

*Canadian Flag*

so to speak, and that was it. He did not mention then, nor did he tell anyone during the 1963 election campaign, that he intended to remove the union jack from our official flag.

It is the measure of this government that they press this flag issue so arrogantly, and so conveniently forget their promise to the farmers to provide better price supports, to labour for higher minimum wages, to business and management for a national development corporation, and all the other promises they have so neatly pigeonholed to bring out and dust off for the next election.

The next step in the Prime Minister's campaign to foist this flag on the nation involved a meeting of a selected group of newspapermen in his official residence.

This little lamb over here needs some milk, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Graftey:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. It is becoming very apparent to the members on this side of the house who have come here to listen seriously to this debate, that our ability to listen to the debate is being hampered by the continuous and unnecessary interruptions from that corner of the house over there. I would ask, Mr. Speaker, in the interest of good debate and serious debate that they be made to stop. I think the members to whom I am referring know very well what I am talking about.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I may say that if noises have been made from the end of the chamber, they have not reached the Chair. If they do, I certainly will bring to the attention of all members that whoever has the floor should not be interrupted.

**Mr. Muir (Lisgar):** When I was so rudely interrupted by one of those trained seals who is just learning to suck the bottle, because that is the noise he was making, I was going to say that the next step in the Prime Minister's campaign was to bring a selected group of newspapermen to his official residence on what one of the guests later described as an exercise in news management. The Prime Minister broke the news regarding the flag design to these gentlemen. He told them he had sent a message to the Queen and that the red ensign would not be part of the new design. He said he was going to lay the whole matter before the Canadian Legion convention in Winnipeg the following Sunday.

In Winnipeg on that Sunday, the first day of the conference, which is traditionally reserved as a period of remembrance for fallen comrades, the Prime Minister chose to make a political speech in furtherance of his per-

[Mr. Muir (Lisgar).]

sonal choice of a new flag. He indicated the government would stand or fall on the issue, and by inference he told this group of men, who had offered their lives for the protection of Canada, that anyone who wished to retain the red ensign could go fly a kite.

His advisers had apparently gambled on the fact that because of the solemnity of the occasion no serious objection would be raised. That the Legion was outraged is understandable and had it not been but for his privileged position as the guest speaker, and particularly as the Prime Minister of Canada, the meeting might well have been less constrained than it was. The *Dauphin Herald and Press*, a Manitoba paper in the constituency of Dauphin, took account of it this way:

Talk of Canada's crying need for a new flag, at this point being promoted almost solely by Prime Minister Pearson, is wearing thin the public's patience with political leadership in our country. Ask the average man-on-the-street what he thinks about Sunday's hullabaloo in Winnipeg, at the national Legion convention, and the most frequent reply should give Mr. Pearson cause for second thoughts about his self-imposed campaign—

Looking back on the past week's news coverage of Canadian happenings, it's small wonder that the Legion convention opened in an atmosphere of tension. Stories out of Ottawa had played up the Prime Minister's determination to bring the flag issue to a head at this convention, from his privileged position as guest speaker. Supposing there had been a quiet acceptance of Mr. Pearson's rejection of the red ensign. Imagine how quickly the word would be rushed back to all members of parliament that their "free vote" could assume that the Legion had surrendered all the gains earned in recent years for red ensign support.

There was launched another one of the government's fearful comedy of errors, errors that have turned the Prime Minister's flag issue into farce. The greatest farce was when the Prime Minister said that parliament would decide the matter by a free vote, but subsequently made quite clear that his government would stand or fall on the decision. In other words he was telling parliament and the public, "You don't have to swallow my flag; I am just going to ram it right down your throats."

The Prime Minister's approach to this problem denies any compromise whatever, and he is presenting parliament with a political flag for which he will accept no alternative. Compromise has always been part of our national fabric and has held confederation together for 97 years. That is a long time and that is the way we have done it, with compromise. If we are going to continue as one nation, a great Canada, it will be because we accept that fact as part of our political life, but if we submit now to the dictates of a