PROGRESS, POLICY, AND PROTEST:

ECONOMIC CHALLENGES AND THE COLOMBIAN STUDENT MOVEMENTS OF THE 1920S

By

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A Thesis Submitted of the Partial Requirements for the Degree of a Master of Arts in History

Middle Tennessee State University

May 2021

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ABSTRACT

Throughout Colombia's early Twentieth Century, university students carved out political importance and played a critical role in precipitating major political events. The student mobilizations in 1909 toppled a regime, while helping end the Conservative Party's control of the state. While the political and social motivations for mobilizing against the state are well known, I rather explore the economic and socioeconomic issues behind why the students politicized and then mobilized, and I argue that economic issues played large roles in motivating the students to mobilize against the state.

Analyzing the student publications makes clear that students found highly important issues such as public debt, interest rates, the money supply, and greater monetary policy. They also paid clear attention to fiscal policy, worker's rights, public spending, and tax rates, and then publicly criticized collusion and racketeering within the government, contracts with foreign firms, state policy regarding land concessions. In this last regard, the U.S. banking and oil sectors absorbed most of the attention. Even within the prevalent idea of university reform, I argue that students focused on socioeconomic issues. Although considered a more sociopolitical concept, they framed their rhetoric on socioeconomic concepts such as national economic progress and professional advancement within the economy. The fact that the height of the student movements occurred in the 1920s further reinforces this notion of student economic motivations, because the nation experienced rapid economic growth.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I want to thank Michael LaRosa for his constant support, assistance, and encouragement in this lengthy process. Thank you for your academic support, teaching me much about the history of Colombia. Most importantly, thank you for your friendship that formed throughout this process. I will always remember adventures in Bogota, Nashville, and Tampa. Secondly, I owe significant thanks to James Torres for both your friendship, guidance, and attendance to my incessant questions regarding the Colombian economy. Without your patience, this project would have been impossible.

My professors at Middle Tennessee State University, Christoph Rosenmüller, Amy Sayward, Sean Foley, and Becky McIntyre all played vital roles in this process. Christoph Rosenmüller continued to encourage me to see my subject from different angles and always pushed me to seek originality, as best as I could. Amy Sayward's relentless work ethic was a constant motivation for me to write and research. Additionally, the time I spent with her in independent study enlightened me to the true nature of scholarship, and what it takes to produce quality academic work. Sean Foley's encouragement and support in helping me strengthen my writing and analysis helped me tremendously in the early stages of this process. I also thoroughly appreciated the time he took to talk about life, research, Nashville's coffee scene, and much more. Becky McIntyre lent a friendly, helpful ear as I processed the theme and how to approach my topic, and she offered valuable perspectives.

The archives in Bogota willingly offered their assistance in my two very short stays while conducting archival research. The staff at the National Library and the Luis Angel Arango Library guided me, at times, step by step in acquiring the bulk of my sources. Alma Nohra at the Javeriana Pontifical University's archives, Ramon Garcia and Juan Manuel Gualteros at the National University of Colombia archives, and Mauricio Tovar at the General Archive of the Nation all dedicated substantial time in assisting me in the research process.

I owe a special thanks to the Office of International Affairs at Middle Tennessee State University and the Association of Graduate Students in History for generous grants they provided in funding my first research experience in Bogota.

Most importantly, I want to thank my wife, Mallory, for her patience and encouragement throughout this long process.

Lastly, I want to dedicate this paper to my first history professor, my mentor, and my friend Theodora Ayot, who passed away this winter. Her kindness, warmth, humor, and friendship are her traits that I will always carry with me, and her dedication to her craft and development of students and future scholars will always inspire me. Thank you.

A NOTE ON TERMS

Because this work focuses on the socioeconomic dynamics of the university reform movement and the students' discussions regarding the economy, I must draw a distinction between the terms *economics* and *socioeconomics*, and how they differ throughout the body of the text. First, because I focus on how students framed their rhetoric around university reform, I use the term socioeconomics. Socioeconomics focuses on the means by which society and the economy affect one another, how individuals within a particular society and economy are affected by these forces or operate within both society and the economy. One's social class plays an important function within this idea, as individuals and groups will behave within society based on their economic standing. The university students often framed their desire for social change and university reform within the context of their social standing and their economic prospects, as well as the economic prospects of the nation, which inherently determined their social and economic status.[1]

In the second part of this work, I use the term *economics*, because the students focused heavily on economic matters of the nation and eventually mobilized as a result of governmental economic policy and practices. When discussing economic issues, the students focused on both fiscal and monetary policy, issues within the private banking sector, levels of public debt, inflation, royalties and contracts over resource extraction,

[1]Oxford English Dictionary, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), s.v. "Socio-economic," https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/view/Entry/183786?rskey=SeqvOA&result=1#eid

and the funding of social welfare policies, among others. These issues are economic, and I use the term when these issues emerged among the students.

ABBREVIATIONS AND FREQUENTLY USED SPANISH WORDS

List of Abbreviations:

BanRep	Banco de la República (Bank of the Republic)
COP	Colombian Peso
FNE	Federación Nacional Estudiantil (National Federation of Students)
MIP	Ministerio de Instrucción Pública (Ministry of Public Instruction)
PSR	Partido Socialista Revolucionario (Revolutionary Socialist Party)
UNAL	Nacional Universidad de Colombia, Colombia's largest public university
USD	United States Dollar

Definitions:

autonomía universitaria	separation of the university and the state
campesinos	rural agricultural laborers in the context of 1920s' Colombia
cátedra libre	the freedom of professors to teach without censorship from university administrations
cogobierno	decision-making at the university's administration level that involved university administrators, faculty members, and student committees
jornadas	the popular protests of 1909 and 1929
ley heroica	officially *ley 69* of 1928; this law granted the federal government authority to repress dissent, which resulted in hundreds of incarcerations for socialist party members

"la rosca" the ring of corruption that developed between the federal, departmental, and municipal governments in Bogotá at the end of the 1920s

matanza sometimes seen as Matanza de las bananeras; the Colombian army's massacre of striking banana workers in Ciénaga

reinadas competitions that in which women competed for the title of "queen" for the universities' festivals; transformed into important sociopolitical events

universidades populares night schools for working-class families that were free of charge; operated by the student organizations created at Colombia's different universities

"la danza de los millones" at times shortened to "la danza," this was the popular nickname given to the era of rapid economic growth in the 1920s

INTRODUCTION

On March 13, 1909, university students in Bogotá brought down the president of Colombia. Upset with President Rafael Reyes' disregard for democratic processes and the loss of the Panama territory, the students went on strike and marched on the presidential palace. Shortly after, the president acquiesced to the will of the students and greater public and resigned. The student-led *jornadas*, or public protests, ended the Reyes Administration's *quinquenio*, the five-year reign. He had overstepped his constitutional authority, buckled under U.S. imperialist pressure, suspended the democratically elected Congress, and suppressed public dissent. Joined by other influential groups, Colombia's students scored a major victory for "republicanism" and national pride in ousting the dictatorial leader. Twenty years later, the students mobilized and took down another political regime.[1]

In this thesis, I study Colombian student movement history between the *jornadas* of 1909 and 1929, which precipitated major political change in both situations. In analyzing the motivations, demands, platforms, and goals of the students, I ask, what motivated the students to mobilize? This is an important question that scholars have often asked regarding this topic. Usually, these scholars have focused on the sociopolitical

[1]Mauricio Archila Neira, "El movimiento estudiantil en Colombia, una mirada histórica," *Revista del Observatorio de America Latina*, no. 31 (May 2012): 73; Medófilo Medina, *La protesta urbana en Colombia en el siglo Veinte* (Bogotá: Ediciones Aurora, 1984), 23-25. In referencing the student mobilizations and popular protests of 1909 and 1929, I follow the example of Colombian scholars who use this term to describe the events. For examples, see Medina, *La protesta urbana en Colombia en el siglo Veinte*, 19; Renan Vega Cantor, *Gente muy rebelde: Protesta popular y modernización capitalista en Colombia (1909-1929)*, vol. 4, *Socialism, cultura y protesta* (Bogotá: Ediciones Pensamiento, 2002), 355.

motivations of the students as they organized and mobilized. I argue, however, that economics and socioeconomics played an equally important role, especially in Colombia's student movements of the 1920s.

Colombia's university students have had a long history of public protests and political mobilizations that have impacted Colombian politics in significant ways, even dating back to the colonial era. In 1791, Bogotá's students ignited the first sustained and effective student movement. The students combined what have historically been their two primary concerns: university reform and sociopolitical issues. Over the next three years, student groups, or *pasquines*, lobbied colonial officials to open the university to new scientific ideas. They also adopted political platforms and soon emerged as a leading voice among *criollos* who sought independence from Spain. These *pasquines* figured heavily in the early phases of the colony's eventual push for independence, and they laid the foundation for the later student activity that ignited in 1909.[2]

Aside from fighting with either of the two entrenched political parties—the Liberals and the Conservatives—in the four civil wars of the nineteenth century, no major or sustained student movement occurred in this era. The final and bloodiest civil war–the Thousand Days' War–resulted in Panama declaring its independence with support from

[2]Diana Soto Arango, "El movimiento de estudiantes y catedráticos en Santa Fe de Bogotá a fines del siglo XVIII," in *Movimientos Estudiantiles en la historia de America Latina*, ed. Renate Marsiske (México City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2002), 40, 58. Soto studies a string of university student activity in the years of 1791, 1794, and 1796 and argues that this early student activity set a precedent for later student movements that largely focused on two elements that later became the foundation for twentieth-century movements: protesting academics and teaching within the university and supporting contrarian sociopolitical issues—in this case, students clamored for independence using a unique approach of staging satirical theater shows in Bogotá's popular public spaces.

the United States State Department and military. It also brought Reyes to power, as voters regarded him as the leader to stabilize the economy and build peace within the divided nation, which in the end galvanized the students in their first major movement during the 1909 *jornadas*.

Following these mobilizations, the students built on this momentum throughout the next decade and established a platform on two major issues. The first combined Colombian nationalism, regional solidarity with other Latin American university students, and anti-imperialism. Their political goals in this area lacked any real substance, with perhaps the exception of a general call to oust foreign influence from Latin American politics and economic policies. Students established the concept of university reform as their second platform issue. Just like the university students in the colonial era, the students in the early twentieth century regarded the university system as inadequate to meet the students' academic needs, and they viewed it as a symbol of Colombia's economic stagnation.

As the 1910s transitioned into the 1920s, however, students broadened their platform, incorporating issues such as workers' rights, women in the university, and of course economic policy. In 1921, students initiated nearly a decade of intense student organization and politicization, eventually mobilizing against the municipal, departmental, and federal governments in the 1929 *jornadas*. In igniting these mass protests, students hoped to bring the Conservative Party's hegemony over local and national politics to an end by publicly condemning rampant corruption, abuse of workers and *campesinos*, and economic policies that had harmed the nation. During these public protests, a combined force of federal police and the Colombian army opened fire on a

group of students, killing popular law student Gonzalo Bravo Perez. In the end, students, workers, and members of Liberal and Socialist parties increasingly mobilized in force, shutting down public transit, businesses, and many governmental offices. Not only did President Miguel Abadía Mendez and his administration shoulder the blame for the public disorder, but it also became clear to many Colombians that the Conservative Party had failed to serve the public's best interests. Seemingly, the students played a vital role in precipitating another major political transition, as Colombians voted the Liberal Party into power in the executive and legislative branches just a few months later.[3]

Scope and Framework

The years between the student mobilizations in 1909 and 1929 provide a unique temporal framework for studying Colombia's student politicization. Between these years, Colombia experienced unprecedented economic growth and cultural change. The 1920s, especially, provided the students and the student movements with a unique cultural, social, and economic backdrop. The cultural and economic changes that Colombia both experienced and pursued created an environment for new forms of art, transportation, industrialization, and for more inclusion of women in public spaces. My analysis of Colombian student movements focuses on this time. I conclude my analysis of the student movements with the June 1929 uprising that shut down the capital and arguably ended the Conservative Party's grip on federal power. While the student movements

[3]Jose Diaz Jaramillo, "El 8 de junio y las disputas por la memoria, 1929-1954," *Historia y Sociedad*, no. 22 (January-June 2012): 160-61; Medina, *La protesta urbana en Colombia en el siglo Veinte*, 40-41.

continued into the 1930s with the Liberal Party's ascension to federal power, these movements differed in their makeup and motivations and never quite achieved the same levels of politicization that had occurred in the 1920s.[4]

The economic growth of the 1920s played an especially important role in the Colombian student movements. Because of the important economic changes of that era, I analyze the early twentieth-century Colombian student movements through an economic lens, posing important questions: What impact did the economic growth have on students? How did students affect or attempt to affect the economic changes? To what degree did microeconomics and macroeconomics influence student rhetoric and mobilizations? And how did the students—few in numbers but influential due to their associations with important leaders in Colombia—view themselves in this new economy?

Exactly what changes occurred from 1909 to 1929? To begin, global coffee demand in the early 1920s ensured that Colombia's much coveted coffee fetched extremely high prices relative to the prices of earlier decades. Between 1924 and 1928 alone, Colombia's exports doubled per annum in value. Additionally, the United States finally paid its indemnity of $25 million USD to Colombia for its complicity in Panama's independence. The Colombian economy grew more than ever thanks to these two windfalls in the era known as the *"la danza de los millones"* or "Dance of the Millions." Between 1924 and 1929 alone, Colombia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew at a rate

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[4]Carlos Uribe Celis, *Los años veinte en Colombia: ideología y cultura* (Bogotá: Ediciones Alborada, 1985), 29, 3. In general Uribe argues that Colombia's cultural shift occurred thanks to a nation-wide interest in the shifting cultural paradigms that occurred throughout European and North American culture. Adopting these new aspects of other "western" culture, Colombia modernized itself through aspects such as the airplane, cinema, radio, new literature trends, attire, and other aspects.

of twenty-six percent. For university students, this new economy offered a combination of hope, frustration, and opportunity unseen prior to this epoch.[5]

The post-World War I fatalism and liberalism that permeated youth and younger generations across the world also caused a monumental cultural shift among Colombians, including Colombian youth of both conservative and liberal molds. They challenged entrenched economic models, the Church's authority, gender norms, accepted attire, and especially the functions and administration of the university. By the 1920s, two influential groups of Colombian youth had established themselves on the political scene: "los Centenarios" and "los Nuevos." Divided by age, both generations adopted a left-liberal framework in their thinking, writing, and organization. The younger Nuevos veered from the more tepid tactics and rhetoric of the older Centenarios, who remained highly influential as a political coterie even after their graduation. Student activists of the Nuevos generation assumed a much more heterogeneous composition, but most scholars agree that the university student bodies tended to lean left of center on the Colombian political spectrum. The majority of the politically active students seem to have affiliated

[5]While global coffee prices moved cyclically, Colombian growers and traders tended to avoid negative impacts from down cycles due to a reorganization of growing and production methods in the early 1900s known as the parcelaria system. See Jesús Antonio Bejarano Ávila, "El despegue cafetero," in *Historia Económica de Colombia*, ed. José Antonio Ocampo (Bogotá: Fedesarrollo, 2015), 169-71; Uribe, *Los Años Veinte en Colombia*, 35; Miguel Urrutia, *Historia del Sindicalismo en Colombia, 1850-2013* (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2016), 84-85; Carlos Caballero Argáez, *La economía colombiana del siglo XX* (Bogotá: Debate, 2016), 1334. When calculating the average growth in terms of nominal GDP, Caballero points out that Colombia's economy grew at an average of 5% in the first two decades of the twentieth century, and then 6.6% over the entire course of the 1920s (pp. 1405).

themselves with either the moderately liberal Departmental Center of Students or the more conservative National Federation of Students.[6]

The 1910s and the 1920s also marked a remarkably peaceful time in Colombian history. These two decades commenced the only significant stretch of time throughout the republic's history void of significant and sustained social violence. Unlike many other Latin American nations, Colombia has avoided dictatorships throughout its history—with the exception of the four years under General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla from 1953 to 1957. The strength of its bipartisan political system and the strength of the Liberal and Conservative parties has instead fostered entrenched partisanship with neither side obtaining a substantial majority. However, due to the popular attachment to and polarizing political dispositions of the parties, militarized inter-party conflicts have routinely surfaced throughout Colombia's postcolonial history. In four different occurrences, these conflicts exploded into full-blown civil wars in the nineteenth century alone. Between the end of the Thousand Days' War in 1902 and the 1948 *Bogotázo* riots, however, Colombia enjoyed an uncharacteristic era of peace from inter-party violence, civil wars, and insurgencies. To be sure, memorable events of violence did occur during this stretch, such as the police massacre of Bravo and the wounding of other students and the *matanza*. But aside from isolated incidents, Colombia remained relatively calm, making this era particularly fascinating to study.[7]

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[6]Diana Soto Arango, Diana Elvira, Jose Antonio Rivadeneira, Jorge Enrique Duarte Acero, y Sandra Liliana Bernal Villate, "La generación del movimiento estudiantil en Colombia. 1910-1924," *Historia de la Educación Latinoamericana* 20, no. 30 (January-June 2018): 219; Uribe, *Los años veinte en Colombia*, 12.

[7]Michael LaRosa, *De la Derecha a la Izquierda: La Iglesia Católica en la Colombia Contemporánea* (Bogotá: Planeta, 2000), 49. LaRosa references the former

The combination of a changing society and a new era of economic growth shaped the way that university students in Colombia viewed their roles in society. In adjusting to these new socioeconomic phenomena, Colombian university students also shaped the nation's future society, economy, and political structure. The students participated in Colombia's politics as major change agents in the 1920s, mainly because the majority of them hailed from upper-class and upper middle-class families. This proximity to political and financial leaders provided them with access to these elite individuals and groups that other left-liberal social groups lacked. This access also enabled students to act as a bridge between society's elites and other subaltern social actors.[8]

Two other socioeconomic phenomena defined the 1920s: industrialization and mass migration to urban centers. Both impacted the student movements, as students began to ally themselves with these new urban demographics, especially members of the burgeoning working class. Thanks to an explosion of new public works projects to augment the production and export of coffee, Colombia's demand for labor increased, drawing tens of thousands of workers into the urban areas, causing cities to balloon in

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general Rafael Uribe Uribe who lamented the Colombian proclivities for civil war in resolving bipartisan differences; For information on the Banana Massacre, see Urrutia, *Historia del sindicalismo en Colombia, 1850-1920*, 105-07.

[8]Dora Pineres de la Ossa, "El movimiento renovador estudiantil y las reformas universitarias en Colombia, 1920-1930," in *Historia de la Educación Latinoamericana* 9, no. 1 (August 2000): 78. Although speaking on the student movements at the Universidad Industrial de Santander in the 1960s and 1970s, Alvaro Acevedo acknowledges that the anti-establishment radicalism was probably exaggerated among activist scholars and that students still used politicization to establish themselves as important leaders and potentially carve out a career in politics. Alvaro Acevedo Tarazona, *Modernización, conflicto y violencia en la universidad en Colombia: El movimiento estudiantil en Santander AUDESA, 1953-1984* (Bucaramanga: Universidad Industrial de Santander, 2004), 283-85; Hans-Joachim König, "Los años veinte y treinta en Colombia: Época de transición o cambios estructurales?" in *Iberoamericana* 23, no. 1/2 (1997), 130-31.

population. The Department of Antioquia and especially the city of Medellín experienced a boom in the textiles industry. Bogotá and other cities witnessed a manufacturing surge in food processing, brewing, glass production, and other manufactures, all of which aided in attracting rural farm hands from the countryside to the city for steady wage labor. The new industrial advancements in the 1910s and 1920s, the introduction of a domestic commercial airline, and new mining projects also necessitated an educated workforce that Colombia lacked at that time, and this necessity became a critical point of contention in student politics. Additionally, as students became more interested in the economy and their own place within the economy, they also began to recognize the socioeconomic problems that the working class faced. As the decade went on, students increasingly sought to develop political ties with the workers and their organizations. The *universidades populares* where university students offered free education courses to working-class families demonstrated this desire to link movements.[9]

Lastly, my analysis of student activism during the "la danza de millones" mostly centers around the students at the National University of Colombia (UNAL) in Bogotá. However, beginning with an attempted student convention in 1908, students at UNAL drafted plans for the First International Congress of the Students of the Nations of Gran Colombia (Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela), demonstrating an increasingly expansive geographical view of student movements. The *antireyista jornadas* also incorporated

[9]Colombia's industrial sector remained small compared to other Latin American nations such as Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico—of jobs created in the "Dance of the Millions," working-class jobs only constituted roughly 29% of those added. Uribe, *Los años veinte en Colombia*, 30-34; König, "Los años veinte y treinta en Colombia," 130-31; Bejarano, "El despegue cafetero (1900-1928)," 192; Germán Arciniegas, *Cuadernos de un estudiante americano* (Bogotá: Ediciones Uniandes, 1994), 21-22.

students from across the nation, as well. This trend continued throughout the 1920s, and students in different universities across the nation reacted to the same issues that encouraged Bogotá no students to mobilize. As a result, I did not limit the scope of my research to strictly students at UNAL or metropolitan Bogotá.

When discussing the students and their activities, I refer to them as "Colombian" to incorporate all political corners of the university students across Colombia, except for where the content is location specific. In such cases I refer to the students by their city after identifying the respective university in that city or greater metropolitan area, for example "students of Cartagena" or "Antioquia's students."

Thesis

Because the rising economy of the 1920s provides a unique backdrop to the congruous rise of student politicization in that decade, it is critical to incorporate elements of socioeconomics, economics, and finance into the discussion on how and why the students mobilized, acted, and organized. The scholarship covering the 1920s' student movements is scant relative to other decades, and even that has mostly ignored the economic dimension of this activism. In my analysis, I focus on two themes. First, I address how socioeconomic issues shaped the framework by which students addressed and tried to institute university reform. Secondly, I discuss the attention that students reserved for strictly economic and financial issues, while evaluating the importance of these issues as reasons for eventual mobilization during the 1929 *jornadas*.

University reform arguably preoccupied students more than any other issue. If not the most important issue in all student movements, the theme of university reform has

played a role in almost every major movement, beginning with the first Colombian student movements in the 1790s. Emerging from time to time in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the students' demands for university reform reached their apex following the famous Córdoba Reform Movement in Argentine universities in 1918. Much of the student political activity in the 1920s centered on the concept of university reform.[10]

To understand the importance of the university reform movement, one must also study the relationship between university reform and the rapid socioeconomic changes that the students encountered. Therefore, I argue that socioeconomic issues occupied a significant portion of the students' demands for university reform, especially those issues dealing with students' financial prospects and the direction of the nation's economy.

Secondly, as the Colombian economy expanded notably in the 1920s, Colombia students stayed keenly apprised of the nation's economic realities. The student publications addressed, analyzed, and critiqued monetary policy, fiscal policy, corruption, socialist ideologies, working-class solidarity, and foreign economic influence. When Colombia's economic strength showed signs of underlying weakness toward the end of the decade, students increasingly focused on these financial and economic issues and grew increasingly critical and contumacious. I argue that these economic issues played a significant role in galvanizing students to mobilize against the Abadía administration and ignite the 1929 *jornadas*. Banking policies, budget bills, governmental contracts with foreign corporations, and unionization, among other problems, all concerned student

[10]Armando Solano, "La capacidad económica del país," *Universidad,* August 17, 1929, 169-70; Soto, "El movimiento de estudiantes," 40-43.

leaders and their organizations toward the end of the decade. Economics constituted a significant part of students' print rhetoric leading up to this monumental moment in Colombian political history.

Historiography and Methodology

The student movements in Colombia have been a popular topic in the past twenty years with key scholars producing narrative-setting works on the students, especially Alvaro Acevedo Tarazona, Mauricio Archila, Dora Piñeres de la Ossa, and Manuel Ruíz Montealegre. These scholars, however, have concentrated the bulk of their studies on the much more popular, influential, and sustained student movements that toppled military dictator Gustavo Rojas Pinilla in 1954 and then continued until the mid-1970s.[11]

Compared to the large and growing scholarship on the student activity of the 1960s and 1970s, the time from 1909 to 1930 remains a largely understudied theme when addressing the political importance of student activism. No monograph exists that explicitly focuses on Colombia's students during the early decades of the twentieth century. The co-authored graduate thesis of Nubia Gaitán and Myriam Restrepo remains

[11]Acevedo, *Modernización, conflicto, y violencia en la universidad en Colombia*; Piñeres de la Ossa, Dora, *Modernidad, universidad y región: el caso de la Universidad de Cartagena, 1920-1946* (Cartagena: Universidad de Cartagena, 2008); Ruiz Montealegre, Manuel, *Sueños y realidades: Procesos de organización estudiantil, 1954-1966* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2002); Mauricio Archila Neira, *Idas y venidas, vueltas y revueltas: Protestas Sociales en Colombia 1958-1990* (Bogotá: Icanh-Cinep, 2005). Archila's work on social movements in 1960s' and 1970s' Colombia largely focuses on students, who were key players in the formation of social activism, but he has not produced a standalone monograph that focuses specifically on the students. See also another important work on student movements in the latter half of the 20th Century: Libardo Vargas Diaz, *Expresiones políticas del movimiento estudiantil, 1960-1980* (Bucaramanga: Universidad Industrial de Santander, 1996).

the most in-depth work on student politics of that era. Gaitán and Restrepo's work largely provides a chronological history of the student movements throughout the decade within the framework of the rapid change within Colombian culture of the 1920s. They demonstrate that the Colombian students' political nature changed as society changed with them. As these rapid changes impacted the students, the authors argue that students emerged as a legitimate sociopolitical force, developing new political ties to foment long-term change in Colombia. While they mention some of the economic concerns of the students and discuss the economic trends of the decade, the authors mostly focus on the social and political nature of the movements. Additionally, the authors follow Archila's lead and take much care to de-homogenize the student movements. Despite the heterogeneous nature of the student movements, they contend that students moved increasingly to the left, especially as socialism rooted itself among student ideologies.[12]

José Díaz Jaramillo analyzes the sociopolitical nature of the student movements within the rapidly changing Colombian society and culture from 1908 to1954. He argues that they developed social connections with other groups and classes to advance change. University reform also preoccupied the students more than any other issue. Positive changes at the university level eventually trickled down throughout all of Colombian society, bettering life for most Colombians. However, Diaz also observes that the university reform did not directly result from student activism, but rather from above, with politicians cementing the change under the new Liberal Party majority. Diaz also

[12]Nubia Gaitán Feo and Myriam Restrepo, "El movimiento estudiantil en la década del 20 en Colombia y su influencia en la modernización de los partidos" (MA thesis, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana de Bogotá, 1988).

attributes the new economic growth to laying the groundwork that enabled students to rise to social and political prominence.[13]

Diana Soto, José Antonio Rivadeneira, Jorge Duarte, and Sandra Bernal's important article analyzes student politics from 1910 to 1924. The authors select this time frame to contrast the two generations of student activists who emerged in the first few decades of the 1900s, the Centenarios and the Nuevos. They argue that although the *Nuevos* regarded themselves as the true vanguard of Colombian social reform due to their more leftist ideologies, both groups paved the way for important social changes that eventually occurred throughout Colombian politics and society. They also demonstrate that Latin America's other student movements substantively influenced the Colombian students, who often framed their ideologies in continental terms and sought solidarity with other Latin American students.[14]

When analyzing the student movements in the 1920s, Archila contends that student mobilizations laid the foundation for the subsequent movements that occurred in the latter half of the century. The connections that Colombian students created with other continental youth movements played a major part in generating the later momentum. He also argues that the economic changes of the 1920s birthed a "new Colombian man" of the university, and this new generation of Colombian students then fomented important sociopolitical change. Piñeres de la Ossa also sees the 1920s as a decade moment for student movements that emerged in the twentieth century. She argues that the economic

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[13]José Abelardo Diaz Jaramillo, "Aproximación histórica a los universitarios de Colombia (1908-1954)," (PhD Diss., Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2017).

[14]Soto, et al. "La generación del movimiento estudiantil en Colombia. 1910-1924," 217-241.

changes of the decade, combined with the university reform ideals from the Córdoba movement, provided students with a social and political platform to challenge social issues and push for university reform.[15]

While these scholars all use the economic growth of the early twentieth century as a framework for the development of student politics and movements, they largely focus on the pedagogical, cultural, social, and political nature of the students. Certainly, the students embodied a sociopolitical awareness more than any other factor, and they pursued mostly social and political goals in their platforms. However, the students also focused on economics. Finance, land contracts, fiscal policy, and the state of the nation's progress in terms of national wealth all steered the students to eventually mobilize. While

[15]Piñeres de la Ossa, "El movimiento renovador estudiantil y las reformas universitarias en Colombia (1920-1930)," 78-86; Mauricio Archila Neira, "Entre la academia y la política: el movimiento estudiantil en Colombia, 1920-1974," in *Movimientos estudiantiles en la historia de America Latina*, ed. Renate Marsiske (México, D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2002). Prominent student movement scholars Alvaro Acevedo and Gabriel Samacá covered the historiography of student movements in Colombia in their important essay that looks at student movements of Colombia within the context of student movements throughout the Latin American region. Álvaro Acevedo Tarazona, and Gabriel Samacá Alonso, "El movimiento estudiantil como un objeto de estudio en la historiografía colombiana y continental: notas para unbalance y una agenda de investigación," *Historia y Memoria*, no. 3 (November 2011), 45-78; José Abelardo Diaz Jaramillo, "Aproximación histórica a los universitarios de Colombia." Both Diaz and Gaitán and Restrepo discuss the *reinadas* in detail, as the competition proved highly influential for the student movements for several reasons. Both scholarly works focus on the *reinadas'* sociocultural aspects (i.e., women in leadership, women challenging for the right to attend universities, the students' organizational capacities during the events that helped legitimize the students in the eyes of the public). However, to organize, mobilize, and grow in numbers, the student committees needed funding outside of membership dues. The *reinada* competitions raised significant sums that funded the students' platforms. c.f. also Catalina Bohorquez Mendoza, "Carnavales, 1921-2020: Universidad Nacional de Colombia," *Contestarte*, no. 10 (2011) and Fernando Andres Crispin Castellanos, "Las reinas del carnaval universitario: líderes estudiantiles," *Contestarte*, no. 10 (2011).

the students strived for university reform to advance their sociopolitical goals, I contribute the idea that the economy had just as much to do with how the students attempted to achieve their aims. And while the students opposed social and political structures and strived to change them, they also demonstrated a keen concern for fiscal and monetary policies as well as other financial matters of the nation. The economy often dominated the reasons for student politics and mobilizations, rather than primarily existing as a framework for the student's sociopolitical goals and mobilizations.

Although both Acevedo and Ruíz study the student movements from the 1950s through the 1970s, they recognize the 1920s and 1930s as the foundation of later student politicization. They also contribute an important theoretical analysis of the student movements through the idea of the politics of space. In 1936, UNAL moved to its new location, with a sprawling campus on the outskirts of the west side of the city. The students had long desired a European-style campus, and the politicians wanted the politicized students away from the governmental district in the city center. Ruíz demonstrates that this new campus provided the students with a political space in which students could share ideas, organize, and protest. But in the 1920s, UNAL still existed as a university spread out across the city center, with the different colleges occupying different buildings. The students of the 1920s did not have a concentrated space at the university, but the university acted as a theoretical space in which students developed their political ambitions. Additionally, students created other spaces throughout the city that held political and symbolic importance, such as the Casa del Estudiante.[16]

[16]Uribe, *Los años veinte en Colombia*, 133; Ruiz, *Sueños y realidades*, 128-30. For the different areas within the university that operated as specific bases or loci that

Because much of the student activity dealt with the concept of university reform, much of my research focused on the university education system. Aline Helg, Renan Silva, and Diaz have produced the most important scholarship on the history of education in Colombia. These scholars provide their readers with detailed accounts of the historical trends of education within social, political, and economic contexts. Helg and Silva study the entire educational system, primary through higher education levels. Helg provides a detailed chronological history in which she discusses the continuous, albeit labored, growth and modernization of the education system, touching on the role that the students played in pressing the education department, Congress, and other executives to build a more advanced university. Silva also looks at the historical trajectory of Colombia's education, and argues that the cultural dynamics of the 1920s fostered a climate that allowed Colombian educators to embrace a more liberal educational direction.[17]

Ciro Quiroz and Alfonso Borrero have both contributed important works on the university and student movements in Colombia. Quiroz outlines a detailed narrative history of UNAL, demonstrating that the student movements proved effective in toppling the different regimes in the 1909 and 1929 mobilizations. In his discussion of the

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helped create ideologies and organizations, see Acevedo, *Modernización, conflicto y violencia en la universidad en Colombia*, 23-24; Adrian Vergara, et al., "Espacio público en Latinoamérica: de la fragmentación espacial y la segregación social hacia la cohesión territorial. Nuevos retos a viejos problemas." Discussion Papers No. 73 (2015), *Justus Liebig University Giessen, Center for international Development and Environmental Research (ZEU)*; and Diane E. Davis, "The Power of Distance: Re-Theorizing Social Movements in Latin America," *Theory and Society* 28, no. 4 (August 1999): 585-638.

[17]Aline Helg, *La educación en Colombia 1918-1957* (Bogotá: Plaza y Janés, 1987); Renan Silva Olarte, "La educación en Colombia 1888-1930," in *Educación y ciencia, luchas de la mujer, vida diaria,* ed. Gloria Zea, Vol. 4 of *Nueva Historia de Colombia*, (Bogotá: Planeta, 1989), 61-86; Diaz, "Aproximación histórica a los universitarios Colombia."

university and the student movements, Borrero incorporates a more in-depth summary of students at Bogotá's influential Jesuit university, Pontificia Javeriana Universidad. While his study of the Colombian students mainly traces the general history of student politicization, he highlights the importance of the solidarity between the students and other political groups. He also emphasizes the political importance of student spaces, such as the Casa del Estudiante and the Casa de los Estudiantes Católicas. Lastly, Borrero stresses that the student politicization throughout the early century also proved effective, because the students also received support and protection from powerful allies in government.[18]

It is important to quickly discuss some of the terminology that I use within the paper. First—and understandably problematical—when I discuss the students, I refer to them as "students" throughout the text, especially in the third chapter. As I mention above, the students, their organizations, and political ideologies covered a wide range of political identities. Many of the politicized students identified as conservatives, especially within the Leopardos moderate camp of conservatism. Other students aligned themselves with the increasingly popular Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR) and the socialist ideologies that the party embraced. The majority of the politicized students, however, arguably identified with the progressive platform of the Liberal Party that included increasing governmental regulation, centralization of power in the federal government, new governmental programs for campesino and working-class families, and the

[18]Ciro Quiroz Otero, *La Universidad Nacional y sus pasillos* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2002); Alfonso Borrero Cabal, *La universidad. Estudios sobre sus orígenes, dinámicas, y tendencias*, Vol. IV, *Historia universitaria: los movimientos estudiantiles* (Bogotá: Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2008).

enfranchisement and social inclusion of women, among other political beliefs common within more left-leaning political parties of that era.

While I could refer to committees such as the Departmental Center of Students, the officers of the Casa del Estudiante, or the National Association of Students, the sources unfortunately never really specify which students they referenced, or on behalf of which committee they spoke or published. As a result, when I use students, I refer to the students politically involved in the mainstream portion of the movement, probably affiliated with the larger organization, the National Federation of Students (FNE) or the local Departmental Center of Students in Bogotá. Most importantly, the major student publication, *Universidad*, acted as the voice of the student majority in the 1920s, according to the movements' historians.

A discussion that combines students with the economic and socioeconomic climate of the 1920s must include the ways that students talked about and analyzed the rise of Marxist principles, especially as the region took interest in the new communist project in the Soviet Union. In their publications, students referred to these ideologies as Marxism, socialism, and Bolshevism. For the sake of consistency, I adopt the term socialism to discuss the economic aspects of these newer ideologies, which the students focused on more than any other element. And lastly, one of the key areas of economics and socioeconomics that the students consistently addressed dealt with a combination of anti-imperialism, nationalism, and regionalism, or a Latin American cultural solidarity. I try to use the term anti-imperialism to describe these student sentiments and demands. However, at times, the other terms are more appropriate.

Discussion on Sources

In researching this paper, I utilized government documents and memorandums, university records, and press publications from the Colombian national archives; the national library; the National University of Colombia's Central and Historical Archive; the Pontifical Xavierian University's Juan Manuel Pacheco, S.J. Xavierian Historical Archive; and the Luis Ángel Arango Library's documental collection. Because I divide my thesis into two parts, the sources that I used differ in the sections.

My first section analyzes how the students focused on socioeconomic aspects in their demands for university reform, and I relied on a combination of primary sources. First, government sources played an important role in providing insight into how officials viewed and, at times, even responded to student demands. The Memoirs of the Ministers of Public Instruction and Ministers of Education proved important in understanding how the Ministry of Public Instruction—later re-structured and re-named the Ministry of Education in 1928—crafted policy and discussed the educational issues in respect to the nation's socioeconomic climate. These documents had their limitations of course. Although the different ministers addressed issues that the students decried, they never actually mentioned the universities' student movements, organizations, platforms, or any other area related to the universities' student politicization. Even more limiting, the official memoirs mainly addressed primary and secondary educational affairs.

Documents from the Ministries of Public Instruction and Education in Section II of the General Archives of the Nation added to the understanding of the student mobilizations, as they included correspondence between university rectors, the ministers of public education, professors and deans of the different colleges, and student

organizations. The correspondence—which included student petitions, ministry inquiries into poor teaching standards, and students' organizational activities—all further one's understanding of the relationship between students and their superiors. The archive at UNAL also contained correspondences between the rector and the educational ministries, as well as student petitions, announcements, and documentation regarding student organizations.

Both UNAL and the folders from the educational ministries proved especially helpful in providing financial information regarding the university and its programs. These ledgers from the National University's archives showed the funds for the different colleges and departments and how these funds increased or decreased over time. Additionally, the educational ministries' budget statements enabled me to outline the spending patterns and funds earmarked for the universities during the first three decades of the 1900s. Although the archive lacked all the monthly budget statements, the available documents provided enough information to get a full sense of trends over time, particularly in relation to student demands. Drawing correlations between student demands and public spending on education proved especially insightful in concluding how and why the students mobilized.

Lastly, I relied heavily on both the mainstream and student press, especially the student publication, *Universidad,* the brainchild of student leader of the *Nuevos* generation Germán Arciniegas. *Universidad* figured heavily, because I was particularly interested in how the university students perceived themselves within this new era of economic growth and how they considered their future within this changing society. We do not know how many students read, or were guided by, this publication, but we do

know that Colombian students were shifting further and further to the left; and *Universidad* operated as the main voice of students leaning toward liberalism and aligning with the Liberal Party. Students, of course, existed on both sides of the political spectrum. Both conservative and socialist students existed, of course, and even organized along their ideological ideals. However, because of its association to prominent and very young Liberal Party politicians and the mainstream contingent of the Liberal Party, it is highly likely that most of the students followed the press that their peers published. In analyzing the social impact of *Universidad*, Piñeres de la Ossa describes it as "an organ of diffusion and protest."[19]

Mainstream newspapers aided my understanding of the student movements, as well, especially as they carried a running story of the student movements within the medical school that did not appear in the available student publications. Some of the major newspapers also covered the major student strikes, protests, or even school events, such as the *reinadas*. As the economy expanded, the public appeared to hold an interest in the students' growth in the sciences and more financial studies, and therefore often printed stories that covered student activism and organization. The nation relied on their future acumen. Because of this, newspapers often opined about educational reform and almost always supported students during student-government confrontations. Lastly, when I discuss the *jornadas* of 1909, several youth and student publications from across the county provided a unique insight into the students' voices and motives, which I argue have not been discussed in such depth until my thesis.

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[19]Piñeres de la Ossa, "El movimiento renovador estudiantil y las reformas universitarias en Colombia (1920-1930)," 80-81.

In the second section, I rely almost exclusively on *Universidad*, which is admittedly problematic for a number of reasons. First, even though most politicized students probably read and adhered to the weekly, to what degree it actually spoke on their behalf is impossible to tell. But this is almost all of what we have available that reached or influenced large groups of student thinkers. Even personal letters that may be available would be limited in scope to a small group or even to individuals. Secondly, the *Universidad* folios available at the Luis Ángel Arango Library have a temporal gap spanning from 1923-1927. This, of course, is a sincere limitation and unfortunate reality, as 1924 played host to significant student activity. But it luckily provides us with the most important moments during the 1920s when considering the major economic shifts and trends. We see the students respond to the stuttering economy in 1921 and 1922 and then the sharp growth that kicks off in 1923. When the economy was still in its growth phase, the sources become available again in 1927, cover its apex in early 1928, deal with the increasingly evident decline in mid-late 1928, and then witness the financial bubble pop in 1929. The available sources also cover the arguably most important events, the *matanza de las bananeras* in 1928 and the *jornadas* of 1929.

As mentioned before, *Universidad* arguably provides the student of the Colombian university and its students with the best window into the majority of the students' lives, views, voices, and motives. Of equal importance, the publication arguably provides the best insight into what motivated the students and drove them to mobilize. It is because of the detail with which the publication covered economics, finance, and class solidarity that we know these issues possibly played a leading role in mobilizing the students. In her analysis of the weekly, Piñeres de la Ossa discusses the motivations of

the students, highlighting the concepts of university reform, solidarity with other Latin American students, and addressing social needs of the nation. But also, within the pages of the weekly, one can find discussions on banking policies, inflation, debt, fiscal spending, and other economic issues that clearly preoccupied the student writers.

Lastly, when I analyze the 1909 *jornadas*, the student publications figure heavily in crafting that narrative. Other newspapers from that era contributed in important ways to the discussion on the *jornadas*, the students, and the fall of Reyes. They allow the student of this important event to develop a better perspective of how Colombians perceived these events. Documents from the national university archives and the national archives added to the discussion of student activities and political rhetoric in the late 1910s before *Universidad* began publication in 1921. Either the students of this earlier period paid little attention to economic matters or I simply did not encounter the evidence. Nonetheless, the students did address broad economic concerns, even if they lacked the language to address them in more specific financial terms.

CHAPTER I: A CONTEXTUAL AND GENERAL HISTORY OF EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY COLOMBIA

After winning its independence from Spain in 1819 and separating from Ecuador and Venezuela in 1830, liberals and conservatives quickly entrenched themselves as the two main political camps and established a bipartisan democratic republic. This bipartisan structure was almost unique to Colombia compared to other Latin American nations, and for the next 123 years, political power oscillated between the Liberal and Conservative parties. Many members of Colombian society benefitted from this political system, as it provided socioeconomic and political opportunities such as land ownership and political participation.[1]

The bipartisan republican system also introduced three important political problems, however. Most prominently, it caused a clear division between the two parties that resulted in at least four civil wars in the 1800s alone. Secondly, leaders and members of the two parties refused to entertain or even tolerate outside political competition. The fierce and usually close competition between the two parties meant that every vote mattered. Therefore, splinter parties or intra-party divisions spelled doom for that party's election prospects. These third parties often endured harassment or severe violence.

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[1]James Sanders, *Contentious Republicans: Popular Politics, Race, and Class in Nineteenth Century Colombia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004). See the introduction in which Sanders lays out his argument that despite the oligarchic nature of the bipartisan system, the experiences of lower-class Caucanos proves that individuals used party affiliation to carve out their own agency, purchase land, participate in politics, and much more, experiences not necessarily available in other oligarchic societies in which governmental or unused land fell into the hands of wealthy, landowning *hacendados* who could influence policy and prevent mass land ownership.

Thirdly, the leadership at the top of the parties' hierarchies worked in tandem to prevent mass mobilizations that challenged the status quo. In these situations, party elites paused their competition with one another and acted as an oligarchy of sorts in order to suppress popular, grassroots challenges.[2]

It is within this political context that the students operated, as this political apparatus continued well into the twentieth century, affecting the economic growth, governmental policies, and student movements of the 1920s. After Liberals dominated the early post-colonial phase of the nation's early government, the Conservatives took control of government at the federal level in 1886 in what is known as the "Regeneration" era. The "regeneration" returned Colombia to its pro-Catholic, agrarian, and socially conservative colonial roots. Eventually, the political rivalries culminated in the bloodiest and final civil war between the two parties–the *Thousand Days' War* that raged from 1899 to1902. This civil war cost hundreds of thousands of lives, bankrupted the treasury, halted all economic activity, and wiped out the burgeoning export market. When the Conservative forces defeated the Liberals, Colombia embarked on a new era of relative peace and economic prosperity. And although Conservatives maintained their control over the federal government, they did not entirely exclude Liberals.

Much of the post-war economic growth came from a renewal of the coffee export industry. From the 1870s, Colombia established itself firmly as a trading nation, relying heavily on revenues from exports of raw materials. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, rising coffee prices and a particularly favorable climate for different coffee trees

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[2]John W. Green, *Gaitanismo, Left Liberalism, and Popular Mobilization in Colombia* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2003), 1-4.

meant that small plot growers and the Colombian government invested heavily in the product. Coffee eventually eclipsed quinine, tobacco, gold, and other major exports. The final decade brought sustained economic growth via increased coffee export and rising global prices, but the Thousand Days' War brought the economy to an abrupt halt. Following the war, Colombian officials regarded coffee as the primary means to reignite Colombia's economy, and when Rafael Reyes won the first presidential election after the war in 1904, he quickly invested the bulk of Colombia's remaining financial resources into coffee production.[3]

Reyes' presidency ended abruptly with the student-led strikes, because he willingly conceded Panama, suppressed dissent, and suspended Colombia's elected legislature. However, Reyes' successes lay in the economic policy that he had crafted with the assistance of the pliant National Assembly, a policy that put the nation on a path to economic growth, even if Colombia did not immediately enjoy a return on the invested capital. The most important aspect of Reyes' multifaceted economic policy dealt with curbing the hyperinflation that had plagued Colombia since the war. Despite suspending Congress and creating his own plan, Reyes strictly enforced and upheld Ley 33, passed in 1903, which established a gold standard for a new Colombian Peso also pegged to the United States dollar. Within months, the new policy stabilized consumer prices and lifted a heavy burden from Colombian markets. Reyes also wanted to centralize the nation's

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[3]Marco Palacios, *Coffee in Colombia, 1850-1970: An Economic, Social*, and Political History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); 1-4. See also Charles W. Bergquist, *Coffee and Conflict in Colombia, 1886-1910*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1986), 225-46. In chapter IX, Bergquist discusses in detail the Reyes Quinquenio and how coffee production preoccupied the Reyes administration in resuscitating the Colombian economy.

banking and financial sector, and the National Assembly created the Banco Central at his behest. Reyes used the bank to issue primarily treasury bonds to both fund his ambitious expansion projects and renew payments on sovereign debt (mainly to European banks). While the bank proved effective in restoring Colombia's credit rating abroad, the Reyes administration's unchecked use of the bank also evoked the students' ire in some cases, as I will discuss.[4]

In addition to curbing inflation and restoring Colombia's credit, Reyes invested heavily in three areas of production that placed Colombia on a path to the economic boom the nation experienced in the 1920s: coffee, infrastructure, and light industry. Colombia's monolithic coffee economy exposed the economy to fluctuations in global markets, but it also provided the nation with a clear path to revenues and growth when coffee demand stayed high, which occurred through most of the first three decades of the twentieth century. Reyes encouraged small plot farming schemes and offered unused federal land for relatively low prices. Unlike its main competitor, Brazil, Colombia's coffee market remained largely competitive, which made coffee prices desirable on the global market and maximized production. It also significantly expanded Colombia's middle class, therefore expanding the government's tax revenue base.[5]

To move coffee from production to market, Reyes invested heavily in infrastructure projects, primarily railroads. Before the war, Colombia had almost no railroad network, but by 1907, the nation boasted over 250 kilometers that helped link the

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[4]Bejarano, "El despegue cafetero," 162-65.

[5]Ibid., 167-69. For a more thorough discussion on the land policies that enabled small plot farmers to access land and restructure the coffee production, see also Palacios, *Coffee in Colombia, 1850-1970,* 61-79.

coffee sectors to its Pacific and Caribbean ports. Despite the significant increase in mileage, however, these construction projects never truly recouped the invested capital. Thirdly, Reyes encouraged the growth of light industry via subsidies to new factories, tax breaks, import duties on finished goods, and outright purchases of machinery. By the time his presidency ended, the nation had assumed exorbitantly high levels of sovereign debt, while running a steep budget deficit. To make matters worse, economic growth never truly reflected the money the administration invested.[6]

Over the course of his five-year tenure as president, Reyes gradually lost support among the public for several reasons–eventually causing the student mobilizations in the 1909 *jornadas*. First, he too often eschewed democratic procedures to accomplish his economic goals, and he routinely overstepped his constitutional authority. When Congress began to resist some of the new legislation that Reyes desired, he suspended the body and installed the National Constituent Assembly. Acting as the new legislative body, Reyes filled the positions primarily with his supporters. Initially, the assembly bode well for Colombia, enabling Reyes to ram through his economic program that reaped immediate benefits for the economy. The assembly also widened the Liberal Party's participation in the government, as Reyes designated a third of the seats to Liberal Party representatives. However, Reyes used the assembly to leverage more authority for himself and abandoned democratic ideals to pursue his political goals. By late 1908,

[6]Bergquist, *Coffee and Conflict in Colombia, 1886-1910*, 227-28.

students began to publicly dissent against Reyes' authoritarian position and call for a return to the nation's "republican" governmental foundation.[7]

Secondly, attempting to reestablish diplomatic relations with the United States, Reyes willingly conceded Colombia's loss of Panama. Panamanians had long desired their independence from mainland Colombia, and during the Thousand Days' War, they declared their independence. Because the United States had longed to develop a waterway passage through Central America, the Theodore Roosevelt administration sided with the Panamanians, lending naval support to protect their newfound sovereignty. Although the administration of President José Manuel Marroquin refused to recognize Panama's independence, it lacked the military might or finances to assert its authority. Reyes recognized the importance of U.S. demand for coffee, Colombia's top export, plus other benefits of close association with the United States financial markets, and he hoped to re-establish strong trade and commercial relations with Colombia's former enemy. In 1908, he therefore commissioned Colombian Minister to the United States Enrique Cortes to craft a treaty with U.S. Secretary of State Elihu Root to settle the matter between the two nations. The agreement would have made official Colombia's concession of Panama, granted the Colombians a small indemnity, and placed little blame on the United States for its complicity in the affair.

While the 1909 *antireyista* mobilizations defined the student activity during Reyes' *quinquenio*, the student generation of the Centenarios had begun to organize and embrace political ideologies of the parties the year before. The growing U.S. presence in

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[7]ibid., David Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia: A Nation in Spite of Itself* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 156-57.

the affairs of Colombia and other Latin American nations concerned Colombia's students, and students across the region began to express anti-U.S. and anti-imperialist sentiments. In 1908, students at UNAL hoped to address U.S. imperialism with other students in the region and proposed the First International Congress of Students of Gran Colombia, designed mainly for university students throughout the former Gran Colombia state (Ecuador, Venezuela, and Colombia). In creating the convention, Colombia's students established the goal of uniting Latin American students against U.S. influence in the region. While the convention never materialized, this proposal set the tone for student movements the following year, and in the 1920s, as students embraced a clear solidarity with other Latin American students and consistently opposed U.S. economic activity in Colombia, and other nations in the region.[8]

Additionally, as the Centenarios generation grew in its political activity, it returned to the historical issue of university reform in 1909, just before the *jornadas*. Student leaders drafted a proposal to Congress that would have officially separated national universities like UNAL from the control of the federal government, establishing the concept of *autonomía universitaria* (university autonomy). The demand for *autonomía universitaria* emerged as a foundational rallying point for Los Nuevos generation when students renewed their politicization and mobilizations in 1921. Eventually, and especially in the 1920s' movements, students blended these two concepts of Latin American solidarity and *autonomía universitaria*, especially in 1918, when demands for university reform exploded across the region, demonstrating that the failures

[8]Quiroz, *La Universidad Nacional de Colombia en sus pasillos*, 66-7.

of the university plagued the entirety of Latin America, necessitating the autonomy of the Latin American university, in general. The students argued that the university needed to decouple itself from the state for academicians to guide the university in a modern direction without conservative state oversight.[9]

The Colombian economy began to experience the positive effects of Reyes' broad economic program in the following decade. The expanded farming base ensured that production increased, and coffee prices continued to climb on the global market. Additionally, restoration of Colombian credit meant that foreign capital began to trickle into the economy in the form of some capital investments in coffee production and light industry, but primarily loans from British underwriters. After stalling infrastructure projects and taking an austerity approach to fiscal spending in 1910, the federal government restarted its public spending in developmental projects (such as the railroad) when the increases in coffee exports generated higher than anticipated tariff revenues. Colombia continued its steady growth until World War I caused an economic shock in global markets between 1914 and 1918.[10]

Colombia, like much of the world, found itself reacting to the changes precipitated by the First World War at the start of the 1920s. At the onset of the war in 1914, Colombia struggled financially due to the global instability, and its export earnings fell significantly. Because of the monocultural coffee economy, the decrease in export

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[9]Soto, et al., "La generación del movimiento estudiantil en Colombia, 1910-1924," 227-28.

[10]Bergquist, *Coffee and Conflict in Colombia, 1886-1910*, 247-248; Mauricio Avella, "El acceso de Colombia al financiamiento externo durante el siglo XX," in *Economía colombiana del siglo XX*, eds. James Robinson and Miguel Urrutia (Bogotá: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2007), 520-21.

revenues hit the Colombian economy particularly hard. With export earnings down, Colombia's consumption of foreign products then decreased by 14 percent as well, leaving Colombia's government starved of the much-needed revenues from import duties. These measures forced Congress to levy excise taxes on many locally produced goods. These new taxes took aim at cigarettes, liquor, and other highly consumed items, exacerbating financial woes for a population already coping with a new deflationary wave.[11]

To add to their woes, Colombia's primary sources of credit and capital investment—the United States, Great Britain, and Germany—had no funds to spare from their respective war efforts. As a result, Colombia endured a shock in the money supply. The deflationary shock also meant that Colombia once again entered the well-worn path of deficit spending. However, because the national bank instituted during the Reyes *quinquenio* had expired, the government lacked the monetary policy to print money and assuage economic hardships from the recession. In response, Congress entertained the idea of creating some form of central banking division to deal with expansionary policy and peso printing, but the measure failed. Unfortunately, Ley 33 of 1903, which was meant to curb inflation, also firmly limited the government by tying the peso to the gold standard. Even in down cycles, the Conservative legislators who dominated Congress

[11]Ley 126 de 1914, *Diario Oficial* año L.N., no. 15397, December 29, 1914, 1, accessed through Sistema Único Información Normativa- Juriscol, November 13, 2020; Roberto Junguito and Hernan Rincon, "La política fiscal en el siglo XX en Colombia," in *Economía colombiana del siglo XX* ed. Robinson and Urrutia, 245.

shied away from repealing the gold standard, afraid to repeat the rampant inflation that had plagued Colombia at the turn of the century.[12]

At the war's conclusion, however, Colombia quickly bounced back as one of the prominent coffee producers. Thanks to a high post-war global demand for coffee, Colombia began to resuscitate its export economy through coffee production. As a result, Congress had access to new tax revenue from the coffee industry, which developed as the most important source of revenue. This new revenue came from property levies of coffee producers, transfer payments in the production and transit processes, and import and export duties. Even with these new revenues, however, Colombia continued to run a large budget deficit until 1921.[13]

Between 1918 and 1921, Colombia oscillated between deflationary and inflationary trends—although largely inflationary—and struggled with the issues that resulted from both. Even with the currency fluctuations and the volatility of the money supply, Colombia's economy grew steadily from 1918 to 1921 due to the high global demand for coffee, especially in the United States. Despite the economic growth, Colombia experienced a serious negative trade balance that left the nation with a serious deficit. To make good on its outstanding foreign debts, Colombia paid these in gold.

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[12]Junguito and Rincón, "La política fiscal en el siglo XX en Colombia," 244-45; Bejarano, "El despegue cafetero," 165; Bergquist, *Coffee and Conflict in Colombia, 1886-1910*, 248-249; Fabio Sanchez, Andres Fernandez, and Armando Armenta, "Historia monetaria de Colombia en el siglo XX: grandes tendencias y episodios relevantes," in *Economía colombiana del siglo XX*, ed. Robinson and Urrutia, 333.

[13]Bergquist, *Coffee and Conflict in Colombia, 1886-1910*, 247-48; Maria Teresa Ramirez, "Efectos de eslabonamiento de la infraestructura de transporte sobre la economía colombiana: 1900-1950," in *Economía colombiana del siglo XX*, ed. Robinson and Urrutia, 389.

Then, to offset the gold outflows, the government convinced banks to print bank notes that did not legally act as currency, but as a proxy currency to amplify the circulation of money. This caused concern among Colombia's lenders and investors abroad, who began to have their own problems domestically. The noticeable but limited postwar economic growth quickly evaporated in the later months of 1921, when the students concomitantly reignited their politicization and mobilization.[14]

Leading up to heavy student activity in 1921, the students stayed relatively quiet throughout the 1910s, aside from student clubs and organizations that maintained loose political affiliations but engaged in no major activism. Students did, however, become more politically aware and engaged in 1918 with the advent of groundbreaking student movements at the National University of Córdoba in Argentina. Frustrated with the backward curriculum and arcane structures of the university, students of Córdoba rioted and shut down the university until the government and university hierarchy acquiesced to their demands. In what became known as the Córdoba Reform Movement, the Argentine students proposed two changes to the university in their famous document, the *Manifiesto Liminar*. First, they called for *cogobierno*, a concept in which the students, faculty members, and university officers (such as deans and rectors) all made decisions together, usually through elected councils. Secondly, the students wanted a better education that adopted the scientific curriculum and methodologies of UNITED STATES and European

[14]Leidy Milena Pena Sepulveda, "1920: Colombia en plena crisis," Universidad EAFIT, no. 19 (Julio-Diciembre 2011), 98-9; Ramirez, "Efectos de eslabonamiento de la infraestructura de transporte sobre la economía colombiana; Fabio Sánchez and Juan Bedoya, "La danza de los millones 1923-1931," in *Historia del Banco de la República, 1923-2015,* ed. José Darío Uribe (Bogotá: Banco de la República, 2017), 34.

universities. Their university, the students recognized, had fallen far behind the rest of the developed world in preparing them for a future in an increasingly industrialized and globalized era.[15]

These events influenced the Colombian students, who had long fought for university reform in fits and starts. The mobilizations in the 1790s had embodied these concerns, but students in 1909 also expressed concern with the state of university education and criticized the Reyes Administration for its failures to respond to these educational failures. But Colombian students also embraced two other elements of the Córdoba Reform in that they now looked to renew the sense of solidarity among Latin American university students and develop an economic, social, and political solidarity with the emergent urban working class. Young students and future movement leaders Germán Arciniegas, Federico Lleras, and Guillermo Ancizar each stayed apprised of the student politics in other Latin American nations and effectively helped propagate the principles of the Córdoba reform in Colombia. Several months after the beginning of the Córdoba strike, law students at the Normal School of Medellín protested the poor state of the curriculum and pedagogical development. When the college's administration expelled several of the students, UNAL students in Bogotá under the Germán Arciniegas' new organization, Society's Voice of the Youth, protested in the streets to bring wider attention to the issue and publicly support the expelled students. The Córdoba Reform

[15]Álvaro Acevedo Tarazona and Rolando H. Malte Arévalo, "Movimiento estudiantil y gobernabilidad universitaria en Colombia: 1910-1972," in *Movimientos estudiantiles en la historia de America Latina*, ed. Marsiske, V, 209-47. (México, D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México Press, 2017), 215-18.

Movement appeared to have awakened the Colombian students and paved the way for their consistent activity in the 1920s.[16]

The explosion of student activity in 1921 continued consistently, more or less, throughout the decade, as the students' political activity grew into a veritable, sustained social movement. Even when student activity waned, as it did in 1923 and 1927, students still maintained consistent pressure on governmental and university officials, carved out a prominent presence in the public sphere, sought and established links with other social actors, and published widely read and highly political newspapers. The students were responding to the rapid sociocultural changes brought on by the booming economy, but the student activity was in many ways the foundation for student activity that eventually led to the 1929 *jornadas* that effectively ended the Conservative Party's grip on politics at the federal level.

The 1920s "danza de los millones" economy can be summarized in four main phases: steady growth from the end of World War I to mid-1921, a short but sharp recession until early 1923, the rapid growth from 1923 to late 1928, and then a slowing economy in late 1928 transitioned into a categorical recession by early 1929 and continued into the global Great Depression. However, more specific and finite trends, occurrences, and policies also deserve attention. To begin, the shock that the Colombian

[16]Ibid., 218; Gabriel Isaacs, "Algo sobre instrucción pública," *Correo de las Brujas*, December 20, 1908, 1; Januario Henao, "Educación pública," *El Cosmopolitan*, March 18, 1909, 1-2; Gabriel Samacá and Alvaro Acevedo Tarazona, "De la reforma de Córdoba al Cordobazo. La universidad como escenario por las luchas por la democracia en Argentina, 1918-1969, y sus impactos en Colombia," *Revista digital de historia y arqueología el caribe colombiano* 8, no. 15 (November 2011): 174-75, 185-86; Diaz, "Aproximación histórica a los universitarios de Colombia (1908-1954)," 100-102.

economy endured in 1921 occurred because of a sharp decline in U.S. demand for Colombian coffee, signaling two problems that students appeared to understand relatively well. First, the coffee economy relied too heavily on exports, and it lacked diversity of production that might enable Colombian markets to avoid sharp or protracted cyclical volatility. Secondly, this mono-product economy relied far too heavily on the United States' consumer market. Not only did the United States exert an increasing economic influence throughout the Latin American region, it could also steer the direction of a local market that Colombian producers almost entirely owned themselves because of the amount of demand that U.S. consumers constituted.[17]

The decreasing coffee prices continued, and the economy attenuated for the next two years. However, amid the recession two factors changed the course of the Colombian economy and set it on a path of unprecedented growth. First, the United States quickly emerged from its own recession in 1922, kicking off its own economic boom of the "Roaring 20s," sending coffee prices much higher from the increased U.S. demand. Secondly, the Colombian and U.S. legislatures finally came to terms on the tenets of the treaty regarding the independence of Panama. The United States accepted fault for its role in violating Colombia's sovereignty over Panama and agreed to pay $25 million USD in four annual installments as an apology. The indemnity, scheduled to begin in 1924, inspired local confidence in the nation's economic growth, while piquing global interest in the possibilities of investing in an economy projected to expand.[18]

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[17]Caballero, *La economía colombiana en el siglo XX*, 91-2.

[18]Xavier Duran and Marcelo Bucheli, "'Holding Up the Empire': Colombia, American Oil Interests, and the 1921 Urrutia-Thomson Treaty," *Journal of Economic History* 77, no. 1 (March 2017): 257; Bejarano, "El despegue cafetero," 183.

By 1923, the trajectory of Colombia's economy looked promising, but even with the revenues from climbing coffee prices and the imminent indemnity funds, the Colombian economy still lacked the capital it needed to accelerate its growth. Foreign investors who had the capital to invest still needed further assurances that their investments would generate returns. The likely existence of large oil deposits in Colombia's northern region generated additional interest, as they promised large potential revenues for U.S. oil companies. Additional royalties for the Colombian government now under the leadership of conservative President Pedro Nel Ospina also assuaged investors hesitant to pour money into Colombia. Even still, Wall Street and oil companies, required further assurances regarding Colombia's economic stability. For U.S. finance houses, Colombia's shaky record of repaying its liabilities eclipsed its financial potential. Without a central bank to steer monetary policy, the history of state insolvency continued to plague Colombia's prospects for foreign investments and loans.[19]

To allay Wall Street's reservations, President Ospina reached out to the U.S. State Department for suggestions, which in turn recommended economist Edwin Kemmerer from Princeton University. Kemmerer, the "Money Doctor," embarked on his commission to Colombia with a team of experts to shape the nation's banking system and re-establish a monetary policy that mirrored the Federal Reserve system of the United States. The Kemmerer Mission, as it became known in Colombia, significantly re-shaped both of Colombia's monetary and fiscal policy. The government established a central

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[19]Bruce Dalgaard, "Monetary Reform, 1923-30: A Prelude to Colombia's Economic Development," *Journal of Economic History* 40, no. 1 (March 1980), 98-100; Donald L. Kemmerer, "Princeton's 'Money Doctor': Professor E. W. Kemmerer and the Gold Standard," *Princeton University Library Chronicle* 55, no. 1 (Autumn 1993): 27.

bank, passed new legislation regarding revenue and collections, granted the state and the central bank oversight of the private banking system, and implemented other public finance measures that stabilized Colombian finances. The new central bank—the still operating Banco de la República (Banrep)— shored up Colombia's finances and risky private bank assets.[20]

The Kemmerer Mission embarked on the project just as the financial system neared collapse, although promising signs of sharp growth still prevailed. Following a few months of an upward trend in global commodity prices and the imminent windfall from the Urrutia-Thomson Treaty, Colombia's largest private bank, Banco López, flirted with insolvency in July of 1923. Fear of the bank's illiquidity rippled through Colombia, and policymakers steadied themselves for a resultant economic panic. In response, the Kemmerer commission implemented new regulatory measures a few months later, which Congress made official a few months later.[21]

Export incomes, state revenues from trade, oil prospects, the Kemmerer commission legislation, indemnity funds, steady increases in profits from light industry, and the financial stability that Banrep created all combined to whet the appetite of Wall Street lenders, and loan funds poured into Colombia. Between 1924 and 1928, Colombia's economy boomed. While industry and finance generated healthy amounts of economic growth on their own, Colombia owed its rapid expansion primarily to the

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[20] Kemmerer, "Princeton's 'Money Doctor,'" 26-27; Bruce Dalgaard, "Monetary Reform, 1923-30," 101-2.

[21]Robert N. Seidel, "American Reformers Abroad: Kemmerer Missions in South America, 1923-1931," *Journal of Economic* History 32, no. 2 (June 1972): 528; Kemmerer, "Princeton's "Money Doctor,'" 27.

coffee export revenues, the indemnity, and the staggering $71 million USD in debt that the nation had accrued by 1928. Like Reyes, President Ospina and his conservative successor Miguel Abadía Mendez spent the bulk of the windfall on infrastructure projects, especially railway expansion, and funneled the funds to the Ministry of Public Works, which oversaw the construction and spending for these projects. Along with the incipient industrial sector, the public works projects employed tens of thousands of Colombians and created a veritable working class.[22]

From 1923 to mid-1928, Colombia's Gross Domestic Product increased at an average rate of 5.2 percent, with some years recording a growth of over 7 percent. Wages also rose steadily over this time at a rate of roughly five percent, while the increase of Colombia's landowning class meant that a greater portion of Colombians working in agriculture fetched substantial earnings from high coffee prices. The increases in public spending at local, departmental, and federal levels continued to grow the base of Colombia's working class, who arguably saw the highest relative increase in wages compared to those that agricultural laborers received on haciendas.[23]

These rapid economic changes both carried with them and caused new social and cultural developments that reshaped aspects of Colombian society. In studying the 1920s as a pivotal cultural and economic moment for Colombia, Carlos Uribe argues that the new post-WWI cultural undercurrents and the rapid economic growth worked in tandem, with both phenomena impacting one another. Colombia quickly embraced the cultural

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[22] König, "Los años veinte y treinta en Colombia," 124, 126-27; Bejarano, "El despegue cafetero," 183-84, 187.

[23]Caballero, *La economía colombiana en el siglo XX*, 102, 104; Bejarano, "El despegue cafetero," 177-179.

changes occurring in Europe and the United States, such as women's liberation, new clothing styles, new music genres, rural-to-urban migration trends, and a general opposition to traditional social conventions among youth. These changes, he contends, helped to expedite the economic changes that later pulsed throughout Colombia. However, this new boom economy also provided the foundation for these often youth-led changes to sustain themselves, further develop, and achieve legitimation in the eyes of older Colombian generations. The wave of change brought to Colombia film and the movie theater, new music, the radio, new literature, new architecture, and even the airplane.[24]

Within these new social and cultural dynamics, students carved out for themselves an important role in society, precipitating some of that change. Several factors laid the groundwork for students to use these cultural and economic changes in order to exert significant influence on greater society. First, Bogotá had long been regarded as the "Athens of South America," because its citizens embraced their intellectuals, new ideas, and new literature. The state of education had long preoccupied leaders in both political parties. When students stepped up in 1921 to challenge the university system and demand reform, not many politicians truly disagreed with them, even if politicians criticized the students' rowdy behavior. Secondly, women began to embrace feminist ideologies and

[24]Written in 1985, Colombian sociologist Carlos Uribe's work remains the most important and vast work that analyzes the 1920s. In studying this important era, Uribe discusses social, political, cultural, and economic changes, and how they were intertwined. In doing so, he addresses changes among the youth as important change agents, especially university students, who he sees as critical players in the Colombian social dynamics. See Uribe, *Los años Veinte en Colombia*, 75-80; König, "Los años veinte y treinta en Colombia," 121.

demand access to the economy and political enfranchisement, especially as women did the same in the United States, Europe, and other Latin American nations. Because Colombia's liberal students championed the enfranchisement of women and women's access to the universities, they earned legitimacy in the eyes of women and liberal men who also supported women's rights in some form. Lastly, as mentioned early, the economic changes brought new ideological ideas to the public sphere, especially socialism. Although students never wholly embraced the ideology, they embraced some of the general principles, which won them further legitimacy in the lower-class public's eyes, as workers and students developed a modicum of solidarity heading into the 1929 *jornadas*.[25]

When the student movements returned in full force in 1921, much of the students' demands and motives dealt with university reform, emanating from early movements in Colombia, but mainly from the Cordoba Reform Movement. However, the students also began to evince a wider social awareness outside of their university and even became aware of their upper and upper-middle socioeconomic class statuses as juxtaposed to the emergent working class. At the Second Assembly of Students in early 1921, student leaders addressed the need for university reform, but they also discussed adopting a platform that sought to link the university to society at large. Lastly, they rekindled the long-standing concept of declaring solidarity with other Latin American students. One of the more mundane goals of the Second Assembly of Students involved centralizing the

[25]Ibid.; Rafat Ghotme, "La identidad nacional, el sistema educativa y la historia en Colombia, 1910-1960," *Revista científica "General José Maria Córdova"* 11, no. 11 (January-June 2013): 277, 281.

Colombian student organizations under the newly created National Federation of Students (FNE), and when this movement faltered, student leaders at UNAL attempted to reinforce the notion of centralization at the Third Assembly of Students later that year, without significant success. The Colombian students maintained a general and loose coalition or mutual support, especially among liberal students. However, the student organizations at the different universities throughout the nation remained loosely affiliated, and even within these universities, students formed different groups with different political leanings and platforms.[26]

Two major events cemented the return of the student movements to the public sphere in 1921. First, the student leader of the Nuevos generation, Germán Arciniegas, gave official voice to the liberal majority of politicized students and put into print the first edition of *Universidad*. Secondly, the students at the Universidad del Cauca in the city of Popayán went on strike against their university's administration and took their complaints to the streets in public protest. Rather than resigning, the rector and vice rector expelled several of the student leaders, effectively quelling the other student protestors. Although the strike did not last long, it succeeded in drawing both public support among the Popayán public and university students across the country. Later that year, students at the

[26]Soto, et. al., "La generación del movimiento estudiantil en Colombia. 1910-1924," 227; Gaitan and Restrepo, "El movimiento estudiantil en la década del Veinte en Colombia y su influencia en la modernización de los partidos," 159-71. For a more detailed discussion on the organizational affairs of the students leading up to the 1921 mobilization, see Diaz, "Aproximación histórica a los universitarios de Colombia (1908-1954)," 101, in which he discusses formation of the Confederation of Students, formed at the First Assembly of Students in 1919 by leaders of the Juridical Society, the Center of International Law at the National University, and the Society's Voice of the Youth (Arciniegas' first organizational brainchild).

University of Cartagena went on strike themselves, in this case protesting steep increases in student fees in addition to poor educational standards.[27]

The 1921 student activity also revolutionized the university, society, and the role that women played in both spheres. The leaders of the different student organizations, but primarily the FNE, proposed to Congress the establishment of a national celebration known as Day of the Student. Students designed the festival to celebrate what the concept of "the student" represented for society: erudition, youthful idealism, the future of society and the nation, and other idyllic notions. The celebration quickly became one of the most popular events in university, bringing life to Bogotá particularly. Eventually the Day of the Student transitioned to the week-long Festival of the Student, involving parades, public debates, soccer tournaments, dances, and more. More than any other activity, the *reinadas* competition, however, truly revolutionized Colombian society.[28]

The *reinadas* solidified themselves as the most important event, because they catapulted women into public leadership roles that forever changed how Colombian society viewed women. Initially designed to mimic a beauty queen competition of sorts, the r*einadas* saw different "queens" nominated to compete for the title of "La Reina."

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[27]Gaitan and Restrepo, "El movimiento estudiantil en la década del Veinte en Colombia y su influencia en la modernización de los partidos," 164-67.

[28]G. Manrique Teran, "El Carnaval y la Civilización," *Cromos,* July 14, 1928, 1-2. For a more thorough discussion on the cultural importance of the Festival of the Student, see Diaz, "Aproximación histórica a los universitarios de Colombia (1908-1954)," 212-44. Gaitan and Restrepo discuss the festival and its importance for the students throughout their thesis, focusing on the importance that the festivals played in raising funds for the organizations and other student projects, such as the Casa del Estudiante and the fund to provide tuition relief for students in need, Gaitan and Restrepo, "El movimiento estudiantil en la década del Veinte en Colombia y su influencia en la modernización de los partidos."

However, as the festivities became more popular, the competition evolved to incorporate debates, speeches, and other organizational skills to judge the women contestants. The competition required the women contestants to take on leadership roles and gave them a public platform not often afforded to women in early 1900s' Colombia. *Universidad* also dedicated significant print space to women who wrote, opined, and challenged different social conventions, such as the exclusion of women from the major universities. While several factors paved the way for women's enfranchisement, admission to the university, and further measures of equality, the *reinadas* played a very important role in preparing these future victories for women. Even within the student movements themselves, women in time began to adopt leading roles outside of the competitions. Women like Maria Arango and Rocio Londoño emerged as two of the most important leaders during the 1960s student movements, descendants of the precedent established during the 1920s.[29]

The politicized students from all sectors and organizations carried their momentum into 1922 and convened the First Student Congress in Medellín to address some of the divisions that had become apparent among student bodies as well as to establish a platform to define the politics of the movements. Again, the concept of university reform dominated the discussions, particularly with the events in Medellín and Popayán still fresh in the collective memory. However, the student committees also widely adopted a more liberal platform, despite initial efforts to avoid political discussions. Their liberal ideologies included anti-imperialism, a growing social awareness, solidarity with the working class, centralization of the federal government,

[29]Diaz, "Aproximación histórica a los universitarios de Colombia, 1908-1954," 230-37.

and a reduction of Catholic influence. After the students laid the groundwork for the growing movement in 1922, the next year proved relatively quiet for Colombian universities. One can surmise several factors for this decline, but internal divisions resulting from the firm narrative of the congress probably played a potent role. Additionally, one could also see this potentially because of the growing economy. With the nation progressing and their prospects looking bright, it is also possible that students felt less anxious about the socioeconomic realities around them.[30]

This respite did not last, though, as in 1924, full blown movements occurred in Popayán, Medellín, and the medical college of UNAL. Other smaller strikes and protests also occurred throughout the university system. The worrying political and ideological rifts that began to widen in 1922 and 1923 might have prevented a unified student front, but students stayed just as active, with strikes and protests from both liberal and conservative student groups. Indeed, one of the more sustained and potent mobilizations involved the conservative students at the University of Cartagena against the local clergy's meddling in university matters, especially the curriculum. In response to this second wave of activity, student leaders convened the Second National Congress of Students, which met in Bogotá. Here they reinforced their left-leaning ideologies and even began to adopt aspects of the socialist platform that the PSR and other student groups across the region asserted. The students also discussed proposing to the university rectors and other education officials that they provide funds for a dormitory, especially

[30]Archila, "Entre la academia y la política," 161; Gaitan and Restrepo, "El movimiento estudiantil en la década del Veinte en Colombia y su influencia en la modernización de los partidos," 194, 196-197, 206-7.

for students from lesser privileged backgrounds, laying the groundwork for the later Casa del Estudiante.[31]

With ebbs and flows between 1925 and 1927, student activity continued through new manifestations, new organizations, protests and strikes, and student festivals as well as increased ties to the political parties, especially the Liberal Party. Students also strengthened their links with Colombia's working class. Focusing on the health of working-class citizens, students opened a Red Cross clinic for individuals who needed affordable or free health care, while *reinada* contestant Elvira Hernández put her efforts to overseeing the early process of building the San Jose University Hospital that provided medical students with vital training in its clinic, which also offered working-class members free health care. The opening of the Casa del Estudiante in 1926 provided housing for less privileged students and created an effective political space for the student movements. While students increasingly sought to address social issues and influence political policy, they nonetheless continued to focus primarily on university reform within the different organizations.[32]

In 1928, students convened the Third National Student Congress in Ibagué. The students at Ibagué demonstrated their expanding ideologies and outlook, as they discussed, debated, and proposed issues regarding university reform, anti-imperialism and Latin American solidarity, support of the working class and campesinos, and other

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[31]Soto, et al., "La generación del movimiento estudiantil en Colombia. 1910-1924," 227-28; Gaitan and Restrepo, "El movimiento estudiantil en la década del Veinte en Colombia y su influencia en la modernización de los partidos," 228-30.

[32]Quiroz, *La Universidad Nacional de Colombia en sus pasillos*, 71-74; Gaitan and Restrepo, "El movimiento estudiantil en la década del Veinte en Colombia y su influencia en la modernización de los partidos," 271-72.

issues. They also voted to open the *universidades populares*, or night schools, in which students educated members of the working class at the universities free of charge. Interestingly, the students also roundly condemned some of the economic policy and financial practices of the Colombian government. First, they feared future economic hardships, because the nation grew overly reliant on the coffee economy, which also made future economic growth vulnerable to demand rates for coffee in the U.S. market. They also petitioned Congress and government officials to study and reverse its public debt policy and deficit spending. Colombia, they argued, had also become too reliant on debt, and the students questioned the nation's solvency when coffee prices invariably dipped in the next down cycle.[33]

The Ibagué congress happened to convene right as signals from different economic sectors began to warn of an impending recession, and the students' worries in that convention highlighted the volatility of the economy. Although the Colombian economy reached heights unseen in its history, the growth emanated primarily from the U.S. indemnity, inflated coffee prices, and most importantly, an exorbitant accumulation of debt. Very few industries or economic sectors contributed to the growth on their own. Without the U.S. indemnity and the access to loans, Colombia's economic growth would have been modest at best. Indeed, the students' prescient worries turned into reality, for when coffee prices began to drop in mid-1928, the Colombian economy began to wobble. To make matters worse, U.S. banks began to scale back their lending, fearing liquidity

[33]For a more in-depth discussion on this, see chapter III of this paper as well as Gaitan and Restrepo's analysis of meeting notes, debates, and other documents from the Ibagué congress, pp. 264-90.

issues. The two sources of national revenue began to dry up, and by early 1929, the Colombian economy felt the impact.

In addition to these economic undercurrents, corruption in government proliferated, and U.S. multinationals increased their activity within the Colombian economy. Corruption had long been a problem in Colombian politics, particularly within the Public Works Department. By 1929, corruption became rampant, and not just within the Public Works Department. Bogotanos and the students criticized and lamented "la rosca" – the ring of corruption within the capital city's federal, departmental, and municipal governments. Regarding foreign economic influence, Tropico Oil Company threatened to exploit the nation's rich petroleum deposits, but United Fruit embodied the true problem of U.S. companies in Colombia. When workers at United Fruit's banana plantations on the Atlantic coast in the north demanded better working conditions and better pay, United Fruit refused, and the Colombian government backed the company. When the workers protested and went on strike in the town of Cienega, the Colombian military massacred thousands.[34]

The student movements in later 1928 and 1929 leading up to the *jornadas* of that year must be understood within this economic context. The mass protests of the *jornadas* began on June 6, 1929, a day after President Miguel Abadía and the governor of Cundinamarca—Bogotá 's department—Ruperto Melo, conspired to oust Bogotá 's popular mayor Luis Augusto Cuervo. Roughly twenty thousand Bogotanos arrived at the city's center, Plaza Bolivar, to protest both the mayor's removal and "la rosca." Backed

[34]Diaz, "El 8 de junio y las disputas por la memoria, 1929-1954," 160-61; Medina, *La protesta urbana en Colombia en el siglo Veinte*, 40-41.

by the students, the prominent lawyer and former student leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán assumed nominal leadership over the crowd. The following day, he established an effective city-wide boycott of the transit system to shutter the city's financial district, to encourage banks and other businesses to put pressure on the Abadía administration to deal with the protestors. When Abadía ordered the military to act, soldiers stormed the crowd, wounding dozens of protesters, evoking fear of another *matanza*. The following morning, students organized and assumed leadership of the protests as participation swelled to thirty thousand protesters, but late in the evening, federal police opened fire on a group of students, severely wounding several and killing prominent student leader Gonzalo Bravo Pérez.[35]

The massacre of Pérez exacerbated the public unrest, forcing Abadía to call in more soldiers to suppress the *jornadas*. A group of influential Liberal and Conservative leaders known as the junta de notables met privately with President Abadía and demanded the resignation of the head of the National Police, Carlos Cortés Vargas, and war department minister Ignacio Rengifo, both of whom the public deemed culpable for the *matanza*. The junta readily accepted credit for convincing Abadía to bend to the public's will after he fired both officials. However, the junta did not necessarily represent the will of the people, as the public did not regard the junta as representative of their views and political voice. Rising populist leader and young lawyer Gaitán truly

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[35]Diaz, "El 8 de junio y las disputas por la memoria, 1929-1954," 160-61; Medina, *La protesta urbana en Colombia en el siglo Veinte*, 40-41; Gaitan and Restrepo, "El movimiento estudiantil en la década del Veinte en Colombia y su influencia en la modernización de los partidos," 310-11; Ciro Quiroz, *La Universidad Nacional de Colombia y sus pasillos*, 91; Ruíz, *Sueños y realidades: Procesos de organización estudiantil, 1954-1966*, 54-55.

represented what quickly became the two demands of the crowd: an end to "la rosca" corruption ring in the government and official accountability for the massacre of the banana workers. Rather than the junta, they recognized Gaitán as their unofficial leader in this movement, and Gaitán, a former student leader himself, arguably acted as a leader and representative of the student voice by proxy.[36]

In the end the students never carved out a clear leadership role in the days following their strike and Bravo's death, nor did they impose a liberal ideology on the movement. Any majority ideology could have arguably aligned with the Liberal Party's increasingly popular platform. The students primarily identified as liberal, although conservative students and their organizational leaders also participated heavily in the *jornadas* as well as a small minority of socialist students. The heterogenous political makeup of these student protestors also probably affected their ability to either establish a continued leading role or promulgate a platform that the masses sanctioned. Nonetheless, the early student leadership on June 7th certainly steered the masses into a focused and eventually successful mobilization, while the death of student Gonzalo Bravo convinced the majority of Colombians that the official Conservative Party had lost control. Colombians on the fence swung toward the Liberal Party, while the division within the Conservative Party widened, resulting in its epochal loss in the subsequent elections.[37]

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[36]Cantor, *Gente muy rebelde: Protesta popular y modernización capitalista en Colombia (1909-1929)*, 355-57; Medina, *La protesta urbana en Colombia en el siglo Veinte*, 42-43; Ruíz, *Sueños y realidades: Procesos de organización estudiantil, 1954-1966*, 55.

[37]Quiroz, La Universidad Nacional de Colombia y sus pasillos, 92-3; Gaitan and Restrepo, "El movimiento estudiantil en la década del Veinte en Colombia y su influencia en la modernización de los partidos," 312; Diaz, "El 8 de junio y las disputas por memoria, 1929-1954," 161.

CHAPTER II: THE SOCIOECONOMICS OF UNIVERSITY REFORM

From the onset of Colombia's student movements, politicized students organized and mobilized around the demands for university reform, beginning with Colombia's first documented example in the 1790s. The issue of university reform remained a constant theme throughout the 1920s. Understanding what "reform" meant to the students allows the reader to understand why and how the student movements progressed through the decade, especially within the context of national economic growth. I argue that Colombian students concerned themselves with two primary socioeconomic realities. First, they viewed university reform as a means to advance the national economy in the era of "la danza de millones" and secure their financial position within the new, changing, and rapidly expanding economy. Secondly, the students believed that the university, with substantial reform, could transmit new ideas that might precipitate socioeconomic change. These potential socioeconomic changes, they contended, could open the university's doors to lower-class students, providing them with more opportunities for economic and financial advancement. This expansion of the university would then, according to the students, catalyze further economic progress, unshackled by socioeconomic structures of the past.

As mentioned earlier, the students in the 1790s had adopted an anti-colonial, pro-independence rhetoric, focusing much of their discontent on policies of the Bourbon rulers of Spain. However, they focused more so on the pedagogical and administration issues by conflating the failures of the university with the policies of the crown and Church. The wealthy *criollo* and *peninsular* students of that era who had access to

collegiate education, emphasized that the colonial Spanish university more than anything, operated as a social engine of advancement. Although Latin American universities mainly functioned as institutions of higher learning, they more importantly also served to socioeconomically advance their matriculants. When the students believed that the university failed in its role of promoting them to a better socioeconomic future, they mobilized against university and governing officials, demonstrated in the 1790s strikes and protests.[1]

Redressing the university's surface issues of poor pedagogy and administration meant that students needed to first tackle the structural social issues that ran much deeper in Colombian society. To begin, the Spanish Catholic Church maintained a dogmatic stranglehold on the direction of Colombian education, restricting the advancement of the sciences and prohibiting women's admission to the university. Socioeconomic issues also plagued the university's structure, further cementing the Colombian university's status as a bastion of the humanities at the expense of the sciences. For example, because Spain never quite developed its industrial economy like its European neighbors, the colonial authorities failed to see the importance of adding opportunities for more technical and scientific training. Spain's strict monopolization of trade and production also dissuaded inhabitants of colonial Colombia from investing time and resources in more technical or industrial ventures. In the 1790s, the university's aversion to the sciences did not affect the students nearly as much as later students, but as the nineteenth century passed, it became obvious to students that their universities had fallen behind European and U.S.

[1]Soto, "El movimiento de estudiantes y catedráticos en Santa Fe de Bogotá a finales del siglo XX," 40-41.

institutions of higher learning. Even when Colombia's leaders attempted to develop the nations' industrial base and introduce science and technology into university education, Catholic traditions and a social affinity for the humanities thwarted these measures. These shortcomings became more pronounced in the 1920s when Colombia desperately needed better academic training to thrive in the new modern and global economy. As the Colombian and global economy continued its growth into "la danza de millones" of the 1920s, the university's structural failures became more and more evident.[2]

In the 1909 *jornadas* brought on by the loss of Panama, anti-imperialism and "republicanism" began to dominate the student rhetoric ahead of the issue of reform. However, the underlying issues with education still loomed large as a point of contention for some of the press and political leaders. Several newspaper articles addressed the problems within the education system in Colombia in 1909, problems that the university student confronted in the upcoming years, including poor teaching, poor training for the

[2]LaRosa, *De la derecha a la izquierda*, 62-65. LaRosa focuses here on the primary and secondary education and how the Church utilized education to indoctrinate students not only with eccleseial morals but also socially conservative values, as well. Diana Soto Arango, "Aproximación histórica a la Universidad Colombiana," *Historia de la Educación Latinoamericana* 7, (2009), 101-38. For a more detailed discussion on the Church's control over the education of women in Colombia, see Lucy M. Cohen, *Colombiana en la vanguardia* (Medellín: Universidad de Antioquia, 2001) and Elena Garces, *Colombian Women: The Struggle Out of Silence* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008). One of the most important monographs on the Colombian economy in the Nineteenth Century is Frank Safford's *The Ideal of the Practical: Colombia's Struggle to Form a Technical Elite* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976), in which he discusses how Colombia's leadership soon after their independence recognized the need for better education to train a young generation of students to pursue more technical careers and help push Colombia to into a more modern economic and industrial era. He discusses the struggle to maintain a balance between restructuring Colombia's higher education by adding technical schools while also appeasing the more traditional Catholic and social values, pp. 8-18; David Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations: Why Some Are so Rich and Some so Poor* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), 310-17.

teachers, and a lack of resources for schools, among others. Medellín business leader and teacher Januario Henao drafted a series of open letters in the local press, calling for new training regimens for teachers and better funding for schools. New reforms could propel Colombia into a new era of modernization and economic success, he contended, which many proponents of education reform echoed. Following the resignation of Reyes in 1909, students redirected their energies back toward educational reform. Later that year, leaders from the schools of sociology, medicine, public health, and law and political science combined their forces and pressed the university administration for more modern pedagogical practices. Then, in 1910, Colombian students joined with students from Ecuador and Venezuela to convene the First International Congress of Students of Gran Colombia, in which the students discussed, debated, and then championed the idea of *autonomía universitaria*, complete university autonomy from the state and church. [3]

The 1918 Córdoba reform brought the concept of university reform back to the forefront of student politics across the entire Latin American region, and it heavily influenced future student leaders, especially Germán Arciniegas. He and other students

[3]Tomas Emilio Pichón, "Homenaje a un periodista," *El Grito de Juventud*, May 12, 1909, 2; "Lo que debe ser un periodico," *El Estudiante*, April 30, 1909, 1-2; Januario Henao, "La educación pública," *Edison*, February 27, 1909, 2; Januario Henao, "Educación pública," *El Cosmopolita*, March 18, 1909, 1-2; "Por los maestros de escuela," *Concordia*, November 8, 1908, 2; "La instrucción pública," *Industrial*, July 17, 1909, 1; "Enseñar es liberar, Dia, January 13, 1098; 2; Gabriel Isaacs, "Algo sobre instrucción pública," *Correo de las Brujas*, January 10, 1909, 1; "Council discussion on petition from Sociology, Medicine, Public Health, and Law and Political Science Students, October 27, 1909," *Universidad Nacional Hemeroteca*, Correspondencia (NC.FDCP.NA.SA 071044), caja 162, carpeta 2; Diaz, "Aproximación histórica a los universitarios de Colombia 1908-1954," 61-65; "Janus," "Sobre instrucción pública," *El Eco*, April 4, 1909, 89-90. The author "Janus" explicitly asserts that the future of Colombia lies in its commercial interests, and progress can only be achieved through better education.

began to organize in early 1919, forming the Society of the Voice of the Youth. They soon absorbed other student organizations from the different departments and rebranded this new, expansive organization the Assembly of Students. The Assembly of Students incorporated the bulk of politicized students until student leaders established the National Federation of Students (FNE) during the 1922 student congress. With the rise in student activity under the influence of the 1918 Córdoba reform, the students began to define the three core tenets of university reform. First, they demanded *autonomía universitaria*. Secondly, they called for the university to employ younger, more qualified professors who embraced the sciences and new pedagogical techniques. Within this call for new faculty, they also insisted that the professors be granted *cátedra libre,* or the freedom to teach without censorship. Lastly, they proposed the idea of *cogobierno,* or a co-governing system that included junior faculty, students, and alumni.[4]

As students renewed their political activity in 1919, they identified a correlation between Colombia's economic growth and the students' clamors for university reform. Colombia's economy expanded between the end of the First World War and the 1921 recession, and this growth produced socioeconomic changes that imposed on Colombia new demands, both domestically and internationally. In the 1910s, Colombian entrepreneurs, with state help, innovated transportation, competitively priced exports, and ensured higher levels of production of both raw goods and finished goods. In the early 1920s, these efforts markedly increased, and the student took notice. Interestingly,

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[4]Maria Elena Erazo Coral, "Nuevos sentidos de la reforma de Córdoba: el caso de la Universidad de Nariño," *Historia de la Educación Latinoamericana* 20, no. 30 (enero-junio 2018): 72-3; Samacá and Acevedo, "De la reforma de Córdoba al Cordobazo," 74-5.

student activity increased in tandem with increased economic growth, perhaps showing that the students were responding to these new economic challenges and realities. To meet these new economic challenges in the 1920s, however, the university required an overhaul.[5]

Amid the moderate economic growth just before the cyclical shock of 1921, Colombia's student leaders evinced an awareness of their potential role in the nation's future, while the Assembly leaders felt that it alone possessed the energy and ability to direct Colombia's future path toward modernization. Leaders of the student federation asserted that only through their leadership could Colombians adopt the necessary changes to the economy, namely a more industrialized economy. By the end of the year, students had ignited protests at universities across the nation, demanding that the Ministry of Public Instruction address pedagogical failures and other academic issues throughout the university system. In doing so, they received support from the Assembly at the student movement epicenter in Bogotá. Responding to the student unrest, Minister of Public Instruction Arboleda Llorente openly opposed newer pedagogical practices, including the inclusion of more scientific heavy studies. As a result, students at the University of Cauca in the city of Popayán went on strike, calling for the removal of the university's rector. In

[5]In 1919, fiscal spending on education in total figures (projected spending based on prior months) varied month to month with oscillations in increases and decreases of earmarked funds. As a percentage of the overall fiscal budget, however, the spending decreased by over 10% from June to December of that year, as demonstrated by a calculation of funds stated on university balance sheets, see "Expediente no. 2.955, Junio 28, 1919," "Expediente no. 3.378, Julio 30, 1919," "Expediente no. 3.780, Agosto 30 1919," "Expediente no. 6.253, Diciembre 30, 1919," and "Expediente no. 5.738, Noviembre 29, 1919," *Archivo General de la Nación,* Anexo Grupo- 2, Ministerio de Instrucción Pública, Actas de visita, caja 5, carpeta 1, 1893-1923; Samacá and Acevedo, "De la reforma de Córdoba al Cordobazo," 75.

the aftermath, the university hierarchy expelled several of the student leaders. Despite the unfortunate outcome for those students, this event gained national attention and earned the student movements public recognition.[6]

Several other student mobilizations in 1921 demonstrated the students' growing discontent with the university hierarchies but did so by addressing financial issues. At the University of Cartagena, students protested an increase in student fees without any additional change to the university. Meanwhile in the capital, UNAL's engineering students protested the low pay of their instructors. Understanding the importance of a strong engineering department, the Assembly appointed student councils to train incoming students who lacked the prerequisite knowledge needed for the engineering program. With a nation expanding its infrastructure to augment its export economy and newer light industry, assembly members recognized the importance of graduating students who could help further the expansion and sought to develop those skills.[7]

At the beginning of the decade, students within different organizations aimed to primarily revamp the university's educational and administrative model to meet the demands of a new economy. In some instances, the students specifically addressed the subject of training in commercial matters. Up until 1922, the outmoded university education attempted but failed to provide an adequate education for prospective students

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[6]"El conflicto universitario de Popayán," *Universidad*, February 24, 1921, 16; "Los que surgen," *Universidad*, February 24, 1921, 1; "Mensaje a los estudiantes de Bogotá," *Universidad*, May 12, 1921, 116; Gaitán and Restrepo, "El movimiento estudiantil en la década del Veinte en Colombia y su influencia en el modernizacion de los partidos," 165-67.

[7]Gaitán and Restrepo, "El movimiento estudiantil en la década del Veinte en Colombia y su influencia en la modernización de los partidos," 166-67.

of international trade and commerce. With the economy in recession in January of 1922, officials struck down a measure that would have renewed funds for the School of Commerce in the final budget during budgetary sessions of the House of Representatives. This effectively shuttered the school's operations. Frustrated with this measure, student leaders from the newly formed Federation of Students of Bogotá immediately petitioned for the House to reverse the measure, citing two reasons. First, these leaders expressed concern with the financial ramifications for the School of Commerce's students, especially those who might lose years of collegiate studies as they now needed to pursue another career path at a different university. Secondly, the student leaders rued the closure of the school, which had historically sent many graduates onto successful careers in trade and commerce, careers that had proven vital to the Colombian economy.[8]

In 1922 the student leaders continued to attack the university's abysmal departments of the sciences, the lack of commercial and technical training, and poor pedagogical practices across all departments. However, public spending in education shrank both in real figures and as a percentage of total public spending due to the economic shock that occurred at the end of 1921, effectively limiting any real public investment in educational reform. By mid-1922, the student movements entered a critical phase, as the student activism that ignited the potent university strikes of 1921 waned into a state of dormancy. Leaders noted that a general complacency jeopardized the aims of the movement, asserting that the students' failure to heed the "flag of Córdoba" and "the

[8]"El asunto de la Escuela de Comercio," *Universidad*, January 26, 1922, 71.

flag of rebellion" compounded the issues caused by Colombia's fiscal treatment of education and deteriorating economic health.[9]

In addition to the low levels of activity among the students, student movement leaders also grappled with internal divisions that began to resurface leading up to the presidential and congressional elections of 1922. The presidential elections of 1922 offer a view into the complexity of the Colombian student movements, as different sects of the activists began to form, and the student groups embraced ideas that extended beyond the university institution. The 1922 election marked the first true participation from the Liberal Party since the civil war. Former general and proponent of educational reform Benjamin Herrera rose to assume the party's presidential candidacy, and he retained significant support from the students. However, the students, hailing primarily from the left, began to take issue with Herrera's opposition to strikes and protests, while students of a more conservative ilk favored the Conservative Party candidate, Pedro Nel Ospina. Meanwhile, as socialist ideologies permeated Latin America, the left-leaning students in Colombia began to break ties with the Liberal Party and fill the ranks of the newly formed Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR). These fissures created diverging paths within the student movements. Despite the differing ideologies, Colombia's students all

[9]"La crisis," *Universidad*, April 4, 1922, 217. See also José Inginieros, "Por America," *Universidad*, February 16, 1922, 92-93; "La pobreza de la universidad," *Universidad*, February 24, 1922, n.p.; Grupo de Estudios de Crecimiento Económico Colombiano, "El desempeño macroeconómico colombiano. Series estadísticas (1905-1997), segunda versión," *Banco de la República*, 1998; Helg, *La educación en Colombia, 1918-1957*, 106; *Memoria de Ministro de Instrucción Pública al Congreso, Tomo I, 1923* in Memorias de Ministros de Educación años 20, 1920, 61.

roundly condemned the university system as unfit for the needs of the nation's economy. For the time being, university reform remained nonpartisan.[10]

According to the students, advancing Colombia's pedagogical practices could propel Colombia's economy forward, and students renewed their political activity by the middle of 1922 with this objective in mind. This activity adopted a more organized and less radical behavior with the students conveying their demands through the UNAL-led student assembly and another national congress of students. First, the Assembly of Students at UNAL commissioned a group of student scholars to study the possibilities and economic implications of university *autonomía*. Then in October, student leaders across the nation convened the First Student Congress in Medellín, where attendees proposed their official student platform on university reform. Above all other issues, the students addressed the poor pedagogical practices throughout the university.[11]

At the April meeting of the Assembly of Students at UNAL, leaders recommended amending the university structure to separate itself from both the direct control of the government and the outmoded university system. This could have positive economic effects on the university structure, according to the assembly members. The leaders admitted that eliminating the government's control of the university would adversely affect education initially, as Congress would likely decrease public funding for the university. The university would then need to raise its own funds through tuition,

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[10]Luis Zea Uribe and J. Joaquin Caicedo R., "La dirección del liberalismo y la Universidad Libre," *El Tiempo*, January 7, 1925, 5; Gaitán and Restrepo, "El movimiento estudiantil en la década del Veinte en Colombia y su influencia en la modernización de los partidos," 177.

[11]"El Congreso Nacional de Estudiantes," *Universidad*, March 16, 1922, n.p.; L.L. Vaux, "La hora de la juventud," *Universidad*, April 6, 1922, n.p.

which could then elicit two economic benefits for the students and greater Colombian youth. First, Assembly leaders argued that this would force the university administration to expand the admission process and accept more students so that their tuition would cover the operation costs. This would effectively open the university doors for students from Colombia's growing middle class that still lacked access to higher education. Secondly, as the university hierarchy would then rely on the students for the bulk of operating funds, the students could embody a sense of ownership of the university process, empowering them to demand a voice in the decision-making regarding university governance. Through this process, the university and the student body might develop a more fiduciary relationship that would ultimately benefit the students.[12]

The First National Student Congress that convened in Medellín in October of 1922 brought together student leaders from Colombia's largest universities across the nation for the first time on a large scale with a focused direction. After several days of meetings, conventions, debates, and other student activities, the student leaders ratified their platform. They spent most of their energies defining a path toward university reform, but they also identified Latin American student solidarity as an aim for the movement. After establishing the goal of creating student publications as their first point, the students then demanded better teaching, sought student representation in administrative matters, called on the university and government to redress poor pedagogy, and insisted on educational changes within the university system.[13]

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[12]"Caprichos para el futuro," *Universidad,* April 20, 1922, n.p.

[13]Diáz Jaramillo, "Aproximación histórica a los universitarios de Colombia 1908-1954," 132; Gaitán and Restrepo, "El movimiento estudiantil en la década del Veinte en Colombia y su influencia en la modernización de los partidos," 194-200.

Delegates of the leadership councils at the Medellín congress reiterated the Assembly's position on separating the university from the state. They posited that separation would also help pave the way for a more scientific and innovative university. Repeating the same arguments that the assembly in Bogotá had posed, the council delegates, under the leadership of Arciniegas, asserted that university reform needed to be built on an economic foundation. By divorcing its structure from the government, the university could establish its economic independence, permitting the students and open-minded faculty members to reform the university from the ground up, rather than relying on a top-down reform.[14]

It is important to note that because conservative students began to break away from the main core of the student movements, the Medellín congress consisted mainly of Colombia's liberal students. Although the overall student movements constituted mostly left-leaning students—including a burgeoning socialist contingent—conservative students still made up a sizable portion of the overall student movements. Regardless of their political and economic ideologies, both groups placed a heavy emphasis on reforming the university and sought to redress pedagogical failures.[15]

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[14]Gaitan and Restrepo, "El movimiento estudiantil en la década del Veinte en Colombia y su influencia en la modernización de los partidos," 202.

[15]Ibid., 194-95; "Convención de la Juventud Conservadora," *Universidad*, March 10, 1921, n.p. As early as 1921, conservative divisions of the student body began to organize outside of the larger student assemblies and congresses. Student leaders praised the initiative of the conservative students in early 1921, because both liberals and conservatives essentially mobilized for the same end goals. However, by 1922, student organizers saw these growing divisions as detrimental to aims of the larger, liberal student groups. L.L. Vaux, "La hora de la juventud," *Universidad*, April 6, 1922, n.p. Although many of the students were inspired by the Russian Revolution and studied emergent Bolshevism, only a small portion of politicized students joined the socialist party or adopted a socialist platform. Liberal students and socialist students joined ranks,

After two years of significant and consistent student activity, 1923 brought a lull in the Colombian student movements. Several factors can explain this sudden decrease in politicization and mobilization. First, the Liberal Party's losses in the 1922 election that brought President Nel Ospina to power probably deflated the left-leaning students who had witnessed a growth in a constituent base of the Liberal Party. Secondly, the internal divisions that continued to cause rifts among the different student organizations also probably discouraged student leaders who hoped to centralize student activity and organizations from across the nation. Although the majority left-leaning students enjoyed some organizational success at the Medellín congress, the sources point to very little activity following this convention. Thirdly, the decade's economic growth became evident in 1923 with the successes of the Kemmerer mission, the indemnity, and the rising coffee prices. It is possible that the students' future outlook appeared less dim, and therefore, students put their efforts in carving out a place in this fledgling economy.

In fact, as the economy expanded, the Colombian government also dedicated more funds and effort to modernizing the university system. The Ministry of Public Instruction, the governmental department in charge of national education, reformed education at the primary and secondary levels by granting scholarships to prospective teachers and investing public funds into training better teachers. The Institute of Pedagogy also received a remodeled building and extra funds. Perhaps more importantly for the university students, Congress invested in modern technology and radiography

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and the socialist influence grew among liberal students; but the large majority of students fell into the Conservative-Liberal bipartisan mold, Pineres, "El movimiento renovador estudiantil y las reformas universitarias en Colombia (1920-1930)," 79-80.

within the School of Medicine at UNAL. The Colombian government also used the new revenue stream to contract a team of Germán educational consultants to study and critique the Colombian education system in 1924.[16]

While difficult to quantify, the ministry's emphasis on advancing pedagogical practice seemed to win support from some of the students. Student and national press articles lauded congressional efforts to revamp pedagogical practices, and they acknowledged specific professors who succeeded in applying new teaching methods or incorporating modern scholarship in the classrooms. While it is impossible to ascertain the true nature of the student inactivity in 1923, it seems logical that the economic growth and its resultant reforms temporarily satisfied student demands for reform of the education system.[17]

Arguably, these new reforms of 1923 were byproducts of the increasing revenues from the coffee exports. They also pointed to a general goal of the nation advance into the new financial era. Regardless of the effects of the reforms or the economic growth, however, student activism returned to the forefront of both university and national politics in 1924. Perhaps the "danza" created a new norm in the lives of Colombian students that required time for adjustment, or even more likely introduced students to different economic issues. But the students' activism adopted a different element than the earlier mobilizations that mainly addressed university reform for the sake of professional advancement in the booming economy. With the rise of industry and infrastructural

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[16]*Memoria de Ministro de Instrucción Pública al Congreso, Tomo I, 1923*, 61-62, 70, 83-86.

[17]Los estudiantes de Bolívar, "Maestro de los estudiantes de Bolívar," *El Tiempo*, January 1, 1924, 13.

projects, Colombia began to develop a small but absolute working class, and in 1924 students at times offered a rhetorical solidarity with workers.[18]

Despite expanding their platform to incorporate social issues, students of UNAL's medical school, however, demonstrated that their own issues with the university system and their future place in Colombia's changing economy remained the primary preoccupation of the student movements. Medical students criticized poor teaching in the field of pathological anatomy, and through protests they demanded that the medical school's directors terminate the ill-equipped faculty. Around the same time, the university also voted to shutter three student-led clinics for working class citizens of Bogotá. Despite recently appearing concessionary and approving the students' solidarity with the working-class, the university leadership objected to the demands for new professors and better training in pathology.[19]

The records lack information on the degree or nature of these student strikes and protests, but news articles from politically moderate *El Tiempo* allude to somewhat contentious and raucous early protests. Following the protests, the students challenged the university's decisions using four tactics. First, the students created a process that

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[18]These reforms went into effect in 1924 and lasted mainly until 1926, Enrique Santos, "Política instruccionista," *El Tiempo*, January 9, 1927, 1; Gaitán and Restrepo, "El movimiento estudiantil en la década del Veinte en Colombia y su influencia en el modernizacion de los partidos," 228-30.

[19]*Letter from Third Assembly student secretary A. Posada Puerta to Senior Minister of Public Instruction E.S.D.*, September 4, 1921, Ministry of Public Education "Expediente no. 2.852, Septiembre 4, 1921," *Archivo General de la Nacion*, Anexo-Grupo- 2, Ministerio de Instrucción Pública, Comunicaciones de Sociedades, caja 1, carpeta, 1; "Otro Estudiante," "El conflicto de la Escuela de Medicina," *El Tiempo*, May 4, 1925, 3; E.R., "Una idea para solucionar el conflicto estudiantil," *El Tiempo*, May 1, 1925, 1.

gauged the efficacy of certain professors, pedagogical practices, and curriculum, part of which involved an examination of the faculty. Interestingly, the medical school's Directive Council, which oversaw the faculty's academic duties, took the student body's examination results seriously enough to review and discuss them. Secondly, the students commissioned a new organization within the university called the Liberal University Committee, essentially with the goal of pursuing the liberal students' political aims. Thirdly, a corps of talented students simply terminated their studies at UNAL's School of Medicine. Fed up with the university administration's intransigence and proclivity to vilify the student activists, several of the students sought matriculation in other South American medical schools.[20]

Upon leaving, several of the students who withdrew drafted a manifesto in which they outlined eighteen different objectives that they hoped to see in the future Colombian university. The Committee of Students then published these points and implored the medical school's administration not to ignore these objectives. The objectives mostly followed the demands of the larger university reform rhetoric, such as removing poorly trained faculty, implementing better hands-on training and pedagogy, requesting better equipment and supplies, and objecting to other academic inadequacies. Interestingly, they demanded that the medical school maintain local clinics for working-class individuals and their families staffed by the medical students. This appeared altruistic and even

[20]"Otro Estudiante," "El conflicto de la Escuela de Medicina," *El Tiempo*, May 4, 1925, 3; E. Flarez Vergara, "El Comité Liberal Universitario," *El Tiempo*, May 4, 1925, 6; E.R., "Una idea para solucionar el conflicto estudiantil," *El Tiempo*, May 1, 1925; "El derecho de los estudiantes y el deber de los profesores," *El Tiempo*, May 16, 1925, 1; Germán Arciniegas, "La Crisis Universitaria," *El Tiempo*, May 15, 1925, 1; "El derecho de los estudiantes y el deber de los profesores," *El Tiempo*, May 16, 1925, 1.

socialist on the surface—in fact, many of the students within the movement began to pay attention to Bolshevist Russia where students adopted similar practices. However, the students also recognized that these clinics provided the students with real, hands-on experience that provided real opportunities to improve their professional aspirations, highlighting their desire to reform the medical school for their future betterment and career.[21]

Leading student activist Germán Arciniegas explained the importance that economics played in the mobilizations within the medical school. Like past mobilizations centered around university reform, Arciniegas saw the diaspora of the leading medical students as an economic failure, suggesting that the university's hierarchy refused to acquiesce to the students because of financial reasons. He also criticized the students for leaving, arguing that heightened protest, boycotts, strikes, and other more common tactics might have proved equally effective. The loss of Colombia's best medical students, Arciniegas warned, demonstrated that Colombia's educational failures had economic consequences. In the end, he lamented the students' decisions to transfer abroad. Their decision equated to an easy way out of a situation that should have been pressed to better the Colombian education system and the future of Colombia. Yet Arciniegas realized the potential ramifications for the students if the university opted to expel them. The students

[21]"La agitación en la universitaria de ayer," *El Tiempo,* May 17, 1925, 1, 4; Comité ejecutivo nacional de estudiantes, "La Facultad de Medicina," *El Tiempo,* May 13, 1925, 3; Diaz, "Aproximación histórica a los universitarios de Colombia, 1908-1954," 157.

feared reprisals that would have negatively impacted their personal and professional futures.[22]

Ultimately, the students achieved a major victory when the new Minister of Public Instruction J. I. Vernaza appointed the highly respected Dr. Luis Felipe Calderón to head the new polyclinic division within the medical school. Calderón's successful record as a practitioner at the San Juan de Dios hospital earned him the respect of the students and the ministry. The appointment followed a surge in student malcontent throughout all departments of the university as well as among influential alumni. After the appointment of Dr. Calderón, the law school hosted a series of lectures that received wide public attention. In the lectures, young professors and law students called on the university and greater Colombian society to pursue educational reform measures. Eventually, the young legal scholar and attorney Dr. José Alejandro Bermúdez joined in the calls for reform. He argued mostly that "fiscal autonomy" for the universities would expedite the reform process.[23]

When student leaders convened in Bogotá a few months later for the Second National Student Congress, they formally addressed economic issues and university reform. For the first time, students widely adopted a more socioeconomically conscious platform, calling for unity with Colombia's burgeoning working class. The students also

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[22]German Arciniegas, "La Crisis Universitaria," *El Tiempo*, May 15, 1925, 1.

[23] "Una nueva cátedra," *El Tiempo*, June 20, 1925, 3; "La Asociación de Antiguos Alumnos," *El Tiempo*, June 2, 1925, 1; Simón Latino, "El la Facultad de Derecho," *El Tiempo*, July 1, 1925, 2. Latino insisted that one of the leading spokespersons, law professor Dr. Jose Alejandro Berumudez, failed to adequately address the underlying issues within the university that had stymied reform. His basic proposals for reform ignored the very factors that caused unrest among the students.

established as their final committee roundtable the continuing discussion on university reform. In this session, the committee leaders proclaimed that universities should appoint students to assist in overseeing the selection of faculty members, further develop the law and political science departments, earmark more funds for scholarships, and revamp many of the existing curriculums, especially in the sciences, engineering, and medicine. Interestingly, the students petitioned Congress for financial support in their bids to recruit foreign experts to teach classes on one hand. On the other hand, Colombian students began to adopt a nationalist, pro-Colombian and pro-Latin American disposition, especially in educational matters, despite requesting foreign scholars. In fact, students expressed serious apprehension and even disapproval for a team of Germán pedagogical consultants who studied the Colombian education system that same year, proposing their own, European-based recommendations. That the students willingly sought foreign experts in underperforming colleges of the university and areas of the economy demonstrates their overwhelming concern with their future and with the economic growth of the nation.[24]

As mentioned earlier, I deal with a temporal gap in the student publications with no availability of the weeklies in the four years from 1923 to 1926. How the students framed their demands for university reform during this period are difficult to gauge and come strictly from secondary sources. Some of the mainstream newspapers covered mobilizations, such as the 1924 protest of medical students. However, the scholar of these

[24]For details on the Bogotá congress, see Gaitan and Restrepo's much-cited thesis. In the referenced section, the authors provide minutes, declarations, and other important writings from the committees within their text, pp. 233-42.

movements and the narrative that the students built around the mobilizations must analyze these still from a non-student perspective, especially by reading of student activity that mainstream periodicals covered in the press. They can still be valuable, but not as valuable as the student publications. In 1925 and 1926, for example, students sparked major protests and strikes in Popayan, Pasto, and Bogotá that all dealt with attempting to institute some type of reform within their respective universities. They also created important political spaces, such as the Casa del Estudiante in Bogotá, where they could discuss ideas and generate momentum. In 1926, the students' political activity also ebbed, especially as the 1926 presidential election (like the 1922 version) evoked more political division with university organizations, especially among left-liberal students. As the student movements proceeded from 1927, more pressing issues such as political reform, nationalism, and even the rise of left-liberal ideologies began to supplant university reform as a key platform issue. But as student activity waned, students still discussed the importance of educational reform and what an advanced education might mean for them financially or within the rapidly changing economic realities.[25]

When the student publications pick up again in 1927, it becomes apparent that university reform remained the prevalent issue of 1927 and 1928. In these years, student organizations in the different colleges sought reform of juridical studies in the law school, new methods in the schools of engineering and medicine, and even christening of departments in the fields of sociology and economics. The most consistent theme,

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[25]Gaitán and Restrepo, "El movimiento estudiantil en la década del Veinte en Colombia y su influencia en la modernización de los partidos," 244-45, 250-51. The authors detail the little-known attempts of more liberal students to break away and create another party at a convention of the "liberal youth" in 1926. The measure failed.

however, proved to be the issue of *cátedra libre*, or the right of professors to teach what they perceived as most important in their fields. More than the mere idea that professors reserved the freedom to teach, *cátedra libre* embodied the idea that education assumed a role as a rebellion against established social and political norms, particularly those norms that the Church had long regulated. By 1926, the Colombian Church showed signs of weakness, ceding ground to the students and more progressive faculty members via a congressional reform bill, *decreto 483*. On paper, the bill provided families and schools with the autonomy to develop curriculum as they saw fit, without oversight from clerical purview. In practice, however, the bill precipitated very little change, and the Church still maintained its influence on education.[26]

The rhetoric from the student committees and congresses varied when addressing university reform in the latter years of the decade. Students still often invoked economic concepts and ideas, to be sure, but they also championed high-minded concepts such as the advancement of culture, nationalism, fostering of the 'spirit of the youth,' intellectualism, and others. At times, economic progress or the students' future financial and professional standing did not figure in articles written by or for students, student committee discussions, and student congresses. Yet, new economic topics such as the

[26]Guillermo Nannetti, "Libertad de cátedra. Asistencia libre. Abolición del tutelaje," *Universidad*, December 10, 1927, 600-1; Ghotme, "La identidad nacional, el sistema educativa y la historia en Colombia, 1910-1962," 280; Diaz, "Aproximación histórica a los universitarios de Colombia, 1908-1954," 150-55. Here Diaz discusses the failure of both Congress and the Senate to pass a reform bill that was in line with the recommendations from the German Pedagogical Mission, commissioned by President Pedro Nel Ospina in 1924. In the end, politicians balked at the mission's recommendations in order to protect conservative and catholic values.

national economy, public spending, and labor-management relations became an almost constant line of thought in the student publications.

On July 2, 1927, engineering student Francisco Wiesner Rozo published a lengthy article that outlined the importance of and reasons for advancing the sciences at the university level. Wiesner's article pointed to the reality that even in a changing social, economic, and political climate, university students still touted the sciences and saw a need for a more advanced and scientific curriculum. Wiesner alluded to the debate among Colombia's elites regarding the benefits and detriments of embracing science and technology. Colombia's economic boom had helped globalize its economy, and he argued that this required Colombians to analyze how they might navigate this new era with the assistance of science and technology.[27]

Embracing the sciences not only satisfied human biological tendencies, Wiesner went on to claim, it also played a vital role in advancing and strengthening one's own culture. He argued that by embracing scientific and technical education and eschewing the traditional fine arts courses, Colombian education could propel the citizenry and national culture toward new spiritual and moral levels. Science, Wiesner argued, brought society out of archaic ways of living and archaic ways of thinking, enabling civilized societies to shed their prejudices. The scientific and technical approach could also catapult Colombia into a new socioeconomic era. Wiesner then identified attorneys as one of the professions that embodied the arcane education system, asserting that a new educational trajectory in the sciences would obviate the swelling field of law. He instead

[27]Francisco Wiesner Rozo, "La importancia de los estudios científicos," *Universidad*, July 2, 1927, 43.

championed economists as a necessary and beneficial profession for what would be a technologically advanced and globalized society, if only Colombia boasted the foresight to move in that educational direction.[28]

The FNE, in general, viewed the study of economics as a necessary educational field in Colombia's new, modernizing, and now global economy. Some of the committee leaders appealed to congress for funds to open an economics department at UNAL, only to be rebuffed. An important figure who opposed the idea—likely a member of congress, based on the context—dismissed the demands for economic studies as "unnecessary and inconvenient" for the nation's education needs. But the student committee that proposed this particular reform to Congress disagreed, condemning the legislature for stymying education reform, even when it could invariably benefit the nation's economic growth. Again, the legal field entered the discussion, with the federation's author attacking it as a symbol of the backward university. Rather than investing funds in new courses and higher pay for professors in the sciences, it seemed to the students that congress preferred the traditional courses of study where earning a jurisprudence doctorate remained the pinnacle of education and social title.[29]

The student federation also championed the School of Engineering as a key edifice of education that could steer the nation in the right direction, and in 1927 the stirrings of another student *jornada* began to emerge, this time even with the support of President Abadía. Engineering students led by cohort members Luis Soriano and Francisco Rueda created a student council within the engineering school's own

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[28]Ibid., 43-44.

[29]"Semanario," *Universidad,* August 13, 1927, 169-70.

department. Soriano and Wiesner christened a new publication of a "scientific and technical character" that was to be "[preoccupied], as well, with the progress of the school" and the students' outlooks on current social issues and educational matters. In addition to publishing articles in its new departmental journal, the organization appealed to Congress for more funds for faculty salaries plus books to expand the inadequate departmental library. The engineering student council also returned to the theme of students' place in the booming economy in their post-graduate lives. They petitioned departmental and municipal governments to adopt a program that would allocate internship positions for engineering students within public works offices. The council eventually wrote a grant proposal to congress requesting funds for two different off-site studies of public railroad construction projects. The committee succeeded. Congress earmarked $1,500 COP for both studies to help cover student expenditures.[30]

Even with the additional funds, engineering students later petitioned Congress about what they perceived as the nation's failures to advance science, technology, and industry. The engineering committee increased it monetary demands of Congress, calling on the two chambers to increase the funds for the engineering department. For the first year, the committee asked for $400,000 Colombian Peso followed by another $250,000 per annum following the initial monetary injection. The students also asserted that professors required a minimum annual salary of $70,000 COP and then requested an

[30]"Vida Universitaria," *Universidad*, Junio 25, 1927, 23. See also "Semanario," *Universidad*, August 13, 1927, 169-70; "Por La Escuela de Ingeniería," *El Tiempo*, March 15, 1927, 11.

additional $30,000 COP per annum in auxiliary funds to cover expenditures that might arise throughout the school year.[31]

The engineering students followed these requests for more funds by criticizing the current faculty as incompetent. To solve the increasingly dire situation of inadequate professors, engineering students petitioned congress and university administration for three major changes. First, students called on the university to construct a job description for engineering professors with a detailed list of duties that the position required, one of which required faculty to publish research in scientific journals. Secondly, the council hoped to see the university implement a competitive process for faculty appointments that involved contests with other candidates. Not only would this process produce the top candidates, it would also eliminate candidates hoping for a sinecure. Lastly, the students again called for an increase in salaries for the faculty—a point the author took pains to qualify. Increasing the salaries, he contended, by no means solved the issue, but as an economic convention, it could incentivize professors to perform better and access more resources for their pedagogical practices.[32]

While the School of Engineering highlighted the most prevalent student activity that sought reform on economic and financial precepts, students in other departments of the university pressured the university and political hierarchy as well. The law school students' own organization, la *Sociedad Jurídic*a (the Legal Society), continued to

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[31]Julio Carrizosa Valenzuela, "La reforma universitaria," *Universidad,* August 13, 1927, 182-84; Julio Carrizosa Valenzuela, "La reforma universitaria en la Facultad de Ingeniería," *Universidad,* September 19, 1927, 280-82.

[32]Julio Carrizosa Valenzuela, "La reforma universitaria en la Facultad de Ingeniería," *Universidad,* September 19, 1927, 280-282; Silvio Vargas, "Lo lozana andaluza y la ingeniería nacional," *Universidad,* October 1, 1927, 336.

mobilize for changes within their department and utilized their own publication *Revista Jurídica* to express their goals and values. At the behest of the law school's student council, future president and prominent liberal politician Alfonso López Pumarejo conducted a lecture series on the pressing economic issues facing the nation. Like their engineering school's counterparts, law students also understood the individual and societal importance of being well versed in the study of economics.[33]

In solidarity with the burgeoning mobilizations in the engineering school, law students mobilized to issue their own demands in hopes of achieving university reform in October of 1927. Spearheaded by student leader Guillermo Nanetti, the council proposed this new "project of total reform" with nineteen different objectives that they expressed to the university's governing authorities. The objectives followed the outline of past reform blueprints, demanding *cátedra libre*, revision of dated entrance exams, more funds, more qualified professors, better pay for quality professors, and of course, more university autonomy from the state. In keeping with their call for more instruction in economics, the students demanded that the university carve out courses in economics related to the legal field. Nanetti and the council members deemed it necessary that in order to matriculate or do well in their careers, students must have a foundation of courses in the political economy, public housing, Colombian economics, and the institution of banking. Although the students argued for the necessity of this curriculum, it seems that the newly created Ministry of Education ignored these requests as unnecessary costs.[34]

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[33]"Vida Universitaria," *Universidad*, Junio 25, 1927, 24-25.

[34]"La reforma universitaria en la Facultad de Derecho," *Universidad*, October 1, 1927, 343.

Right as the economy began to show signs of a slowing growth in mid-1928, the Conservative government began to crack down on leaders of the PSR for inciting violence and jeopardizing public safety. Congress passed the *ley heroica*, a law that gave the Abadía administration the legal permission to imprison insurrectionists and censor the socialist press. The Abadía administration also grew weary of students' clamoring, although still agreeing with the students' desire for structural change and the need for a more modernized and advanced education system. If the government, at worst, ignored the students before 1928, it began to see them as rebellious by 1928.[35]

Even as 1927 ended, the Ministry of Public Instruction highlighted this intransigence. First, in early 1927, public instruction minister Dr. Sálomon Ponce Aguilera attempted to restrict student strikes by calling a convention to discuss establishing legal parameters for the students and their activism. Secondly, after the ministry appointed the largely unpopular Dr. Eduardo Restrepo Sáenz as UNAL's new university rector, students quickly mobilized to oust the new rector. Meanwhile, conservative students who approved the appointment countered with their own public protests to maintain Restrepo. Without hesitation, Minister Ponce openly rebuffed the students' calls for Restrepo's ouster. Lastly, in the later months of that year, the university hierarchy concretely squashed the debates surrounding the implementation of *cátedra libre* in the universities. After Ponce and Restrepo effectively crushed *cátedra libre*, students were conspicuously quiet, leading other student leaders to question their

[35]Mario Alberto Cajas Sarria, "La 'ley heroica' o de defensa social de 1928 contra la "amenaza bolchevique" en Colombia," *Revista de estudios historico-juridicos*, no. 42 (April 2020), 430.

commitment to university reform and suggesting that most students feared expulsion by a non-pliant rector.[36]

Three organized conventions defined the student movements of 1928: the Congress of Popayán, the First Juridical Congress of Students, and the Third National Congress of Students at Ibagué. The three events occurred either before the economic wobbles or right as the attenuating signals appeared toward the middle of the year. Students organized as some form of response to the government's growing antipathy toward student autonomy and cries for structural reform. The rhetoric that emerged from these conventions addressed several new issues, such as the admission of women into the universities, but also the older themes of *cátedra libre*, *autonomía*, and *cogobierno*. The directive committees of the Popayán and juridical congresses did not broach economic topics, but the leaders of Ibagué congress designated an entire portion of the convention to discussing the nation's economic outlook, which I discuss in more detail in the third chapter.

Students evinced an increased interest in national economic affairs in 1928 and into 1929, especially with the economic problems at the end of 1928. The students, however, began to divorce economic issues from the original conceptions of university reform. Convened in January, the Congress of Popayán kicked off the year for student activity and called on left-leaning student activists to maintain a reformist vigor for the overall movement. Reigniting the fight for *cátedra libre* and other academic issues, the

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[36]Marco Naranjo López, "El Ministro de I.P. contra los universitarios," *Universidad*, November 5, 1927, 474-75; D. Guzmán, "La Asamblea discutió la reglamentación de las huelgas," *El Tiempo*, March 30, 1927, 2; Carlos Lleras Restrepo, "El Congreso de Popayán," *Universidad*, January 14, 1928, 16.

leaders of the congress hoped to rekindle in the university students a desire to carry out the "revolutionary program" of university reform that the student movements originally sought. Student leader and future president of Colombia Carlos Lleras Restrepo covered the details of the congress in an article, in which he praised the return to the basics of reform. He also warned other students of the perils of trying to frame the movements on lofty and abstract ideals that only served to divide the students and provide them with less concrete goals. When members of the Popayán congress attempted to link the university reform movement with wider social aims, many of the committee members met them with significant resistance.[37]

The First Juridical Congress of Students dealt with both academic affairs and theoretical ideas regarding the reason for the existence of Colombia's law schools. Highlighting the need for reform, students called for more academic freedoms, a more scientific approach, *cátedra libre*, *autonomía*, and the other common reformist demands. They then discussed in detail the law schools' theoretical framework and emphasized the need to define the role of law schools in Colombian and even greater Latin American society. Leaders also sought to completely decouple education from the Church. Lastly, they wanted to establish professional communities to augment social and academic growth of students and alumni and to develop racial, cultural, and regional solidarity among Latin American students in order to further modernize their societies.[38]

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[37]Carlos Lleras Restrepo, "El Congreso de Popayán," *Universidad*, January 14, 1928, 16. See also Guillermo Nanetti, "El primer Congreso Jurídico de Estudiantes," *Universidad*, February 18, 1928, 124-25.

[38]Guillermo Nannetti, "El primer Congreso Jurídico de Estudiantes," *Universidad*, February 18, 1928, 124-26.

Highly regarded student leader Guillermo Nanetti summarized the congress' proceedings in an article following the event. Before summarizing the platform and evaluating the content, however, Nanetti analyzed the event within the framework of the socioeconomic realities of Colombia in early 1928. He contended that the current economic growth provided students with the unique opportunity to express these new desires and press for academic and social changes already put forward by the student committees. In other words, without the economic growth of the 1920s, these goals for cultural growth and social well-being would not have been possible to achieve or even conceptualize in 1928.[39]

On the first of August, student leaders primarily of the FNE convened the Third National Congress of Students in Ibagué to address changing undercurrents in the student movement, which many perceived to be in decline. The governing committees divided the topics of discussion into three categories: organization and governance of the movement, the problems within the university education system, and social, political, and economic issues in Colombia. After motioning to restructure the student assemblies and departmental centers, the congress proposed that women gain access to the university, a phenomenon made important by women entering the workforce in large numbers. Because of the increasing revenues, Congress had been able to earmark more money for normal and pedagogy institutions of higher education. Women primarily filled the ranks of these institutions, because they could not legally achieve admission to the mainstream universities. However, as society became more liberal and open to new ideas and as

[39]Ibid.

women carved out important spaces within the growing economy, the male student leaders recognized that including women would have a modernizing effect on society and the economy.[40]

During the committees covering section on university issues, the convention's executive committee opened the debate by re-introducing the concept of economic autonomy for the university, which the FNE had initially proposed in the 1922 committees. Since then, urbanization had taken off, with hundreds of thousands of *campesinos* and other rural segments of the population flocking to Colombia's major cities for employment in the new industrial and public works sectors. Sons of these now working-class families—and eventually daughters—began to seek social advancement, and the university offered the path for attaining those goals. Many members of the FNE leadership again initially worried that by granting the university its autonomy, the state would naturally divert funds from the institution. Instead, university administrations would have to obtain the necessary funds from tuition monies from a much larger student body. However, the students who supported this transition reiterated their position that this structural change would serve two important purposes. First, it would further the ambitions of working-class youth, with whom Colombia's left-liberal students began to

[40]Diaz Jaramillo, "Aproximación histórica a los universitarios de Colombia (1908-1954)," 163-64; "Semanario," *Universidad*, July 28, 1928, 86; C. Lleras Restrepo, "El Congreso de Popayán," *Universidad*, January 14, 1928, 16; Germán Arciniegas, "La función política de la universidad," *Universidad*, July 28, 1928, 91-2; Uribe, *Los años veinte en Colombia*, 47-8.

align more and more. Secondly, it would expedite the modernization process for the nation due to a higher percentage of an educated population.[41]

Events within the last few months of 1928 up until the *jornadas* of June in 1929 altered the trajectory of the student movement almost entirely from university reform to socioeconomic reform. These events put the nation's student activists at the forefront of social change. In addition to transitioning from theoreticians and activists who eventually filled the roles of business and political leadership, students reinforced their roles as change agents for Colombia. The *matanza* also heavily influenced the students' dispositions toward the government, and they increased their work with and for Colombia's lower classes. Meanwhile, the economy continued its cyclical downward trend, and by the end of the year Colombia's major student publications were referring to 1928 as a disaster.[42]

In early 1929, graft and corruption within the different levels of government became more and more evident. The massive quantities of loan money the nation had taken on also appeared to the students to have placed the national economy on the verge of bankruptcy in the face of rising interest rates and lower revenues for the federal, departmental, and municipal governments. The Abadía administration's public approval deteriorated as the 1930 elections loomed. Mounting evidence of corruption and the handling of the *matanza* created divisions in the Conservative Party that left-liberal

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[41]Uribe, *Los años veinte en Colombia*, 25-26, 29, 125; Gaitán and Restrepo, "El movimiento estudiantil en la década del Veinte en Colombia y su influencia en la modernización de los partidos," 268.

[42]G. Manrique Terán, "El aniversario del 13 de marzo," *Universidad*, March 16, 1929, n.p.; "Semanario," *Universidad*, December 15, 1928, n.p.; "Semanario," *Universidad*, December 29, 1928, n.p.

Colombians hoped to exploit. Students latched onto these socioeconomic and political trends, expanding their platform and altering their motivations for mobilizing. More importantly, the student publication *Universidad* demonstrated more and more solidarity with subaltern groups, especially working-class Bogotanos.[43]

Even as the students expanded their focus and adopted a more socially inclusive disposition, university reform remained a prevalent part of student politics. The socioeconomic aspects of the student movement diverged into two different. First, the students continued to demand university reform with the goal of improving the university to both better students' financial prospects and to advance Colombia's economic growth. Secondly, student leaders of the FNE officially made the economic advancement of the working class, *campesinos*, and even women's groups a part of federation policy.

To the degree that students in the student movements championed university reform over other, more pressing national issues is difficult to assess. However, a series of articles in the main student publication, *Universidad*, titled "La reorganización de la universidad nacional" suggests that the topic still figured heavily in the motives of the politicized students. Student author Carlos Garcia Prada essentially repeated the same tropes about the need for scientific-based curricula, more funds for innovative training, *autonomía*, and others. In keeping with the trend regarding technology and innovation, Garcia argued that Colombian society would benefit from more industrial, commercial,

[43]Gabriel F. Porras P., "La universidad social," *Universidad*, January 29, 1929, 67-8; "Semanario," *Universidad*, May 11, 1929, 485-86; Valerio Botero Isaza, "Una reforma que se impone," *Universidad*, May 11, 1929, n.p.; Green, *Gaitanismo, Left-Liberalism, and Popular Mobilization in Colombia*, 26.

and even agricultural courses for the university students to continually advance the economic situation of Colombia.[44]

In early January of 1929, *Universidad* began the year by printing a story that put forward the student federation's goals for the upcoming year. Many of these alluded to the content put forward by the committees at the Ibagué congress. These goals, again, centered primarily around academic concepts, expanding on the conventional student demands. Students petitioned for the right to audit and evaluate professors and the courses they taught, harkening back to the concept of *cogobierno*. They also requested that each department craft its own entrance and comprehensive examinations and called on rectors to rely more on experts in each industry or professional field to teach courses in a more practical manner. At the Ibagué congress, committee delegates introduced to the FNE the idea of establishing *universidades populares,* or night schools designed to train and educate *campesinos* and working-class adults. The students voted to take on the responsibility of volunteering their time to educate illiterate and undereducated sectors of society, framing much of the discussion around the idea that more learning would elevate their socioeconomic statuses.[45]

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[44]Carlos García Prada, "La reorganización de la universidad nacional," *Universidad*, June 8, 1929, 603-4; Carlos García Prada, "La reorganización de la universidad nacional, II," *Universidad*, June 15, 1929, 621-22.

[45]Borrero, *La Universidad*; Centro Universitario Pro-Cáldas—Junta directiva, "Manifestó de los estudiantes de Cáldas a la juventud del país," *Universidad*, July 19, 1929, 76-7; Ricardo Melgar Bao, "Las universidades populares en America Latina 1910-1924," *Revista de Pensamiento Crítico Latinoamericano* 11, no. 34 (April- June 2020): 41-55. Born primarily out of the 1918 Córdoba reform—although it had antecedents dating back to the early 1900s—students countenanced and then created the university populares as an altruistic service to subaltern groups throughout Latin America, primarily aimed at the urban working class. As students veered more to the left, they began to adopt elements of socialist ideology, thus seeking solidarity with the emergent working class.

This motion highlighted the second type of rhetoric surrounding the concept of university reform that proliferated in the wake of the *matanza* up until the aftermath of the assassination of Bravo on June 8. Students began to conceive university reform within an economic framework, and this new economic framework included the socioeconomic elevation of the lower classes and redefining the university for a greater social role that might help elevate the economic position of Colombia's lower classes. A month after the assassination of Bravo, students in the city of Cáldas drafted a manifesto that outlined their vision of the Colombian university. In the manifesto, students declared that historically, the university had operated outside of the realities of daily Colombian life and that the university's focus on high-minded humanities divorced from both reality and the needs of society proved detrimental to Colombian society. The students asserted that at the end of the decade, this new global economy provided the groundwork to recreate a university system that sought to address social issues and solve the socioeconomic problems of the nation with all classes and social groups in mind.[46]

The Federation's program that *Universidad* published in early January also addressed other socioeconomic issues that they predicted the *universidades populares* could potentially redress, highlighting health, hygiene, and sanitation practices. Poor practices in these areas had long plagued Colombia's lower social strata, and the students

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By providing members of the working class with education, training, and space via the Popular Universities, the students were able to strengthen these growing ties. Melgar makes sure to point out, however, that the students used the classroom as a platform to project their own doctrines and ideologies, attempting to mold the participants in line with whatever left-liberal ideology the pupils supported.

[46]Comité ejecutivo nacional de estudiantes, "El programa de la federación de estudiantes," *Universidad*, January 12, 1929, 36-38.

and even political leaders hoped that the night schools might tackle these rampant problems. Because the nation had thrust itself into a new industrial era, Colombia now relied heavily on the working class' full participation in the economy. University reform that opened the university's doors to the lower, working classes could help increase hygienic practices and infuse a sense of stability into working-class families. Sanitary environs would also spur further growth and inject more confidence into Colombians and foreign investors regarding the long-term prospects of growth, stability, and public health.[47]

The 1920s also witnessed the rise of temperance stirrings in Colombia, and the university students adopted these sentiments as well. The student federation perceived alcoholism as a major problem among lower-class males in particular. A modern Colombia, according to students and other temperance advocates, left no room for the excesses of alcohol. To remedy the problems that alcoholism might have on working-class males in Colombia's modern industrial economy, the students proposed the *universidades populares* as a vehicle for such social indoctrination. In this matter, university reform might accomplish several socioeconomic goals. It could also dissuade working-class men from this social ill while instilling more responsible, disciplined behavior among workers who in turn would operate as important contributors to the

[47]Ibid.; Gabriel F. Porras P., "La universidad social," *Universidad*, January 12, 1929, 67-68.

economy. Lastly, in helping to steer these individuals from unproductive behavior, these efforts would then assist these individuals in their rise to new socioeconomic levels.[48]

After the major events of that year, students still mobilized on behalf of university reform, but the reform followed more conceptual lines than practical or even tangible ones, and the demands reached well beyond the university. As the Colombian population moved increasingly toward left-liberal political ideologies, the students adopted more liberal dispositions and increasingly gained the support of the greater public. These dispositions contained Marxist principles that urged students to form links with the working-class populations as well as other social groups. As students formed these new lines of solidarity with popular groups, they wrote, spoke, organized, and mobilized to carve out a new identity for the university—a university that not only benefited their own economic status in the new economy but also the economic interests of the greater Colombian population.[49]

[48]Comité ejecutivo nacional de estudiantes, "El programa de la federación de estudiantes," *Universidad*, January 12, 1929, 36-38; Ghotme, "La identidad nacional, el sistema educativo y la historia en Colombia, 1910-1960," 278.

[49]Enrique Millan, "El problema de la educación," *Cromos*, August 3, 1929, 1.

CHAPTER III: STUDENTS AND THE NATIONAL ECONOMY

As the Colombian economy expanded in the 1920s, students also grew increasingly interested in economic issues, and student publications show that they concerned themselves with the direction of the nation and its financial matters just as much as they focused on sociopolitical issues. Eventually, students became more critical of federal economic policy, such as the staggering debt to foreign banks, monetary policy that caused inflation, and land concessions to foreign petroleum companies, among others. In the students' estimations, these practices began to undermine Colombia's economic health and jeopardized its sovereignty, as these activists feared foreign banks and multinationals might prevail upon policymakers and legislators to craft policies detrimental to the nation. I argue that these economic issues played a significant role, if not the most important role, in galvanizing students to politicize and ultimately mobilize, especially against the Miguel Abadía administration in the 1929 *jornadas*.

In analyzing how economic issues influenced the student movements, I divide their analysis and critique of economic affairs into four main but intertwined categories, particularly where the sources pick up in 1927 following a four-year gap in their availability. First, the students paid significant attention to financial matters like, banking, monetary policy, and financial markets, especially focusing on the proliferation of public debt. Secondly, students saw new socialist ideologies and practices as a means to redress both the detrimental financial practices and poor conditions of the working class and campesinos. They also sided with Colombia's disenfranchised classes, and they mobilized with them and on their behalf. Student attention to these matters increased as

news from the Soviet Union's early socialist experiment trickled into Latin America, but it is important to note that the students never actually embraced socialism in its entirety.

Thirdly, students addressed economic policy and financial practices at the governmental level. In this regard both fiscal policy and corruption at the federal, state, and local levels fell under the scrutiny of students. The evident levels of corruption plagued Colombian governments and laid bare the nation's economic weaknesses, while also exposing the government's mismanagement of public funds, especially with the rampant racketeering and nepotism within the Public Works Department. Lastly, students took aim at both imperialist measures of the United States how the Colombian government's complicity abetted the expanding influence of the United States into Colombia's economy. The ownership of the nation's natural resources particularly concerned students, primarily the extraction of oil, land concessions to foreign enterprises, and the foreign companies' treatment of their Colombian employees and contract labor.

Colombia's students mobilized against Reyes in the 1909 *jornadas* mainly because he had overstepped his constitutional authority, and he commissioned the Cortés-Root Treaty that effectively surrendered Panama. However, Reyes' economic policy also troubled the students, arguably acting as an undercurrent in the reasons that they mobilized. The student publication *El Estudiante* attacked the progressive liberal economist and politician Dr. Antonio José Restrepo, a leading representative in Reyes' assembly. Dr. Restrepo had recently endured a downturn in public approval after he backed the Cortés-Root Treaty. In a public statement, he exhibited little concern for his political career despite his waning support, and he claimed that with a swipe of his pen,

he could immediately execute unfavorable banking measures that would win back his support. Infuriated, the students stated that such action by Restrepo would have been a dereliction of duty to the citizens, especially because he was also an acting member of the assembly.[1]

A salient feature of his economic plan, the Reyes' administration exploited the national bank and used it for its benefit. Politicians like Antonio Restrepo benefited from the government's use of the bank to manipulate the currency and set interest rates for the Colombian credit. Addressing the National Assembly in 1905, dissenting member of the Assembly, Dr. Samuel Jorge Delgado, castigated the Reyes administration for treating the central bank as a political tool. He quickly garnered support from the "youth of the South" when he argued that the central bank operations would have "ruinous" effects on Colombia. He proposed in the resolution to limit the executive's control over monetary policy. Delgado's political clout ensured that assembly members took the resolution seriously, forcing Reyes to subsequently suspend the National Assembly temporarily. After restoring the assembly, Reyes "rewarded" Delgado with the less than desirable position of university rector in the south, far from the nation's capital. Four years later in 1909, however, the youth of Nariño still supported Delgado's attack on the monetary

[1]"El defensor de los tratados," *Estudiante*, April 30, 1909, 2. Another article in the same issue lamented the partisanship and federalist government structure from the 1800s that had left a heritage of internal opposition that led to the series of civil wars. The major problem with these wars and partisan-borne strife, they argued, was the "economic ruin and fiscal bankruptcy" of the Colombian nation, "Division territorial: una reforma urgente," *Estudiante*, May 8, 1909, 1-2; Francisco José Urrutia, "El Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y 'La Joven Colombia,'" *Demócrata*, June 11, 1909, 1-3; Bergquist, *Coffee and Conflict in Colombia, 1886-1890*, 227-29; Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia*, 157-59.

policy issues, lauding him as a champion of republican values. This open support also highlighted their keen interest in economic affairs, possibly even as one of the several factors that urged the students to mobilize against Reyes.[2]

After the Reyes *quinquenio,* students reduced their activity. After all, Colombia's gloomy economic prospects that had loomed large in the first decade of the twentieth century began to dissipate by the early 1910s. Their concern for the nation's sovereignty had not waned, however, and in 1911 the committees of different student clubs at UNAL including the Jockey Club, the Medical Club, the Rifle Club, the Polo Club, and the Chess Club sought to use their economic resources to raise a military battalion for national defense. Together they combined their financial resources and proposed that these funds be able to sponsor "one or more company batteries . . . for service of the National Army." Aside from this event, the students largely refrained from major political activity until the 1920s.[3]

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[2]"Labor de un republicano," *Sur Republicano*, October 20, 1909, 3; Johanna Inés Cárdenas Pinzón, "Evolución del Banco de la República en Colombia: una aproximación," *Finanzas y Política Económica* 5, no. 2 (julio-diciembre 2013): 77. Politicized youth from the city of Pasto, the seat of Nariño's department, had long been a recognized political force. In 1903, members of a Pasto youth organization rose up to challenge several regional politicians and took the press by surprise. By 1909, the Pasto press was attributing the youth with "light[ing] the sacred fire of the republican ideal" and affecting the Pasto public's demand for Reyes to be replaced by Conservative party politician Gonzales Valencia, who ultimately served as interim president, "Rumbo," *Sur Republicano,* October 20, 1909, 1.

[3]"Expediente no. 4.246, Septiembre 2, 1911," *Archivo General de la Nación*, Archivo Anexo- Grupo 2 (SAA-II), Ministerio de Educación Nacional, Comunicaciones sobre labores de docentes, caja 5, carpeta 1. See also Bergquist, *Coffee and Conflict in Colombia, 1886-1910*, 242-43, 249, 256-2576. Much of the downturn in the economy was a result of diminishing access to foreign credit, thanks to recessions in the United States and Europe, while a decline in international demand for coffee also affected

Events at the end of the decade, however, brought new concerns among the students, who brought forth a new wave of activity in the 1920s. The First World War highlighted the problem that Colombia relied too heavily on coffee for its economic well-being, while the 1918 Córdoba Reform Movement united Colombian students in address the problems within the university. Additionally, Colombian students worried about the increasing economic activity of the U.S. in the Latin American region. As students began to organize and mobilize in 1921 for university reform, they also sought to thwart U.S. imperialism in the region and develop solidarity with other students across the region. Within this new globalized, post-war economy, students envisioned themselves as the "new men... those that arise" with the real possibility of altering the direction of the nation's economy. To thwart the United States, they studied the region's macroeconomic affairs and called for Latin American governments to institute a uniform regional tariff policy, officially recognize free trade principles, and establish a regional gold standard. Additionally, students expressed the need for Latin America's states to sanction an interstate court of arbitration for trade disputes, earmark funds for intra-regional transit companies, build a merchant marine fleet, and renegotiate trade agreements with the U.S. and European nations.[4]

Colombia's economic growth. However, by 1910, global coffee prices began to increase consistently. See also Palacios, *Coffee in Colombia, 1850-1910*, 141-42.

[4]"Los que surgen," *Universidad*, February 24, 1921, 4-6. See also Roberto Andrade, et al., "A la hispanoamericana," *Universidad*, February 24, 1921, 1-2. To be clear, these desired economic changes were not originally those of the Colombian students. They were seemingly introduced by participants at the conference in Buenos Aires.

Local economic issues also preoccupied students in early 1921, as they discussed the problems that they noticed regarding production costs, marketing and advertising among competing firms, and profits for businesses in Colombia. By impugning the growing use of marketing strategies, the students challenged the need to spend significant funds to "advertise" and convince consumers that a particular product might suit them. In perfect market scenarios, this article posited, the consumer should be able to base their purchases on quality or price comparisons. It also decried the infrastructural deficiencies that drove up consumer goods prices because of high transportation costs. These added costs limited the purchasing power of Colombian households and, according to another article in *Universidad*, diverted important capital away from production to marketing and advertisement to convince consumers to buy already inflated goods.[5]

The Colombian students focused their attention on economic policy with the United States, especially as U.S. multinationals' increased operations in Colombia. In March of 1921, the public caught wind of some documentation alleging that the Colombian government had awarded a massive land concession to a "yanqui" business. In the end, the documents proved to be false, but the student authors sternly warned its readers of the danger that the wealth and influence of the United States could "shake the bases of the Republic." Unbridled by experience and convention, one can easily reason that the perspicacious youth more clearly understood the nation's needs, and they could therefore more easily predict Colombia's economic future. They recognized that surrendering large portions of their land to foreign interests would have catastrophic

[5]"Las casas comerciales anunciadoras, y la baja de los precios," *Universidad*, March 23, 1921, 59; "Cuál puede vender más barato?" *Universidad*, March 23, 1921, 59.

consequences. The author argued that the nation's leaders, blinded by their ambition to enrich the nation by all means possible, lacked the foresight to see the calamity ahead by signing away land and resource deposits. Although the students concomitantly called on the nation to advance Colombia's economy and reform the university in the name of "progress," they also concluded that the nation would only prosper with its economic autonomy intact.[6]

Events in the upcoming months of late 1921 justified the students' apprehension of U.S. financial influence when coffee prices began to drop. After a few years of relatively steady growth, Colombia's economy stuttered when the U.S. economy fell into a recession towards the end of 1921. Because the U.S. market constituted the largest portion of demand for Colombian coffee, its coffee industry suffered substantially, effectively reducing the government's tax revenues and making Colombia's tether to the U.S. economy became increasingly apparent. By the middle of 1922, coffee prices had dropped by thirty percent from their record high 1921 price levels. Lower revenues impacted wages, and the decreasing wages meant that Colombian consumers purchased far fewer imported goods, causing customs duties to fall by forty percent. As a result, Colombia's government started running significant budget deficits. Additionally, with U.S. market in recession, U.S. lenders lacked funds to lend abroad, starving Colombia of capital and credit, and reigniting concerns about a shrinking money supply and rising

[6] "El South American Trust," *Universidad,* March 31, 1921, 63-64.

unemployment. A more diverse economy might have staved off the ill effects of the U.S. recession.[7]

The economic downturn lasted less than a year and a half, as 1923 brought renewed growth and the start of "la danza de millones." However, its effects impressed upon the students the need to address major economic issues across the nation. A conference of the nation's leading bankers in August of 1923 encouraged students that the Colombian government might craft economic policies to stabilize and develop the nation's economy. Student Ruperto Campos' article in *Universidad* asserted that Colombia's economic issues eclipsed all others and should be regarded as the most urgent by professionals and policy makers. However, the author contended that Colombian policymakers had too often eschewed the critical economic questions that the most economically advanced nations tackled head on. Even more concerning, if the state put economic questions at the forefront of public policy, he argued that the nation lacked the means to resolve the issues that plagued Colombia's economy. The banking conference at least offered the nation a good start, and students felt hopeful that the convention's members would address key issues, such as expansionary monetary policy to deal with money supply shocks, textile industry and agriculture stimuli, and legislation that might better catalyze Colombia's economic growth.[8]

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[7]Duran and Bucheli, "Holding Up the Empire," 257; Junguito and Rincon, "La política fiscal en el siglo XX en Colombia," 246; Ramirez, "Efectos de eslabonamiento de la infraestructura de transporte sobre la economía colombiana: 1900-1950," 392-93.

[8]Ruperto Campos G., "El Congreso de Banqueros," *Universidad*, June 23, 1921, n.p.

As the economy grew, students protested inadequate training and education in economic matters, blending their concerns over the nation's economy and university reform. Campos' article on the banking convention focused primarily on this issue above all other economic policy matters. To realize the nation's economic potential, Colombia required a more knowledgeable base of economists. The closure of the School of Commerce both angered and dismayed students who continued to insist that the nation embrace technical and financial education to further Colombia's economic progress. The students understood that university reform needed to incorporate better professional programs to address the nation's economic needs, providing students with a deeper understanding of the social science.[9]

Campos also acknowledged that the U.S. indemnity could catalyze the Colombian economy. The Colombian and U.S. legislatures had finally ratified the Urrutia-Thomson Treaty two months before, solidifying the $25 million USD remuneration for U.S. complicity in fomenting Panama's independence movement. While the students inveighed the increasing presence of U.S. multinationals in the Colombian economy, they simultaneously admitted that the United States' deep pockets might have had the solution to their temporary economic woes. Perhaps the earlier involvement of the United States in Panama could spark Colombia's fledgling economy by injecting the cash it needed to take off. In reality, no true consensus existed among the politically active students regarding their opinion of U.S. economic activity in the region in the early 1920s. When U.S. President Warren G. Harding proposed the idea of forming a league among the

[9]Ibid.; "El asunto de la Escuela de Comercio," *Universidad,* January 26, 1922, 71; José Ingenieros, "Por America," *Universidad,* February 9, 1921, 78-81 & 99.

American nations, many of the students expressed distrust of Harding's efforts to seemingly bring unity to the region. Other students, however, expressed a desire to entertain the idea and tenets of this league, perhaps because the Urrutia-Thomsen Treaty had somewhat restored relations between the two nations. Or perhaps the $25 million economic catalyst two years later smoothed over tensions. Regardless, even as the two nations restored diplomatic relations and support for U.S. involvement grew among a core of students, many seemed highly suspicious of these new relations with the United States, especially its likely imperialist motives.[10]

Unfortunately, despite the importance of 1923 for the Colombian economy and 1924 for the student movements, the students' discussions on these matters are absent. There is very little on Colombian students at all between 1923 and 1927, and almost nothing addresses either economic activity or student opinions on the economic or financial matters of the nation. How the students responded to the Kemmerer Mission is simply unavailable for this project at this time. A further investigation of potential student publications is necessary to fully understand the student opinions and politics related to economics, but what occurred from 1927 to the June *jornadas* in 1929—based on available sources—provides ample insight regarding the subject. Where the sources picked up in 1927, students amplified their attention to economic matters within the four categories: financial matters and monetary policy, socialist ideas, corruption and harmful fiscal policy, and U.S. economic influence.

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[10]Ruperto Campos G., "El Congreso de Banqueros," *Universidad,* June 23, 1921, n.p.

In late June of 1927, the editors of *Universidad* invited Joaquin Angel, an officer of the central bank, the Bank of the Republic (Banrep), to publish a quarterly report on the bank's financial performance and report on the health of the economy. In addition to providing data that highlighted the growth of underwritten mortgages, Angel firmly reminded them that when the banking infrastructure increased its mortgage issuances, it signaled strong economic health. The economy, he reassured, maintained its state of progress. Indeed, Colombia's economy reached its near apex in 1927, with all sectors growing and showing no signs of slowing.[11]

Two weeks later, a member of Banrep's board of directors, Lucas Caballero, also contributed an article that discussed the role of banking in both economic and social development. Caballero's article focused on the socioeconomic role of the Agriculture and Mortgage Bank, created in 1924 as a division of Banrep to supply the growing demand for home purchases loans and farming credit. Caballero informed the student readers of the banking system's importance to the nation's economic progress, while also positing that the expansion of the banking system could potentially act as a means for redressing socioeconomic inequalities, especially in underwriting mortgages and entrepreneurial loans. These measures, according to Caballero, would solve many of the

[11]German Arciniegas, "Noticia," *Universidad*, June 25, 1927, n.p.; Joaquin Angel, "Economía nacional," *Universidad*, June 25, 1927, s/p; Junguito y Rincon," La política fiscal en el siglo XX en Colombia," 247.

economic inequalities, which bred dissent, unrest and "revolutions that threatened political organisms and social systems."[12]

In referencing the potential unrest, Caballero alluded to an increasing economic problem that the students found troubling: inflation. Bogotanos began to endure rising prices in most sectors, and city-wide resentment began to fester in mid-1927. The students grew critical of what they perceived as a lack of concern for Bogotá's working class. As the price indexes increased, Bogotá's households found it more difficult to afford household consumables especially. The students also criticized policymakers' lazy analyses of the inflationary troubles in their attempts to explain the issue. When Ministry of Foreign Relations advisor Carlos Uribe Echeverri attempted to link the spike in prices with an increase in the circulation of Pesos, he essentially laid the blame on Banrep's monetary policy. Financial experts, purportedly defending the bank, refuted his claim in an article published for the students. As stipulated in the contracts of many of the sovereign bonds originating on Wall Street, the authors reminded the student readers that Colombia operated on the Gold Standard and still pegged its currency to the U.S. Dollar. This meant that inflation resulted from factors other than a growing money supply. *Universidad* defended Uribe Echeverri's thesis, however, claiming that Banrep had long caused volatility in the Peso's value. Basing their argument on U.S. economist Irving Fisher's revised analysis of the Quantity Theory of Money, the author argued that

[12]Lucas Caballero, "La cuestión social y el Banco Agrícola," *Universidad,* August 6, 1927, 147-48. See also Julio Caro, Rafael Iregui, Julio E. Lleras A., "Balance del Banco de la República," *Universidad,* July 2, 1927, n.p.

Banrep's Peso printing policy actually had been devaluing the currency over a longer period of time, thus increasing prices for Colombian consumers.[13]

Of the increased prices in Colombia's "basket of goods," the rental housing market prices jeopardized the financial well-being of Bogotá's households more than any. In the same issue as Caballero's letter, *Universidad* writers apprised its readers of a growing unrest among the city's working class and even lower middle-class residents who struggled to make their rent payments. The article also simultaneously hinted at a developing solidarity between concerned students and their families, while lamenting the very real and increasing issue of inflation. Both the student writers and Caballero relied on the economic concepts of supply and demand to establish their position. The students contended that while the organic laws of "supply-and-demand" caused the increase in rent prices, they lacked the means to solve the problem. The steady increase of rural-to-urban migration in the 1920s and the geographic nature of Bogotá exacerbated the inflation of rent prices, and the economy's "invisible hand" therefore proved insufficient in providing families with affordable housing. On the other hand, Caballero defended the natural laws of the economy while also asserting that the very banking institutions that

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[13]R. Santa Maria Ordoñez, "La teoría cuantitativa de la moneda y el costo de la vida," *Universidad*, October 15, 1927, s/p; Jorge Alvarez Lleras, "La crisis de las obras públicas y la economía nacional," *Universidad*, November 5, 1927, 455-56. Both articles relied heavily on Fisher's Equation of MV=PT, where M= the money supply, V= the rate by which an average unit of currency is transacted, P= the average of the price index (based primarily on the average unit of currency price of consumables and housing prices in a "basket of goods,") and T= the number of times a unit of currency exchanges hands in the consumer market. The theory has been disputed, especially with the rise in Keynesian economics that gained popularity in the 1930s, but also saw a revival in the 1960s and especially in the 1970s during the era of "Stagflation" in the U.S. economy; Sánchez and Bedoya, "La danza de los millones 1923-1931," 72-73.

had spurred economic growth—thus causing the urbanization and inflation—also had the ability to solve these admitted social ills. In the end, the students conceded economic growth caused inflationary trends, but then posed the question: why did income levels not also increase?[14]

In addressing the rising rent prices, Caballero informed the student readers that banks like the Agriculture and Mortgage Bank continued to stockpile higher reserves, enabling it to lend more money to new homebuyers. As more Bogotanos entered the housing market as homeowners, he argued that this would ultimately alleviate the dearth in supply over time, equilibrating the supply and demand at affordable prices levels. The students disagreed. In the opening article of the following issue of *Universidad* in August of 1927, the writer challenged Caballero's assessment of the looming rental housing crisis. Countering claims that the nation's new banking system had propagated more widespread wealth, the author suggested that the banks preferred to support a shrinking class of business elites rather than spread the wealth.[15]

In general, students seemed to have supported the existence of Banrep and agreed that it helped augment the economic bonanza by stabilizing the financial markets and recruiting foreign capital. However, the "old and simple concept" of banking prevented the bank officers from seeing the potential of the bank to adopt a more proactive role in addressing socioeconomic inequalities. Banrep had also taken on significant speculative

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[14]Ibid.; "La lucha de los inquilinos," *Universidad*, August 6, 1927, 146; Enrique Restrepo, "Economía Nacional: El problema de los arrendamientos," *Universidad*, August 13, 1927, 174; "Semanario," *Universidad*, August 13, 1927, 169-70.

[15]"Semanario," *Universidad*, August 13, 1927, 169. See also both stories under subtitles "La simple nación" and "La reforma bancaria."

positions, causing concern among some finance experts and the students, urging them to call for new legislation to reform the purpose of the bank's assets—even if the students contradictorily soon criticized the bank for its safe, risk-averse policies. For now, though, they believed that new banking reform measures would limit the bank's risk exposure and free up funds to construct new housing at lower interest rates in the nation's urban centers.[16]

Students found an ally in Conservative Party politician Enrique Restrepo, who proposed new fiscal and monetary policies to cope with the developing affordable housing crisis. In his plan, the government would set aside a percentage of raw material exports, using them to construct new residential structures. To fund this project, urban centers would also need to raise taxes. The students' approval of Restrepo's ideas demonstrated that some of them began to embrace aspects socialist ideologies, even though they never truly expressed a support for socialism nor ever really established a unified pro-socialist front. Still, the solidarity that students established with Colombia's working class and socialist organizations became increasingly apparent and acted as their second area of their economic concerns. In September of 1927, students and workers demonstrated this growing relationship when a coalition of the two groups formed a committee to back certain candidates for Bogotá's city council.[17]

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[16]Ibid. Interestingly, the article deemed the university to be both a victim and perpetrator of the economic reality of inequality. It failed to adapt to a new materialistic era and refused to adopt new ideas. In the end, however, this rejection of socioeconomic change was exacerbated by inadequate funding for the sciences, an area critical for entertaining new ideas that might reshape the Colombian political and socioeconomic landscape.

[17]Enrique Restrepo, "Economía nacional: el problema de los arrendamientos," *Universidad*, August 13, 1927, 174; "Semanario," Universidad, July 16, 1927, 67;

Gradually, students did, in fact, increase their theoretical ties to the working class, expressing solidarity with its movements and demands. In late 1927 and early 1928, students seemed to vacillate between adopting a critical stance toward socialism and regarding it as a new framework for socioeconomic change that the nation badly needed. Several socialist publications mentioned the political activity and rhetoric of the students from time to time. Their treatment of the students confirms what the students and outside contributors stated in student publications; at times the students viewed workers as natural allies and regarded socialism as the ideology to catalyze a socioeconomic change, albeit not without reservations and some criticism. The socialists also began to embrace student organizations toward the end of the decade after criticizing the students' insouciance about the working class' plight. In early 1928, a group of university students convened the First National Socialist Congress of Students with the support of older members of the newly formed Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR).[18]

Eduardo Vallejo, "La baja de los alquileres," *Universidad*, July 30, 1927, 137. While the students adopted a strong stance against rental market inflation, much of Bogotá, including the federal government, sought to rectify the crisis and here proposed to expropriate and develop unused property near the urban centers to expand the supply and effectively decrease the prices via the economic law of supply and demand; "Semanario," *Universidad*, September 3, 1927, 241; "Semanario," *Universidad*, October 8, 1927. The authors lamented the lack of unity among the students in their political dispositions.

[18]*Universidad* maintained a constant focus on events and ideas emanating from Bolshevik Russia while consistently debating the positives and negatives of Marxism. For example, several of the articles in early 1928 that took either a supportive or critical approach in their treatment of these concepts; R. de Santa María, "La reforma monetaria en Rusia," *Universidad*, February 11, 1928, n.p.; "Semanario," *Universidad*, April 28, 1928, 357; Jorge Redan, "A los Estudiantes Universitarios," *Socialista*, March 3, 1920, 2; "Solidaridad estudiantil," *Claridad*, March 23, 1928, 1-2; "Los obreros y los universitarios," *Claridad*, March 23, 1928, 3.

Although many of the students argued that Colombia required political, economic, and social reform, they hesitated to take up the banner of socialism for two main reasons. First, they cynically believed that the entrenched bipartisan political structure would always relegate socialism to the political margins, especially as Liberal Party elites generally rebuked it. Secondly, they recognized that Bolshevism—socialism's main progenitor and current example in the new Soviet Union—was enduring severe social and economic troubles. Additionally, one of the more prominent student political groups, the National Association of Students, still favored more traditional, conservative values. However, political contributors to student publications made sure to allay fears about social and political woes that Soviet Russia experienced, while championing the economic gains from Soviet fiscal and monetary policy in 1925 and 1926. Even if students did not fully embrace the ideology, they believed that socialist principles could help steer the necessary revisions to the Colombian economy.[19]

One of the areas of Colombia's economy that sorely needed revision, according to the students, was fiscal policy—the third aspect of student economic concern. As discussed, the monetary policy that Kemmerer helped craft instilled in Wall Street the confidence to underwrite Colombian treasury notes on the bond market. This prompted a major spike in public debt, and in response, many influential Colombians began to

[19]R. de Santa María, "La reforma monetaria en Rusia," *Universidad,* February 11, 1928, n.p.; "Semanario: ¿Hacia el socialismo?," *Universidad,* April 28, 1928, 357; Ricardo Sarmiento Alarcon, et. al., "Declaración de los universitarios socialistas," *Universidad*, May 26, 1928, s/p; Luis López de Mesa, "Los intuitivos," *Universidad,* June 16, 1928, 352; "El peligro bolshevista," *Universidad,* June 14, 1928, n.p; Enrique Millan, "Efectos de la revolución rusa," *Universidad*, July 14, 1928, 50-51; Diaz, "El 8 de junio y las disputas por la memoria," 160-61.

perceive the rising debt levels as a short-term boon to economic growth with significant long-term negative consequences. Students listened to the public critics and then echoed these concerns as well.[20]

Although the economy continued to grow, students began to question the narrative of consistent economic expansion, calling into question the irresponsible deficit spending policy. Pushing more treasury bonds made sense to the Abadía administration, however, because officials projected capital and revenues would outpace the interest payments on the national debt. To the students though, this notion belied the economic realities. They pointed to shrinking commerce and industry, tariff policy, and the spike in urbanization that caused demand to outstrip housing supply. For municipalities, especially those as economically and culturally important as Bogotá, the increasing debt could jeopardize future growth and public services if they still paid interest during down cycles. By September of 1927, the municipality of Bogotá already had to earmark a steep fifteen percent of its budget for interest and origination fees on the debt. This problem existed at the departmental and federal levels as well, where expensive fees and future payments on interest reduced the amount of money available from loans. To make matters worse, by late October, lenders to the federal government began requiring

[20]On the alarm raised by politicians and the students regarding the increasing debt in early 1927, see future president Alfonso López Pumarejo's series of essays and transcribed lectures in the summer editions of *Universidad*, particularly, "Colombia y la era de los empréstitos," *Universidad*, July 9, 1927, 49-50. See also *Universidad's* transcript of the official conference notes, "La conferencia de Alfonso López," *Universidad*, July 30, 1927, 140-41; Bejarano, "El despegue cafetero," 183-84; Caballero, *La economía colombiana del siglo XX*, 5541. Due to the overall inflation, the salaries of Colombians increased at an annual rate of roughly 5.2 percent, enabling Colombians to spend some of their incomes on new imports.

collateral for their loans, highlighting a "wilting confidence" in Colombia's ability to continue to expand at the same rate.[21]

Not only did the students worry about the amount of money that the nation had borrowed, they also questioned the ways that the nation had been spending money. Many accused the federal, departmental, and municipality governments of profligacy with public funds. Liberal politician and future president Alfonso López published a series of articles in *Universidad* in which he lobbied for more public audits of government spending habits, calling attention to several examples of fiscal irresponsibility like a national silkworm farm and grape cultivation for vineyards. These projects mostly failed, and none of them provided any return to the taxpayers in either saleable assets or jobs created. Unfortunately, much of the profligacy occurred within the different projects of Public Works Department. President Reyes had established this historical precedent in the early 1900s when the government invested excessively to develop infrastructure. In following the trend, public policymakers continued to prioritize public works projects as the means to catalyze more economic growth, especially the railroad. Building infrastructure, Reyes and later politicians promised, would link Colombia's ports, urban

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[21]R. de Santa Maria Ordonez, "Economia nacional: la naturaleza y base del crédito," *Universidad*, October 29, 1927, 444-46. See also "Notas nacionales," *Universidad*, July 23, 1927, 98. In this article, the student author goes so far as to accuse Congress of attempting to obfuscate the issue of unstable growth and spending. "Semanario: Bogotá," *Universidad*, September 3, 1927, 241-42; Roberto Junguito, "Las finanzas públicas en el siglo XIX," in *Economía colombiana del siglo XIX*, edited by Adolfo Meisel Roca and Maria Teresa Ramirez (Bogotá: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2010), 51-2. Junguito's essay focuses on public finances and the problem with debt servicing fees, but as he explains, this was simply part of servicing loans. Servicing fees or "closing costs" still exist for any type of loan, as brokers, underwriters, and investment bankers receive payment for services from the loan principal in many cases.

centers, and raw materials. The failures of these projects became increasingly evident to the public, as the railroad and waterway nexus remained mostly unconnected. The students began to refer to the constant flow of loan funds to the railroads as "fiscal hemorrhaging" and lamented the loss of taxpayer money. To make matters worse, much of the production of railways remained in the hands of foreign companies, sending profits abroad.[22]

The railroads also epitomized two other policy problems regarding public projects in general. First, government officials poured funds into construction projects without adequately understanding the technical and engineering acumen that the projects required. Secondly, it highlighted the need for more scientific investment at the university level; it made obvious the absence of adequate training in the field of economics. Closures of the School of Agronomy and the School of Commerce further limited important vocational training for Colombia's students. To solve the nation's problems that might emerge from a lack of engineering and economics expertise, the nation relied on institutions like these. In addition to cutting important vocational programs, Congress and the Ministry of Finance began to reduce the funding for education relative to other governmental departments—although it increased very slightly in real numbers.[23]

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[22] "La conferencia de Alfonso López," *Universidad*, July 30, 1927, 141-42; "Economía nacional," *Universidad*, June 30, 1927, 128-29; Sanchez and Bedoya, "La danza de los millones, 1923-1931," 36-37; Lucas Caballero, "La cuestión social y el Banco Agricola," *Universidad*, August 8, 1927, 147-48.

[23]Silvio Vargas, "La lozana andaluza y la ingeniería nacional," *Universidad*, October 1, 1927, 336; "Resolución no. 12, March 3, 1925," *Archivo General de la Nación*, Archivo Republica, Ministerios de Industria, Tomo 2, Folios 1-38. This resolution of the Ministry of Industry discussed the unfortunate closure of the Superior School of Agronomy, certainly with negative future impacts on agricultural engineering. The lack of proper economic studies at the university level emerged as an interesting area

More than any other fiscal issue, students condemned the corruption that the debt and different public projects yielded. Anger with this corruption figured heavily in the students' rhetoric leading up to the 1929 *jornadas*. Rumors of kickbacks to politicians and racketeering began to surface in late1927 and early 1928, and the bloating of bureaucracy became especially obvious. Politicians had been had not only been diverting borrowed money for failed or unnecessary public projects, they had also been creating unnecessary public jobs. In late 1927, Congress passed a bill that raised taxes. This bill created a host of new public positions to collect and distribute the new revenue funds, eating into the revenue that should have gone to citizens. Immediately, the students protested Congress for funding "sinecures for increasing the frames of an insatiable bureaucracy."[24]

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of public policy that students lambasted in late 1927 and early 1928, combining fiscal policy with educational policy—a trend that developed with more fervor in the following two years. I discuss the implications of these demands in the first chapter but focus on the fact that students demanded economic studies as a means for future advancement or influence in a changing and expanding economy. Here, the students recognized that to better understand the nature of fiscal and monetary policy and its impact on the nation, they required more university studies on these issues. A few months later, students leveled the same criticism against Bogotá's *alcaldia*, or mayor's office, claiming that the city's leadership lacked any understanding of economics to deal with the issues of urban expansion, infrastructure, finance, and housing. For students' demands for economic vocation and course of study, see also "Semanario: La jornada universitaria," *Universidad*, October 8, 1927, 357; "La reforma universitaria el la Facultad de Derecho," *Universidad*, October 1, 1927. A significant part of the first chapter of my paper, the law students recognized that the university inadequately prepared them for legal practice in areas of finance and business. The students also understood that a foundation of economic studies would help in their understanding of the law; G. Manrique Terán, "La cátedra libre y la tribuna libre," *Universidad*, October 8, 1927, 361; "Semanario: La reforma universitaria," *Universidad*, August 13, 1927, 170.

[24]"Semanario: El parlamento y el fisco," *Universidad*, March 24, 1928, 237. See also "Semanario: peajes y pasajes," *Universidad*, December 17, 1927, 597-98.

Corruption emerged as a major focus for the students, because it incorporated the students' fourth area of concern regarding economics and finance: nationalism and anti-imperialism. For the students, nothing symbolized the connection between corruption and their staunch opposition to U.S. economic imperialism more than oil. In 1918, geologists working for Tropical Oil Company, a subsidiary of the U.S. Standard Oil Company, made the first discovery of Colombia's vast subterranean petroleum deposits. That year the Colombian government awarded the company what became known as the De Mares Concession in the Magdalena River region to explore and exploit petroleum. Compared to the contracts that U.S. multinationals signed with their regional neighbors, the Colombian government signed concessions contracts that actually favored the Colombian government. However, U.S. multinationals still dominated the oil extraction and remitted back to the United States the bulk of their profits. In the 1920s, the Colombian government issued more land concessions to U.S. and British petroleum interests and then continued to cede to U.S. oil interests' demands, even at the expense of Colombian businesses.[25]

Because Colombia reserved the contractual right to nationalize all oil fields, students saw congressional expropriation of these assets as a viable option. Doing so would both restore national pride and ensure greater future wealth for the nation, they

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[25]Juan Carlos Echeverry, et al, "Oil in Colombia: History, Regulation, and Macroeconomic Impact," Documentos CEDE 005428, Universidad de los Andes - CEDE, 2009, 5-7; Duran and Bucheli, "Holding up the Empire." In addition to the oil field concessions, the executive department, with the support of the Ministry of Industry, issued a resolution in November of 1926 that granted the All American Products Company from Portland, Oregon the rights to a large concession in Zona Bosques for exploration of resources of national forests, "Resolucion Ejecutiva Numero 118," *Archivo General de la Nación,* Archivo Republica, Ministerios de Industria, tomo 2, folios 1-38.

argued. In late September, leaders from the Departmental Center of Students moved to officially establish "a defined orientation against the grand problems" that the students perceived to threaten the economic autonomy of the nation. With the spirit of nationalism emerging as a popular social force throughout Colombia, the students sought to channel this nationalist spirit to better the nation's strong financial foundations. To strengthen this economic foundation, Colombia first needed to protect its natural resources. They further contended that by protecting the oil that inherently belonged to Colombia, along with the profits from its mining and production, it defended the nation's economic resources and future.[26]

Toward the end of the year, the student publication called on Congress to grant petroleum extraction first and foremost to any Colombian enterprises willing and able to carry out the process. They also controversially and vituperatively called for Congress to pass laws that punished Colombians who "conspired against the national interests" of Colombia. Any violators, they stated, should be imprisoned for their calumny. To the students' dismay earlier that month, Congress favored Tropico when new oil fields became available, granting the foreign company a near monopoly in Colombia's oil extraction and export market. The students estimated the lost profits from this decision at $3 million USD. The students concluded that Congress favored Tropico at the expense of the incipient Colombian oil companies. To make matters worse, not only did Congress

[26]Juan Carlos Echeverry, et. al., "Oil in Colombia: History, Regulation, and Macroeconomic Impact," 7-8; "Semanario," *Universidad*, September 27, 1927, n.p; "Semanario: Los estudiantes formulan un programa patriótico," *Universidad*, October 1, 1927, 334-35.

grant Tropico a veritable monopoly, it also seemingly raised the limit on the amount that it permitted Tropico to extract.[27]

In February of 1928, U.S. oil companies lobbied the Colombian government for legislation favoring multinationals who drilled in Colombia. When the *United Press* in the United States published the details of the companies' requests, the students reiterated their anti-imperialist, nationalist agenda. They then wrote an article in the student press that firmly reminded multinationals of their obligation to obey the laws and respect the customs and culture of the nations in which they conducted their business. In April, Congress rejected a pact between Colonel H. Yates of British Petroleum Company and the Minister of Industry, J. A. Montalvo. The pact would have suspended a decree that limited oil extraction in Colombian concessions. The student publications praised the House of Representatives for its defense of national interests.[28]

Like oil, Colombia's high levels of debt to U.S. banks and brokers also worried students. They warned that as the Ministry of Finance recklessly borrowed, it portended a problem with Colombia's financial autonomy. The United States could potentially exert significant influence over the nation's governance if the state's solvency came into question. Colombian students already viewed the U.S. economic goals and financial

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[27]"Semanario: El petróleo y los colombianos," *Universidad*, November 19, 1927, 501-2. The author(s) did not quantify or calculate how they arrived at the $3 million USD in lost profit, nor is it clear if they actually meant profit or simply revenues from export. No reference to another study was made if these figures did, in fact, come from another source. Additionally, the story makes no distinction if the foregone capital gains for Colombia amounted to extrapolated earnings over time or the current value of extracted oil that sold on the global market.

[28] "Semanario: Otra vez los petróleos," *Universidad*, February 25, 1928, 142; "Semanario: La política del ministro de industrias," *Universidad*, June 9, 1928, 521-22.

system as tyrannical against its own working class, to say nothing of its treatment of other nations within its sphere of influence. Although economic signals remained strong, the sovereign debt proliferated, causing many to question the need for foreign loans. Some Colombians believed that Banrep attained the monetary policy tools to fund much of the capital growth through its own instruments, such as treasury bond offerings and interest rate adjustments. Instead, the Abadía administration chose to borrow tens of millions from U.S. banks, knowing very well that the U.S. government would back Wall Street if Colombia balked at any future debt repayment. Colombians understood that the financial sector would suffer if Wall Street downgraded its credit rating, but nothing could quite cripple Colombia's economy like economic sanctions, especially when Colombia's mono-export coffee export economy relied heavily on U.S. purchases.[29]

Certain economic signals and trends, such as industrial activity and slightly volatile coffee prices, began to portend an economic downturn in mid-1928. By the fall of that year, recessionary trends became evident to many Colombians. Students intensified their attention to macroeconomic issues, rising socialist influence, fiscal policy and corruption in the government, and U.S. activity within the country. The *matanza* at the end of the year rocked the entire nation, and students, Liberal Party leaders, workers, and

[29]A. Martinez Delgado, "Los Estados Unidos, país de la tiranía," *Universidad*, December 12, 1927, 628-29; "Economía Nacional: El Apoyo Político-Moral de Wall Street," *Universidad*, January 28, 1928, n.p; "Semanario: La simple nacion," *Universidad*, August 13, 1927, 169. It is important to note, however, that Banrep did not enjoy all of the tools of expansionary or contractionary policy that the Federal Reserve enjoyed. Additionally, even the Federal Reserve's Open Market Operations had a limited involvement in the 1920s and did not really expand until the Great Depression in the following decade. Mauricio Avella Gomez, "La independencia de la banca central en Colombia desde 1923. Aspectos institucionales," *Economía Institucional* 16, no. 30 (Primer Semestre 2014), 175.

much of the general public began to lose faith in Conservative Party's ability to govern. Eventually, the economic state of the nation worsened, particularly the corruption, and the students played a leading role in the public mobilizations against the president, especially after the massacre of one of their own, Gonzalo Bravo.

In early 1928, the public started posing some serious questions about the health of the economy based on some of the central bank's actions, and student publications both echoed and even led the dissent. *Universidad* publishers had earlier solicited a response from the central bank to explain recent actions in the market, particularly regarding "inconsistencies" with the bank's varying rediscount totals. They also solicited from Banrep a reason for the sharp adjustments of the discount rate from month to month, the rate at which the central bank and its affiliated offices lent to private banks. In May of 1928, a representative of Banrep's directive council responded to some concerns that the students had presented through a letter published in *Universidad*. In the response, the representative defended the bank's policy of issuing rediscounts on securities held by affiliated institutions. The letter also reminded the student readers of the monetary policy tools at the bank's disposal, enabling it to constantly adapt, react, and take preemptive measures to maneuver the economy forward. Inflation and deflation, the author lectured, often occurred as non-secular—short-term or cyclical— trends, requiring the central bank to adjust the discount rate. Additionally, as bank liquidity decreased within these non-secular trends, the bank's charter permitted it to rediscount notes held by affiliated banks thus providing them with liquidity they needed to operate. Whether or not the students were aware, the rediscounts connoted a shock to bank liquidity, suggesting that banks had struggled to meet reserve requirements or even depositor withdrawals. Interestingly,

Banrep also began to build up gold reserves, portending a potential recession and shock to the treasury's own money supply. How the students responded to this is unknown, but in July, *Universidad* reached out to Banrep again, questioning inconsistencies in the nation's monetary policy that became apparent.[30]

An article that students published in July pointed to a number of problems they found in the operations of Banrep, both in its monetary policy and social duties described by its charter. First, the students challenged the high interest rates in the Colombian economy relative to other South American nations. With the discount rate hovering around nine percent, students contended that the high rates of interest made it difficult for Colombia's businesses to access necessary capital and warned that not lowering the cost of capital could have damaging effects on businesses, which the students saw as the lifeblood of the economy. Secondly, the bank had been building up its reserves, and the author saw this as a gross misallocation of money and potential returns on investment. By building up its reserves in bullion, the students claimed that the central bank essentially removed funds from the credit market that farmers, businesses, and potential homebuyers needed for production and expansion and to cope with liquidity constraints and increasing rental prices. Thirdly, the overwhelming majority of the bank's directive council consisted of representatives from Colombia's financial sector, only three members from governmental agencies, and none from different sectors such as agriculture. Small

[30] "La política de crédito del Banco de la República," *Universidad*, May 26, 1928, n.p. In this article, the bank published an open letter for the student body. Earlier that year, opinion piece in the publication had criticized the bank for what it called "inconsistencies" in its policy. "Semanario: La baja del interés y el Banco de la República," *Universidad*, July 7, 1928, 1-2.

businesses, farmers, and related industries lacked a voice in the nation's monetary policy.[31]

Additionally, two other banking issues bothered the students. First, the central bank's policies had enabled the financial capital of Bogotá's private banking sector to swell, purportedly at the expense of other areas of the economy that could have used the capital for growth. Secondly, Banrep's laws only permitted it to invest its non-reserve equity in relatively risk-averse securities and markets, which limited the return on investment that its capital earned. While private banks, which had no obligation to invest in Colombian social initiatives, reaped an approximate nine percent in capital gains on invested equity, Banrep accrued roughly three percent returns. The fact that Banrep had been increasing its rediscounts on notes that private banks held, only made the disparity in returns more glaring in the public's eye.[32]

This wealth differential between public and private entities in Colombia certainly had the potential to heighten tensions between the public and the government, who the students saw as crafting policy to favor private financial institutions. Meanwhile, the Colombian population—at least in Bogotá—endured a declining purchasing power, especially in rent prices. Considering these new inflationary trends, the student writers worried about a potential recession. Exhibiting an understanding of Banrep's monetary

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[31]"Semanario: La baja del interés y el Banco de la República," *Universidad*, July 7, 1928, 1-2. While lowering the discount rate might have assuaged the businesses' liquidity issues, inflation remained high, making it difficult for the banks to lower interest rates without increasing price averages, a point clearly lost on the student authors.

[32]"Semanario: La baja del interés y el Banco de la República," *Universidad*, July 7, 1928, 2; "La política de crédito del Banco de la República," *Universidad*, May 26, 1928, n.p.

policy, they recognized how that policy failed to alleviate economic concerns among the populace. Then during the budgetary hearings in Congress in late July, they caught on to the economic undercurrents that warned policymakers of a contraction in the market, although they did not mention these undercurrents in detail. Speaking on the "obstacles that opposed the development of the country," the student publication warned of an imminent economic decline when analyzing the "stagnant national production" and other economic indicators.[33]

Colombia's five-year run of unprecedented economic growth finally came to an end in mid-1928. Coffee prices, although still at high levels for the decade, began to drop, while also bringing up concerns over Colombia's long-term solvency. Wall Street reacted by tightening its credit to the Colombian government and municipalities. Without the profits, governmental revenues, and balance of payments credits from coffee exports, Colombia's Gross Domestic Product began to suffer, and the signs of a recession grew more and more evident. The treasury reserves began to diminish, and Wall Street took further note of the contraction and began limiting credit to Colombia's private sector as well. For the first time in years, Colombians began to feel the effects of a shrinking money supply as 1928 continued. Although Colombians soon experienced the deflationary effects of lower prices, unemployment concomitantly climbed.[34]

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[33]"Semanario: El presupuesto nacional," *Universidad*, July 28, 1928, 85-86.

[34]Sánchez and Bedoya, "La danza de millones, 1923-1931," 69 (see the graph on the page that shows the figures of the coffee prices per year); Salomon Kalmonovitz, *Nueva historia económica de Colombia*, 124 (see the graphic that also shows the steady decrease in global coffee prices); Caballero, *La economía colombiana del siglo XX*,1580.

In student publications, opinion about the economy's health began to break from the narrative of continual economic growth that Banrep chair Dr. Lucas Caballero propagated. Focusing on the massive amount of debt that the nation had amassed and the "prodigal" spending habits within the nation, an August article in *Universidad* questioned the economy's strength and dreaded a likely downturn. In such an unfortunate economic scenario, the students feared that U.S. underwriters could become a burden not just to the nation's finances, but their national sovereignty and resources, as well, as lenders might request collateral to maintain higher credit ratings. When the students convened the Third National Congress of Students in the city of Ibagué on the first of August, the nation's sovereignty in the face of its creditors and potential insolvency occupied a significant portion of the students' time.[35]

The Ibagué congress largely addressed the key items mentioned in chapter one, such as university autonomy, advancement in sciences, and even the future role that women might play in the university. However, several economic issues preoccupied the students in their discussions and debates, and they incorporated several of these into their platform at the conclusion of the convention. The student committee of the FNE divided the convention into thirds, reserving the entirety of the last third to establish an anti-imperialist front among Colombia's political student bodies. Within the anti-imperialist dialogue, the convention identified Colombia's sovereign debt to foreign brokerages as the main threat to Colombian economic and cultural autonomy. They reiterated what student publications had warned back in Bogotá: future insolvency could allow the

[35]Jose Arturo Andrade, "El papel moneda y la producción agrícola," *Universidad*, August 5, 1928, n.p.

financial sector of the United States to influence Colombian domestic policy in a way that favored bond repayment over social issues. This would be especially true if Colombia hoped to maintain good credit standing for future loans. The United States might also demand collateral in the form of natural resources, and as a result, the students attending the convention called on the federal government to address these issues and revise its deficit-spending policies. The students also discussed the economic and sovereignty problems that arose from Colombia's monocultural coffee economy, an issue that they had addressed in publications the year before. Not only did the national economy's reliance on coffee cause it to be more susceptible to economic downturns, it also meant that the U.S. consumer market largely determined Colombia's economic strength and ability to meet its obligations. If U.S. consumers demanded less coffee for any reason, the resulting price shock would undoubtedly precipitate a recession in the Colombian economy. The committees at the Ibagué congress implored the national government to rectify this problem and explore new avenues of economic growth for the nation.[36]

As the economy began to decelerate toward the end of 1928 and the beginning of 1929, the students actually paid less attention to banking policies, financial practices, and other monetary issues. They instead fixated on the other three economic concerns: solidarity with the working class and socialist principles, fiscal policy and corruption, and the perceived aggrandizement of the U.S. influence. As mentioned in chapter one, student and mainstream publications seemed to rue a slight decrease in student politicization just before the Ibagué congress, despite what appears to be relatively high levels of

[36]Gaitan and Restrepo, "El movimiento estudiantil en la década del Veinte en Colombia y su influencia en la modernización de los partidos," 266, 283-88.

participation with a number of congresses and conventions in 1928. To reverse this either perceived or real decrease, the students broadened their political base and sought to unite their ideology with struggles of the working class, the second area of the students' concern regarding the economy.[37]

At the Ibagué congress, leaders addressed working-class issues and socialist political movements, and they emphasized drawing parallels between the working-class movement and their own. They called on the guilds of both workers and students to ally and align their goals, voted to establish the *universidades populares* for working-class citizens, and condemned the *ley heroica*, which censored public dissent and resulted in the imprisonment of hundreds of socialists and labor organizers. The December *matanza* hastened the links between the two, especially because the government protected the financial interests of United Fruit. Again, the students never adopted a socialist ideology, nor did they establish any truly official attachment to the socialist working-class movements. However, associating with Colombia's workers and their leaders added to the students' clout, and it reinforced the students' leadership during 1929 *jornadas*.[38]

Despite this rise in working-class solidarity and modicum of affinity for socialist values, the students remained skeptical of socialism, especially when apprised of the state of economic affairs in the Soviet Union. The students and their political allies sought to catalyze socioeconomic change to alleviate the impoverished conditions of workers and

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[37]Ibid., 285-289.

[38]Julio Caro, "El banco de emisión y la tasa del interés," *Universidad*, September 22, 1928, n.p.; "Semanario: La situación económica y la situación fiscal," *Universidad*, September 1, 1928, 225-26.

campesinos and roll back the repression of socialists and labor organizers. However, full adoption of socialist values, particularly of the Bolshevist type, did not seem to have been the answer. Former student and future politician Carlos Lozano y Lozano and student writers recognized the shortcomings of the communist project in the Soviet Union, as political dissidents suffered in Siberian labor camps while the Soviet leaders largely ignored the needs of the peasant farmers. Additionally, of the two newer major student organizations that existed in Bogotá—the Departmental Center of Students of Cundinamarca and the National Association of Students—he prominent National Association still maintained some conservative values.[39]

Regardless of socialism's shortcomings, the students demanded better treatment of workers and peasants, and two scenarios embodied the oppression of workers and *campesinos*. First, as they did in the Ibagué congress, students continued to lambast the unconstitutional nature of the *ley heroica*, demanding that politicians check their overreach of authority. Additionally, they argued that the Ministry of War, responsible for carrying out the arrests, acted on severely exaggerated claims of communist insurrection. In the second scenario, students defended Colombia's agriculture workers employed by United Fruit leading up to the *Matanza*. The company's workers, mostly

[39]Carlos Lozano y Lozano, "Sobre la agitación proletaria en Colombia," *Universidad*, September 22, 1928. Here Lozano y Lozano echoed what seemed to be a growing trend of student politicization. Rarely did the students call for an all-out adoption of socialist ideology, but aspects of socialist ideology appealed to the students in alleviating the oppressed livelihoods of workers and campesinos. The students did tout several socialist ideas, such as land reform, government-protected labor syndicates and unions, higher taxes to provide workers with higher wages, collective bargaining of agriculture workers, and others, but not with significant force or consistency; Diaz Jaramillo, "El 8 de junio y las disputas por la memoria, 1929-1954," 161.

rural *campesinos*, lived in terrible conditions, worked for extremely low pay, and suffered from poor health. When the *bananeros* began to organize, United Fruit refused to meet the workers' demands for higher pay and better working conditions. Rather than mediate the brewing conflict, the government defaulted to the contracts between labor and management and sided with United Fruit. The student publications and leaders publicly sided with the workers and condemned the government for granting such generous concessions to the company with such little governmental oversight.[40]

In the end, even if students did not fully adopt a socialist platform, they nonetheless saw the ideology's economic principles as a counterweight to the imperialist ventures of the United States, crippling sovereign debt, impoverished conditions of workers and *campesinos*, and corruption rampant throughout the different government levels. The students therefore demanded higher wages and better conditions for workers. To augment this, they pressed Congress to levy higher taxes on wealthier citizens and to create programs for land distribution to *campesinos*. Additionally, they called for new legislation that permitted or even fostered a system of labor organization, rather than suppressing it and harassing its leaders. The connections with the working-class, their organizations, or the PSR remained mostly immaterial in early 1929, but these connections eventually became more concrete. By June, the students were marching

[40]Cajas, "La 'ley heroica' o de defensa social de 1928 contra la 'amenaza Bolchevique' en Colombia," in *Revista de estudios historico-juridicos*, no. 42 (2020): 430-31; "Semanario," *Universidad*, October 20, 1928, 473-74; "Semanario," *Universidad*, December 7, 1928, 671-72; "Semanario," *Universidad*, December 15, 1928, 699-700; Alejandro López, "De la pena del trabajo," *Universidad*, December 15, 1928, 716-17.

alongside their working class and socialist counterparts in the city-wide strikes and protests that finally cemented the end of the long hegemony of the Conservative Party.[41]

Arguably, these socialist values that the students espoused acted as the means through which they channeled their frustrations with the different levels of government, particularly in their third area of concern: fiscal policy and corruption. As mentioned, the students had taken issue with the profligate use of debt monies to sustain economic growth. They also called attention to the rampant mismanagement of funds and racketeering at all levels of government. The slowing economy only exacerbated these issues, and in the later months of 1928, students began to express serious concerns about the national budget and how Congress began to allocate the funds, concentrating on the Department of War. When Minister of Finance Esteban Jaramillo proposed the national budget in mid-1928, students accused the Abadía administration of requesting an inflated budget based on vastly inflated economic projections. These projections, they contended, obfuscated the economic reality of lower coffee prices and slowing production in some sectors. Within this inflated budget, the students focused their ire on the exceptionally high budget proposed for the war department, which stood at a staggering nine million Colombian pesos, a staggering 300 percent increase over the budget level of just three years before. Why, the students asked, would a nation at peace with all its neighbors

[41]It is important to note that within the student publications, much of the concrete platform of the students, apart from the Ibagué congress, came from contributors. How much the students aligned themselves with these somewhat revolutionary ideals is difficult to pin down, although they seem to support them via correlative sentiments, see also the article from well-known journalist and supporter of the student movements, Enrique Millan, "Hacia una éra económica," *Universidad*, December 7, 1928, n.p.; and the article from young politician Marco Naranjo López, "La situación de los campesinos en Colombia," *Universidad*, November 8, 1928, 572-73.

possibly need to designate 30.5% of its overall budget to the military? Most likely, they believed, the Abadía regime planned to use the bloated military for internal purposes, mainly to suppress the rising unrest among the working class.[42]

The students also attacked the military budget because it symbolized the government's fiscal and social priorities. As it stood, education went largely underappreciated and underfunded by the Abadía administration. While their neighbors Chile and Argentina increasingly poured more funds into their schools, Colombia's education budget shrank substantially in relative terms, even if it increased in real numbers. This notion points back to my argument in chapter one that students mobilized on socioeconomic matters, while framing their idea of university reform within national economic progress. Lastly, the students challenged the low amount of funds designated for agriculture and cultivation across the nation. While other neighbors, like Brazil, prioritized agricultural development, Jaramillo's proposed budget designated only a negligible amount to this area.[43]

When Congress passed the preliminary budget bill in early 1929, the students returned to the issue, condemning the bill, and questioned whether the true desires of the

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[42] "Semanario: El presupuesto nacional," *Universidad*, July 28, 1928, 85-86. Not only did the other South American nations mentioned in this article invest significantly more funds into education, but they also invested much less in their military and "national defense" budgets. In fact, in 1928, only Colombia, Bolivia, and Venezuela earmarked more funds for military than education; "Semanario," *Universidad*, September 1, 1928, 225-26; "Semanario: Un año que termina mal," *Universidad*, December 29, 1928, n.p.

[43] "Semanario: El presupuesto nacional," *Universidad*, July 28, 1928, 85-86; "Semanario," *Universidad*, September 1, 1928, 225-26; "Semanario: Un triunfo de doscientos mil pesos que ha debido ser tres millones," *Universidad*, September 8, 1928, n.p.

Colombian people had been acknowledged in the process of passing the legislation. The budget bill that Jamarillo introduced in July almost a year earlier eventually passed with amendments to the overall amount. However, while Congress slashed budgets in other departments to match the now sobering economic projections, the budgets for the war and foreign relations departments remained virtually unchanged from their earlier inflated figures. The students again found the funding for the war department confounding, unless, of course, the Abadía government did in fact plan to use the newly expanded military force to suppress political dissidents, rather than defending Colombia from imaginary foreign threats. Although the students did not demand more funds for the Ministry of Education this time around, they still decried the new budget's measly amount reserved for agriculture and even public works, often targeted for its rampant racketeering.[44]

As the political and socioeconomic conditions intensified after the *la Matanza de las Bananeras*, student leaders began to draw parallels between 1929 and 1910, when the student-led protest precipitated the downfall of Reyes and the resulting constitutional reform. The corruption grew more evident in early 1929 as it had in 1909, and students also similarly questioned the degree to which their electors represented the interests of the citizens. Like the war department, the Ministry of Government's budget grew substantially from the year before, with much of the funding allocated for governmental salaries. This meant that while Congress voted to slash spending across most federal departments, officials increased their own wages. The student publication conceded that

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[44]"Semanario," *Universidad*, March 16, 1929, 285; "Semanario," *Universidad*, March 23, 1929, 313-14.

the inflationary pressures permitted wage increases but argued that the rate of increase in governmental salaries far exceeded the rate of inflation. They suggested new legislation that would limit governmental salary increases.[45]

Fiscal policy and corruption at the federal level continued to preoccupy students, but as 1929 wore on, they began to redirect their focus to *la rosca*, the ring of corruption throughout the federal, departmental, and municipal levels of government in Bogotá. Bogotá's municipality officials used their proximity to the federal government and access to federal funds for public works projects. Here local officials built a "spoils-system" of kickbacks and racketeering that enriched construction company managers, local politicians, and federal officials, especially surrounding the construction of the city's transit system and aqueduct.[46]

After the students ignited the protests that kicked off the city-wide *jornadas*—and especially right after the death of fellow student Gonzalo Bravo Perez at the hands of the federal police—leaders pressured Congress, the City of Bogotá, and other governmental institutions to put an end to the corruption. In one instance, the Departmental Center of Students, the more left-leaning of the main student organizations, promised to continue the strikes and protests until the Abadía regime met their demands, one of which involved the dismissal of Arturo Hernández, Minister of Public Works. The different levels of government in the nation's capital, they contended, worked in tandem with each other

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[45]"Semanario," *Universidad,* March 23, 1929, 313-314; "Semanario: 1910 y 1929," *Universidad,* May 11, 1929, 485.

[46]Diaz Jaramillo, "El 8 de junio y las disputas por la memoria, 1929-1954," 160-61; "Semanario: Bogotá," *Universidad,* March 2, 1929, 205-6; J. M. Piedrahita, "Bogotá y sus finanzas," *Universidad*, March 16, 1929, 287-88.

like “a monster with a hundred heads” that plagued the democratic nature of the Colombian government. The upcoming elections in early 1930 gave them an opportunity to end this corrupt “spoils-system,” and the student-led *jornadas* weakened the Conservative Party’s stranglehold on federal governance. Arguably, students earned significant public support during the *jornadas* because they attacked *la rosca*.[47]

Many of the students blamed the unscrupulous amount of debt for causing much of the corruption in the political environment. From the loans, politicians and Colombia’s business owners colluded to enrich themselves. The flow of capital into Colombia bloated the coffers of business owners, politicians, and financiers at the expense of taxpayers who would shoulder the bulk of the credit bill in the future. The reckless use of borrowed money also jeopardized the nation’s sovereignty in the face of what *Universidad* saw as U.S. imperialist strategies in Latin America, the students’ fourth economic focus. Before the summer of 1928, students had already expressed worries regarding U.S. policy if Colombia struggled to repay its loans. When the economy began to slow from decreasing coffee projects and stalled infrastructure projects, the threat of U.S. influence seemed more and more real.[48]

When addressing their worries about the growing economic influence of the United States in Colombia, the students again focused on the same two issues: the

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[47]Centro Departamental de los Estudiantes, “Dos decretos del centro departamental: decreto numero 2 de 1929,” *Universidad*, June 15, 1929, s/p; “Semanario: Las roscas a todo lo largo de la nación,” *Universidad*, June 22, 1929, 634; “Semanario: La capacidad económica del país,” *Universidad*, August 17, 1929, 169-70; “Semanario: Una mala jornada electoral,” *Universidad*, February 9, 1929, 133.

[48]“Semanario,” *Universidad*, March 23, 1929, 313-14; “Semanario: La capacidad económica del país,” *Universidad*, August 17, 1929, 169.

increasing levels of Wall Street-owned debt and the status of the nation's natural resources. At the Ibagué congress in August, the students adopted an official stance on the debt issue, condemning it and demanding the government curb its use of credit. As Colombia's Congress prepared to debate and pass the budget bill proposed by Minister Jaramillo in July, *Universidad* called its readers' attention to some serious inconsistencies in the debt levels. In one session before Congress, Jaramillo, seemingly eschewing data from Banrep, attempted to assuage public concerns by placing the debt per capita at $3 pesos. After students challenged his assessment, Jaramillo later readjusted his figures, claiming that the debt per capita stood at a much higher $10 pesos, but still lower than the central bank's assessment of a staggering $32 pesos of sovereign debt per capita. Regardless, either figure was a stark reminder that the United States played a leading role in the majority of the economic growth via the indemnity, financed loans, and it purchase of most of the coffee exports.[49]

In one of the articles in *Universidad,* the author suggested that Congress and the Abadía administration use those funds from the loans to produce and develop the nation's "natural riches," rather than dumping funds into the public works projects. The students

[49]Gaitan and Restrepo, "El movimiento estudiantil en la década del Veinte en Colombia y su influencia en la modernización de los partidos," 283; "Semanario: El presupuesto nacional," *Universidad*, July 28, 1928, 85-86; "Semanario: La situación económica y la situación fiscal," *Universidad,* September 1, 1928, 225-26; "Semanario: La cátedra libre," *Universidad,* August 11, 1928, 142. The students also took an interest in the United States 1928 elections that brought Herbert Hoover of the Republican Party to the presidency. The Democrats openly opposed imperialism and exerting foreign influence, while the Republicans expressed no reservations about exploiting foreign markets and resources. Because of these platform differences, the students saw Hoover's victory as a clear nationwide approval of United States imperialist activities, see "Semanario: El triunfo de Hoover," *Universidad*, November 8, 1928, s/p; and "Semanario: Los yanquis y el viaje le Hoover," *Universidad*, January 29, 1929, 29.

understood the relation between the U.S. economic influence, the debt to U.S. banks, and the concessions allotted to U.S. producers. Colombia's economic sovereignty and economic outlook seemed precarious, especially when also considering that Colombia's top export, coffee, relied heavily on demand within the U.S. market, even if Colombians owned the production. At a meeting of university student organizers in the city of Caldas a month after the 1929 *jornadas*, the leaders drafted a manifesto that began by condemning Colombia's financial situation and the "economic interdependence" that resulted. In calling for more public protest, they mostly accused officials in both parties of lacking awareness of the population's needs. However, students later laid partial blame for what they earlier deemed to be political "uncertainty and negativity" that the U.S. Kemmerer commission had essentially created.[50]

After the economy showed its first signs of weakness in mid-1928, Colombia's politicians actually made two decisions that roundly won students' approval. First, both chambers of Congress refused to ratify a pending contract between the Ministry of Industry and British Petroleum for exploration of oil fields in the region of Urabá. Even if the contract would have yielded future revenue for the Colombian government, the

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[50]Centro Universitario Pro-Caldas, "Manifiesto de los estudiantes de Caldas," *Universidad*, July 19, 1929, 76-77. See also "Semanario," *Universidad*, March 16, 1929, 285. In addition to calling on the government to adjust its fiscal policy to increase spending to develop raw materials, the article discussed problems with some of the debt instruments for Colombia. At the time that the article was published, Colombia had floated some treasury bonds on Wall Street that were selling at a 15% discount in the U.S. market—meaning that Colombia would repay the full price of the plus the bonds' coupon rates and yet receive only a 85% of the bonds' face values or "par values." Rather than blaming Wall Street for potentially driving down the bonds' values, the article squarely placed the blame on Colombia's irresponsible fiscal policy and nominal economic growth that gave investors less and less confidence; "Semanario: Los dos regimes," *Universidad*, August 24, 1929, n.p.

members of Congress argued that the contract lacked any real benefit for the nation. Secondly, in early August officials in the Ministry of Industry upheld a rescission of the Barco concession contract, granted to the U.S.-owned South American Gulf Oil Company. Carlos Bravo, the Minister of Industry under former president Nel Ospina, had rescinded the company's contractual right to the Barco area, because the company had failed to uphold their end of agreement. After the company tried to appeal the decision, the new ministry under Abadía backed Industry Minister Bravo's assessment. The students saw the decision as a major victory for Colombian economic interests, even if they recognized that the ministry based its decision more on "juridical concepts" of contract law, rather than on patriotic economic sentiments.[51]

Eventually, the general public echoed the students' demands, and Congress began to entertain nationalizing the country's resources and investing its own funds into exploitation and production. However, in late September of 1928, the U.S. Minister to Colombia Samuel H. Piles responded harshly under pressure from State Department officials and the oil company. He attempted to cajole the Abadía administration into reinstating the South American Gulf Oil Company's contract. Abadía resoundingly defended the interests of the nation, however, and Congress once again voted to uphold the contract termination. A large group of students publicly backed Congress and Abadía

[51]"Semanario: La caducidad de la concesión Barco," *Universidad,* August 11, 1928, 142. See also "Semanario: La cuestión del petróleo," *Universidad,* July 21, 1928, n.p.; Stephen Randall, "The Barco Concession in Colombian-American Relations, 1926-1932," *Americas* 33, no. 1 (July 1976): 96-97.

against an increasingly hostile U.S. State Department by rallying downtown en masse to support the government.[52]

These students quickly waned in their support for the Abadía administration, as they became disenchanted with the "inconstancy" and "inconsistency" of the petroleum contract policies. The government's nationalist stance on natural resources grew less resolute as economic and political issues looked less stable. Students grew frustrated as questions surrounding the Yates Contract for British Petroleum remained unresolved. Two other policies, the "ley sintética" and the recent Code of Hydrocarbons, seemed to cause even more confusion among the public regarding rights to deposits, rather than addressing the rights and ownership of them. Additionally, Gulf Oil's Colombian legal counsel continued to pressure Minister Montalvo to convince Congress to reverse the contract revocation for the benefit of Colombia's economy in the long run.[53]

By early 1929, the *matanza* and the evident corruption within government had eclipsed issues around oil and foreign companies within student publications, as students focused more on domestic issues. However, in March of 1929, *Universidad* provided its readers a bulletin memorandum written by Secretary of Mines and Petroleum Ernesto Vasco Gutierrez. In it, Vasco discussed the process of oil nationalization and confirmed the importance of protecting and profiting from the nation's resources. However, he

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[52]Randall, "The Barco Concession in Colombian-American Relations," 100.

[53]"Semanario," *Universidad,* November 17, 1929, 591. See also Ibid., 100-01. In fact, even the U.S. legation in Bogotá urged patience to the State Department officials while publicly questioning the Abadía administration's sincerity of the nationalization of Colombian oil. H. Freeman Matthews, secretary to the U.S. Legation of Colombia, argued to other State officials that the nationalization rhetoric was a political strategy of Abadía to win back popular support amid a dwindling approval.

warned his readers of the difficulties of pursuing this economic and political course of action. The nation, he contended, first needed to understand the consequences that nationalization might have on long-term foreign investors as well as other negative effects. He also informed his readers that crafting a concrete policy to protect national interests appeared highly unlikely due to major rifts between legislators. As the 1930 February elections neared, the students, who had championed the Liberal Party's candidate Enrique Olaya Herrera, clamored for an end to Conservative hegemony. One article listed all of the failures of the Abadía administration, highlighting especially the Yates Contract with British Petroleum plus other oil policies that had undermined the nation's interests.[54]

By early 1929, however, *la matanza* dominated the attention of the students in matters germane to anti-imperialism and nationalism. They saw the Army's massacre as a true symbol of imperialism in Colombia, especially considering that Rengifo and the commanders acquiesced to United Fruit's pressure to suppress the strike of the workers. The army's role as perpetrators in the massacre, however, shielded United Fruit and U.S. multinationals. In fact, student leaders directed most of their ire at the military and the Abadía administration. However, this did not absolve United Fruit, and leading up to the massacre, the students lobbied government officials to step in and mediate the worker-management dispute, as mentioned before. The students labelled United Fruit's labor contracts as predatory and lamented its gross mistreatment of the workers. United Fruit's

[54]Ernesto Vasco Gutiérrez, "La politica nacionalista de la reivindicacion de petroleo," from the *Boletin de Minas y Petroleos,* published in *Universidad,* March 16, 1929, 310-11; "Semanario: Tres años de fracaso," *Universidad,* August 10, 1929, 141-42.

failure to even consider the workers' pleas signaled to the students the reason that the government needed to fight foreign influence while incentivizing Colombians to own their own processes of production, as was common in the small-plot horticultural production of coffee.

As the 1930 elections drew near, student writers believed that the recent events of the *matanza* and the *jornadas* could disrupt the long hegemony of the Conservatives. With the Liberal Party in power, Colombia could rebuild its economy more ethically and focus on Colombian businesses rather than foreign ones. Additionally, the Liberal Party could give attention to working-class needs. The students hoped that the 1929 *jornadas* in Bogotá demonstrated the need for a change in executive and legislative power to limit corruption, reverse the irresponsible public debt policy, and curb inflation, among other reforms within the financial sector. In February of 1930, Colombia's male voters recognized these needs and swept the Liberal Party into power in executive and legislative branches for the first time since 1886.

To what degree the students precipitated this change is impossible to quantify, but they certainly played a leading role in bringing to the attention of other political youth the economic problems that plagued the Conservative Party's regime at the end of the decade. The students also played a leading role in precipitating the *jornadas* that shut down the capital city, spooked foreign investors, and alerted the rest of the nation to the corruption and fragility of Abadía's government. Their attention to interest rates, inflation, local taxes, workers' rights, unionization, public works projects, *la matanza*, and *la rosca* empowered the students to pose difficult questions to Colombia's leaders, as they potently challenged the government and financial institutions' policies.

From the 1909 *jornadas* to the 1929 *jornadas*, students remained at the forefront of these effective mobilizations. Their attention to economic matters and their concern for the nation's economic well-being shaped how and why they mobilized, and these concerns increased and developed as the nation's economy steamed ahead into the new era of "la danza de millones." What began with an anti-imperialist and nationalist zeal to defend the nation's economic interests eventually transformed into an expansive focus on monetary policy, workers' rights and new socialist ideas, and fiscal policy failures. Economics played a vital role in politicizing and mobilizing students.

CONCLUSION

The 1909 and 1929 *jornadas* demonstrated that Colombia's university students played important roles in Colombian society and significantly impacted the nation's political structure. In both events, the students precipitated the end of the respective political regimes. In the first *jornada*, the students mobilized and brought an end to President Rafael Reyes' autocratic grip on Colombia's federal government during the *quinquenio*. In the second *jornada*, students mobilized against President Abadía's administration and the corruption and hegemony of the Conservative Party, which had controlled the federal government since 1886. In this case, their public protests demonstrated to Colombia's public that the Conservative Party could neither maintain public control nor govern in the interest of its constituents. Several months later the Liberal Party won its first presidential election and many congressional seats, finalizing the consequences of the *jornada*. Although a division in the Conservative Party abetted this victory, the students acted as the vanguard for a public that overwhelmingly demanded a change within the nation during and leading up to the protests, just as they did in the 1909 *jornadas*. Aside from their concerns with Reyes' anti-democratic governance and the Abadía administration's corruption, what other factors galvanized these students to mobilize in both situations? Most importantly, on what other factors did Colombia's students maintain a consistent and active student movement throughout the 1920s?

Much of the scholarship on the 1920s' student movements in Colombia has focused on the social and political nature of the student politicization, organization, and

mobilizations. In this regard, the students' demands for university reform to achieve higher academic standards, increasing social awareness and solidarity with subaltern groups, and an anti-imperialist, nationalist, and pro-regional Latin American agenda have all been analyzed by scholars of the student movements of the 1920s. I, however, approach the student movements from an economic and socioeconomic perspective, analyzing how the students framed their demands for university reform and evaluating the degree to which politicized students emphasized economic issues in their rhetoric.

Here, the 1920s' "danza de los millones" comes into focus, as it is imperative to analyze the student movements within the framework of the economic growth that occurred from early 1923 to late 1928. Thanks to the indemnity from the United States over the Panama fiasco, high global coffee prices, and the inflow of U.S. loans, Colombia's economy grew rapidly. The economic growth shaped Colombia's economy and its culture, but it also affected how students viewed themselves within these changing socioeconomic dynamics. The economic growth raises two important questions: How did the rapid economic growth and then sharp decline shape the student movements? And how much did concerns about their socioeconomic and economic situations influence their politicization? Because the students focused significantly on socioeconomic and economic realities, the rapid economic growth significantly influenced university students in the 1920s. Based on the attention that they gave to socioeconomic and economic issues, it is obvious that these issues played significant roles in galvanizing the students to mobilize.

In analyzing the students from socioeconomic and economic perspectives, the student movements divide neatly into two categories. In the first category, I have focused

on the socioeconomic aspects of university reform, arguably the primary issue among students in the 1920s' student movements. In demanding that the university and government hierarchy accede to their demands of *autonomía universitaria*, *cogobierno*, and *cátedra libre*, the students often framed their rhetoric within socioeconomic concepts. In this regard, the students demanded changes within the university that would have largely benefitted them and placed them in a better position to advance their own socioeconomic well-being, while also actively advancing the new Colombian economy for the betterment of the nation. In the second category, I have analyzed and discussed the importance that students placed on national economic issues. In their focus on economic issues, the students addressed four main areas in which they noticed major problems emerging: monetary policy, the conditions of the working class and *campesinos*, the government's use of public funds (namely fiscal policy and corruption), and foreign influence over Colombian markets and natural resources.

University reform had long been an issue in Colombian higher education, dating back to the late eighteenth century, and students reignited the issues of *autonomía universitaria* and *cogobierno* in the 1909 and into the early 1910s. However, with the advent of the Córdoba Reform Movement in the Argentine universities in 1918, Colombia's students grew increasingly agitated with the shortcomings in universities' pedagogy, curricula, Catholic influence, and failure to develop quality sciences programs like engineering. When the economy began to recess in 1921, students kicked off what became the sustained movements of the decade in several of Colombia's universities. These mobilizations mainly opposed intransigent administration, incompetent faculty, and Catholic dogma-ladened curriculum. The economy stagnated, and prospects

remained gloomy. In several of these mobilizations, students focused on pay for their professors, fees that they owed to the university, and overall institutional funding.

As the economy emerged out of its slump, the students deviated from this narrower approach to university reform, expanding to discuss wider socioeconomic issues, the growth of the national economy, and how their education figured into these changing dynamics. Even by late 1921, members of the Assembly of Students began to address how shifting the university from a publicly funded institution to a tuition-based institution might expand the enrollment to Colombia's middle- and working-class students. The 1922 Medellín congress highlighted this widened focus, establishing a platform that reinforced their reform goal, but also sought to establish solidarity with other student movements across the Latin American region. The students also made a point to debate the role that the university would play in developing a modern economy in the future. This trend continued throughout the decade, as the students called on the university, the Ministry of Public Instruction and Education, and Congress to create programs in economics and agricultural studies and to earmark more funds for developing the sciences.

By the end of the decade, students throughout the different departments began to press the university to implement reforms in their respective colleges, as law students pressed for more courses on the economy, engineering students demanded better faculty, and medical students protested the closure of training clinics. The earlier closures of the Agronomy and Commerce universities exacerbated the dearth of education in economics and other curricula that might strengthen Colombia's economic development, and students continued to protest the lack of training in these fields. As the economy

expanded, the students recognized that the nation required modernization to compete on the global stage and to continue to prosper. When they pushed for university reform, the students did so by framing these reforms as socioeconomic concepts.

In the second category, I have focused on the economic aspects of the student rhetoric during the 1920s' student movements. Student publications, especially the popular *Universidad*—voice of Colombia's moderately left-leaning students—focused heavily on the economic issues of the nation. Beginning with the 1909 *jornadas* that deposed President Reyes, student writers took a keen interest in monetary policy, especially the means by which state officials manipulated economic outcomes, or perceived outcomes, by taking advantage of their influence over the central bank. With the rise of the student movements in the 1920s, concerns over monetary policy, banking, and other financial issues within the private sector increasingly came into focus among the students, as did the conditions of workers, government spending, corruption, and the U.S. involvement in Colombian markets.

In the first half of the decade, students were preoccupied with economic growth and economic sovereignty in the face of foreign enterprises looking to dominate Colombian consumer and export markets as well as extraction of natural resources. The nuances of banking, finance, and monetary policy did not figure often in the rhetoric of the students before 1927, although students discussed the need to establish strong bullion-backed currency and stability in the banking sector; so they called on officials and members of congress to craft policy and legislation that might stabilize these areas of finance within the economy. That the students admonished the government for myopic practices and then called for new policies and legislation demonstrates that the students

frequently discussed fiscal policy. When it appeared that the Ospina Administration had granted a mining concession to a U.S. venture, students demanded public action against, and congressional censure of the officials involved in the contract negotiations. And while the concession turned out to be erroneous, the students used the moment to take a firm stance that defended the saleable assets of the nation against imperialist ventures of U.S. and European multinationals.

Beginning in 1927, following a temporal gap in the primary sources available for research, the students stayed significantly more apprised to the financial realities of the nation, attacking irresponsible banking practices, expansionary monetary policy that caused inflation, but most importantly, increases in the debt of both the public and private sectors. Early student criticism of rampant borrowing throughout the nation belied the narrative of strong economic growth, but when students pressed the issue in later 1928, the economy had begun to show signs of weakness in some sectors, namely light industrial production and revenues from coffee exports. Other practices of the central bank also alerted students to issues in banking liquidity and currency stability as well, especially when the BanRep steeply increased rediscounts on bank notes from the private sector.

Different areas of the government came under sharp criticism for allowing these monetary practices to occur. Officials did little, in the students' opinions, to curb inflation in the rental housing market, and the students beseeched Congress and the City of Bogotá to redress this issue with public funds, housing projects, and other developmental policies. In the end, it seems that neither government redressed the issue, as consumer purchasing power remained low by the time the public mobilized against the Abadía

regime in the 1929 *jornadas*. Aggravating the situation further, students took note of sharp increases in civil servant salaries from tax hikes, while the Ministry of Finance and Congress voted to bloat the military budget. That the military's budget increase came at the expense of funds appropriated for education was not lost on the students, and student leaders condemned both parties for profligacy with taxpayer pesos.

The government, in general, also engaged in corruption, which drew the students' ire. Particularly in Bogotá, where all three levels of Colombian government—federal, departmental, and municipal—shared a governmental seat, rampant corruption became obvious. The different government levels earmarked taxpayer monies for pork-barrel projects, politicians received kickbacks from companies, and politicians voted to increase their own salaries. The development of "la rosca" in Bogotá embodied all of these corruption measures that had been proliferating since Colombia received the indemnity from the United States and took on massive loans to build infrastructure and other projects. The students recognized that government officials had spent large portions of the debt (that their generation would need to repay) on areas that did not benefit the nation nor modernize the economy.

When the student movements began to expand their focus from a more narrow, insular approach to a more expansive, societal outlook, the working class emerged as a major theme in the rhetoric of the students. By the end of the decade, Colombia's urban centers had swelled in population, as former *campesinos* migrated to the cities to find work in the new light industrial sector and the growing public works projects. Not only did these workers struggle with inflation in consumer staples and housing prices, but they also generally endured poor working conditions and disfranchisement. When they

attempted to organize under the PSR, the Abadía administration and the Ministry of War harassed leaders and often imprisoned them under the *ley heroica*. Students increasingly sought to establish solidarity with Colombia's workers—and *campesinos* in rural areas, as well—and they often regarded elements of socialism as a solution to working-class problems. Although the students, especially the Liberal-majority ones, never argued in favor of adopting socialism, they proposed increased taxes to subsidize living expenses, the right of labor to unionize, and even collective or state ownership of production. They also stayed apprised to the incipient project in the new Soviet Union and took note of both the positive and negative news that came out of that country.

Lastly, the students studied and warned of the increasing activity of the United States and U.S. companies within the Colombian market, as well as the U.S. consumer market's impact on the Colombian economy. The increasing debt to Wall Street worried the students that Wall Street could significantly influence Colombian fiscal policy if the nation ever struggled to repay its loans. For this reason primarily, the students condemned their government's policy of amassing huge debts to U.S. underwriters to continue its economic growth instead of seeking alternative funding options. The students were aware that failure to repay debt would carry severe consequences, like credit downgrades and even possible trade sanctions. Any attempt to re-amortize might also come with overbearing oversight from the United States. The U.S. consumer market also unnerved students due to the coffee industry's overreliance on U.S. demand. At the Ibagué congress especially, the students expressed their discontent with Colombian leadership for not doing more to develop other areas of the economy and focusing too heavily on revenues from the coffee trade. Even if the Colombian economy remained

internally strong, a dip in the U.S. markets, the students surmised, would have a ruinous effect, and they demanded that Congress and business leaders invest funds in other productive areas, like oil.

Oil and more of Colombia's natural resources also evoked anti-imperialist sentiments from the students, who witnessed their government grant important and potentially lucrative land concessions to foreign companies to drill and extract oil. The Barco Concession highlighted to student leaders that the Abadía administration sought to reap immediate royalties at the expense of long-term gains, even if it ultimately hoped to keep oil production in the hands of Colombians. But other areas of the national economy also attracted student concern. Many of the railways and other transit companies were foreign-owned, and U.S. companies extracted lumber from Colombia's forest regions. The most glaring example of U.S. influence in Colombia occurred during the *matanza,* when United Fruit refused to increase wages and better the conditions of their *bananeros*. By 1928, several student organizations had developed close ties to socialists and publicly backed the banana workers' demands. The Colombian military's massacre of the rioting workers in Ciénaga demonstrated the clout that U.S. producers had carved out for themselves among Colombia's leadership.

When the university students eventually mobilized in the 1929 *jornadas,* they combined their socioeconomic concerns with their economic ones. The students called on the university and government hierarchy to implement the university reforms that would better both their future prospects and the nation's economic outlook. When they addressed the nation's economy, the students demanded changes to monetary policy, government spending and corruption, and treatment of the working class. Finally, they

demanded that the nation's leaders protect the economic sovereignty of the nation in the face of foreign economic interests. When the state failed to address these issues, the students precipitated the greatest change to Colombian politics in the early twentieth century, while these students also laid the foundation for more potent student movements in Colombia's future.

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