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KAZIN CRITICIZES MISUSE OF FLAG

At Antiwar Rally, He Cites
'42 Law on Display

By HENRY RAYMONT

Alfred Kazin, the author and literary critic, denounced yesterday what he called the "flag business," the use of the American flag by construction workers and others as a patriotic symbol against war dissenters.

Mr. Kazin delivered what amounted to a civic lecture on the uses and symbolism of the flag at a noon-time antiwar rally by employes of 70 publishing houses at Dag Hammarskjold Plaza on 47th Street, near the United Nations.

Referring to a Federal law of 1942 that stipulates that American flags be displayed in the open only from sunrise to sunset, Mr. Kazin deplored the recent practice of some construction workers who leave flags hanging overnight from girders and cranes at the city's construction sites.

"The matter is very serious," he said, his gravelly voice rising in anger, "for our flag is being desecrated."

A group of hard-hatted construction men who had drifted over from an unfinished building across the street listened glumly but did not interrupt Mr. Kazin, although some had booed earlier speakers. Only two high-school girls in white miniskirts repeatedly shouted "Support the President."

'Attempt to Cover Up'

Mr. Kazin, a political moderate, spoke from a flag-draped sound truck and drew loud ovations from a crowd of 800, mostly young editorial workers. He spoke caustically about the use of flags on police cars and fire trucks, which, he said, symbolized "I hate you, Jack," instead of the tolerance implicit in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag. "One nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

"The flag business," he continued, "is an attempt to cover up the many things that are wrong and that everyone knows are wrong. It covers up the fact apparent to everyone that we cannot win a total victory in Vietnam. It covers up the fact that over 40,000 of our men have died for nothing."

The rally, organized by the action committee of Publishers for Peace, headed by Christopher Cerf, an editor at Random House, was planned as a warm-up for a major lobby effort during the American Booksellers Association's annual convention in Washington next month. It had encountered some opposition from young radicals in the publishing industry, who advocated a work-stoppage rather than demonstration.

The first speaker was Theodore Solotaroff, editor of the New American Review, who said the committee would send daily delegations to Congress during the convention, from June 8 to 12, to seek support for the amendment sponsored by Senators George S. McGovern, Democrat of North Dakota, and Mark O. Hatfield, Republican of Oregon, which would require in effect, withdrawal of all American forces from Vietnam by mid-1971.

This plan was warmly endorsed by another speaker, Representative Richard L. Ottinger, a candidate for the Democratic nomination for Senator.

Other speakers included Evan W. Thomas, vice president of W. W. Norton, Seymour Hersh, who won a Pulitzer Prize this year for his account of the killings at Mylai, and Alfred Prettyman, a former editor at Harper & Row who now heads his own publishing house, Emerson Hall.

Administration Scored

Mr. Thomas, who was the editor of John F. Kennedy's "Profile in Courage," noted that during his 20 years in publishing he had always tried to avoid taking a public stand on political issues. But Mr. Thomas, the son of the late Norman Thomas, charged the Nixon Administration with "moving toward escalation, imposing continental enslavement and ignoring urban and national challenges." He added:

"The time comes when no human can afford not to take a public position."

A more radical program of opposition to the war was outlined by Grace Paley, the novelist and short story writer. She urged the destruction of draft records that would "deprive the Administration of the manpower to wage war," and that advocates of peace adopt Vietnamese orphans as a way of reducing their tax payments.