

Canadian Flag

(Text):

Mr. Daniel McIvor (Fort William): Mr. Speaker, as I served on this committee I feel I should say a word. I was grateful to the Leader of the Opposition for the tribute he paid to that committee. However, I do not agree with him when he says they knew it all—this is my own language—because I think another committee might know a little bit more. I certainly do not agree with the hon. member for Macleod (Mr. Hansell) when he says that Canada is the same, that the people are the same, that there are the same parties in the house. He must remember when he was a small boy at school being taught that you cannot step into the same river twice. We are always changing. It is a universal law that not for two seconds are things the same. This country should be better, if we have been giving the proper kind of service, than it was at that time.

No matter what a former government did, I submit that an individual member has a right to introduce any resolution or bill he likes if he feels it is his duty to do so, or that it is in the best interests of Canada. I agree also that every hon. member has the right to vote as he likes.

I sat on that committee and I shall never forget it. I remember one hon. member who has now gone to his reward, the former member for Davenport, who had convictions a good deal like my own. The friendship that developed there was real. I thought the chairman of that committee was a young man of great promise, and he handled that committee, and those of us who were hard to handle, in such a way that we agreed with him before we were through.

I am thankful that we have a Prime Minister who champions the cause of unity in Canada. He made that one of his pleas during the election. He has stood for unity in the past and he will stand for unity in the future, and anything that tends toward disunity in Canada will get no support from him. For that reason, in introducing legislation I think we should be very careful to avoid anything that tends toward disunity.

I remember the final vote on a flag including the union jack and the maple leaf. It was not a unanimous vote, but it was so near to it that it might well have been, for I believe only one member voted against it. If I am wrong I stand corrected. If I served on that committee again I would support the same flag because it has sentiment, ties that are tender; because I was born in a part of the British empire that takes second place to no other in loyalty or ability to serve king or queen; and because I am not yet prepared to support any national flag for Canada but a flag with the maple leaf and union jack.

That flag was first drawn by a young man down east, I think in Halifax, who was an invalid; and he demonstrated great sense and wisdom. Whether that flag will be adopted as a national flag I do not know, but as yet that is the only flag for which I am prepared to vote.

I have mentioned the land of my birth, and let me add that Ireland is cursed with religious bigotry, both Protestant and Roman Catholic. Both sides are narrow and selfish, and only once in a while do they rise above their narrowness. I do not want our great Canada to become like that, and anything that tends to divide our nation will be opposed by me.

Mr. J. L. MacDougall (Vancouver-Burrard): Mr. Speaker, this is an extremely important discussion we have listened to today, and in dealing with this issue it is my opinion that we should make haste slowly. For many years in the history of our fair nation we have tried to evolve the maximum amount of harmony, unity and good will amongst Canadians from the Atlantic to the Pacific. We can all recall the efforts of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, R. L. Borden, Mackenzie King, and in more recent times the present Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent), toward the establishment of a sense of unity which is completely opposite to bigotry and disunion.

In my younger days I belonged to an organization which had the issue of a distinctive national flag as one of the main planks in its platform. There were many other planks in that platform, and some of the members in that organization felt that all our aims should be realized immediately. Wiser counsel prevailed, however, and we became satisfied making haste slowly.

Along with many other hon. members of this house I fought in world war I and world war II. I fought under the flag of our forebears, and I was as glad to fight under that flag as were many others. But I do not think the feeling among many sections of our people has approached any degree of unanimity as yet with respect to the development of a distinctive Canadian flag. We cannot continue our progress toward unity by tearing to rags and tatters the degree of unity we have accomplished over the past 55 or 56 years.

It is only human for certain members of the house to decide, possibly within their own minds, that this matter of a distinctive Canadian flag is something that should be decided by the government. However, I do not agree with that and, as the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Applewhaite) pointed out so clearly in his address, the people of Canada are the people whom we serve in this house.