

Remarks of Ambassador Luigi R. Einaudi

Center for Democracy Dinner  
In Honor of President-Elect Rafael Angel Calderon

Monday, March 19, 1990

This is a very special evening. The newly elected president of the hispanic world's most durable democracy is with us in the capital of Jefferson and Lincoln. It is a bipartisan evening. Support in the United States for democracy, and particularly for Costa Rica's vital brand of democracy, cuts across political and bureaucratic lines.

The Center for Democracy has an enviable record for promoting peaceful democratic change through the electoral process in many countries, most recently in Nicaragua. Alan Weinstein, we are all in your debt.

This evening we greet the President-elect of Costa Rica. Rafael Angel Calderon Fournier is a veteran political leader. That some still call him "Junior" is a tribute to his parents. He is the eldest son of the beloved "El Doctor," Costa Rica's President Rafael Angel Calderon Guardia, founder in the 1940s of Costa Rica's enduring social security system, and of the wonderfully political Dona Maria del Rosario Fournier de Calderon.

This said, the President-elect's record reveals that he stands very much on his own. Rafael Angel Calderon Fournier was born in the bitterness of exile and began his education in Mexico. In Costa Rica, he became a student leader, then a youth leader and public official. In 1974, he was elected to parliament. In 1978, he became Foreign Minister. He was all of 29 years old, one of the youngest Foreign Ministers in history. If that were not enough, he is also the founder of the political party that just carried him to victory.

The Party of Social-Christian Unity is not a personal vehicle, but a political party with programmatic foundations in the Christian Democratic tradition. The PUSC's orientation and international links owe much to the work of our guest tonight.

It has not always been easy. Prior to his victory February 5, our guest ran twice for the presidency. He lost both times, in 1982 and 1986. This range of experience gives him very special credentials. He is a leader of the new generation, yet in experience as well as heritage he is also a bridge to the old.

The present alone is full of extraordinary challenges. Fresh resources are in short supply. Will Costa Rica be able to deepen the social justice that is the fruit of its enviable political freedom? Across the border in Nicaragua, arms are everywhere. Will a peaceful transition to democracy be possible? The hemisphere is buffeted by gaps among and within countries. Will our New World have the confidence to forge its own 1992 in response to EC-92 and the extension of political freedom in Eastern Europe?

Not least among Rafael Angel Calderon's credentials is his belief in a stronger role for the Organization of American States. Costa Rica has much to offer.

--Costa Rica is virtually synonymous with human rights. San Jose is the seat of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

--Costa Rica's Supreme Electoral Tribunal is an institution envied and emulated throughout the hemisphere and beyond.

-- The Inter-American Center for Electoral promotion (CAPPEL), which has contributed to elections from Nicaragua to Haiti and from Bolivia to Panama, is based in Costa Rica.

--Costa Rica's agricultural base, so fused with its democratic tradition, makes it the ideal location for IICA--the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture.

The challenge before us as we enter the 90's is to make our cooperation stronger and more relevant to managing the common and even the uncommon problems of our increasingly interdependent hemisphere. In some areas, as the inter-american system begins its second century, proven relationships must adjust to new challenges. In other areas, we sense that regional cooperation will be decisive, but we cannot yet discern the shape of the future.

What is clear is that Costa Rica and the United States will both help shape that future. Threats like hunger, illegal narcotics, refugee movements or human rights abuse, and just as surely the hemisphere's positive agenda of growth, protection of the environment, regional integration, and potentials that are still only glimmers in the antechambers of our minds, all these can only be dealt with by the creativity and effort that are the hallmarks of the freedom we share.

Mr. President-elect: Your many American friends congratulate you and welcome you. We look forward to many useful discussions this week, and to much concerted action in the years ahead.