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## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WSJ.com

WORLD NEWS | SEPTEMBER 1, 2010

# Chile Mining Minister Is Resourceful in Rescue

By MATT MOFFETT

SAN JOSE MINE, Chile—Whether consoling families of 33 miners trapped deep underground or overseeing engineering teams trying to bring the men out, Mining Minister Laurence Golborne has been the point man on an unparalleled rescue effort.



Associated Press

Laurence Golborne, center, communicates with miners through a tube.

A former CEO of a retail chain who typifies a government dominated by business executives, Mr. Golborne has won praise for his adroit management of the miniature city that has sprung up around the mine with a diverse population including miners' relatives, geologists, health workers, journalists—and even a visiting clown named Rolly.

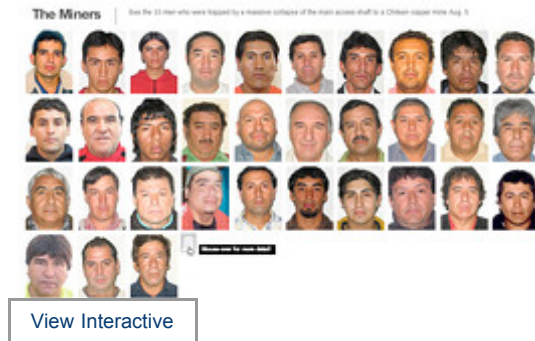
Mr. Golborne, whose brief tenure in government was marred by controversies before the Aug. 5 mine collapse, oversaw the desperate 17-day search for the miners that finally located them in a chamber half a mile underground. Now an epic management and engineering task lies ahead of him. Mr. Golborne must tend to the fragile mental and physical health of the trapped workers in the months ahead, while rescuers drill down 2,200 feet and then try to lift the miners out.

Besides search and rescue, Mr. Golborne's biggest challenge has been managing the approximately 300 family members who are holding vigil at a tent city on the mine site, dubbed Camp Hope.

### The Miners

See the 33 men trapped underground.

"We had to



## Chile's Efforts to Rescue Miners

See key dates



Luis Hidalgo/Associated Press

Relatives waited outside the collapsed mine Aug. 9.

### More photos and interactive graphics

establish a relationship built on trust and on the confidence that we were on the same team," Mr. Golborne, 49 years old, said this week at a press briefing, in which he shifted easily between Spanish and English. Mr. Golborne said the relationship with families is now "very strong," while acknowledging there have also been "ups and downs."

Family members were incensed when, after the miners had been underground about a week, Mr. Golborne told a Chilean television station that there were "low" probabilities of discovering them alive. He later said the remark was taken out of context, and he eventually won the families over with persistent dedication to the search and lots of personal attention.

"He came down to our tent at night and drank [yerba] mate," a South American tea, says Jessica Segovia, who came here shortly after her husband, Dario, and the other miners were trapped. "He is very human. He cried along with us."

Later, after the miners were located, Mr. Golborne played guitar in an impromptu celebration with the family members.

Political scientist Patricio Navia says the people skills Mr. Golborne learned in business have been an asset in the crisis. "He wasn't a banker—he worked in supermarkets," says Mr. Navia. "That's a client-oriented business where you deal with people from lots of different social strata."

Mr. Golborne received an undergraduate degree in civil engineering before going on to study business

administration at Stanford and Northwestern. He spent eight years through 2008 as CEO of Centros Comerciales Sudamericanos, a diversified retailer with operations in four countries besides Chile and nearly 100,000 employees.

President Sebastián Piñera, a conservative billionaire who made his fortune in airlines and television, brought so many executives, like Mr. Golborne, into his cabinet when he took office in March that some people dubbed the government "Chile Inc." Mr. Piñera's conviction was that executives could run the country more efficiently than the more traditional politicians of the center-left Concertación coalition that had governed Chile the previous 20 years.



As Chilean rescuers prepared Monday to begin drilling a tunnel to free 33 miners trapped underground, local officials spoke out about allegations of corruption surrounding the reopening of the San Jose mine in 2008.

Some Chilean analysts feared that the prevalence of businessmen in government would lead to rampant conflicts of interest. Others worried that the executives would simply prove ill-suited to the rough and tumble of politics, as Mr. Golborne himself sometimes seemed in the early going.

One of Mr. Golborne's first tasks was pressing for congressional approval of an increase in mining royalties to help pay reconstruction costs from Chile's massive February earthquake. In the midst of the debate in June, Mr. Golborne became a target of criticism for taking five days off to go to South Africa for the World Cup. A government spokeswoman said the trip was a family commitment, and Mr. Golborne said

his absence had no impact on the royalties push.

After a Congressional committee shot down the royalty proposal in July, opposition senators held a press conference, in which one suggested raising taxes on the rich to pay for the earthquake damage. Suddenly Mr. Golborne could be heard cackling loudly in the back of the room. The legislators confronted Mr. Golborne about the outburst, and he subsequently apologized for it.

Mr. Golborne was on a working trip to Ecuador when the cave-in occurred, but quickly rushed to the mine. "The families were very anxious, impatient," Mr. Golborne said during a briefing. "They wanted results."

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