

*Canadian Flag*

our internal wranglings, in nourishing our resentments—resentments that are invariably the aftermath of the application of the old Canadian treatment—that we will ignore the real threat to our over-all sovereignty, the threat of foreign domination. I fear that this type of reaction feeds on what is our legitimate desire for a vent for our collective frustrations. We are in a somewhat similar position to the wife beater. He picks on his own because the boss gave him a bad time at work; but he does not change his job.

Another bitter irony is the current attempt to becloud the issue by the effort of many to convince the Canadian people that any manifestations of nationalism on their part are not only belated but are primitive expressions of a backward people. So elevated do we regard ourselves in the hierarchy of sophisticated nations that such an observation is particularly galling to our self-esteem. It would not be inaccurate to say that such a suggestion has found a fairly wide acceptance in our country today. The really unfortunate thing is that it has little merit. The ironic connotation is that its most ready proponents would seem to be among our corporate leaders and our heady left-wing intellectuals. At last they have found a sentiment which they can espouse in common, and apparently with equal enthusiasm. A galling aspect of this particular irony is the fact that the common sentiment would have to be the very sentiment that would undermine those national aspirations that some Canadians may at last be ready to express. I think in this context I can do no better than quote the thoughts of Michael Barkway on the subject some years ago when he undertook to deal with this problem:

One (argument) is the pose of sophisticated realism which asserts that the conception of national independence is out of date in this nuclear age, and, therefore, Canada should not worry about preserving its independence from the United States. All that needs be said about this slippery bit of semantics is that the premise, in any sense in which it is true, is also trite; and that the conclusion does not follow from it. It is true that the growing interdependence of the world in the world in the nuclear age necessitates increasing limitations upon the sovereignty of all nations. But the chance of getting such limitations universally accepted will not be increased, but reduced, if Canada surrenders its independent voice to one of the superstates.

The same offence against logic invalidates the argument when it is presented in its alternative form under a cloak of superior idealism. In this form the premise is that national barriers must yield to a universal community of man and a world government. Its false conclusion is that Canada can hasten "the day of the Lord" by sacrificing its independence, not to a world authority, but to the

one superstate which happens to be very powerful, very rich and very near. This merely confuses Canada's absorption by the United States with an ultimate kingdom of heaven where all lambs will be cherished by all lions and there shall be no night.

He goes on:

I don't want to labour the elementary and obvious confusions but so much Canadian thought about independence is so confused that they cannot be ignored. We cannot begin to talk sense until we get rid of the half-baked idea that it is somehow vaguely immoral to assert Canada's will to independence.

Later on Mr. Barkway brings back to our memory a prophecy made many years ago by Henri Bourassa when he stated that if a movement toward annexation ever started in Canada it would be led by "the imperialists of Toronto". This line of reasoning leads one to the historic note that has been drawn to our attention by Douglas V. LePan. In one of his papers, Mr. LePan was warning that Canadians are prepared to pay some price to preserve their national independence but there was a limit to what they are prepared to pay; and then he reminded us of the somersault performed by some of the signers of the annexation manifesto in 1849, signed by many of the very people who had been most vocal in defending Canadian independence and who suddenly became most anxious to exchange it for union with the United States.

The third ironic element that has emerged during our discussion on the flag debate is the often repeated criticism being levelled at the Prime Minister to the effect that his timing was exceedingly bad in bringing in the flag resolution at this time.

When, I ask, could there be a more propitious time? Twenty or even 10 years ago? Surely not. Those were times when we still basked in that affinity with the United Kingdom, arising from the close attachment during world war II and for many years thereafter. To bring in this resolution in those times would have provoked near havoc.

If the argument is that the timing was premature, then would it have been more appropriate to have delayed this resolution to say 10 years from now? I think not. If I may appropriate a phrase uttered by the leader of the New Democratic party, the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam (Mr. Douglas), it would seem that perhaps 10 years from now the more suitable Canadian flag would contain "the insignia of a beaver clutched firmly in the claws of an eagle". Would not a resolution such as the one before us today if brought in at such a time be