

IMPERIALISM, NATIONALISM, OR A THIRD ALTERNATIVE

BEHIND the usual form in which a choice for our country's destiny is presented to Canadians, that is, as a choice between Imperialism and Nationalism, there lies a fallacy which is made only the more perplexing by those who complacently, and quite unconscious of their real inconsistency, tell us that we may choose both. That fallacy lies in this, that we are not told as plainly as we should be, that Imperialism is also, in its essence, Nationalism, though with a different nationality in view.

Canadians will not appreciate fully and clearly the problem presented to them until they cease for a while to use the word "nation" or "nationality" as a kind of given term, and get back to its origins and its implications. For the truth is that this idea lies behind every possible destiny that has yet been suggested for us. Independence means the establishment of a new Canadian "nation". Annexation meant absorption into the American "nation". Imperialism really means, for all real Imperialists, the overflow across various portions of the earth, Canada included, of the British "nation", with, of course, touches of local colour here and there. Thus in all our thinking about our political future—I had myself almost written "national future"—we tacitly assume "nationality" in one form or another as the ultimate goal towards which we must move.

It is, however, a fairly accurate generalization to say that the history of western civilization shows that political ideals are the product of existing political facts, and that such ideals live on in the thoughts of mankind long after the political facts which have produced them have begun to change until they become inconsistent, nay, utterly at variance, with