

*Canadian Flag*

on their political leaders that they desire a policy of enlightened nationalism.

Any discussion in the political arena of nationalism, especially a Canadian nationalism, leaves the politician open to immediate ridicule. Such activity on his part is seen as nothing more nor less than that action of a rather ruthless political opportunist, succumbing to the irresistible temptation to seize a time-tested weapon in order to reap rich political rewards.

On the premise that the best defence is attack, may I say that the constant refrains by many of the commentators on the Canadian political scene are distastefully smug, an ego-satisfying device to identify oneself with the conventional wisdom of the so-called intellectual elite, to identify oneself with the enlightened. The answer to a more definite scope and direction of a Canadian nationalism must be found. If it is to be found it undoubtedly lies between the two extremes. The important thing is we must try to find it. The flag issue is simply another price we Canadians would pay to be Canadians; just another hesitant step in our cautious groping to find a truly national purpose.

Of the many Canadians who are prepared to take this step, are there not those who wish that they were more aware of its direction? How much more so, then, must this feeling sway those Canadians who are not as yet prepared to take that step, who desire knowledge of where the step will lead us.

Can we be too critical of those who before depriving themselves of a cherished possession would desire to know that with which it is to be replaced? To say that the replacement will be a distinctive symbol, three maple leaves on a field of white bounded in blue, is an answer too patently superficial. If it is to be replaced with something new let us have a general idea of the dimensions of this newness, of its fundamental meaning. Many surely will acknowledge how much more readily those Canadians who still resist the implementation of this resolution would accept it if they but knew the real ingredients of its substitute.

Our caution, as exhibited in this issue, brings to mind a point made by Professor Kilborn in his book "The Firebrand", a point he seems to have made more as an afterthought. When our country's only armed rebellion, in the early part of the nineteenth century, ignominiously suffered humiliating defeats, it left an indelible mark on our Canadian character. This is the point Professor Kilborn makes that I think is of con-

siderable interest. This, he claims, left us a cautious people, suspect of any emotionalism; a people resolved to settle its problems by travelling the safer road of pragmatic compromise. No ringing declarations for us; no high sounding protestations of faith and allegiance for us.

Does not this present resolution somehow disturb this pact we have made among ourselves? This resolution would squarely confront and challenge this historic legacy. Nor, as some unhappily believe, does it lend itself to solution through the good old Canadian way. We are boldly dealing with a matter on the order paper which is not subject to our typical Canadian treatment. Too slavish adherence to the device of compromise has left Canadians with a festering sense of unfulfilment. Like a bandage too hastily applied, it covers up the wound before the air gets in and often as not the wound never properly heals.

I am not extolling the virtue of soul searing, emotional orgy, but rather the necessity of seeing this debate on the flag as it is encompassed by the many other problems and circumstances we face as a nation; problems of which we are now at last aware; problems that all too often are given the old Canadian treatment, that of burying them in our subconscious and hoping against hope they will fade. They have not faded; events have nurtured them; they are bursting their enclosure; they are stridently emerging into our consciousness. Any further attempt to entice them back into the recesses of our national soul are attempts we undertake at our peril.

What are some of these encompassing problems and circumstances that reflect so strongly on this question of a distinctive flag? We know that no modern industrial country has ever allowed so large a portion of its industry to fall into foreign hands as we have. I would include in this our natural resources, owned by non-residents to a frightening degree—a type of foreign ownership which to all intents and purposes is irredeemable. Predicated upon this premise that Canadians cherish their independence, dare we delude ourselves that such a development has not imposed severe limits on that independence; that it has and will cut drastic inroads into our sovereignty; that it constitutes a constant pressure area to prompt ever greater economic and political assimilation to our southern neighbour?

One striking thing about this flag issue is the bitter ironies that it has pointed up. One such bitter irony is now evolving; that is the thought that so absorbed will we become in

[Mr. Munro.]