

those of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The fact and principle of authority is established prior to the fact and principle of freedom. In the British tradition of monarchy, parliament, and law, specific liberties are carved out within the ordered structure of society.

There is in Canadian political, business, and social life a certain formality and conservatism that reflect this fact. This conservatism has its regrettable side, of course. The walking dead are out in numbers—the mediocrats, the anti-hothead vote. We are 'the elected squares' to one writer and 'the white baboos' to another; for our inefficiencies there is no excuse. A little talent will get you a long way in an uncompetitive society, protected by tariffs and government rewards. A Canadian has been defined as somebody who does not play for keeps. Even his anti-trust laws fail to enforce business competition as ruthlessly as the American ones.

The Canadian, unlike the Frenchman, the Britisher, or the American, has had no single dominant metropolis. The English-speaking Canadian has had New York and London as well as Toronto and Montreal, and for the French Canadian there has been Paris as well. This condition breeds a divided vision, sometimes paralysing, sometimes detached and ironic, always multiple, and useful for living in the electronic age's global village. It has meant that Canadians have been better interpreters and critics of culture than creators of it—better as performing musicians and actors, for example, than as composers or

playwrights. In politics and diplomacy this has led to an extreme pragmatism. Our two major parties are even less the preserve of one class or doctrine than the American parties. Certainly there has been nothing like the Republicans' monopoly of the rich and of the free-enterprise creed. There are no strong ideological overtones about this Canadian approach to other peoples and world affairs.

When a distinguished American advocate of socialism, pacifism, and free love was turned back by Canadian immigration authorities in 1965, the liberal governor of Minnesota deplored this unexpected evidence of McCarthyism in Canada. It was of course nothing of the kind. In a sense, it was just the opposite—an almost touchingly stupid application of the letter of the law, born of respect for regulations. There was little real concern about doctrines. In Canada ideas abound and rebound with Hindu proliferation, and except among some French Canadians are not taken very seriously anyway.

Canada is a place not easily confused with paradise or the promised land. This 'indigestible Canada,' this Marx Brothers' Freedonia, this Austro-Hungary of the new world, with its two official peoples and its multitudes of permitted ones, its ethnic islands and cultural archipelagos, its ghettos of the unpasteurized and unhomogenized, this harbour of old Adams unable or unwilling to be reborn or to burn just yet their old European clothes, but growing attached, many of them, as deeply as the Indian or the pioneer to the landscape of farm and city—this Canada

has, alas, not even carried diversity and toleration nearly as far as it might (perhaps lest they become principles), since in practice it has been extremely difficult for Asians and West Indians to immigrate to Canada. By contrast, one conjures up a hopeful vision of the year 2070 in which the majority of Canadians will be of Chinese origin—though the ones that speak English, who will be called 'Anglo-Saxons' in Quebec, will undoubtedly have their quarrels with those who speak French, some of whom will be unable to get their children taught in French in British Columbia.

Canadians often apologize for or feel guilty about the lack of revolution or civil war in their history to stir up their phlegmatic souls. The poet James Reaney recalls someone at a cocktail party sneering at one of the Riel rebellions because so few people were killed.

In a world where independence often arrives with swift violence, it may be good to have one nation where it has matured slowly: in a world of fierce national prides, to have a state about which it is hard to be solemn and religious without being ridiculous, and impossible to be dogmatic. In a world of ideological battles, it is good to have a place where the quantity and quality of potential being in a person means more than what he believes: in a masculine world of the assertive will and the cutting edge of intellect, a certain Canadian tendency to the amorphous permissive feminine principal of openness and tolerance and acceptance offers the possibility of healing. ■