

*Canadian Flag*

changing the flag of a country is equally as important as these things I have mentioned.

How should the question be dealt with? I can tell you, Mr. Speaker. The amendment proposed by the right hon. Leader of the Opposition is the way to deal with it. The Prime Minister would be given great respect by all Canadians should he present his resolution as a request only for an opinion of the house rather than as a motion on which the government is prepared to stand or fall, to stake its life and the existence of this parliament. There are other ways. There is the matter of a joint committee of the House of Commons and the Senate. There is the question of examination. This is too important a matter to be relegated to the realm of partisan politics and decided on that basis. It is not fair; it is not right; it should not be done. There is no question about that.

I have some quotations concerning a plebiscite, which I would like to read. They are all in favour of a plebiscite, and the first one appeared in the *Telegraph-Journal* of May 23, 1964, written by Mrs. Jean Sweet, an outstanding woman of Saint John, New Brunswick. Her arguments favouring a plebiscite are so impressive that I would like to put them on the record:

Normally, like most peaceful citizens, I'm a coward about public issues. But I think the time has come to stand up and be counted on this flag matter.

Most people who ever saw a tree know that big trees rise from big firm roots. If you trim away the roots you weaken the tree. If too much root is removed you have nothing. The tree—that grew slowly over many decades—weakens, falls, and decays.

Loyalties grow the same way...putting down roots in friendly soil. Without loyalties—even misplaced loyalties—man is nothing but a drifting derelict.

Millions of Canadians grew up as I did in the friendly soil of a Canada we learned from earliest years to respect and view with immense pride. We were taught not to brag loudly and constantly about our land, but instead to know what we had and to feel secure in its tenets.

Above all our flag has symbolized this land. It has grown with us. From pre-school age we loved the simple but intricately planned design of the union jack—so carefully integrating the major elements of Great Britain. We were proud when we saw the Canadian coat of arms in the fly of the beautiful flag. We sang songs to it. It meant our land.

Through school days, I have no recollection of any "Quebec Question." I remember Montreal as a fascinating place I longed to see where—right in our Canada—two languages were spoken and peoples from many other lands settled and lived.

Above all, as a child I watched the proud Van Doos march through the streets of our town, where they trained—headed by the tall lean figure of Col. Vanier (I didn't know his name then, not until

I met him as our Governor General). From that time I "saw" those proud French speaking troops "fighting for our flag" as news of their exploits trickled home. When we sang "We'll never let the old flag fall" the Van Doos were in the picture, dying in France for that flag.

Well, as far as I'm concerned, no one man, no one group of troublemakers can tell me "Here is your new flag." This is a matter of roots, Canadian roots. If my flag can be readily discarded, so can my country, and any other belief I ever held in it. It is disturbing—and makes me wonder: what next?

This is a matter not for one man, one party or one government to decide. This is a matter for a clearcut vote, a national plebiscite of citizens' votes—apart from any party affiliation whatsoever. It is a matter where every citizen has a right to cast his vote for the issue—and not for the party, the man next door, the boss or any dictatorial group with whom he must identify himself.

Such a vote should be protected in every way possible from any pressures or interference. It should be most clearly stated on the ballot, beyond any possibility of misunderstanding or confusion.

It seems certain that many of our new citizens, those who chose Canada and all it stands for—

—and a few minutes ago the hon. member for Yorkton referred to them as having taken the oath—

—when they sought refuge from other lands, must favour the flag they chose and to which they have so recently sworn allegiance.

As for me...I am just one unimportant citizen (there are millions of us unimportant citizens or there would be no nation)...but without the flag that I was taught to respect from earliest years, I should no longer "feel" Canadian.

I also quote from the *Toronto Telegram*, the *Chatham News* and the *Moncton Times*. The *Toronto Telegram* had this to say:

The people of Canada should be allowed to decide whether or not they wish to live under the flag of their forebears or discard it in favour of a new emblem...Let Mr. Pearson ask the people by referendum whether they want to replace the banner that carries the symbols of our nationhood by one that is mounted on the colour of surrender and would be most suitable for an arboretum...

The *Chatham News* had this to say:

Prime Minister Pearson, in announcing that he was prepared to place the life of his government on the line over the flag issue, has pulled off one of the trickiest political manoeuvres in Canadian history. The Prime Minister knows that no one—the opposition parties or the people—wants an election at this time. We agree with those who say "take it to a vote of the people."

The *Moncton Times* had this to say:

There is only one sound solution: That is for there to be a national referendum embracing all voters, and possibly even the younger citizens of the country. The ballot should be a comprehensive document asking if a change is desired, yes or no; if so, which of several designs does the individual favour, first, second, third, and so on, or none of them. Only in this way can there be a clear and definite expression of the people's will. The selection of a new flag should be left to the people, and the majority choice should be accepted.