

Canadian Flag

Mr. Nasserden: After all that applause, I think I may continue for a while. I see the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Sharp) smiling. He is in a genial mood tonight. He was one of the two cabinet ministers, I believe, who took part in this debate. Surely tonight, in that expansive mood, when he is in a position so close to the Prime Minister that he must know what is going to happen, he will want the rest of us to know as well. I do not want to say anything more in that regard. I see the Minister of Forestry (Mr. Sauv ) and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Favreau).

Some hon. Members: Order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Richard): Order, does the hon. member for Dorchester (Mr. Boutin) have a question?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Boutin: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Richard): What is your point of order?

Mr. Boutin: Mr. Speaker, since everybody seems happy to see the smile which brightens up the face of the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Sharp), why not suggest to the house that his smile be substituted for the maple leaf, on the distinctive flag?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Richard): Order. The hon. member for Rosthern (Mr. Nasserden) has the floor.

[*Text*]

Mr. Nasserden: I want to thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is the type of point of order that we have had throughout this debate, or so-called point of order. It gives us some indication of the seriousness with which hon. gentlemen opposite have taken this whole matter. I am not going to try to reply to it at all.

There are one or two things I want to say about the flag of Canada before I do conclude my remarks.

Mr. Gr goire: This is the fourth time you have concluded.

Mr. Nasserden: Mr. Speaker, when one has such an attentive audience it is difficult to conclude. I do want to say, in all seriousness that a Canadian flag with a red maple leaf in the centre, in my opinion, will not inspire that devotion from the people of Quebec that all of us would like to see. I say that because I believe the people of Quebec would rather

[Mr. Nasserden.]

see a green or gold maple leaf in that arrangement. I may be mistaken about this, but that is what I believe as a result of the observations I have been able to make during the last four or five years when I have been in that province. I want to say this, too—

Mr. Gr goire: In conclusion.

Mr. Nasserden: I regret that there have been all these interruptions which have made my remarks such a hodge-podge. I see hon. gentlemen opposite laughing. This is hardly the time when hon. gentlemen opposite should be laughing because, after all there is a lot more hangs on the decision that is about to be made in the House of Commons once a vote is called than hon. members realize at the moment.

When you are planning to change the symbol of a nation as is envisaged by the present government it ill becomes those on the government benches who have a majority in the House of Commons, with the assistance they receive from the other parties, to treat as lightly as they do the whole matter under discussion.

I wish to say in conclusion—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Richard): I am sure hon. members would like the hon. member for Rosthern to bring his speech to a happy conclusion.

Mr. Nasserden: There can be no happy conclusion in a debate such as this when the Prime Minister is not in his seat.

Mr. F. J. W. Fane (Vegreville): Mr. Speaker, I think I should first ask you to have a bale of thistles brought in so hon. members on my far left will have something to keep them busy while I am speaking. I am amazed that tonight of all nights, after one of saddest days we have experienced in Canada, no one has come forward on behalf of the government to make a statement on the position taken by hon. gentlemen opposite with regard to a new national flag.

Certainly a semblance of a flag was picked out by the committee that worked on it, but what real Canadian in Canada wants a flag which is not Canadian and which is not distinctive, but which is the flag of some other country—except that it bears a dead maple leaf in the middle in place of the coat of arms of that country?

Mr. Barnett: Nonsense.