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# Appendix 6

## Humor, Politics, and the Economy

by Andrea Matallana<sup>1</sup>

The years of the nation state's organization and subsequent consolidation were rich in terms of political humor. During the peak period of a political press from 1862 to 1890 there were numerous publications that used a humorous "sting" to satirize political and economic situations, albeit from different ideological angles. This is an important point to keep in mind because, although the most effective political humor tends to emanate from those in opposing positions, the satirical press aligned itself with different political groups and used its biting humor against various political actors.

The images included in this volume are taken from satirical publications that delighted the readers of their time. To illustrate the nineteenth century, we have taken cartoons from two publications: *El mosquito* (1863–93), founded by Enrique Stein, a cartoonist and editor of French origin, and *Don Quijote* (1884–1903), founded by Spanish editor Eduardo Sojo. The latter's principal caricaturist was José María Cao, a frequent contributor to many humorous publications in Argentina.

The reader should be aware that these two newspapers held different political positions. *El mosquito* criticized Bartolomé Mitre, Domingo Sarmiento, and Nicolás Avellaneda (the three presidents who preceded Julio A. Roca), and it allied itself with Roca during the period of his first presidency, 1880–86.<sup>2</sup> Conversely, *Don Quijote* was extremely critical of the Roca government (and that of his successor and brother-in-law Miguel Juárez Celman), and it identified itself more with the "Park Civics." The latter group were the allies of Leandro N. Alem and the *Unión Cívica* which was founded in 1890 as the principal opposition group to the Autonomist National Party (Partido Autonomista Nacional).

To illustrate the period between 1900 and 1935, we have used another type of source: general interest magazines that were humorous but not exclusively centered on political satire. *PBT* (1903–18) was founded and edited by Eustaquio Pellicer. *Caras y Caretas* (1898–1939) was founded by writer and journalist José A. Alvarez also known by his nickname Fray Mocho. In these magazines the political content and criticism was less central but no less effective. These extremely popular publications show that satire about economic questions is always in the spotlight during periods of great economic crisis; but, when these crises recede, politics takes center stage with more of a focus on elections, the abstention of radicalism, fraud, and so on.

Humorous publications like these occupied an important place in the press of this

1. Doctoral candidate in History at the Universidad Torcuato Di Tella. I would like to thank the staff of the National Library, especially in the Treasury Room and the Periodicals Department. Translation by Emily Stern.
2. For the reader unfamiliar with Argentine political history, a list of the Argentine presidents and their parties is given in in Table A6.1.

Table A6.1. *Presidents and their Parties, 1862–1938*

1862–1868	Bartolomé Mitre	Partido Nacionalista
1868–1874	Domingo F. Sarmiento	Partido Autonomista
1874–1880	Nicolás Avellaneda	Partido Autonomista Nacional (PAN)
1880–1886	Julio A. Roca	PAN
1886–1890	Miguel Juárez Celman	PAN
1890–1892	Carlos Pellegrini	PAN
1892–1895	Luis Saenz Peña	PAN
1895–1898	José Evaristo Urriburu	PAN
1898–1904	Julio A. Roca	PAN
1904–1906	Manuel Quintana	PAN
1906–1910	José Figueroa Alcorta	PAN
1910–1914	Roque Saenz Peña	PAN
1914–1916	Victorino de la Plaza	PAN
1916–1922	Hipólito Irigoyen	Union Civica Radical (UCR)
1922–1928	Marcelo T. de Alvear	UCR
1928–1930	Hipólito Irigoyen	UCR
1930–1932	José Félix Urriburu	Government <i>de facto</i>
1932–1938	Agustín P. Justo	Coalition ( <i>conservadores, antiyrigoyenistas, socialistas independientes</i> )

era. They criticized, satirized, and, in some cases, even imagined a political direction for the future, an ideal republic to which one might aspire. As Lichtenberg noted, “neither comedy nor satire improves things immediately”; that is, they don’t eliminate vice, but they undoubtedly liberate an energy that uncovers certain unspoken elements of a political situation and, thus, expand our horizon of understanding.<sup>3</sup>

3. Lichtenberg (1995).