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presents

# *Chileanización and La Chinita: The Regulation of Domestic Service in Chile, 1924-1952*

Dr. Elizabeth Hutchison

Department of History

Monday, March 31, 12:00-1:00 PM

SUB Cherry/Silver



Chilean President Pedro Aguirre Cerda with domestic workers at his Conchalí estate, c. 1940.

In Chile's sweeping labor code of 1931, domestic servants were (among other workers) explicitly excluded from a number of provisions, leaving them to rely on the state's social welfare office for medical care and minimal oversight of their labor relations. In the years following that exclusion--and throughout the popular fronts, 1938-1952--female domestic workers regularly petitioned the Labor Office, demanding payment of salaries and severance, as well as an end to employer abuses. Based on these interactions and servant use of state medical clinics, numerous legal, social work, and religious professionals went on to write lengthy treatises describing the negative effects of household workers' exclusion from social legislation, advocating greater state protection.

This paper draws on servant petitions, legal and social work studies, as well as newspaper, labor, and union records, to examine how female domestics and others understood their labor and their "rights": as workers, citizens, and mothers. The years of Chile's Popular Front regimes were critical years for the redefinition of "empleada" as a category in labor law and popular culture, which in turn contributed to the construction of myths of *mestizaje* and "raza chilena" that were so central to the Chileanization project of Chile's populist regimes.



Dr. Hutchison received her PhD in Latin American History (1995) and her Masters in Latin American Studies (1989) from the University of California, Berkeley. She is Associate Professor of Latin American History at the University of New Mexico, USA. Her lifelong concern with social justice, democracy, and human rights has driven her engagement with Chilean history, as well as her specialization in the history of labor, gender, and sexuality in 20th-century Latin America. In her current book project, "From Servants to Workers," Hutchison analyzes the changing labor relations of domestic service in Chile over the course of the twentieth century, linking questions about domestic servants' employment, migration, family life, and political activity to broader class and ethnic relations in Chilean history.



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