

Usage devolves upon me as the head of the Foreign Office of the country in which you are assembled to call this meeting together; to call it to order and to preside during the formation of your organization. I wish to express to you, at the outset, the high appreciation of the Government of the United States of the compliment which you pay to us in selecting the city of Washington as the field of your labors in behalf of the rule of peace and order and brotherhood among the peoples of Central America. It is most gratifying to the people of the United States that you should feel that you will find here an atmosphere favorable to the development of the ideas of peace and unity, of progress and mutual helpfulness, in place of war and revolution and the retardation of the principles of liberty and justice.

So far as a sincere and friendly desire for success in your labors may furnish a favorable atmosphere, you certainly will have it here. The people of the United States are sincere believers in the principles that you are seeking to apply to the conduct of your international affairs in Central America. They sincerely desire the triumph and the control of the principles of liberty and order everywhere in the world. They especially desire that the blessings which follow the control of those principles may be enjoyed by all the people of our sister republics on the Western Hemisphere, and we further believe that it will be, from the most selfish point of view, for our interests to have peaceful, prosperous, and progressive republics in Central America.

The people of the United Mexican States and of the United States of America are now enjoying great benefits from the mutual interchange of commerce and friendly intercourse between the two countries of Mexico and the United States. Prosperity, the increase of wealth, the success of enterprise — all the results that come from the intelligent use of wealth — are being enjoyed by the people of both countries, through the friendly intercourse that utilizes for the people of each country the prosperity of the other. We in the United States should be most happy if the states of Central America might move with greater rapidity along the pathway of such prosperity, of such progress; to the end that we may share, through commerce and friendly intercourse, in your new prosperity, and aid you by our prosperity.

We cannot fail, gentlemen, to be admonished by the many failures which have been made by the people of Central America to establish agreement among themselves which would be lasting, that the task you have before you is no easy one. The trial has often been made and

the agreements which have been elaborated, signed, ratified, seem to have been written in water. Yet I cannot resist the impression that we have at last come to the threshold of a happier day for Central America. Time is necessary to political development. I have great confidence in the judgment that in the long course of time, through successive steps of failure, through the accompanying education of your people, through the encouraging examples which now, more than ever before, surround you, success will be attained in securing unity and progress in other countries of the New Hemisphere. Through the combination of all these, you are at a point in your history where it is possible for you to take a forward step that will remain.

It would ill become me to attempt to propose or suggest the steps which you should take, but I will venture to observe that the all-important thing for you to accomplish is that while you enter into agreements which will, I am sure, be framed in consonance with the most peaceful aspirations and the most rigid sense of justice, you shall devise also some practical methods under which it will be possible to secure the performance of those agreements. The mere declaration of general principles, the mere agreement upon lines of policy and of conduct, are of little value unless there be practical and definite methods provided by which the responsibility for failing to keep the agreement may be fixed upon some definite person, and the public sentiment of Central America brought to bear to prevent the violation. The declaration that a man is entitled to his liberty would be of little value with us in this country were it not for the writ of *habeas corpus* that makes it the duty of a specific judge, when applied to, to inquire into the cause of his detention, and set him at liberty if he is unjustly detained. The provision which declares that a man should not be deprived of his property without due process of law would be of little value were it not for the practical provision which imposes on specific officers the duty of nullifying every attempt to take away a man's property without due process of law.

To find practical, definite methods by which you shall make it somebody's duty to see that the great principles you declare are not violated, by which if an attempt be made to violate them the responsibility may be fixed upon the guilty individual — those, in my judgment, are the problems to which you should specifically and most earnestly address yourselves.

I have confidence in your success because I have confidence in your sincerity of purpose, and because I believe that your people have developed to the point where they are ready to receive and to utilize such results as you may work out. Why should you not live in peace and harmony? You are one people in fact, your citizenship is interchangeable — your race, your religion, your customs, your laws, your lineage, your consanguinity and relations, your social relations, your sympathies, your aspirations, and your hopes for the future are the same.

It can be nothing but the ambition of individuals who care more for



their selfish purposes than for the good of their country that can prevent the people of the Central American states from living together in peace and unity.

It is my most earnest hope, it is the hope of the American Government and people, that from this conference may come the specific and practical measures which will enable the people of Central America to march on with equal step abreast of the most progressive nations of modern civilization, to fulfill their great destinies in that brotherhood which nature has intended them to preserve, and to exile forever from that land of beauty and of wealth incalculable the fraternal strife which has hitherto held you back in the development of your civilization.