Banquet Speech

Melvin Calvin's speech at the Nobel Banquet in Stockholm, December 10, 1961

Your Majesties, Your Royal Highnesses, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

To express to you in mere words, our personal feelings on this occasion you must know to be impossible, and particularly so for one who normally has to describe only things outside himself. You have honoured my colleagues, my family and me, but mostly my comrades in science. I speak not only of those with whom I have had the pleasure to work directly - but the many others who preceded us and surround us in our work. For each of us who appear to have had a successful experiment there are many to whom their own experiments seem barren and negative. But they contribute their strength to the structure within which we all build.

Alfred Nobel, in creating his foundation and naming the four prize-awarding bodies, sought to enhance international understanding. By elevating scientists and thus their science he has certainly succeeded. If I may take the liberty to speak for science at least, today his name and his prizes are without a peer in the world. He not only elevates science but he influences it as well.

Your Majesty - your Royal Academy of Science and its Nobel Committees in physics and in chemistry and your Royal Caroline Medico-Chirurgical Institute and its Nobel Committee have done their work so well over the past six decades that their decisions are universally accepted and point the new frontiers in science for the coming generations. He designed well and you and your countrymen may well be proud of your construction.

Prior to the speech, G. Liljestrand, member of the Royal Academy of Sciences, addressed the laureate: No chemical process has a greater importance than the incorporation of atmospheric carbon dioxide into the starch molecule of the green plants under the influence of light from the sun. This reaction is the foundation of life, not only for the green plants themselves but also for all higher animals. This complicated process - the object of intense studies for more than a century - has now been unravelled, Professor Calvin, by your establishing the intermediate steps in the reaction. We express our deep admiration of your achievements.