

Flags of Canada

During the last ten years our country has grown rapidly and our new Canadians have made a great contribution to the welfare and progress of our country. I have been associated with people of many nationalities, especially in my own riding of Waterloo North, where we have one of the greatest cosmopolitan centres in Canada. The great majority of these people have been constantly enquiring about a distinctive flag. Evidently they have become real Canadians and are interested in many matters, including that of a distinctive flag for Canada. By royal proclamation of November 21, 1921, the King declared:

The King, at the request of Canada, assigns to Canada the national colours white and red and declares that the national emblem of Canada shall be three red maple leaves on one stem, on a white field. These shall be used to represent Canada on all appropriate occasions.

I believe that a Canadian flag when chosen should be easily recognizable and unlike any other. It should be visible at a distance, characteristic in structure, and appropriate. It should be symbolic of our country and of our position as a sovereign state in the family of nations, lending itself, also, to variation for different purposes.

It may be of some value at this time to note that the history of the Canadian flag from the treaty of Paris in 1763 to the present date is as follows:

1763-1801—the flag of Great Britain (England and Scotland) was used officially and for all purposes.

1801-1911—the union jack was assumed to be and, with certain minor and generally unofficial exceptions, was used as the official flag of Canada.

1870—the blue ensign, defaced by the Canadian coat of arms, was designated for use on Canadian government vessels.

1892—the red ensign with the Canadian coat of arms in the fly was authorized for use by merchant vessels registered in Canada. This was confirmed in the Canada Shipping Act, 1934.

1911—the union jack was officially declared to be flown at the stern and the blue ensign with the Canadian coat of arms in the fly to be flown at the jack staff of all vessels of the Royal Canadian Navy.

1924—the red ensign with the Canadian coat of arms in the fly was authorized to be flown "over all premises owned or occupied by the Canadian government abroad."

1924—the present coat of arms was substituted for the old Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick quarterings for use on the fly of all Canadian flags.

[Mr. Weichel.]

The dominion command of the Canadian Legion passed the following resolution in 1958:

Be it resolved that this convention requests the federal government to place the selection of a Canadian national flag before the people in the form of a referendum using

(a) the flag recommended in the majority report of the parliamentary committee of July, 1946, or

(b) the flag recommended by the minority report of the same committee.

I am in favour of a referendum concerning the adoption of a distinctive Canadian flag.

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): It seems to me the Canadian people are going to be surprised at the activities which have taken place in the Canadian parliament today. All hon. members who have spoken have said we should have a Canadian flag, knowing full well that the longer we talk today the less chance there is of it coming to pass this year. It seems to me the people are going to wonder at our inability to solve our problems in the normal way. It seems to me that if the government of the day had any gumption they would take action, either through a committee or by coming right out and saying that tomorrow, for instance, the Canadian ensign is going to be the national flag, and that is final. Three weeks later there would be no more noise heard about it, and we would have a flag whether we were all in favour of it or not.

For years and years we have been dithering about this question. We have been a nation for more than a hundred years and we are no closer to getting this flag than we were decades ago, except that we now have thousands of suggestions to choose from when originally we had only one or two. I was talking to a girl from Australia who was at the United Nations representing that country. We were talking about flags and national anthems and she pointed out that Australia had got a national anthem by the back-door method. Americans had come to Australia and decided that the Australian national anthem was "Waltzing Matilda". They always played that tune in honour of Australians at every type of function and very soon it became the national anthem. It seems to me that if we fool around for many more years in an attempt to satisfy each of 18 million inhabitants of this country we shall be getting a flag in the same way as Australia got a national anthem, that is to say, through the United States, and it will be only the addition of another star or another bar.

If we believe in majority decisions why cannot we accept the majority decision of the last committee which we had, and adopt its recommendation as our national flag. It seems