

Constitution or nothing

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By Guillermo Alvarado

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In spite of all the difficulties, the text, which consists of 178 pages, 388 articles and 54 transitory norms, was approved by 77 percent of the convention members, a figure much higher than the two thirds required to conclude the work.

With the document in his hands, President Gabriel Boric called for a plebiscite to be held on September 4, where the population will decide whether the new Law of Laws will enter into force or whether the one drafted during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet will be maintained.

Reaching this moment is the result of an arduous process that started in October 2019, when thousands of people took to the streets to demand better living conditions, adequate health and education services and an increase in pensions for retirees.

The militarized police, known as Carabineros, unleashed a relentless crackdown that resulted in numerous deaths, injuries and captures.

In spite of everything, the popular pressure was so great that the then President Sebastián Piñera had to accept the signing of an agreement, which included the drafting of the new Magna Carta.

This led to the plebiscite of October 20, 2020, when 80 percent supported this initiative and opened the way for the election of the members of the Convention in May 2021, where the right was at a clear disadvantage.

Although the constitutional body was exemplary, with equal representation of men and women and, for the first time in Chilean history, with seats reserved for indigenous communities, the road was bumpy and under constant attack from those nostalgic for the dictatorship.

Fake news was permanent, with claims such as that indigenous people would have extraordinary rights above the rest of society, that property would be confiscated or, imagine what kind of brains, that abortion would be allowed "up to nine months of pregnancy".

Another falsehood was to link the quality of the text with the performance of Boric's government, with the unhealthy intention of turning the plebiscite into an evaluation of the executive, when one thing has nothing to do with the other.

From today, July 6, the campaign for the referendum opens and with it another stage of struggle to overcome 40 years of neoliberalism and send to the trash the remains of the Pinochet dictatorship.

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