

lifetime a hundred thousand Canadians have so chosen; have given their lives to preserve the things that we enjoy in peace today in this very fortunate country; to ensure that our values, our standards, might continue to thrive in home, school and church, and in the minds of our children.

But if the history of sacrifice in war is to repeat itself, it will now be on a scale increased to the point of universal tragedy and destruction. It is this frightening advance in the science of destruction, unaccompanied by anything like it in the social sciences or in political morality, that has given rise, I think, to much of the cynicism that marks and moves the discussion of world affairs today. If we believe that not only will material destruction be total, but that ideals and principles and all good and related things will go with it, we will, almost inevitably, yield in cynical resignation to the inevitable.

This attitude is often rationalized by the argument that nothing anyone can do today has any effect on the course of world affairs. Great events, according to this view, are governed by mysterious and irresistible forces or perhaps by a few powerful and highly placed persons. Ordinary people may be the agents or the objects of these mysterious powers, but they cannot influence them. All humanity are passengers on one of two trains which are running toward each other and whether they crash or not is something that the passengers cannot do anything about.

This desolate conclusion is a matter for grave concern because it leads to indifference and irresponsibility, and that, in turn, makes certain the very situation which the cynics assume already exists. If we act, individually or nationally, on the assumption that we are helpless by-standers, then we will soon become just that.

In free societies such an attitude may indeed turn out to be an invitation to extinction. Just as the wish is often the father to the thought, so cynicism and resignation often beget the very situation that is most feared. Indeed, in their most sophisticated forms, they are themselves forms of fear, and they can come close to despair. This, in fact, is the acknowledgement of defeat before the struggle has even begun. Nor is it justified by a reasoned examination of all the facts including, indeed especially, the most disagreeable.

If an examination of international affairs in 1955 does not seem to offer much ground for optimism, this, should be a reason for not running away from the facts but for having a fresh and deep look at them. It is least of all the time to accept the cold comfort of a cynical wisecrack.