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Chile: On Opposition Presidential Candidate's Economic Program

by John Neagle
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Supporters of Patricio Aylwin, presidential candidate of the 17-party opposition coalition in the Dec. 14 elections, are reassuring businesspersons that the last thing they plan to do is reverse the economic progress fostered by the "free market" policies of Gen. Augusto Pinochet's government. Alejandro Foxley, 50, heads Aylwin's economic team, and is expected to become Finance Minister if the opposition candidate wins. He received a doctorate in economics from the University of Wisconsin, is president of an economic research institute in Santiago, and holds an endowed chair in economics at the University of Notre Dame. Foxley was cited by the New York Times as saying that an Aylwin economic team would produce change with stability, and would not seek to modify prevailing economic rules. He said, "Democracy cannot totally frustrate the aspirations and hopes of people. At the same time, we have a well-functioning economy and our task will be to maintain economic growth at 4 or 5% a year. We will have to increase social expenditures without increasing the fiscal deficit." The Aylwin team has asserted that the needs of Chile's poorer half would be met by raising income and corporate taxes, and foreign aid. Aylwin's economic team includes Sergio Bitar, who served as Minister of Mining at the end of the Salvador Allende's government and spent 13 months as a political prisoner after the 1973 coup. A Harvard graduate who now calls himself a "pragmatic socialist," is considered a possible member of the future government. He was cited by the Times as follows: "For us, the imbalance of economic factors in the Allende period is related to pain and death, not just to the loss of votes, because we know that the economy was a factor that facilitated the coup...For us, inflation is not a question of numbers, it's a question of survival." Aylwin's team has produced an outline of economic principles and policy, including an low tariffs, absence of price controls, and greater government direction of the economy mainly to promote industrialization. (Basic data from New York Times, 08/28/89)

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