

organize our national resources to get the maximum security in a dangerous world, without destroying the freedom of action and initiative of our people?

Let me begin my discussion of these problems which confront our free society by saying that in my view the essential lubricant in a free society is tolerance. This does not necessarily apply to all modern states, and there are obvious examples of nations which are held together without the least regard for tolerance. It is the case, however, in all states where government by consent is practised. Canada, where various groups live and work together within the boundaries of a national state, is a good example of this principle in operation. This country exists on the assumption that, as far as is humanly possible, the interests of no group — racial, geographic, economic, religious or political — will prevail at the expense of any other group. We have committed ourselves to the principle that by compromise and adjustment we can work out some sort of balance of interests which will make it possible for the members of all groups to live side by side without any one of them arbitrarily imposing its will on any other. It is my belief that this is the only basis upon which Canada can possibly exist, as a nation, and that any attempt to govern the country on any other basis would destroy it. In these circumstances, the basic quality of tolerance in our national character is of the first importance.

Of almost equal importance for our national welfare, and indeed arising out of the practice of tolerance, is the avoidance of extreme policies. This is often called walking in the middle of the road. This course is not so easy as people usually think. It imposes both self-restraint and discipline, even when we assume, as I do, that the traffic is all going in the one direction. Anyone who chooses to travel in the middle of the road must not, of course, deny the use of either side of it to persons who prefer to walk there. He condemns himself, therefore, to accept during the journey the constant jostling of companions on either side. This middle ground is, I think, becoming more and more difficult to maintain, and the temptation to abandon it is constantly increasing, especially in the face of the road blocks thrown up by unfriendly fellow travellers. I do not wish here to criticize those who choose other ground upon which to walk, or to question the basis of their choice. I wish only to make a strong plea for the preservation of this middle position in our national life. Paradoxically, it is only in this way that the existence of many of those on each side can also be preserved. If the middle group is eliminated, the less tolerant elements fall under the irresistible temptation to try to capture the whole roadway. When the middle of the road is no longer occupied firmly by stable and progressive groups in the community, it is turned into a parade ground for those extremist forces who would substitute goose-stepping for walking. All others are driven to hide disconsolate and powerless in the hedges, ditches and culverts.

How can the meaning of the middle way in our free society be described in a few words? What does it stand for in principle? Where does it lead in practice? Is it merely the political line of least resistance along which drift those without the courage of their convictions, or simply without convictions? It is, or should be, far more than that. The central quality of this approach is the stress which it always lays on human values, the integrity and worth of the individual in society. It stands for the emancipation of the mind as well as for personal freedom and well-being. It is irrevocably opposed to the shackling limitations of rigid political dogma, to political oppression and to economic exploitation by any part of the community. It detests the abuse of power either by the state or by private individuals and groups. It respects first of all a person for what he is, not who he is. It stands for his right to manage his own affairs, when they are his own, to hold his own convictions and speak his own mind. It aims at equality of opportunity; it maintains that effort and reward should not be separated and it values highly initiative and originality. It does not believe in lopping off the tallest ears of corn in the interests of comfortable conformity.