

To that extent at least we are all nationalists.

This may seem obvious, but I suggest that it is very difficult to understand and cope with the phenomenon of economic nationalism unless one concedes from the outset that we are all nationalists to some extent.

Americans want the United States to be strong, independent and prosperous. Canadians want the same thing for their country.

It is also just as well to concede from the outset that the politicians who make the laws are likely from the very nature of their calling to be amongst the strongest of nationalists. In democratic countries at least, and I suspect even in socialist countries, politicians must not only give precedence to the national interest but must be seen to do so.

While the fires of nationalism are being banked in the older countries of Western Europe as they join together in an economic union, they burn more brightly than ever in the newly-emerging nations of the Third World and elsewhere.

An analysis of these contradictory tendencies helps to illuminate the problem of economic nationalism in today's world. The old civilizations of Europe that dominated the world for so many centuries are prepared to pool their economic sovereignty because they are satisfied that together they will be more prosperous while each can successfully retain its essential national characteristics and identity. In much of the rest of the world, however, national states are still in process of creating a sense of national identity. They are struggling to prove to themselves and to the rest of the world that they are free and independent, particularly those that were until recently colonies of one of the European powers.

Nationalism is a universal phenomenon; it is essentially a deep emotional issue; for most of the people of the world it is a dynamic force.

Ever since nation states began to emerge at the end of the Middle Ages, the more enlightened of the world's statesmen have been trying to channel the energy of nationalism into peaceful pursuits rather than into war. One cannot say that their attempts have been notably successful. It is instructive, nevertheless, that Europe, once the scene of the bloodiest of wars, has been one of the world's most peaceful areas in recent times and that the most dangerous conflicts have occurred among the less-developed states of the Middle East, Southeast Asia and the Indian subcontinent.

These areas are least able to afford the cost of war. They should be devoting their energies and resources to peaceful development. But to say this is to mouth clichés. It does nothing to resolve the conflicting nationalisms that underlie these tragic wars.

So I suggest to you that there is little point in deploring the excesses of economic nationalism or in proving to one's own satisfaction that