

Speech

Organization of American States



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THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES
COMMEMORATION OF THE BIRTH DATE OF DR. LEO S.
ROWE**

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I am pleased to help welcome all of you to this auspicious event. Today we honor the memory of a true "precursor": Dr. Leo Stanton Rowe, an austere and dedicated citizen of the Americas to whom we are deeply in debt for his enthusiasm and love for the Americas and for this Organization, which has evolved even beyond his own dreams.

The entire Hemisphere has benefited from his legacy. The Organization of American States follows the example of Dr. Rowe's unflinching hard work and motivation during his unparalleled 26 years as Director General of the Pan American Union.

I said that the OAS has evolved far beyond even Dr. Rowe's dreams. Let me quote from a chronicler of the times. In writing about the slow evolution of the Pan American Union without a formal legal framework defining its attributes, he wrote that "To suggest the absence of a constitution to (its) long-time Director General . . . Dr. Leo S. Rowe, was sufficient to invite a lecture on its superfluosity." (Donald Marquand Dozer: Are We Good Neighbors? Three decades of Inter-American relations, 1930-1960 (University of Florida Press, Gainesville, 1959), p. 334.)

The adoption of the OAS Charter, nearly two-years after Dr. Rowe's tragic accidental death when he was run over by a car while walking to a function at the Embassy of Bolivia, filled that void and set the stage for our modern Organization, which is today still evolving dramatically to accommodate the host of political, economic and social challenges that condition cooperation in this New World we are entering in the 21st Century, but which now formally and juridically recognizes the principles for which Dr. Rowe stood, including the sovereign equality of states, non-intervention, and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Let me now quote from Leo Rowe himself: "Pan Americanism . . . is simply a recognition of the fact that because of fortunate historical conditions . . . and by reason of a century of determined effort, the foundations have been laid for a system of international cooperation unparalleled in history; a system destined to give to the world an example of new and higher standard of international dealing."

"A new and higher standard." That is what some believe the OAS stands for in the midst of the past century's proliferation of international institutions. And that is the standard Leo Rowe himself set. It is the standard that is set by your co-workers who are awarded the Leo Rowe Memorial Award, given once a year during the Staff Awards Ceremony. This is the highest form of recognition that a Staff Member can receive for his or her contributions to the work of the General Secretariat.

We congratulate these exceptional staff members for following the principles of Dr. Rowe. We compliment Rene Gutierrez, the President of the Staff Association, and Manuel Metz, of the Leo Rowe Fund, and the Department of Human Resource Services for organizing this event to help us remember and reflect on Dr. Rowe's legacy. And I would be remiss if I failed to thank the Columbus Memorial Library and Americas magazine for the two exhibit cases honoring Dr. Rowe that we see around us.

I yield now to the Chairman of the Permanent Council, Ambassador Raymond Valcin, the Permanent Representative of Haiti, for a perspective on Dr. Rowe from the standpoint of the political bodies and of a state that was a founding member both of the Pan American Union and of today's OAS.

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