

ADDRESS BY U.S. CONGRESSMAN DON H. CLAUSEN TO THE SECOND PLENARY SESSION
HELD ON DECEMBER 9, 1967

It is with great humility that I accept this great personal privilege you have granted me—the opportunity to address the Delegates and Representatives of the countries attending the Tenth Pan American Highway Congress.

My purpose in addressing this distinguished group is to give to you some of my thoughts as a member of the Public Works Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives.

I am representing, on the U.S. Delegation to this Congress, that part of the U.S. Government, which has the responsibility to review the highway program proposals of the executive agency within my government which is headed by Mr. Frank Turner. The members of my committee must evaluate and pass judgment on the Bureau of Public Roads program proposals and authorize the funding, administrative control and procedural arrangements by which the programs can be executed. Thus, I represent one part of the partnership arrangement by which the road program of the Federal Government in my country is executed.

These past few days have proven to be very informative and educational for me as I have observed your Committees and Plenary Sessions at work, considering, evaluating and sharing information as presented by the very able Highway technicians, engineers, economists and administrators in attendance.

I have been particularly impressed with the very high quality of people present, willing to give of their time and talents so generously toward a program that I believe history will record as “the most important single undertaking of our time”—“a coordinated and integrated road and highway system for the Americas.” Each of you will receive your reward in Heaven for having participated in this timely and important congress.

At this time, I want to associate myself with the previously expressed commendation on behalf of your retiring Chairman, Don Rómulo O’Ferrill. We, in the United States, hold him in the highest of esteem and respect for his extraordinary leadership in advancing the Pan American Highway Program.

Like you, we were shocked and saddened by the death of President Oscar Gestido shortly after his splendid address to the opening session of this Congress.

His wise and inspiring message is now recorded, permanently, among the papers of this very crucial meeting.

President Gestido left a marked impression on all of us privileged to hear this address. Later that day, he honored me with a brief private meeting in his office where we further discussed and agreed upon the importance of balanced transportation systems, land, sea and air, in the countries of North and South America. He was a great gentleman—a fair, firm and trustworthy man.

At this time, I believe it would be most appropriate to reflect, briefly, on the words included in his Inaugural Address to his people of Uruguay.

These words more than adequately express what might be the symbolic phrase that your organization should adopt as you face the challenging requirements of your task ahead. He said and I quote: “There is no magic formula to make things well, only mental honesty, hard work and routine and meticulous planning for the future”.

A number of my colleagues in the Congress have eulogized and spoken very favorably about President Gestido—in the House Senate—early this week.

The task ahead is not only challenging but potentially rewarding. As I am sure many of you will agree, the improvements to our highways, tends to yield some of the greatest benefits of our time. It accelerates economic development, enhances education, and promotes the general health and welfare of our people.

We, in the United States, have invested large sums of money to build and improve our Road and Highway Systems. As a member of the United States Congress, I can testify to the broad acceptance and genuine popularity of our Highway programs.

I am sure you can all agree that we can learn a great deal from the study of history and the facts that are revealed.

In order to encourage you to take bold and positive action now and in the immediate future, I would like to give you some very revealing and startling facts relating to the growth of our Gross National Product from 1916 to 1967. Based upon our experience, I think I am safe in predicting similar growth in your countries and prompts me say, . . . with a well planned and financed highway system, you can anticipate repayment, many times over, through economic growth.