

National Centennial Act

I should like to urge also, in supporting the resolution before us, that the centennial administration pay a little more attention to what I consider to be the external effects of our coming celebration. As well as having a party within Canada, I think we should try to do things in our centennial celebration that will attract good will and impress the world with Canada's stature. I think we could do this in several ways if we think big enough. I feel that 1967 should be the year when we decide on what kind of official, distinctive Canadian flag our country should have. It may be that we would decide in favour of the red ensign. It may be that we would decide on some other quite distinctive flag. Surely, on January 1, 1967 we should unfurl around the world the officially designated Canadian flag.

Second, sir, I think internally it would be an excellent thing in 1967 if we could do something for our older citizens, such as reducing the pensionable age without a means test to 67 at the most.

Finally, I have one particular point I have brought to the attention of the official centennial organization, and I am hopeful that others would agree it would be a matter worth considering. I think Canada should set the world an example in international thinking on the occasion of our birthday. One way we could do that would be to invite, through the United Nations, one child from each country affiliated with the United Nations to come to Canada as our guest for two or three weeks during the height of our centennial celebrations. We have the planes to fly them here, and we have the trains to take them across Canada so that they could see something of the achievements of their forebears from their own country who have pioneered Canada and helped to give us what we have today. I think this would be a very good method for celebrating our birthday in Canada. It is imperative that we pass this resolution and that we encourage our centennial people to think large and think fast.

Mr. Mandziuk: We cannot minimize the importance of the amendments contained in this resolution, Mr. Chairman. It is true that they fall into three parts. The first is the increase in the number of directors from eight to 12. I would not quarrel with that. If experience has shown that eight directors do not provide sufficient representation to the provinces, or if a directorship of that size would not properly carry out the duties of the directors, I am quite happy to see the number increased to 12 or, if necessary, more than 12.

The second purpose is to simplify directives to this administration. I would not quarrel

with that. However, the change in name puzzles me. I have listened with interest to the very eloquent address of the hon. member for Villeneuve, as well as others. It is true that they went into the history of this country of ours. I do not quarrel with that, either. Why are the words "national centennial", changed to "centennial of confederation"? I can understand the basis of the argument. Some people will contend that Canada existed from the time of the first explorers, but Canada did not exist as a nation at that time. I am in accord with the right hon. Leader of the Opposition when he said that it was in 1867 that Canada, the nation as we know it today, was born. We are, therefore, celebrating in 1967 the centenary of that birth.

An hon. Member: What were we before?

Mr. Mandziuk: Mr. Chairman, I just wonder where the hon. member was before.

What puzzles me is that the President of the Privy Council has said he made this change at the whim of the premier of Quebec.

Mr. Lamontagne: I did not say that.

Mr. Mandziuk: The minister did not use the word "whim", but I am using it. He did not tell us—but perhaps he will before this debate closes—whether or not the other nine premiers felt the same way as the premier of Quebec. Did they have any objection to the name as it was? Did they have an opportunity to concur, and if they did not, why not? This would be very interesting to us.

Mr. Lamontagne: I can answer that question.

Mr. Mandziuk: The President of the Privy Council will have an opportunity to answer that question. He can do so after I have finished my remarks or when he closes this debate.

I agree with what my leader has said, Mr. Chairman, that the birth of Canada as we have it today occurred in 1867. What did we have before 1867? I studied Canadian history from the time of Cabot and Champlain and all those discoverers who came to this new land. At that time lower Canada might have been called a province, but it was an abandoned child, abandoned by its motherland. Let us not twist history or deny historical facts. Upper Canada consisted of people who came from south of the border because they did not want to live under the stars and stripes. They wanted to live under the British flag. These were the two founding races who conceived this structure, this pact, which eventually welded this territory into one Canadian nation.