

LAUDATIO HENDRIK DEELSTRA

R. Dams

Hendrik Deelstra graduated as a chemist from the University of Ghent in July 1959. He obtained his Aggregation for Teaching in High School in 1961. He became Philosophical Doctor in Chemistry at the same University in October 1963 with a Ph.D. thesis on 'Complexes of Lanthanides by Cation Exchange with α -hydroxycarboxylates'. This scientific work was performed at the Laboratory of Analytical Chemistry (Director : Prof. Dr. J. Hoste). Very soon the young doctor left for Africa, where he started a fruitful teaching career at the Universities of Kinshasha and Kisangani, Zaire (1964-1967) and at the University of Bujumbura, Burundi (1968-1972). Often in very difficult circumstances, he has enthusiastically taught Principles of Inorganic Chemistry and Advanced Analytical Chemistry at these Universities in the framework of the Belgian Organisation for the Cooperation with Developing Countries. Later on, when he had returned to his home country, his interest in the education in developing countries continued. Up to now he is still involved in organizing cooperation with the University Education in Middle-African countries.

In Belgium his teaching career continued at the Universitaire Instelling Antwerpen. At the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences he first became Associate Professor and, since 1979, Full Professor, teaching several branches of Analytical Chemistry and Bromatology. At the University of Antwerp he is very much appreciated by his students and his research group performs internationally recognized work in the field of atomic spectroscopic analysis and bromatology.

Very soon his interest in History and Philosophy of Science showed up and since 1973 he teaches "History of Chemistry" as an optional course. More recently he has also been charged with compulsory courses on "Studium Generale in connection with Philosophy of Science"

and on "History of Science and Technology". In addition he co-organized a large number of national and international symposia, colloquia, conferences and exhibitions on subjects such as "The Evolution of Scientific Thinking", "History of Sciences", "Exact Sciences around Christoffel Plantijn", "Scientific and Industrial Patrimony", "Conservation Management of our Paper-Patrimony", "From Mercator to Frimout", etc. At these occasions and on many other symposia and conferences in Belgium and abroad he was an invited or plenary lecturer and often acted as chairman. Deelstra frequently addresses societies of young chemists, service clubs, high school teachers, and even the general public on subjects linked to the history of science, the career of famous scientists, the story of scientific discoveries, etc.

His list of publications on these subjects is impressive, including 10 chapters in books, 40 articles in scientific journals and monographs. He was co-editor of the proceedings of four symposia.

Deelstra's interest in science and history is also illustrated by his memberships and his participation in international committees. In the "Working Party on the History of Chemistry" of the Federation of European Chemical Societies (FECS) he not only represents his country but since 1993 he is the chairman of this international body. He is also member of the programme of the European Science Foundation : "The Evolution of Chemistry in Europe 1789-1939".

Especially during the last decade Prof. Deelstra has made efforts to increase interest for the history and philosophy of science in Belgium. For example within the Royal Flemish Union of Chemistry (KVCV) he established a section on "History of Chemistry". Since 1990 he also chairs this section, which recently organized some interesting scientific manifestations. He is member of still other national commissions and committees for the History of Sciences, linked to the Royal Academies, the Royal Library, the Royal Academies for Overseas Sciences, the Royal Antwerp Pharmacists Union, etc.

In Belgium Professor Hendrik Deelstra is without any doubt one

of the pioneers in the history and philosophy of sciences, especially of chemistry. He was and still is extremely active in arising the interest in this matter of both scientists and the general public. To this aim he wrote a great number of papers and monographies, lectured at many occasions on a variety of subjects connected with the development of Science in Europe and in Belgium, and recently has been very active in organizing scientific meetings and in establishing scientific societies on history and philosophy of science. We are grateful for his efforts to remind us of our important scientific past.