

*Canada Flag Day*

fyng it so closely with one leader, distinguished as he is, to the detriment or to the putting into the shadow of other great leaders of our country. There are a number of leaders in Canada's history who have made distinguished contributions.

We cannot for a moment forget the contribution made to our country by the founding father, Sir John A. Macdonald. For several years my hon. friend from Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie) has introduced into this House a bill which would honour our founding father, Sir John A. Macdonald. I have noticed with a sense of sadness that this bill has been talked out, unfortunately; allowed to fall along the wayside of the parliamentary corridors. I have always wondered why we could not find some way to keep always before the Canadian people, one might say, in the same manner as we keep the external flame outside these buildings, the sense of the founding fathers of this country and what they have done for us.

This is in no way a partisan matter. I do not care to which party men like Sir John A. Macdonald, Lester B. Pearson or any of the other leaders who have helped to bring us to our stage of history belonged. They were great men. They were founders of this country. One need turn only to the *Encyclopedia Canadiana* for a comprehensive article on Sir John A. Macdonald. I shall certainly not read the whole of this article now; I shall refer to only a couple of the points it makes which remind us how necessary it is to keep alive in our sense of history the role Sir John A. played, to recall in particular the role he played at the Charlottetown conference on December 1, 1864, and at the even more important conference which followed in Quebec on October 10. I quote from the encyclopedia as follows:

Macdonald was thus at all stages a major formative influence in the making of Canadian confederation. His declared preference was for a strong national federation rather than for a weak decentralized union of powerful provinces, and he sought at all times—through the division of legislative powers and the organization of the new federal institutions—to ensure the primacy of the new dominion.

He went on, of course, to the great events of July 1, 1867, when the British North America Act uniting the provinces went into operation. As I was looking through this article I came across a passage which I think is particularly relevant to the problems we face today in our society, more than 100 years later, because we read that Sir John was convinced that the continental imperialism of the United States was, and always had been, the most serious threat confronting Canadian nationality. How many times in the debates which take place today in this chamber, on television and in the newspapers across the country do we hear the very same sentiment expressed? Is it not remarkable that Sir John had the prescience to foresee the difficulty we would encounter in establishing our Canadian identity and in preserving it while living beside the giant of the United States?

• (1630)

I am absolutely opposed to playing-off in any sense men like Lester B. Pearson and Sir John A. Macdonald, both of whom in their own way and in the fullness of their times made distinguished contributions to Canada. So, too, did Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Borden and other leaders who

[Mr. Roche.]

have taken their place in this chamber and served their country in capacities beyond political life.

As Bill C-136 emphasizes, in protecting and underlining unity in Canada we must not turn this day that is hopefully going to be marked between January 1 and the end of March into a narrow expression of or focus upon our history, nor regard it merely as a holiday. If celebrating this day on Sir John A. Macdonald's birthday, January 11, is said to be too narrow and too partisan an approach, then let us at least include in the terms of reference and in the literature that will be written about this day the fact that we are honouring all the founders of Canada.

To me the word "founder" has a noble and lasting ring. It speaks not only of the beginning of our country but has a sense of continuity as well. As I remarked in my comments about Expo, we are surely continuing to develop this country. There is, again, a sense of founding, especially in the culturally explosive society that has been with us since the middle 1960s. There is a sense of continuing to discover, as my hon. friend who sponsored the bill respecting discovery day emphasized. That is why I say we should incorporate into the literature surrounding this holiday the names, the accomplishments, the sense of history of those who have helped make our country great.

If this whole subject is now to be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs, then let it be sent to the committee with the instruction from this House that the matter not be viewed in too narrow and partisan a way; that it not be viewed in a way that would hurt that national unity which all of us in this country desire—for as I remarked only yesterday in my comments on the pension bill, there is a temptation in this country to speak of national unity in too narrow terms. How many of us think, in the context of today, that national unity will be achieved if only we can solve the English-French question? Certainly this is a pressing priority, but it does not embrace the totality of what is national unity. To me, national unity means taking into account the problems of the aged, the problems of women and the problems of youth, three major components of our society. National unity means going back to the beginnings of this country and keeping before us the fullness of our history and all those who participated in bringing us to where we are today.

I want this day that will mark our country's acceptance of its flag to be more than just a holiday, as I have said; more than just a day on which we display our flag. The flag will be the symbol of what is underneath it. It will be the tip of the iceberg: The greater part of the iceberg will be the strength of Canada; this is what this day must focus upon. It will be a day that will help young Canadians who are now pursuing academic careers to achieve a sense of pride in their country. I have always felt that this country had a great future, one that belongs to us if only we do not give up on it because we feel that living beside the United States is too great a problem.

I conclude my remarks by saying that national unity is an elusive, precious thing but something we in this country need. We need to transmit it to our children. A burning desire to display our flag will remind us of Sir John A., of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Borden, King and Pearson. It will remind us of the founders of our country, of all those the