

*A Canadian Flag*

flying on all our government buildings from ocean to ocean. That is the story, nationally speaking, of the red ensign as a flag ashore from 1871 or thereabouts to 1938.

What is the situation in regard to a national flag in Canada at the present moment? The red ensign, which had been flown until 1904, and is flying still, is not officially recognized as a distinctive flag for Canada inside Canada, but lo and behold, Mr. Speaker, it is recognized as our official flag outside Canada. It is recognized as the Canadian flag on our legation buildings at Washington. It is recognized as our distinctive Canadian flag on our legation buildings in Paris, Tokyo and London. It is recognized abroad, but there is no recognition for it at home. The result is that from this combination of circumstances we have a confusion existing over our national emblem that, to say the least, does not merit the applause of any Canadian. The quicker that situation is remedied the better it will be for all concerned because a national emblem will be a powerful factor in building up a new nationality from coast to coast, and in uniting our people behind an emblem that signifies Canadian development through the past and aspirations of Canadians for the future.

That being the story of the red ensign on land, what is the story of the red ensign on sea? The red ensign is naturally a water flag, and yet thousands of Canadians use it to-day on land as a distinctive Canadian flag because they have no other. They are using it, mind you, in conjunction with the union jack, and that is quite right and proper. From confederation until 1892 we had no water flag, but in 1892 the Admiralty in London issued an order that from 1892 the red ensign, flying the old coat of arms of Canada in the fly, should be the commercial flag or the flag for our merchant marine vessels on the high seas. That flag is our flag to-day for every ship registered in Canada. This means that the red ensign on the water is in reality our commercial flag. It cannot rightly be used on both land and sea. We are using the same ensign on land simply because we have no distinctive national flag, and I submit, Mr. Speaker, that that is a peculiar condition of affairs to exist in a self-governing country like this dominion. I submit further that the sooner that situation is remedied the better for every real Canadian.

Now, what are we told by those who are opposed to a distinctive national flag for Canada? What arguments are advanced against a distinctive national emblem? One argument used against it, and a familiar one,

[Mr. McIntosh.]

is that it will dismember the empire; that it will sever our empire relations; that if we adopt a distinctive Canadian flag the Canadian confederation will dissolve. Well, it might dissolve in tears of laughter before an argument of that kind, but we do not think it would dissolve in fact. Then they tell us that if we adopt a distinctive national emblem we shall be discarding the union jack, and the union jack stands for justice, liberty and righteousness in national and international relations. Therefore we should not tolerate any movement against the use of the union jack. Let me say right here, Mr. Speaker, that no one is talking against the union jack; no one is opposing its use; no one wants to destroy it; no one wants to substitute another flag for the union jack. We all want the union jack as our flag of empire. But just the same we certainly want a distinctive emblem, a national flag for the dominion. We want to give Canada the flag representation she ought to have, not only in the empire, but throughout the world. So that argument, I think, disappears. It is based upon the idea that we are going to interfere with the union jack. Our opponents have built up their whole case on that foundation, and since the foundation does not exist the argument has no meaning and therefore should be dropped from this time onward.

Another argument against the adoption of a distinctive national flag is, we are told, because of the traditions surrounding the union jack. The union jack has great traditions. It belonged to my forefathers as much as it belonged to the forefathers of any other hon. member. We love it and prize it, and we call it our own. I am not as a Canadian so narrow-minded, however, as to intend, by adopting a national flag for my own country, to supplement the empire flag, any harm to the union jack. Down through the centuries great traditions have gathered around that flag. Those traditions, we are told, should be preserved. Well, they will be preserved as far as we are concerned, because the demand for a distinctive national flag has absolutely not anything to do with the supplanting of or doing away with the union jack.

We are also told that the union jack will unify the different nationalities making up our Canadian nationhood. That is true. We admit the argument; but if it is sound, a national emblem will do this much better, because it will be emblematic of our own country and will promote nation building within our boundaries and signify our position as a nation within the ambit of the British Empire and in the greater world without.