President Piñera praised the student movement in the U.N., but his ministry spokesman, Andrés

Chadwick, underlined in Santiago that the executive would stick to its path despite marches, big or small," said the president of the National Teachers Union, Jaime Gajardo.

In an allusion to the statements of the secretary general, the president of the student federation of the Universidad Católica, Giorgio Jackson, declared: "We are not guided by the people meter... nor the number of people that attend marches," but by "our convictions... that are more plausible, that are more just and that invite a conviction and a devotion for this movement that is constantly getting stronger."

The President's speech was also denounced by high school student leaders.

"What the President said at the United Nations was pretty annoying to us because when the President of the republic is in his country... he criminalizes the movement, lowers the profile and doesn't give much account to our demands," said secondary school federation president Freddy Fuentes. "We would like these declarations to be made when he is in Chile."

Camila Vallejo, president of the confederation of university students, labeled the speech as full of "contradictions, incoherencies and inconsistencies," and "contrary to what the President has really done in his country."

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Riot police retake high schools in Chile's capital : Deputies denounce the take-over as illegal and look to launch an injunction against it - Sunday, 25 September 2011 22:16

Written by Joe Hinchliffe

On Friday the mayor of Providencia, Cristián Labbé, sent in riot police to disperse students from two high schools in the affluent inner-city borough of Santiago.

The public schools of José Victorino Lastarria and Carmela Carvajal were just two of hundreds that have been 'en toma' since May; seized by stu-

dents who are demanding reforms to the education system.

Footage published on the website of [The Clinic](#) showed Carabineros police using water cannons to disperse the students, some of whom were injured.

In a strongly worded address after the incident, Labbé said that those students who had not signed onto the government's controversial plan

to resume classes would now be forced to repeat the year.

"There will only be classes for those students that have signed up to the 'Let's save the school year' program, the rest will repeat the year without consideration," he said, referring to the government initiative to return students to class that has been categorically rejected by CONES,

the body that represents Chile's high school students.



Cristián Labbé, former bodyguard of Gen. Augusto Pinochet and current mayor of Providencia. The plan was announced on Aug. 10 and has been criticized by student leaders, both because they regard it as flawed and as it does not take into account their demands. Instead student and teacher groups have been attempting to forward their own plans to complete the academic year. "We are looking at various alternatives to normalize classes," said CONES spokesperson Rodrigo Rivera in response to the government's decision last week to extend the deadline for signing up to their plan to this Tuesday. However the mayor of Providencia was adamant that in his borough the door was firmly closed to negotiation. "The only way to save the school year is the program declared by the Education Ministry and only until the deadline set by the ministry...the municipality of Providencia declares the schools closed, that is to say, it is not going to try recover (classes)... we are not going

to accept the use of force nor abuse nor the indolence of some parents nor the complicity of teachers," he said. The mayor also declared that students who did not live in the borough would not be allowed to re-enroll, effectively evicting 85% of the student body from the schools. "We are going to concentrate on the students and neighbors of Providencia," he said, "the 85% of students that are not from Providencia will have to look to their boroughs." Dep. Jorge Burgos of the Christian Democratic (DC) party -- who denounced the move as "a throwback" to the dictatorship -- also criticized this last clause as discriminatory. The member of the Chamber of Deputies said that the schools in Providencia "have the resources and capability to help combat the inequality by offering free education to children of other boroughs." In protests -- online and on the ground -- students have displayed the headline of a cover article published by La Nación Domingo in 2006: "I was tortured by Labbé." The article detailed the testimony of Anatolio Zárate, a former officer of the Chilean navy who claims that he was tortured by Labbé when he was imprisoned during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. Then current mayor of Providencia was heavily involved in the military regime, serving as head of security for Pinochet, member of the secret police (DINA) and secretary general for the last two years of the dictatorship. Labbé has repeatedly denied the accusations of torture and the case has never been brought to trial, due to a lack of evidence. However the most recent action of the mayor is already being subject to legal scrutiny. "In a dictatorial, unilateral, repressive way, to go and close the school year of these establishments is an abuse, an arbitrary act and an ille-

gality," said the president of the National Teachers Union, Jaime Gajardo, who filed a legal injunction against Labbé and the mayor of Santiago Pablo Zalaquett, to prevent them from ordering police into schools 'en toma'. On Saturday Dep. Hugo Gutiérrez of the Communist Party also signaled that he might appeal for an injunction against the take-over, which he described as "an absurdity and tramples on the fundamental rights of these youths." Gutiérrez also drew attention to Labbé's past. "The mayor of Providencia is behaving in the way that he knows... (as) a member of the organisms of security and repression under the dictatorship of Pinochet, and the fact that he is in charge of education, demonstrates that there is a need for de-municipalization," said the deputy, endorsing one of the key demands of the students in their campaign for education reform. On Monday Marcela Sabat, of Renovación Nacional -- the party of President Sebastián Piñera -- endorsed the idea. "I am going to take judicial action or join an appeal that has been lodged," she said. The Mayor of Lo Prado, Gonzalo Navarrete, also denied the legality of his colleague's action. "He is doing something for which he has no authority. Mayors cannot close the school year, it is not our responsibility. He could, as a school administrator, call the police to crack down on children, but he does not have the power to suspend the school year," said Navarrete. Amidst the storm of criticism, the government of Sebastián Piñera has been quick to distance itself from Labbé. "It is a completely autonomous decision and the responsibility of the mayor of Providencia. The mayors are administrators of their schools, and the government has no place giving its opinion or referring to it," said Secretary General Andrés Chadwick.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Massive marches across Chile re-invigorate student movement - Thousands take to the streets on Thursday amidst speculation and skepticism - Thursday, 22 September 2011 20:47



Photo by Cristóbal Córdova Durán. In the capital, protesters gathered in front of the Universidad de Santiago and began marching at 11 a.m. down the city's main artery, la Alameda. The march concluded with a concert in Parque Almagro.

Written by Joe Hinchliffe
On Thursday morning, students defied morning drizzle and talk of weakening resolve, and thousands gathered across the country in one of the largest education protests so far. The strike had been billed as an event that would decide the future of Chile's movement for education reform. Though headline news for much of the last four months, the tragic plane crash at Juan Fernández on Sept. 2 and the nation's independence day celebrations on Sept. 18 and 19 had diverted much of the media's attention away from the student movement. There had been speculation ([including in an editorial in Thursday's Santiago Times](#)) that these events -- combined with reputed divisions in student ranks and the threat of losing the

entire academic year -- had weakened the resolve of Chile's students. Even students leaders had billed the event as crucial, urging supporters to maintain the pressure on the government of President Sebastián Piñera. "During this week and the next we hope to recover the (former) level of participation in the marches," said the vice president of Universidad de Chile's student federation (Fech), Francisco Figueroa. Student leaders initially indicated that there were hoping for a tally of 30,000, though on the morning of the march Figueroa upped that figure to between 60,000 and 80,000. At the end of the day, it appears the actual number significantly eclipsed these expectations. Giving a speech to the crowd at Almagro Park, Fech President Camila Vallejo put the figure at 180,000. Radio station Cooperativa reported that the attendance of the march was comparable to any of the previous marches in this movement, which have been the largest demonstrations in Chile since the return of democracy in 1990. According to La Tercera, more than 27,000 people marched in the regions outside of Santiago, with 15,000 in the port city of Valparaíso, and 3,500 and 2,500 in the southern cities of Concepción and Talca, respectively. This march, like the previous ones, was characterized by a lively atmosphere and musicians, dancers and people in costumes.

Representatives of students and teachers were quick to declare the day a triumph. "We are at the peak of our conviction," said the president of the confederation of the University Católica, Giorgio Jackson. "It is clear that there is no weariness in the movement," said Jaime Gajardo, president of the National Teachers Union. "This is even larger than many of our recent protests." However, the government was just as quick to play down the significance of the day. "This is the 35th march of the student movement," said government spokesperson Andrés Chadwick. "A march, big or small, is not going to change the core themes and concerns of the government." The march came as talks between the government and student and teacher representatives appear to be dead in the water. "The government has lost an historic opportunity to initiate a space, to provide a space for discussion, for unfettered debate . . . that would have made a solution to this problem possible," said Vallejo after the government refused to agree to the two of the four conditions that representatives of student and teacher organizations required before talking with the government. "We never thought, we never imagined, that the government would play so dirty in this process," Vallejo said.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : [EDITORIAL] : Students renew protests against Chile's class-based education system - Thursday march may be a "make it or break it" event for the future of education protests, by Steve Anderson - Wednesday, 21 September 2011 19:46



Photo by The Santiago Times.

Today's march by striking students and their supporters may signal an end to an unprecedented four months of student unrest - if the number of demonstrators proves to be small. But if the students are successful in turning out large numbers of supporters across the nation, today may mark a new beginning for the students' quest to put an end to Chile's profit-oriented, [class-based education system](#) and to guarantee quality public education for all. Although polls suggest that support for the students remains strong at 67 percent (down from 76 percent a month ago), the government is betting that the movement is running out of gas; that student fears of losing their academic

year or their financial aid will trump their idealism. The government has made some gestures to deal with the protests - lowering interest rates for university loans and announcing new public schools for gifted high schoolers - but not nearly enough to appease the students. Recognizing that idealism can take them only so far, student leaders are now designing plans to continue their strikes through the end of the year, albeit in a way that would allow regular classes to resume. So that's where it stands. We suspect that the number of protesters reported by the media today will be greatly disputed, with the government and police reporting fewer demonstrators than there actually are, and the students reporting greater numbers. And we suspect that no matter how great the numbers, or how much longer the issue dominates the news, there will be little, if any immediate change. That's at least partly because many of the nation's business and political leaders - both left and right - have invested heavily in the country's privatized education system. They like the money it makes them and they like the control it gives them of the educational forum. Former Education Minister Joaquín Lavín, for example, a member of the Catholic Church's

Opus Dei sect, reportedly made US\$20 million when he sold his interest in the Universidad del Desarrollo, of which he was a founder. One would suppose that a politician of one stripe or another would find this situation fertile grounds building a political future. Maybe. But don't expect any important moves from the [opposition center-left Concertación coalition](#). As one of our favorite political analysts - Patricio Fernández, editor of The Clinic - says: "(The opposition center-left Concertación politicians) have morphed their leadership in social and cultural matters into a kind of club for generals, but without an army. People who in other times would have looked to them for leadership, now don't even acknowledge them. Only a small percentage of those opposed to the Piñera government identify with the Concertación. "The only leftist party that has to some degree capitalized on the discontent has been the Communist Party, even though its popular support is negligible. Almost no one, today, is a Communist, although leaders like Camila Vallejo have no problem owning up to their political views." So what does this mean for Chile's political "leaders" of today?

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Recent months of protests in Chile lead to arrest of 949 minors : Thousands arrested nationwide between June 1 and Aug. 25, and Santiago sees most arrests - Wednesday, 14 September 2011 20:46



Photo by lizunamo2/Flickr

Written by Joe Hinchliffe
During the last nearly four months of student protests, 3,529 people were arrested at the nine

student demonstrations that took place on the national stage between June 1 and Aug. 25. Figures released by the Interior Ministry revealed that 949 of those arrested were under the age of 18, and 1,654 of the arrests in that period were made in Santiago with charges of rioting, vandalism and violence towards the police. Students have been demonstrating for education reform since May. The protests have been characterized by highly creative mass protests, but have also been tainted by vandalism and scenes of violent confrontation between police and protesters. Government and Carabineros police officials were quick to use their figures as justification for heavy police presence at student demonstrations. "[The government] has always been concerned with violent acts, this is why we ask Carabineros to maintain public order," said undersecretary of the Interior Ministry, Rodrigo Ubilla. Senator of the conservative National Renovation party (RN), Alberto Espina, used the figures to call for increased penalties against those who attack the police. "The acts of violence are made by small groups, to whom should be applied the full weight of the law," said Espina.

Carabineros profiled those detained as "encapuchados" (hooded youths), many of whom have been identified as anarchists who coordinate via social media and attend marches with balaclavas and gas masks so as not to be affected by tear gas employed by riot police. However students have argued that the encapuchados are not a part of their movement, but have been used by their opponents to detract from them. "We have been criminalized and threatened," said Camila Vallejo, spokesperson of the Confederation of Chilean University Students. Students have attempted to distance themselves from the encapuchados, who capture much of the media's attention. At many of the marches over the last four months, students have confronted hooded vandals, hurling lemons and trash at them. On Aug. 9, Carabineros were forced to admit that one of the encapuchados in Valparaíso was an undercover police officer after student demonstrators discovered him and began hurling lemons at the fleeing officer. National Director of Public Order and Security, Aguilés Blu, claimed the officer was undercover to "obtain information."

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Chilean students will march Wednesday, await government response : Rumors circulate that government won't meet students' recent conditions for negotiating - Tuesday, 13 September 2011 19:26

Written by Joe Hinchliffe
Camilo Ballesteros, president of the Student Federation of the Universidad Santiago de Chile (Fuesach), confirmed on Tuesday that Santiago officials had given authorization for a student march on Wednesday. "We have permission from 10 a.m to 1 p.m.," Ballesteros said. The march will go down Santia-

go's main avenue, the Alameda, before finishing in Parque Almagro with a "cultural event." Representatives of the Chilean Confederation of Students (Confech) and the National Teachers Union went to the ministry of education on Monday to request [four guarantees from the government](#) before initiating working groups to resolve the conflict over education reform.

La Tercera reported on Tuesday evening that Education Minister Felipe Bulnes analyzed the demands on the afternoon of receiving them with parliamentarians from the government, who advised the minister not to agree to two of the four student requests.





Photo by The Santiago Times. Those two requests included postponing the cut-off date for completing the first academic semester -- which is scheduled for Oct. 7 and could leave students without accreditation for the partially-completed semester -- and halting [two education bills that entered Congress in August](#). According to La Tercera, the minister is willing to agree to the student requests to broadcast the working groups on television and online, and is

also willing to address the issue of profit in the education system. Camila Vallejo, spokesperson of the confederation of Chilean university students (Confech), said that she would wait to see what happens at the next meeting on Thursday, in Valparaiso. "We are waiting for the official response, not what is reported by the media. We want the official response, either from Minister Bulnes or the President of the Republic," Vallejo said.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Chile's students outline conditions for restarting dialogue : Student leaders seek guarantees before forming working groups with government - Monday, 12 September 2011 18:53



Photo courtesy of Camila Vallejo Dowling Facebook.

Written by Joe Hinchliffe
Representatives of the Chilean Confederation of Students (Confech) and the National Teachers Union arrived at the Ministry of Education at midday Monday and handed over a counter-proposal to initiate working groups with the government. The working groups were proposed last week by Education Minister Felipe Bulnes, in an attempt to find solutions to the conflict for education

reform that has been plaguing the Chilean government since May. The government proposal was officially rejected by the Confech after an assembly on Sept. 8. Representatives were not met by the minister but by his chief of cabinet, Germán Subercaseaux. The meeting lasted for around 20 minutes, during which time the delegates outlined their conditions and handed over an official statement from Confech. Students listed four guarantees that they want from the government before they will agree to participate in the working groups. "This isn't about putting a gun to the government's head," said Patricio Contreras, representative from Universidad de Los Lagos, "but listing some basic conditions." The conditions include freezing two bills put before congress on Aug. 17 for education reform that were drafted without student or teacher input, ensuring live TV or online coverage of the working groups to ensure transparency and ending state funding for profit-based educational institutions. The final condition is the postponement of the deadline for ending the first academic semester,

which still has not been completed in many schools and could leave thousands of students without accreditation for the partially-completed semester. Contreras said students felt that the conditions were based on lessons learned from the "pingüino" movement of high school students in 2006 that rocked the government of Michelle Bachelet but failed to achieve many of its goals after entering into dialogue with the government. "Students trusted in the political class and in the end the political class deceived them," he said. "Today we will not commit the same error." The delegates stressed that they wanted a speedy response and that they had every desire to work with the government in initiating the process of education reform. "We will deliver the four guarantees and if you (the government) accept, we hope to start from Thursday," Confech spokesperson Camila Vallejo said to Subercaseaux. "The question now is whether the government is up to it or not," said Vallejo.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Chilean students march in silence - Students don black and light candles in honor of the victims of the Juan Fernández plane crash - Sunday, 11 September 2011 21:28



Photo by Joe Hinchliffe Santiago Times.

Written by Joe Hinchliffe
Last Thursday at 7 p.m., in the day's fading light, students gathered at the gates of the Universidad de Chile's architecture faculty in downtown Santiago in the latest demonstration of a movement for education reform that has been roiling the country for nearly four months now. The majority dressed in black and light candles as night sets in. La Cuarta put the number of people at around 5,000. "We wanted to make this peaceful and beautiful in memory of the people who died in Juan Fernández," explained Priscila Hudson Saravia -- student of education at the Universidad de Chile -- referring to the plane crash of Friday Sep. 2, in which 21 died. "They were doing something important," she said of the victims, which included government workers, entrepreneurs and journalists who were going to oversee and report on reconstruction on

the island following last February's 8.8-magnitude earthquake and resulting tsunami. The march -- called for earlier by the student federation of the Universidad de Chile (Fech) -- began at around 7:30, going down Santiago's main thoroughfare, Alameda, and winding its way through the capital's downtown. There were some banners, occasional chants and even a few horns, but in general the mood was sombre, standing in stark in comparison to the carnival atmosphere that has characterized previous marches. "We are also commemorating the death of the boy who was killed not long ago by a police officer," said Priscilla. On the evening of the 25th of August, the second day of a national wide strike, 16-year-old high school student Manuel Gutiérrez was killed by a stray bullet fired by Carabineros police officer Miguel Millacura. Riot police formed barriers at various points that kept the marches to a prescribed route, and although people chanted "They are the ones who kill without reason," there were no physical confrontations. In contrast to some earlier marches, the evening passed without any major incidences of violence or vandalism. Chilean students have been striking for nearly four months to demand free university education and quality education. They have tried to keep protests as peaceful and creative as possible, in the face of violent minorities who have drawn much of the media attention.

Earlier protests have included a flash mob of 'zombies' dancing Micheal Jackson "Thriller", and 'kiss-a-thons,' to name a few. "Much of the media only shows the worst images; of encapuchados (masked vandals), of people throwing rocks and causing damage," said Priscila, "but tonight wasn't like that." Representatives of international human rights organizations kept an eye on the proceedings. "We're here to make sure that there is no police repression" said one, who claimed to have witnessed police violence against minors at previous marches. People of all ages were present at the march, including an elderly couple who each wore a sign that read, "We grandparents support our grandchildren." The march ended at the main campus of the Universidad de Chile at around 8:30. Students placed hundreds of candles on the facade of the university, illuminating signs that outlined their demands, along with messages of condolence to the victims of Juan Fernández and images of Manuel Gutiérrez. After half an hour the crowd began to disperse of its own volition, although after 10:00 -- with most of the crowd gone -- a police water cannon extinguished a large fire of cardboard boxes and plastic on the courtyard of the university. Thursday morning also saw student marches in Puerto Montt, Valparaiso, Valdivia and Concepción, many of which were also 'silent.'

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Chilean students set to reject government's proposed working groups : Nationwide protests aim to reflect the mood of a country in mourning - Thursday, 08 September 2011 22:44

Written by Joe Hinchliffe

The confederation of Chilean university students (Confech) convened a national assembly at 11:30 on Thursday morning and called for a national strike to maintain the momentum of their four months of protests for education reform.

They also called for respecting the sensitivities of a country still in mourning after the Juan Fernández Island plane crash of last Friday.

Nearly 40 delegations from universities around the country attended the conference in Talca -- over 250 kilometres south of Santiago -- to shape the next phase of the movement, including how they will respond to the Chilean government's proposal of working groups to resolve the conflict.



Photo by juanortegaf78/Flickr.

Students hold silent protests and don black as a sign of respect for the victims of the Juan Fernández plane crash.

The proposal came after Confech agreed to send delegates to talks with President Sebastián Piñera and Education Minister Felipe Bulnes and high school students and teachers last Saturday.

The working groups proposed were aimed at addressing three of the concerns raised by the student groups: changes in the financing of education, including scholarships, debts and loans; the return of primary and secondary education administration to the federal government rather than municipalities; and constitutional reform to include the right to an excellent education.

Confech is expected to formally reject those working groups today, Friday, as many of the country's largest universities have already announced their objections to the government's proposal.

"We know that these working groups are necessary," said Laura Palma, student representative of the University of La Serena, "but we can't accept the conditions that the government has placed upon them."

One of the main points of contention for the students is that the working groups do not address some of the central themes of the move-

ment: an end to profiteering in education of the implementation of free university education.

"We aren't talking the same language. We talk of free education and they talk of credit," said the student spokesperson of the Universidad Católica del Norte, Pablo Iriarte.

Other sticking points were the government's refusal to broadcast or telecast conversations between students and government representatives (students felt broadcasting would ensure the transparency of the working groups) and withdraw the educational reform bills it sent to Congress on Aug. 17 because they did not include input from student groups.

Chile's high school students and teachers representative bodies have also rejected the proposals.

Education Minister Felipe Bulnes criticized the decision of the Chile's national teachers union, saying that it was "irresponsible, because the whole country is waiting for a solution to the conflict."

The Confech delegates in Talca intend to close the conference with a march through the city.

Thursday Morning saw student marches in Puerto Montt, Valparaíso, Valdivia and Concepción, many of which were silent and with participants wearing black as a sign of respect for the Juan Fernández dead and a country still in a state of shock.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Chilean students to hold national strike Thursday : Monday's call to postpone march in wake of plane crash stirs debate among students - Wednesday, 07 September 2011 19:27

Written by Joe Hinchliffe

"The movement will continue, but we understand that the country is in a state of mourning because of the tragedy and we will respect that," said Camila Vallejo, spokesperson for the confederation of Chilean university students (Confech), on Monday when she announced that students would not hold a national strike planned for Sept. 8.



Photo courtesy of Camila Vallejo Dowling

Facebook.

The nation observed two official days of mourning on Monday and Tuesday following a [plane crash late Friday](#) in which 21 lives were lost, including a famed TV personality and well-known philanthropist.

Given the circumstances it would be "impossible for us to hold mass demonstrations," Vallejo said.

However the president of the student federation of the Universidad de Chile (Fech) was forced to change that decision Tuesday after it proved controversial among many of the student federations that comprise the organization.

"Camila Vallejo is the president of the Fech and spokesperson of Confech, but she does not own it and can't make its decisions," said Alexis González, representative of the Universidad Técnico Federico Santa María.

"(The strike) was decided a long time ago and there has been no Confech meeting to change

it," said Gonzalez as he announced that students of the Valparaíso Region would mobilize tomorrow.

"This was a personal decision of the president of the Fech," said Guillermo Petersen, of the Universidad de Concepcion, "not Confech's decision."

By midday Tuesday all of the regions of Chile with the exception of Santiago had announced their intention to mobilize Thursday, disregarding a call by government spokesperson Andrés Chadwick to "consider the pain of the country" and follow the example set by students in the capital.

"We will not allow the government to use the tragedy to demobilize... the student movement," said Peterson in response, while stressing that "we do not want to politicize the tragic death of 21 people, which we also regret."

Later in the day Vallejo changed her decision and announced that the Fech would also take part in the strike.

However she stressed that the strike would not be inconsistent with the mood of a nation in mourning.

"Those who died were fighting for the issue of human dignity and we believe that this is the best way to vindicate them," she said. At least one of the victims of Friday's plane crash, television host Felipe Camiroaga, had reportedly taped a video message in support of the movement.

Chilean students at both the university and high school level have been striking for nearly four months to demand free university education and quality guarantees in public school classroom nationwide.

The internal debate that played out publicly Tuesday is indicative of the decentralized and grass-roots organization of the body that represents Chile's university students.

All Confech decisions are made horizontally, in plenary sessions that involve representatives of federations across the country that are each assigned one vote. The locations of the sessions

are rotated, any students may participate and minutes are released publicly.

The decision to accept an invitation for Confech representatives to hold [discussions with President Sebastián Piñera](#), for example, was made after a marathon 10-hour meeting in Temuco, more than 375 miles south of Santiago.

The debate was also a sign of how much the political environment that confronts the student movement -- which until now has commanded an public approval rating of up to 80 percent -- has changed in the wake of the crash at Juan Fernández.

"There is now less of a bandwidth within which to move politically," Alberto Mayol -- the Universidad de Chile sociologist who advised student representatives in the lead up to their meeting with the President -- said yesterday.

"It has generated a public sentiment where it is not so important if I like you or not, but what is important is national unity and it's always the president who represents that," said Mayol as he warned students of the risk of losing public sympathy with the marches Thursday.

For this reason it appears that many of this week's demonstrations will be toned down from the high level of intensity that has been seen at previous student demonstrations.

"We are in a really complicated situation, said Laura Palma, representative of the Universidad de La Serena, so "we are going to hold an information day, we are going to go into the streets, hand out pamphlets, do some cultural activities."

Meanwhile, secondary students have announced that they will go on strike while the National Teachers Association will preform a symbolic demonstration at Los Libertadores pass -- the border crossing that connects Santiago with Mendoza in Argentina -- with representatives of Argentine teachers unions.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Chile's president looks to extend school day, cut vacations : Piñera summarizes talks with student leaders on proposed education reform - Monday, 05 September 2011 21:31



Written by Juan Francisco Veloso Olguin
Chile's President Sebastián Piñera said he has reached an agreement on nine of the 12 points for education reform during his Saturday meeting with student leaders. Piñera made the announcement during his appearance on the late-night television show "Tolerancia Cero" (Zero Tolerance).

"I feel that the meeting was very promising and fruitful," Piñera said of his attempts to advance on the education crisis, one of several issues discussed during his appearance on the TV show. He also said that Education Minister Felipe Bulnes would now take over the negotiation process. Remaining disagreements center on the issue of eliminating the profit motive in educational institutions -- a major demand of students who have spent nearly four months protesting for reform. "I am a supporter that there can be a private option in all levels of education," Piñera said. The president nevertheless recognized that "structural" changes must be made and the education system must be regulated. He cited financial problems and drop-out rates as other obstacles to educational progress. The president also announced that he is considering extending school day and the school year. "Today there are too many holidays and not

many work days," Piñera said, in comparison with "Singapore, Korea or the Nordic countries." The president also touched on the death of Manuel Gutiérrez, a 16-year-old boy killed by a police officer's bullet at a recent protest, admitting "many mistakes were made." Moving on to economic news, Piñera warned that despite recent economic growth, Chile is not immune to a world economic crisis. "The last 90 days have been very negative; today there is a bigger chance of a recession than those from a month ago," Piñera said, discussing the troubles faced by the United States and Europe. "This is going to affect us," he concluded. Reflecting on the way in which his administration has developed, Piñera said, "I feel that the citizens have a different attitude towards this president in comparison to previous ones. That gives me more strength and makes me work harder and better."

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Chile's students hold first meeting with President Piñera - Positive start to discussions between government and student representatives - Sunday, 04 September 2011 23:59



Photo courtesy Gobierno de Chile.

Written by Joe Hinchliffe
"It demonstrated much willingness for progress, and that is what is important to note," president of the Universidad de Chile Students Federation (Fech) Camila Vallejo said of the meeting between student leaders and the president which lasted three hours and 40 minutes. At 10 am on Saturday university and high school student leaders met with President Sebastián Piñera at the La Moneda government palace for a round table dialogue that included government spokesman Andrés Chadwick, Minister of Education Felipe Bulnes, the rectors of the Universidad de Chile, Universidad Católica and Universidad de Santiago, and the president of the teachers union. The education minister also gave an upbeat assessment of the meeting, which he described as "frank and positive."

The discussions came as a result of three months of protests that have thrown the education system into turmoil, become the nation's foremost issue and seen Piñera slump to the lowest presidential approval ratings since democratic elections were held again in 1990. The meeting began with a minute of silence for the victims of the [air crash at Juan Fernández](#), a tragedy which largely overshadowed the meeting. The two sides discussed the 12-point petition submitted by the Confederation of Chilean Students (Confech) that outlines its demands for education reform. The principal topic of the discussions was the proposal to give universities autonomy over the distribution of financial support, which would lead to lower fees. Though attendees attested to moments of tension and points of disagreement, most agreed that positive measures were initiated for resolving this long running conflict. Confech sources said that in principal accords were struck on three main points: a constitutional guarantee of the right to a quality education; guarantees for the rights of indigenous Chileans; and on the issue financial support. In regards to the final point, attendees said that Piñera was prepared to place a freeze on fees and raise overall financial support. Still, the President did not accept the students' proposal to have universities determine the distribution of

this support, preferring to keep that responsibility in the hands of the government. Nor did the President agree to replace the current high school system - in which schools are administered by municipalities - with a state-run system. There were further disagreements on the issue of ending the profit-based sector of the education system, which has been one of the most fundamental grievances of the student movement. "What this agenda has reaffirmed is that there are central themes that are still pending: an end to profiteering, de-municipalization and shared funding," said the president of the teachers union, Jaime Gajardo. The issues discussed during the meeting at the government palace will be further discussed by Confech at a meeting scheduled for Tuesday in Talca to determine Confech's position in relation to the negotiations with the president. Students are hoping to continue the momentum established on Saturday in a meeting scheduled for Monday with the Minister of Education. Meanwhile, protests look set to continue. "This doesn't mean we are going to give up the movement," Vallejo said after the meeting. The next student march is planned for September 8.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Proposed education reform provokes strong reactions in Chile - Critics say legislation will close private institutions and punish Chilean families - Thursday, 01 September 2011 21:42



Photo by CongresoChile/Flickr.

Written by Adeline Bash
A bill [passed Wednesday, 4-1](#), by the Senate Education Committee prohibiting government funding to Chile's for-profit education institutions has provoked the expected storm of controversy.

"It is a historic reform to an educational model inherited from the dictatorship," Sen. Jaime Quintana (PPD) told Radio Bío-Bío. Quintana's comments echo similar sentiments expressed by students. Amending the constitution to eliminate the profit-motive from education institutions has been a focus for students since the beginning of their more than three-month strike for education reform. "This vote shows that the politicians have started to realize what is happening in this country," Quintana said, adding that by voting in favor, the committee has affirmed a commitment to concentrating funding on improving Chile's public institutions rather than subsidizing private schools. "Those who want to profit may continue to do so, but without the state as their partner."

The bill does not propose closing subsidized institutions like charter schools, Quintana clarified, but rather suggests cutting off their government funding. "Profit will continue to exist, but without state resources," Quintana said. The bill's critics, who include President Sebastián Piñera and Education Minister Felipe Bulnes, however, suggest that closing private institutions is precisely what the bill will achieve. "This is a bill that has two or three simple components, but at a deeper level it generates a profound uncertainty for families," Rodrigo Bosch, president of the Corporation of Chile's Private Schools, told El Mercurio. Bosch said that the proposed changes will affect the daily lives and finances of over a million families who send their children to private institutions.

Diego Méndez, owner of the private school Instituto Profesional Simón Bolívar, had similar concerns.

"Subsidized institutions are going to be left without support," Méndez told El Mercurio. "Where are the millions of students going to go when their school is left without funding?" Bulnes estimates that 4,500 subsidized institutions will be affected if the bill passes. After the initial approval Wednesday by the Education Committee, the bill now faces a vote Friday by the rest of the senate.

Since the government [began discussing reform to the profit model](#), the Piñera administration has opposed eliminating for-profit education altogether. Instead, officials suggest improving government oversight of education profits and creating new systems for monitoring all institutions, private and public, to ensure students receive a quality education. Members of Piñera's own conservative political coalition, however, have questioned why the president defends regulating private education finances at all.

Student leaders also expressed discontent with the government's reaction to the bill, saying that the apparent resistance to eliminating for-profit education could complicate negotiations during their meeting with Piñera this Saturday. "The initial passing was expected," Judge Walter Oliva told El Mercurio of the bill. "Now we can get to the important part: discussion on how to create changes that allow all actors to continue contributing to the country's education."

THE SANTIAGO TIMES: Senate committee approves bill limiting profit in Chilean schools: Education Commission gives the nod to bill that would deny state funding to for-profit schools - Wednesday, 31 August 2011 21:52



Photo by Congreso Chile/Flickr.

Written by Adeline Bash

With four votes in favor and one against, the senate Education Commission approved a bill Wednesday prohibiting state contributions to for-profit educational institutions, despite the Piñera administration's public disapproval of the measure.

For those in favor, the bill would promise to help the government better monitor the funding of private institutions to ensure that a 1981 law prohibiting profit in the education system is upheld and that students are not over-charged for a poor quality education.

"Public education could not be worse and it appears that the state has been promoting poor quality education. This cannot continue," Sen. Carlos Cantero, who voted in favor of the bill, told La Tercera. "For me, it doesn't matter so much that profit exists so long as it is transparent and is always well-regulated."

Politicians who oppose the bill — including President Sebastián Piñera and Education Minister Felipe Bulnes — advocate monitoring all institutions to ensure quality rather than focusing solely on private institutions. The bill, according to Bulnes and other representatives, should be

revised to target institutions that provide inadequate education, not merely those that profit. "We have to think about who this bill is truly affecting. With this bill, we are saying to the 1.2 million kids [who attend profit-earning education institutions] that they can no longer choose," Sen. Ena von Baer, the only senator who voted against the bill Wednesday, told La Tercera. "We are going to decide to make a sweeping closure of both good and bad schools. It seems like for Congress, it doesn't matter if good schools are also closed."

[Amending Chile's constitution](#) to ensure the elimination of profit in the nation's education system has been a focus for students throughout their movement for national education reform. However, Chile's Student Confederation (Confech) asked the government as part of their [conditions for meeting with Piñera Saturday](#) to hold off on voting on education reform bills until student leaders could add their input.

The government has moved forward regardless, and after the approval by the Education Council, the bill will now move on to the Senate floor for a full vote.

Wednesday's vote came in conjunction with further student demonstrations across the country.

The first were sparked by an announcement by the Ministry of Education's Rector Council that if students do not resume classes Monday, they risk losing any possible credit for the past semester.

According to the Ministry of Education, grades for the previous semester are due no later than Oct. 7, and must be received in order for students to enter their second semester of the 2011 school year. If students want to take advantage of options like taking online courses or a final ex-

ams to get credit for the more than three months without classes, they must do so by the first few days of September.

"If they do not accept the offer, institutions will suffer irretrievable damages," Rector Aldo Valle at the Universidad de Valparaíso told El Mercurio. One of the biggest concerns highlighted by officials is that students will not be compensated for tuition and other benefits.

Though universities across the country are expected to vote throughout the week on whether or not to accept the Ministry's offers and return to class, many students immediately indicated they would not adhere to the offer.

At the Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, for example, students held demonstrations Tuesday protesting the university officials' decision to offer online options for students as the strike continues. Five students reportedly began a hunger strike in reaction, calling the plan "a symbolic eviction" by the university against the student movement.

Students held similar demonstrations at the Congress and Interior Ministry of Education buildings Wednesday only hours following the education reform bill vote.

More than 30 students reportedly took over the Ministry of Education building, calling for the resignation of Interior Minister Rodrigo Hinzpeter and Carabinero police force Director Eduardo Gordon for the police involvement in the murder of [16-year-old Miguel Gutiérrez](#).

In Valparaíso, 20 students reportedly protested with similar demands outside Congress, some even reportedly chaining themselves to the building's fence. The students say they feel unrepresented by Confech and ignored by their government.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES: Chilean military tribunal handling case of teenager shot by police Growing calls for resignation of Police Chief and Interior Minister for faulty oversight - Wednesday, 31 August 2011 21:43



Photo by Alobos/Flickr.

Written by Ivan Ebergenyi

Police officers, some discharged and other still active, testified before Judge Paola Jofré at a Santiago military court on Wednesday regarding their involvement in the [death of 16-year-old Manuel Gutiérrez](#), who died from gunshot wounds on the evening of Aug. 25.

Wednesday's proceedings took place after Tuesday's testimony of now-discharged Sgt. Miguel

Millacura, who was forced to leave the force for his role in the killing.

Millacura, who was found to be the owner of the gun that killed Gutiérrez, was ordered detained by Judge Ely Rothfeld on Tuesday after he confessed to having fired his weapon on that night. Although he claimed to have fired up into the air — not directly at Gutiérrez — forensic evidence gathered by the Chilean Investigations Police (PDI) contradicted his claim.

Since Chile's Carabinero police force is technically a paramilitary organization, Judge Rothfeld transferred Millacura's file to Santiago's Sixth Military Court on Tuesday.

Wednesday's proceedings focused solely on officers who were found to be linked to Gutiérrez's shooting. On Thursday, civilian witnesses are expected to testify and an on-site re-creation of the events will take place.

Gutiérrez died on the morning of Friday, Aug. 25, after suffering a gunshot wound to the chest the night before, amidst [violent unrest in the Macul](#)

[borough](#) of Santiago brought on by Chile's two-day national strike.

So far, there is little doubt of Millacura's direct role in Gutiérrez's death. The former sergeant's credibility suffered another blow on Tuesday when he changed his initial account of firing his weapon upwards into the air to having fired "in a diagonal line."

The case has become quickly notorious for the police's [refusal to conduct an internal investigation](#), despite numerous eyewitness accounts claiming that the gunfire came from a police vehicle.

"It is not the place of the police to deny an investigation for eventual crimes committed by some of its members just because the higher echelons are sure that none of them are involved," Lorena Fries told The Santiago Times on Wednesday. Fries is the president of Chile's National Institute of Human Rights (INDH).

"In serious cases it is the duty of the high command to be proactive and carry out all necessary

inquiries in a decisive and transparent way. Institutions base their credibility on the efficiency and clarity of their procedures, not on the personal convictions of their authorities," Fries added.

Indeed, as more officers get caught in the dragnet of discharges, more attention is being directed higher up in the chain of command. Since Monday, numerous calls have been made for the resignation of National Police Chief Eduardo Gordon and the man in charge of the Carabinero's oversight, Interior Minister Rodrigo Hinzpeter.

"Anytime there's a rank-and-file officer caught, it gets a lot media coverage," said former Carabi-

nero Hernan Leiva to The Santiago Times on Wednesday. "But nobody really pays attention when it's a higher ranking officer."

Having been retired for 13 years, Leiva is the spokesperson for Ex-Carabineros, a non-profit organization dedicated to advocating on behalf of police officers who have been unjustly discharged. He sees a deeper underlying problem in Chile's Carabineros police force.

"Surprising as it may sound, Carabineros are not trained for or adequately supported when dealing with situations like we've seen in the past four months," added Leiva, in reference to the continuous demonstrations which have taken place across Chile.

"There's no doubt that Millacura is responsible for his actions, but I'd like to see someone from the outside be put in these officers' shoes. They sleep on average two to three hours per night when these demonstrations happen. And they receive no counselling or psychological support." Despite his sympathy for officers in the field, Leiva does not blame the citizen marches or demonstrators.

"This is all happening because of a government that has taken way too long to listen to its people," he said. "And it's the lower ranks of Carabineros and citizens that suffer because of this."

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : CUT president blames Chile's philosophy profs for violence : Labor union leader accuses university professors of filling their students' heads with "crap." - Wednesday, 31 August 2011 19:32



Photo by Valerie Schenkman Sanjines Santiago Times

Written by Juanita Chacón-Snow

"Arturo Martínez" quickly became a trending topic on Twitter Wednesday following an interview on Radio Cooperativa with Central Workers Union (CUT) president Arturo Martínez during which he said philosophy professors were to blame for the rioting that has been taking place at recent demonstrations.

"They fill (their students') heads with crap, encouraging them to go out and throw rocks and cause disruptions," he said, adding that "there are many universities where they are justifying

this form of dealing with the problems of society."

The statements made by the labor union leader were quickly rebuffed by academics and politicians from the left and right who described his words as irresponsible.

"This is preposterous, what more can I say," faculty secretary Mauricio González of the Philosophy department of the Universidad Metropolitana de Ciencias de la Educación (UMCE) told Radio Cooperativa following the interview. "It's a matter of common sense," he added. "Philosophical thought is founded on discretion, on subtlety, and is in no way associated with violence."

"It's inconceivable, incomprehensible and irresponsible to make these types of unfounded and unjustified statements," Socialist Dep. Fidel Espinoza, who has a BA in Education, told El Mostrador. "We hope he apologizes; it's the least that can be expected and that professors in Chile deserve."

"Arturo Martínez has exceeded all bounds," said center-right RN Dep. Nicolás Monckeberg. "In-

stead of blaming others for the acts of violence, he should examine his own responsibilities."

"He could have called for a peaceful and authorized march," Monckeberg told El Mostrador in reference to the [march](#) organized by the CUT Aug. 25 following a 48-hour national strike that ended with over 100 arrests and several Carabineros police officers injured.

"After calling for the paralysis of the country, blocking roads, bringing the ports to a halt and obstructing the normal operation of public transportation, it is unacceptable that he now attempts to deny his responsibility and place the blame on professors for acts of violence during the last strike," said Monckeberg.

"I'm going to invite my friend Arturo Martínez to my class on the philosophy of globalization. Philosophy is subversive. From there to rocks..." wrote former PPD deputy and PhD in Philosophy Antonio Leal in [his Twitter account](#).

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Chile police officer implicated in student death - Bullet from officer's UZI machine gun matches that found in student's body, prosecutor says - Monday, 29 August 2011 20:38



Photo by Chelsea A. Flowers The Santiago Times

Written by Adeline Bash

The bullet that killed 16-year-old high school student Manuel Gutiérrez last week was fired from Carabinero police officer Miguel Millacura's firearm, prosecutor Jorge Martínez confirmed late Monday night. Martínez said that experts reviewed 160 weapons before concluding that Millacura's was a match.

Millacura was asked to resign earlier Monday after admitting to using his firearm in the Macul borough of Santiago near where Gutiérrez was [shot and killed Thursday night](#).

According to an announcement by Interior Minister Rodrigo Hinzpeter, Millacura hid his 9mm UZI submachine gun and changed the ammunition after the incident to avoid detection by the prosecutor's office.

In a press conference, Minister Hinzpeter also formally requested that the national director of Carabineros ask Gen. Sergio Gajardo, deputy chief of the Metropolitan Zone, to resign. Gajardo

rejected the possibility of police involvement in the student's death last week and refused to open an internal investigation into possible wrongdoing within the police force.

Four other Carabinero officers were also discharged from the force Monday night in connection with the student death.

"Just as we have said on many occasions, we support the important, valuable sacrifices made by the Carabineros de Chile, but we demand that their actions be always within the framework of respecting the law, the rights of our citizens, and the norms that regulate these procedures," Hinzpeter said. "In this we are categorically inflexible."

He called both for recognition of the difficult situation that Carabineros have faced at ongoing student protests, and asked for the cooperation of both citizens and police officers in understanding and respecting the law and public order.

According to local media, Millacura, who has been with the Carabinero police force for 18 years, admitted early Monday to firing two shots into the air from an UZI machine gun close to midnight Thursday in the same area where Gutiérrez was reportedly shot in the chest. Gutiérrez died Friday morning in a nearby hospital.

Officer Millacura insisted that he fired his weapon only in response to other gunshots fired by protestors in the Macul area after [Chile's two-day national strike](#) on Wednesday and Thursday.

Witnesses, including Manuel's brother Gerson Gutiérrez who was with him at the time, have nevertheless maintained that Carabineros were responsible the youth's death.

Carabinero officials immediately rejected these claims, however, initially refusing to even conduct an internal investigation.

Police maintained this stance until Monday, when Deputy Chief José Luis Ortega confirmed that Millacura was asked to resign for unauthorized use of his firearm. Ortega insisted that the measure was not related to possible involvement in the 16-year-old's death.

There is still not enough evidence to connect Carabineros to Gutiérrez's death, Ortega said midday Monday, explaining that an investigation of the bullet extracted from the youth would help officials better determine whether it came from Millacura's weapon. Yet by Monday night Hinzpeter had confirmed the bullet to be a match for Millacura's machine gun.

The announcement about Millacura's unauthorized firearm use on Monday coincided with public demands by politicians, national human rights groups and Chilean activists for investigation into alleged police involvement in Gutiérrez's death.

"It's not reassuring that police officers use their weapons against civilians," said Supreme Court Justice and spokesperson Jaime Rodríguez after Hinzpeter's Monday night announcement.

Rodríguez likewise recommended that the case be reviewed by the military justice system, as the Carabineros police force is considered part of the Armed Forces.

On Saturday, student strike leaders demanded further investigation into Gutiérrez's death as one of their pre-conditions for [meeting with Chilean President Sebastián Piñera](#) to discuss education reform. That same day, Lorena Fries, president of Chile's National Institute of Human

Rights (INDH), publicly criticized Carabinero police officials' refusal to investigate the claims of police involvement.

"It does not seem like an adequate response by the Carabineros to say we are not going to investigate because we had nothing to do with it," Fries told Radio Cooperativa, adding that the

organization plans to take legal action if someone is not held accountable.

According to Fries, appropriate investigation into Manuel's death is especially pertinent given the Carabinero police force's fragile public image, especially in light of allegations of excessive force in the recent citizen demonstrations across Chile.

"We know that there have been incidents of excessive violence in different cities and regions of the country," Fries said. "(Investigating Gutiérrez death) requires maximum transparency so as to not increase the public's existing distrust of police activity."

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Low turnout for Chile's 'Save the School Year' program - Student leaders deem government program a "failure" despite the 68,000 students enrolled - Monday, 29 August 2011 19:41



Photo by Chelsea A. Flowers
The Santiago Times

Written by Adeline Bash

With the enrollment deadline two days away, 27 percent of the 250,000 Chilean students whose public schools are on strike have registered for the ministry of education's "Save our School Year" program.

The program, created by Education Minister Felipe Bulnes, provides pre-university students opportunities for alternative classes and options to make up credit lost during the recent student strikes across Chile. In many secondary schools, classes have been cancelled for over three months.

The majority, or 34,500 of the nearly 68,000 students enrolled, are participating in the program by registering to take the final exams for courses they were enrolled in before the strikes began in May. Another 32,000 students have requested to be transferred to schools still in session, and the remaining 1,200 students are taking courses at alternative learning centers.

Students have voiced doubts for the plan, and have criticized similar programs by the ministry as efforts to disband the student movement for

education reform. Most recently, [student leaders criticized](#) a government scholarship program that provided students not participating in strikes the opportunity to finish the year at some of Santiago's most prestigious private schools.

Alfredo Vielma, spokesperson for the Coordinating Assembly of High School Students, reportedly called the "Save our School Year" program a failure. Eduardo Catalán, vice-president for the Association of Parents and Guardians said that the government cannot find a means of resolving the conflict with students.

Education Minister Bulnes, on the other hand, celebrated the registration numbers and encouraged all other interested students to sign up before the Aug. 31 deadline.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Chile's student representatives agree to meet with president - Dialogue with president does not mean an end to their movement, student leaders assure - Sunday, 28 August 2011 21:48



Photo courtesy of Reporteers/Flickr

Written by Adeline Bash

Following a 10-hour debate on Saturday, student group leaders included in the Chilean Confederation of Students (Confech) agreed to meet with Chilean President Sebastian Piñera on Tuesday. "There are doubts, but it is always good when the president takes initiative on these issues," Giorgio Jackson, president of the Universidad Católica Student Federation, said after Saturday's meeting. "We hope that in this meeting we will be given a guarantee that things will advance."

For over three months students across Chile have organized massive marches, participated in hunger strikes, stalled classes, and taken over

their schools to demand reform to Chile's education system.

During their meeting in Temuco on Saturday student leaders were initially divided on whether to accept the president's invitation to talk. The federation [has rejected similar invitations from](#) government representatives in the past and [has rejected every education reform proposal](#) offered by the government thus far.

But after debating the issue late into Saturday night, the federation agreed to send representatives Tuesday on three conditions.

First, students want a guarantee from the government that it will seriously reconsider their [12-point demand proposal](#), which includes free higher education and an end to municipality oversight of public education.

"We hope that they will give us an outline of how they will address these 12 points," Jackson said of Tuesday's meetings. "We expect this first step to know whether this is a real political commitment (by the government) or just an attempt to encourage us to give in."

The students also insisted the government put a temporary halt to two education reform bills offered in the government's [Aug. 17 proposal](#).

Student leaders argued that the bills, which guarantee the right to a quality education to every Chilean and call for more oversight of universities to prevent their profiting off stu-

dents' education, were drafted without their input and should be reworked by the government and students together.

As a final condition for meeting with the government, students called for a formal investigation into possible police involvement in the death of Manuel Gutiérrez — the [16-year-old shot dead Thursday](#) night during violent unrest in the Macul borough of Santiago.

"This must not go unpunished," Jackson said of the incident, calling on Carabineros Chief Eduardo Gordon and Interior Minister Rodrigo Hinzpeter to find those responsible.

The Tuesday meeting with the president does not guarantee that students will negotiate on their demands, nor does it indicate that their movement is coming to a close, Confech spokesperson Camila Vallejo assured during Saturday's meeting.

"This is only an opportunity to meet face to face with the president so that he can personally give us a response to our 12-point demands and it seems like he will do this," Vallejo said of Tuesday's meeting.

There are no guarantees from that the government will adhere to demands, however, and until that happens, Vallejo said, "We will continue to mobilize."

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : 16-year-old killed in Chile during strike violence : Witnesses say police fired the fatal gunshot in Santiago's Macul borough late Thursday - Sunday, 28 August 2011 21:44



Photo by Diego Martin/Flickr

Written by Adeline Bash

Protests surrounding Chile's two-day national strike took a dark turn late Thursday night when 16-year-old Manuel Gutiérrez Reinoso was killed during violent unrest in the Macul borough of Santiago.

According to initial reports, at close to 12 a.m. Friday morning Gutiérrez was walking with his older brother Gerson (23), who uses a wheelchair, and their friend Guiseppe Ramírez Atan (19) along the road Amanda Labarca close to where protesters had set up barricades.

Gerson and Atan reported that three shots were fired at them, one of which hit Gutiérrez in the chest and he soon lost consciousness. He was taken to a local hospital where he died early

Friday morning. Gutiérrez was in his junior year of high school and, according to his family, he was not involved in the ongoing student protests. Gutiérrez's brother and friend insist that the shots came from Carabinero police officers inside of a police vehicle. Other witnesses have confirmed their account to local media.

"We don't know which one pulled the trigger, but I am 100 percent sure that he was shot by the Carabineros," Atan told La Tercera, adding that they were not participating in the protest.

Carabinero's Metropolitan Deputy Chief Sergio Gajardo insisted Friday afternoon, however, that the police officers were not involved in the shoot-

ing and the van from which witnesses said the shots were fired was not a Carabinero vehicle. As of Friday afternoon Carabinero officials had not called for an internal investigation of the incident, with Gajardo insisting there was not yet sufficient evidence to link any officers to the shooting. According to the representative for the Gutiérrez family, Miguel Fonseca, the shots were fired from nearly 1,000 feet away.

The bullet was removed for Gutiérrez's body during an autopsy by the Legal Medical Service (SML) on Friday and will be examined by the homicide unit within Chile's Investigative Police (PDI). The violent protests in Macul were just a few of numerous incidents across the country Thursday. Protests [started in the afternoon](#) following mostly peaceful [marches around the country](#) in the

second day of Chile's two-day national strike and lasted into the early morning. In total 1,394 people were detained between Tuesday and Thursday night, with 153 police officers and 53 civilians reportedly injured.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Governor attributes Chile's violence to kids born out of wedlock - Piñera-appointed regional governor blames unmarried parents for recent social conflicts - Sunday, 28 August 2011 21:43



Photo courtesy of distrito46.cl
Written by Juanita Chacón-Snow

Víctor Lobos, the recently-appointed governor of the Bio Bio Region and member of the the ultra conservative Opus Dei Catholic Church sect, caused feathers to fly in political circles this weekend after a controversial statement made Thursday at a seminar held at the Universidad San Sebastián in Santiago. "Today Chile is a country without family. I warned this would bring social unrest to Chile," Lobos is quoted as saying. "A child who doesn't receive anything, doesn't receive affection, the loving attention of a father and mother and their protection, shows up in the streets with hate."

Lobos, who was appointed by President Sebastián Piñera to the regional post after the [resignation](#) of former Gov. Jacqueline van Rysselberghe in April following allegations of misuse of earthquake relief funds, blamed the protests on unmarried parents, because 65% of Chilean children are now born out of wedlock. Reactions were quick to come, both from the ruling center-right Alianza and the opposition center-left Concertación, which demanded Lobos' immediate resignation. Senate President Guido Girardi (PPD) announced legal action against the regional governor and demanded an apology from the government. "If the government doesn't apologize, the president is an accomplice to [the governor's] words." But it was within the governing Alianza that tensions were most evident. Sen. Lily Pérez (RN) insisted the regional government representative should immediately resign his post. "His words have wounded the soul of our people. Chile has changed and the government has taken steps precisely towards recognizing the different types of families that exist today,"

Pérez told press, adding that Lobos' statements were "extremely serious, discriminatory and unacceptable." "There are so many examples in Chile of single mothers who raise their children on their own, parents who rely on their own efforts to get by, and couples who haven't married and for whom the government's proposed [Life Partnership Agreement](#) is intended. It saddens me deeply to hear something like this." Sen. Víctor Pérez (UDI), however, told his colleague to "not lose focus of the issue." "Many Chileans like myself find it hard to understand how a father or mother can allow their adolescent children to participate in a hunger strike without taking into consideration the risks of their action," he said, adding that "many of us ask ourselves where are the parents of these 'encapuchados', many of them minors, who destroy everything in their path and are even willing to put the lives of others at risk." The government, meanwhile, stood behind Lobos and ratified the regional governor in his post.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Students reach goal in "education race" : Participants run 1,800 consecutive hours in relay protest race to show their support for the student movement - Sunday, 28 August 2011 21:27



Photo courtesy of cesarsandovalsoto/Flickr
Written by Adeline Bash
While the student-led marches and ensuing violence over the past three months have taken

the spotlight in Chile's movement for education reform, since early June a smaller demonstration has been taking place beneath the media glare — slowly garnering support and drawing attention to a different kind of statement. Since June 13 a group of students and their supporters have participated in a "1,800 hours for education" relay race — demonstrating their support for the student movement by continuously running the half-mile loop around Chile's La Moneda presidential palace. More than 4,000 runners participated in the race, taking turns day and night to run the loop until they clocked 1,800 hours. The number of hours represents the number of millions of dollars it would cost the country to fund free education.

The race, which started with one lone drama student, ended Saturday when runners reached their target time. Close to 400 came to watch the finale. Organizers of the race invited all attendees to participate in the final lap of the racing, hoping to form the largest hand to hand run in Chile's history. In total, the race lasted 75 days. "Not that many people thought we could do it," Alfonso Castillo, a Universidad de Chile student and one of the race's organizers told Radio Cooperativa, adding that though the race has come to a close, their protest has not. "The movement must continue because (the students) have still achieved practically nothing."

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Citizens unite to demand change - Thursday, 25 August 2011 21:04



Photo by Álvaro Rivera Rojas.
Banner reads "From student power to popular power."



Photo by Adeline Bash
Santiago Times

Written by Adeline Bash
Old and young join activists across the country in day two of the national strike
Participants in Chile's recent movement for educational reform and their citizen allies united Thursday in marches across Chile, converging their efforts to send a unified message to their

government: Chile debe ser distinto — Chile must change. "All of the demands are becoming unified," Cecilia Leblanca, a Chilean professor, said during the march of the various organizations taking part. "We are tired of this government that has taken away the rights that we spent years fighting for." Chile's most powerful labor confederation, the Central Workers Union (CUT), organized the march — the major focus for the second day of the two-day national strike. [Since June](#) the CUT has worked to garner support for the strike from organizations ranging from transportation and sanitary services to health and department store unions. During Thursday's marches everyone from labor unions representatives to members of the student movement to environmental protection groups marched in solidarity with the CUT. The strike's demands range from free public higher

education to constitutional reform to changes in the nation's tax and labor laws. The most immediate action strikers have called for is a plebiscite to grant citizens the power to put these demands to a vote.

In Santiago, a march starting in Plaza Italia attracted citizens from all walks of life —from families with toddlers to retirees in their 70's and 80's.

"I was a student during the Allende administration and I participated in the political protests against Pinochet," Adriana Gomez, one of several members of the Feminist Federation participating in the march, said. "(The movements) are much stronger now. We are angry but we have also decided together that we will not tolerate this any longer."

Citizens who did not actively participate in the march showed their support by banging pots and pans and joining in chants from inside the surrounding apartment buildings. At one point confetti was thrown from the roof of a 20-story apartment building, showering down for minutes on the hundreds of protesters below.

The march starting in Plaza Italia was one of four marches across the city. Each started in a different district around 10 am and later converged on

the intersection of Cumming and Alameda — only blocks from the Moneda presidential palace.

CUT president Arturo Martínez said there were too many protesters at the intersection to count. "The streets of Santiago are full," Martínez said to Radio Cooperativa. "We have a city that is saying something and they should be listened to."

In Valparaiso an estimated 50,000 people marched to the National Congress building. Similarly, further north in the city of La Serena 10,000 gathered to march in support of the strike. An estimated 600,000 Chileans participated across the country, according to the CUT.

Though the morning was mostly peaceful in Santiago, once the marches converged violence erupted. Protesters reportedly ignited fires and set up road barricades, vandalized nearby banks and tried to set fire to the National Gratitude Church. Carabineros, in turn, responded with tear gas and water cannons.

Thursday afternoon's violence followed [similar confrontations](#) between police and citizens late Wednesday. Throughout the night protesters reportedly blocked road access in 40 areas of Santiago, burned and stoned Transantiago buses and looted and vandalized public property.

The activity ended in 71 arrests in Santiago, 107 across the country and left six Carabineros wounded.

During a hospital visit to some of the wounded police officers Thursday morning, Carabinero Director of National Security and Public Order Aquiles Blu called Wednesday "one of the most violent nights in recent weeks."

As [they did Wednesday](#), most public services ran smoothly Thursday. The minister of labor estimated that only 9.1 percent of public employees joined the strike and 90 percent of services ran normally.

During Thursday's march many public union workers did participate, however, despite threats Wednesday by the Labor Ministry that employees who chose to participate faced losing a day's pay and other repercussions.

"This was a moment for us to exercise our rights (to demonstrate). For us it was worth it," Silvana Arriaza, a member of the National Board of Jardines Infantiles (daycares), said of choosing to participate regardless of the ministry's threats. "This is the time for change." This movement in Chile has been coming for years, Ariazza said, and she wasn't going to miss it.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES: Six Chilean students end hunger strike, health minister cries foul - Thursday, 25 August 2011 16:34



Photo by Chelsea A. Flowers
Santiago Times

Written by Zach Simon

Mañalich says five of the high school students were "cowards," faking participation.

Six students from the Liceo A-131 high school in Buin—a community about 20 miles south of Santiago—decided Wednesday to end their 37-day hunger strike in protest of Chile's education system. The students cited their deteriorating health as the main reason for the halt.

Hunger strikes are just one form of protest that students across the country have adopted over the past three months of demands to reform education, along with measures such as school [takeovers](#), street demonstrations, [free concerts](#) and even "kiss-a-thons" in the capital's Plaza de Armas.

High school students nationwide have been [hospitalized](#) as a result of their participation.

In Buin, Gloria Negrete was one of the students most affected by the hunger strike, having been transferred to a hospital a week ago.

"Given the concern and distress of our families for our increasingly critical state of health, we have taken the following decision: to lay down our hunger strike, but not the fight we have been conducting for three months," Negrete told La Tercera.

Matías Ortega, Felipe Sanhueza, Kamila Rubilar, Francia Gárate and Fabiola Pilquén also participated in the hunger strike.

However, Health Minister Jaime Mañalich told local media Thursday that he believes Negrete is the only student who was truly on a hunger strike. Mañalich said the other five students were lying to the country as a ploy to manipulate sympathy for their cause.

"When a person says he's on a hunger strike, in the vast majority of cases he's lying," the health minister said. "I know this because we've seen people say they're hunger striking and gain weight. Only Gloria Negrete was truly hunger striking in this case. She lost 10 percent of her body weight in less than 30 days as a result of her actions. Go check the others' medical charts. "I believe it is an act of cowardice for someone to say that they are hunger striking when in reality they have neither the heroism nor the courage to truly follow through with such a decision," Mañalich added.

The health minister's opinions expressed on Thursday were an abrupt about-face from what he had to say Wednesday when the news first broke that the students were ending their hunger strike. La Tercera reported that Minister Mañalich relayed the news to President Sebastián Piñera at the La Moneda presidential palace and said, "We were all so upset. I thank the students and health workers who did so much for them in the

hospital and at the school to keep them in such good condition."

Negrete fired back at Mañalich's comments on Thursday from her hospital bed.

"That's not true," she said. "It's completely unethical to lie to an entire country, and we always told the truth. I agree with the health minister: come and look at our medical charts. Matías (Ortega) is sick."

Ortega and Sanhueza were [hospitalized](#) prior to Negrete last week, showing signs of serious heart and lung complications.

Sergio Aguilera, director of the Hospital de Buin, said that some of the students would have to remain in the hospital for about a week to be monitored.

The students' actions have been praised by student organizations across Chile.

"We respect that they've decided to end the strike, and we value what they've done," Freddy Fuentes, spokesperson for the National Coordination of High School Students (CONES), told El Mercurio. "We hope that it hasn't been in vain, that they will be given an answer to their demands, as well as ours."

Meanwhile, there are eight other high schools in Chile with students currently on hunger strikes.

In the Darío Salas high school in the Santiago borough of La Granja, six students are on day 36 of their strike. On average, these students have lost 22 pounds, according to La Tercera.

"We're very happy," Sanhueza's mother, Maritza Riffo, told El Mercurio. "We spoke with the children, and in the end they understood it was a matter of health and wellbeing, and that they couldn't continue this way."

"To me, the strike was suicide."

THE SANTIAGO TIMES: How did Chile's leaders respond to the national strike? - Thursday, 25 August 2011 16:33

Written by Benjamin Schneider

There were a multitude of voices.

Politicians, labor leaders, student movement leaders, government officials – everyone with a public voice has an opinion about the [national strike](#) held [Wednesday](#) and Thursday.

Early Thursday, many public comments focused on Wednesday night's [violence](#).

"It is terrible how a few can create so much violence and destruction," wrote center-right

National Renovation Party (RN) Dep. Karla Rubilar. "Night of TERROR for the neighbors in my community. PURE DELINQUENCY."

One public official was apparently on the receiving end of violence, though from police special forces officers rather than protestors. Claudina Núñez, mayor of the Pedro Aguirre Cerda district of Santiago, told Radio Cooperativa, "Police special forces acted like delinquents, trying to enter my house at 1:38 in the morning."

Here, there was no protest, there was nothing, there was no justification at that hour," said Núñez. "They hit my [71-year-old] neighbor. They left her on the floor. They left and then returned and began to attack houses. They began to throw tear gas bombs." And there were countless other voices.





Photo by Alison Silveira
Santiago Times

"This is a completely useless strike and brings no benefit to the country," said Pablo Longueira, economy minister and member of the right-wing Independent Democratic Union Party (UDI). "Those that participated in the strike should take responsibility for their actions. Chile does not want strikes," said Juan Antonio Coloma, UDI leader. "[The government] should back down from its ideological stance and take a step towards the position that represents the majority in the country," said Giorgio Jackson, president of the Universidad Católica Student Federation and a student movement leader. "I'm here with Giorgio Jackson, marching down Alameda avenue [Santiago's central thoroughfare] to La Moneda [the Chilean presidential palace]! Another Chile is possible!" said Camilo

Ballesteros, president of the Universidad de Santiago Student Federation and a student movement leader. "Only 18,020 public employees were not at work today. The other 179,781 went to work," said Evelyn Matthei, labor minister and RN member. "I saw the streets of Santiago full of people protesting... More than 600,000 people demonstrated nationally," said Arturo Martínez, president of the Central Workers Union (CUT) and chief organizer of the two-day protest. "The leaders of [the center-left political coalition] Concertación should assume responsibility [for supporting the strike]. When will [Socialist Party (PS) leader] Osvaldo Andrade, [Party for Democracy (PPD) leader] Carolina Tohá, and [Christian Democratic Party (DC) leader] Ignacio Walker assume responsibility for the seven police officers who were gravely wounded or the 285 buses damaged during violence last night?" said Gustavo Hasbún, UDI deputy. "These violent protestors do not want dialogue," said Evelyn Matthei, labor minister and RN member. "The CUT has nothing to celebrate. Arturo Martínez won't be able to go to any expensive restaurants ever again," Carlos Larraín, RN leader. [Martínez, the CUT president, was found to have spent 600,000 pesos—more than US \$1200.00—on a dinner for six last May 21. He's been ribbed about it ever since. The 600,000 pesos included the tip—generous, one assumes.] "This strike has brought ... only great pain and suffering for our countrymen, a self-inflicted

wound to the external image of our country," said Rodrigo Hinzpeter, the interior minister. "What the authorities are doing is blaming the violence on those organizing the strike. It is an attempt to criminalize the demonstrations. It is confusing two distinct things," said Carolina Toha, PPD president. "Forty percent of [Chilean] children are said to be born out of wedlock, out of a traditional marriage with a father and mother.... Today Chile is a country without families... A child who doesn't receive anything, doesn't receive affection, doesn't receive the care and protection of a mother and a father demonstrates violently in the streets," said Víctor Lobos, Bio-Bio regional governor. "Today more than 300,000 people marched in the streets of Santiago, because we believe that Chile ought to be different! Public education for all," said Camila Vallejo, president of the Universidad de Chile Student Federation and spokesperson for the student movement. "This has been a peaceful march... [carried out] in a completely orderly way... Now we are calling for the people who organized the strike to control the situation, if they had the capacity to organize a peaceful orderly march, they should at least call for an end to the [violent] actions that we are seeing. ... What is clear is that the central topic is education. In the march, we saw the same young people from the student marches. The CUT joined the student movement," said Andrés Chadwick, government spokesperson.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : First night of Chile's national strike marked by disturbances : 108 detained in night marked by tensions between demonstrators and police - Thursday, 25 August 2011 10:48



Photo by Chelsea A. Flowers
Santiago Times

Written by Ivan Ebergenyi
On the second day of a nationwide strike called for by Chile's Central Workers Union (CUT), the assessment made by authorities shows a day marked by tensions between police officers, demonstrators and hooded individuals who took advantage of the chaos in order to loot and vandalize. Undersecretary of the Interior Roberto Ubilla has pegged the number of arrested at 108 across the country, 71 of which were detained in the Santiago Metropolitan Region. Of these, seven have been identified as responsible for looting businesses. Activity was limited throughout the daytime on Wednesday, as many local businesses closed

their doors and the streets remained largely empty. Though a few isolated disturbances took place during the otherwise calm day, the pockets of violence and vandalism came to a head during the evening hours. Transantiago representatives told Ubilla that 285 buses in Santiago as having been damaged by small groups of "encapuchados" (hooded individuals). Demonstrations were reported to have taken place in the early hours of Wednesday morning, the first one having taken place in front the Portal La Dehesa mall. Focal points of violence Wednesday night included the San Bernardo borough of Santiago, where police had rocks thrown at them while trying to take down barricades around 6 p.m. Around the same times, burning barricades could also be found on Santiago's Vicuña Mackenna and Irrazaval avenues. Santiago's Alameda thoroughfare was also the scene of disturbances as police tried to disperse demonstrators with vehicles mounted with water and tear gas cannons around 7 p.m. near the Universidad de Chile's central campus and adjacent subway station. Among the more unusual events was the decision of a police officer to draw his pistol in a moment of tension with demonstrators on Santiago's Gran Avenida. Notably, Claudina Nuñez, the mayor of the Pedro Aguirre Cerda borough of Santiago, publicly

denounced the police for violently raiding her home. She also states that officers used tear gas and hit a 71-year-old woman. In Viña del Mar, 1,500 demonstrators gathered at the Municipal Theater for an unauthorized march, which police eventually allowed due to the large turnout. Thursday morning students and workers came out in full force on Santiago's streets. Currently, four separate marches are underway in Santiago all of which have the intersection of Alameda and Cumming as their final destination. The first march started on San Diego and Placer, heading north on San Diego to Tarapacá, turning west on Manuel Rodríguez and heading north to Cumming. Simultaneously, another march started at Plaza Italia headed south to Parque Bustamante, where it turned west along Curicó to converge with the aforementioned march en route to Cumming. The third was scheduled to start at Estación Central and the fourth from the intersection of Alameda and Exposición. For more on the organizers of the two-day national strike, the demands being made and official government reactions, see "[Chile's most powerful unions launch nationwide strike](#)" and "[Chilean government prepares for looming national strike.](#)"

THE PATAGONIA TIMES : National strike called by labor extends to southern Chile - Thursday, 25 August 2011 10:34

Written by Steve Anderson
20,000 demonstrators turn out in Puerto Montt.
The first day of Chile's two-day national labor strike joined with the student movement on Wednesday to bring thousands of demonstrators

to the streets not just in Santiago, but in cities all across southern Chile. About 20,000 demonstrators marched peacefully in Puerto Montt and 8,000 in Osorno, according to Radio Bio-Bio. Much smaller demonstrations occurred in Valdivia and Temuco, where

transport leaders did not adhere to the call for a strike. The demonstrators were roughly 50 percent students, 50 percent workers and included representatives from the nearby local communities of Maullin, Frutillar, Puerto Varas and Calbuco.





Photo by Stephanie Kramm
 In Puerto Montt, the local Governor Sergio Montes praised strike organizers for the peaceful nature of their demonstration and noted that the strike did not close down most government offices.
 Still, commercial activity was noticeably slower on Wednesday. The two-day labor strike and the student demonstrators have received open support from Puerto Montt mayor Rabindrath Quinteros, a member of the Socialist Party.

Complementing the march was a "sea demonstration" led by 40 artisan fisherman boats, piloting their vessels from Anahuac to the waters just in front of the city of Puerto Montt.
 At the march's conclusion, hooded demonstrators created barricades at four different points of the city's center, requiring police intervention. Twenty-two were arrested: 10 minors and 12 adults.

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Limited activity marks Chile's first day of national strike : Citizens remain active in strike though public employees largely attend work - Wednesday, 24 August 2011 18:46



Photo by Valerie Schenkman Sanjine
 Santiago Times

CUT union members celebrated International Workers day in May 2011.

Written by Adeline Bash

Organizers called for limited action Wednesday to mark the first day of [Chile's national strike](#) — planning to hold off louder and more confrontational marches and protests until Thursday. Though many of the nation's public services operated smoothly Wednesday, in spite of expected interruptions, the day was not without incidents.

The two-day strike, organized by Chile's most powerful labor confederation, the Central Workers Union (CUT), began with "cacerolazo" or "pots and pans" protests across Chile Tuesday night.

The CUT predicted that 80 organizations ranging from transportation and sanitary services to health and department store unions would follow through on their vow to take part. The government announced on Wednesday afternoon, however, that only five percent of public workers adhered to the strike, 99 percent of industrial service employees came to work and 95 percent of buses and all metro trains were unaffected.

Individual citizens, on the other hand, demonstrated and undertook disruptive actions to show support for the strike.

Across Chile activists set up road barricades and fires and organized demonstrations as early as 6

a.m. Wednesday morning to stall public services. In one gathering in Santiago, upwards of 200 protesters stalled traffic on Alameda for close to an hour before Carabinero police dispersed the crowd with water cannons and tear gas.

According to La Tercera, 35 people were arrested Wednesday morning, and nine Carabineros and two civilians were injured. Close to 4,000 gathered to march in Valparaíso and in Santiago alone 20 road barricades, typically built from burning tires or trash, were erected.

Government representatives reiterated messages throughout the day to citizens that the strike would not be tolerated.

Labor Minister Evelyn Matthei monitored employees of her ministry closely Wednesday, warning that there would be penalties for any who chose to participate in the strike by not attending work.

"At the Ministry of Labor we have been very clear that those who do not attend work risk having their salary reduced and the hours missed will be deducted from pay," Matthei told Radio Cooperativa, adding that she instructed employees of these measures personally and that she would be the one to ensure they were upheld.

The interior and finance ministries took similar measures. A government statement this week warned employees that those who chose to strike would face wage decreases.

Raúl de la Puente, president of the National Association for Fiscal Employees (ANEF) — one of the major organizations participating in the strike — rejected the threats, announcing Wednesday his plans to request an injunction to protect the workers' right to demonstrate.

Along with threats to public employees, the government also announced Wednesday its decision to refuse a requested permit for a march CUT has planned to the "Moneda", Chile's presidential palace, for Thursday. Four marches are authorized although municipal authorities and CUT representatives did not come to an agreement by Wednesday evening on the routes the demonstrations were to follow.

Government officials [rejected a permit](#) for a similar student demonstration earlier this month, and forcefully repressed students' [illegal gatherings](#) around the country, relying heavily on teargas and water cannons to disperse large crowds. Fires, looted department stores and general destruction caused thousands of dollars in damage.

Just as student leaders did weeks before, CUT officials responded Wednesday that Thursday's marches will move forward as planned.

As of Thursday afternoon the government did not announce any further plans to invoke the Internal Security Law to maintain public order, as was suggested by Piñera administration ministers on Monday. According to legal expert Julián López, however, if the law is invoked the consequences could be substantial.

The Internal Security Law grants authorities the right to use military force to maintain public order and triples judicial sanctions for detained protesters. However, in practice, López told El Mercurio, it takes situations that normally would not be considered illegal and criminalizes them.

For example, a public employee missing work for a day is not typically grounds for any action. However, under the law, missing work could be considered a criminal act — an attempt by the employee to disturb and/or halt important public services.

While the law does expand grounds for arrest it does not typically hold up in court, López said, and rarely leads to convictions.

"It is more effective in the short term than long term," Lopéz said.

Whether the government will implement the law to control demonstrators during the more large scale activism planned for Thursday remains undecided.

For more information on the strike check out The Santiago Times homepage and follow our live coverage on Twitter (@SantiagoTimes).

THE SANTIAGO TIMES : Neither rain or sleet deter Chilean students' march : Organizers report 100,000 in attendance at downtown Santiago march - Thursday, 18 August 2011 21:39



Photo by Ivan Ebergenyi/Santiago Times

Written by Ivan Ebergenyi

Thousands marched down Santiago's Alameda thoroughfare on Thursday, calling once more for sweeping reforms to Chile's public education system.



Photo by Ivan Ebergenyi/Santiago Times

The march began around 10:30 when 4,000 demonstrators gathered at the corner of San Martín and Alameda, then continued westward down Alameda past the Los Héroes subway stop.

Weather conditions were harsh in Santiago. The downtown was hit with unusually low temperatures and incessant rainfall. Higher parts of Santiago even had snow for much of the day.

But the weather failed to dampen the festive atmosphere as the procession turned south onto Exposición upon reaching Estación Central and continued until turning east onto Blanco Encalada. The march ended at Universidad de Chile's engineering faculty, where local media reported it to have swelled to 100,000.

Preceding Thursday's march were isolated incidents involving a group of 20 "encapuchados" or hooded youth who had set up burning barricades on Alameda in front of the administrative building of Universidad de Chile as early as 7 a.m.

Despite this start, the march was notably peaceful. The only other disturbances reported were at



the march's end at the corner the Beauchef and Blanco Encalada, where a small group of people started to throw rocks at police officers. [According to Radio Cooperativa](#), student demonstrators stopped the rock-throwers by forming human chains to fence them in.

The march was organized by student leaders and teachers, and members of other labor unions came out in support of the students' demands, which at their core aim to end profiteering in the country's education system and shift the burden of financing from municipalities to the state.

"The decentralization of education in Chile began in 1980," Patricia Urbano told The Santiago Times. Urbano, a grade school teacher for 25 years, took to the streets in support of reforms she believes are much needed for her students and their parents. "That's when the state ceased to manage education directly and took on a role as a mere subsidizer."

Like many others who came out on Thursday, Urbano believes that the root of the problem in Chile's education system started during the right-wing dictatorship of Gen. Augusto Pinochet. She and other protesters believe that the current system places too great a burden on municipalities that receive state funding for education only based on attendance. Prior to the 1980 Constitution, state funding was centralized and payment for tuition was calculated based on income levels.

Though the 1980 Constitution maintained the illegality of profit in educational institutions, the regime encouraged the emergence of private institutions, which critics blame for the emergence of a class-based education system.

"What the students are calling for is free education like what they have in Argentina and Mexico," said Urbano.

This is what Nicolás, a student at a Santiago university, also wants. A civil engineering major, he has to pay US\$6,300 per year. It is a heavy burden to bear in a country where the average yearly income is US\$10,080 per person and most university programs are five years long or more.

"All the schools participating in this movement have different demands," Nicolás said when asked about the government's proposals [announced on Wednesday](#). "But they all have at their core the call for a halt to profiteering from education. You need to have it under state control and it has to be free."

The government's latest education proposals were a response to the student leaders' rejection of a 21-point proposal offered on Aug. 1. The new proposals include lowering interest rates for student loans from 6 percent to 2 percent, as well as extending scholarships to the country's poorest 60 percent, as opposed to the 40 percent included in the Aug. 1 proposal.

"Interest rates for university students in this country are usurious," said Mario Ruiz of the

union of Banco de Chile employees, currently striking for better wages. Ruiz has worked for 38 years as a banker and says he understands the plight of students and parents who need to take out loans in order to pay for an education.

"The banking sector in this country has a 27 percent return on equity," he said. "When this happens in European countries, the authorities intervene. Here in contrast the banks are congratulated in Congress. As it stands right now, 70 percent of the country needs free access to education, because their salaries are simply not high enough to pay for it."

Chile's GDP is expected to [grow 6.6 percent](#) this year but currently less than 5 percent of students attend private schools.

Students and teachers from such schools were not absent from Thursday's demonstrations.

"The kids are aware of how privileged they are," said Amelia Bustamante, a high school teacher who has worked for 18 years at Santiago's Teresimo Enrique de Ossó private school. She attended Thursday's marches along with a group of her students.

"And they also don't think it's fair for the system to be so unequal. They think that quality education is a privilege that should be shared, and that's why they're out today."

By Ivan Ebergenyi (editor@santiagotimes.cl)

[ILOVECHILE](#) : Demonstrators abroad gather in support of Chilean education reform - Wednesday, August 10, 2011

As an estimated 100,000 protesters congregated in downtown Santiago, Tuesday, Aug. 9, demonstrators abroad also met to show their support of Chilean education reform.

Around 130 reportedly congregated in Plaza Catalunya in Barcelona, Spain and an estimated 50 people demonstrated in front of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France. Demonstrations were also reported in Argentina, the United States, Australia, Sweden and Switzerland.



Photo credit: Victoria López via Twitter

Demonstrators gather in Paris in support of Chilean education reform.

An official statement released by the protesters in Barcelona stated that they had organized to "reject the continued criminalization of social movements, the maintenance of the constitution and the brutal repression seen during the last demonstration, which is supported by the government."

Chilean stocks up following hard day for international markets

The Chilean stock market closed with its biggest growth in almost three years, Tuesday night. The rise comes the day after Chilean stocks saw their largest drop in 13 years. On a day in which stocks were hard hit across the globe, the Chilean market was down 6.92 percent at "Black Monday's" closing.

In contrast, the price index was up 5.83 percent at Tuesday's closing.

Internet activists target websites in name of student protests

Hackers have taken over the website for [Anatel](#), the national television association in Chile. As of early Wednesday morning, the homepage displayed the message: "The demagogues and their political parties are not our flag, even if the media insist on claiming the contrary. Even so, the leadership helps in our cause, what represents us even more is common sense and the desire for a just society."

Anatel was targeted over discontent concerning television news coverage of the most recent student demonstrations.

Other sites targeted in the name of education reform include [www.proaraucaania.cl](#), [www.nuestrofutbol.cl](#) and [www.grange.cl](#).

Cyber-activist group "Anonymous" recently made a call via Twitter, inviting its followers to next target the website for the Chilean ministry of education.

[THE SANTIAGO TIMES](#) : Burning cars fan the flames of Chile's student protests : Shocking photos as protesters reiterate demands; fires and looting in downtown Santiago - Tuesday, 09 August 2011 22:14



Photo by Chelsea A. Flowers/Santiago Times

Written by Nathaniel Frandino

For the third time in seven days, [Chilean students and professors marched through Santiago](#) for national educational reform on Tuesday.

Like the many marches that came before, Tuesday's march featured continued incidents of

violence and chaos, with two cars set on fire near downtown Paseo Bulnes and assorted reports of looting in downtown businesses.

Chilean police reacted with the use of tear gas and "guanaco" water cannons to disperse crowds. The number of arrests is so far undetermined.

Organizers from the Student Confederations of Chile (Confech) estimated that 100,000 people turned out for the protest, while Chile's Carabiniero police force said that only 60,000 participated.

Camila Vallejo, president of the Student Federation of the Universidad de Chile, called the violence "appalling" after having pleaded with her followers on Twitter to maintain pacifism throughout the march.

"We reject all of the acts of violence that happened after the peaceful and successful march that we had today," she tweeted.

Chile's Interior Minister Rodrigo Hinzpeter said the continuing violence is further proof that the students and professors cannot keep the marches under control. Hinzpeter told La Tercera that the protesters need to reconsider the continued marches.

"The moment has arrived when they should reflect on at what point they are calling these marches that they can't control," he said. "The leaders also have to assume responsibility."

The high school and university students and professors convened at the Universidad de Santiago at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday before marching to Parque Almagro. Shortly before, Vallejo said that they were looking forward to Wednesday, when they are expecting another government response to their demands.

"Today, the citizens will yet again express themselves in the streets, we're hoping for a good answer from Minister Felipe Bulnes tomorrow," she tweeted.

<p>The students rejected a 21-point proposal by Bulnes last week and reiterated their demands to the Ministry of Education with a deadline. For three months now, students, professors and workers have been demanding a free, quality public education. That demand has remained the same, said protester Elena, a member of Chile's teachers union, the Colegio de Profesores. "Education is not a business," she said, referring to one of the principle concerns of students and professors. "We want better participation without repression and to change the Constitution of Pinochet."</p>	<p>Sergio Zúñiga, a senior at Colegio Anselmo Cádiz, said the most important demand remains the same: equality. He said Chile's educational system has never been equal and continues to be exclusive. "Our demands are no more than having the right to education," he said. As for a compromise, Zúñiga said there's no telling when the government and students will reach an agreement. The students have already rejected two government proposals—President Sebastián Piñera's Gran Acuerdo Nacional por la Educación (GANE) and Bulnes' 21-point proposal released last week.</p>	<p>Students said those proposals, which included offers of extra funding to universities, more scholarships, and greater transparency in the university system, were not enough. Many said the government's plans lacked concrete details on improving the system. Monica Ramos, who was protesting for her children and grandchildren, said the failed proposals show that the government is out of touch with the citizens. "These students are frustrated because they can't get a quality education, a good experience and a good job," Ramos said.</p>
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