

■ Security depends more upon one's internal qualities than upon the nature of the things we receive from external sources — thus runs the thought of this commencement speech.

ABOUT THE PROBLEM OF SECURITY

In the life of most men and women in any social group there are special occasions that should give them pause for deep and sober cogitation. Oftentimes, however, such critical moments receive no more value and attention than ordinary incidents and routine happenings in a world of change. Under such circumstances, they come and go without provoking any thought or feeling for serious self-assessment or self-examination on the part of those who should be personally concerned. To those who have spent years in an educational institution, one of such occasions is the day set aside to mark the termination of their formal studies. Because commencement programs nowadays take place with almost mechanical regularity once or twice a year, many of us do not clearly realize their deeper significance; and we look upon each of these

events as no more than an ordinary public ceremony when a friend or a member of the family receives his diploma to indicate the end of his four-year peregrination in the classroom and laboratory. If our attitude towards this academic celebration is as casual and as thoughtless as this, if we do not consider college graduation as one of the crucial points in the efforts of a person to rise to a higher plane, we may be revealing in a sense the slightness of the appreciation we have for education and its meaning to the individual recipient and to the community. This indifference to an educational event is a spirit that may infect many others; and it could be one of the reasons why thousands of graduates lose their interest in the real substance of education soon after they depart from the academic environment. Obviously, this is an attitude

that should be deplored and avoided.

The importance of making use of the commencement day as an occasion for sober cogitation should not be ignored or underrated. Every graduate should develop an urge to examine his own record in the process of acquiring the individual improvement which he thinks he has attained. He should make an effort to measure the qualities of mind, character, and personality he has gained.

The successful graduate is not only the student who has received the highest numerical grade for each of the subjects he has taken in his college years. Men differ in the number and quality of aptitudes and talents they possess. Some have more and higher talents than others. But those who have but a few or even only one talent need not be sorry or depressed. The graduate who has made the most out of his opportunity to develop his one and only talent to the highest degree he is capable of reaching is as worthy of praise and reward as the one who has made

good in several avenues in his college career.

The task of equipping a person with adequate abilities to meet the challenge of different areas of life involves several activities. The acquisition of those qualifications for living a full life is the indispensable prerequisite for the fulfillment of the purpose of education. This is not easy to attain; but neither is it extraordinarily difficult of attainment.

Common sense tells us that the problems of the individual and the community do not assume a single and uniform pattern. They are not constant and static. They are often swayed by uncertain moods and unpredictable factors which do not follow the regularity of the ebb and flow of ocean tides. Our life itself even in the heart of sleepy towns and rustic barrios is exposed to unforeseeable vicissitudes. It may be peaceful and pleasant at one moment; and it could be turbulent and disturbing at the next.

Today we feel and enjoy the warmth and light of the sun; tomorrow a driving rain and a destructive typhoon

may keep us immobile and morose inside our homes and offices. At one particular instant, we take pride in our strong and healthy bodies; but at the next moment, we may be trembling with a high fever or weakened by some unknown ailment.

Now we may be experiencing some measure of happiness and prosperity. Then the scene changes, and we may find ourselves face to face with the misery and pain of failure and poverty. Now we may have friends to praise us; but tomorrow these very people may see nothing good in what we do and say.

The facts of history have shown us beyond any doubt that change is the most constant, and permanent phenomenon in all life. Science warns us against absolutes and certainties. And yet there still many people who do not seem to learn nor care to learn from these historical and scientific axioms of precaution. Notwithstanding the college instruction they have received, they deliberately look for a condition of permanence envisioned in their dreams of

security. They are the loudest and the strongest defenders of the status quo as the best guarantor of earthly peace, order, and blissful existence.

But let us not follow in their footsteps and fall into this fatal error; let us not entertain even for a moment the belief that it is the mere possession of some property or some particular job that could give us security and a tranquil mind; let us not be fooled by the expectation that a certain place of safety, a certain kind of business, a certain government position could provide us with a permanent source of satisfaction in our search for our well-being. It is quite safe to say that whatever lies outside of us cannot give us a firm basis of the stability, the safety, and the security that we seek and desire as enlightened human beings.

Security is a condition worth having provided we know what it really is. Unfortunately, the concept has often been misapplied and misunderstood. As a state of absence and avoidance of trouble and worry, security is the goal of the pitiful in-

nocent, the dream of the naive, the summum bonum of the parasite and the weakling. Security is never achieved as a static condition. Unfortunately, it has often been aimed at as such; and the results have often been sad and disastrous.

After the first world war, France built the Maginot line as a measure of national security. It was made up of massive walls and fortifications intended as an impregnable curtain along her boundary to prevent Germany from invading her again. The French leaders thought that the position of their country behind those heavy walls would give her security. Subsequent events proved them pitifully wrong. The thick walls did not make her safe. They could not defend the French nation. Hitler and his legions, his tanks, and his war-planes penetrated into the heart of France itself and conquered the entire country. The French people suffered a humiliating defeat but learned a priceless lesson. The new France has discarded external supports; and following a dynamic policy of self-

reliance, she now stands firm, progressive, and respected.

But you and I want security. If we really do, let us open our minds to understand what it is and where to find it. Security depends upon the vitality of a man's personal qualifications. It lies in a man's capacity to meet headlong the "slings and arrows of outrageous Fortune." It lies in the firmness of a man's will, in his preparation for the unexpected, and in readiness to lock horns with the forces of adversity, to overcome the threats of changing situations, to beat the temptations of a life of ease, and to shun the spinelessness of irresponsibility.

Oftentimes the passion for security in a position could mean the sacrifice of personal freedom. It is certainly most pitiful to see a man exchange his freedom for security. He is no better than a habitual criminal who refuses to leave his prison because within it he is always sure of three meals a day, a roof over his head, a bed at night, and no landlord to throw him out into the

street for non-payment of house rentals.

Service, not security, is the ideal aim of the man and woman of education and character. The qualifications which every good college should develop in its students are those that fit them to meet the challenges of honest and useful service in any place, at any time, and at any cost. Such are the qualifications that make for real security.

The small country of Israel has lately impressed the civilized world with her daring defensive action against numerically superior enemies. Israel has been insecure from the standpoint of geographical size and position. Her total territorial area is but 8,040 square miles, or less than one-fourth of the size of our island of Mindanao. No impregnable walls and fortifications have been erected along her boundary as was the Maginot line in France. Surrounded by hostile countries and unfriendly nations, Israel is insecure as far as her location and her territorial area are concerned. But she has worked hard to develop her capacity to plan,

to act, and to execute and to raise her qualifications for production and survival. She has sought and found security in the exercise of her intelligence, in the development of her will to work, in her determination to overcome obstacles. And so she has conquered many of the difficulties that usually beset a newly organized state without an abundance of natural resources such as those we find in our own Philippines. Her government has not been wasting whatever financial assets she has earned and received. Her leaders and public officials have not made themselves notorious for graft and corruption or for enriching themselves in public positions. She has developed those qualifications that give her the power, the ability, and the integrity to resist external pressures and to stand on her feet. A country hardly twenty years old as an independent political community in this age of fear, uncertainty, and confusion, Israel offers a shining example of what a small country with a dedicated and determined people can accomplish in practically all

areas of life. In economics, in education, in labor problems, in matters of national defense, Israel has been in the vanguard of progress. With a population of about two million five hundred thousand people, a small fraction of the total number of inhabitants of our own country, she has transformed herself into a veritable David in more ways than one. *Mirabile dictu!*

Turning now to our own situation, may I say again that this is a propitious occasion to examine those qualifications we need to enable us to tackle our own problems successfully and to find out how many of them are or are not in our possession. If we discover that we do not have many of them in an adequate measure, now is the proper time to work towards acquiring them, now that we, as graduates, are sufficiently prepared to commence strengthening ourselves further for our life ahead.

Let us then take a brief and rapid inventory of the qualifications we should possess in order to face the challenge of our present and

future work. Our first set of items should refer to mental qualifications, which cover the ability to think for ourselves, to concentrate on the thing we have in hand, on the problem that we have to solve. Our academic preparation should enable us to make good use of this qualification when it teaches us to act only on the basis of actual facts, never to fancies, or unsound beliefs or fantastic superstitions. Our educational preparation should serve as an effective shield against ideas, proposals, or arguments unsupported by reason, facts, or scientific principles.

Together with intellectual and academic qualifications, we need to develop and maintain at all times moral qualifications, which should embrace the ability to choose and to do only what is honest, what is just, what is right, what is clean and true. One of the moral values many, if not most, of our own people lack is a highly developed sense of responsibility. We are reluctant to testify against one whom we know to be a wrongdoer because he is our relative or

our friend, or our fellow member in an association. We are prone to support an accusation against an innocent person because we envy and dislike him or because in doing his duty he has hurt our feelings. There are other instances which show how indifferent we are to the demands of duty and how inactive and dull is our sense of responsibility. Our decisions, both individual and social, can have no meaning nor value unless we have the moral fiber and the moral stamina to carry them out; and lest we forget, it is the habit of purposeful work, unflagging industry, persistent diligence that usually produces these characteristic traits of moral excellence.

Then before we close this brief inventory of essential qualifications for inward greatness, we have to include what are known as behavioral qualifications, the outward manifestations of man's nobility. They cover the admirable traits and practices of refinement in one's action, courtesy in one's dealings with others, and the attitude

of respect and forbearance towards our fellowmen. These may well be deemed as among the imperatives of a decent, orderly, and respectable community. For an intellectual who acts as a howling mad man cannot be of much use in a decent and honorable company. A moral person who moves about as a prophylactic agent parading his goodness among men and women within his circle, will soon be shunned and avoided. The wholesome influence of his otherwise fine qualities will go to utter waste.

As we step out of the academic halls to take our places in another atmosphere, it behooves us to redouble or, at least, to maintain the qualifications we have known for growth and strength — intellectual, moral, and behavioral. In no other way may we attain the security we desire and may we enjoy the freedom we need for individual fulfillment and community betterment. — *By V. G. Sinco from the text of his speech, June 23, 1967, at F.C.*