

Canadian Flag

go down in history as one of Canada's greatest sons. It is a flag which I hope will emphasize, not the differences in our backgrounds, but rather will serve as a symbol acceptable without reservation to all Canadians, including those millions who originate not from the founding races but from other nations—great Canadians who have contributed much to make Canada such a wonderful country.

There have been in this debate many fine speeches, including that of the leader of the New Democratic party, which have emphasized the need for unity and tolerance in Canada. I am one of those fortunate people in this country who know of the benefits of tolerance and understanding, for in my community I have been exposed to the best of two cultures, of two languages, of two peoples different in many ways. They are two peoples impatient with each other sometimes but who, Mr. Speaker, in my province at any rate, have lived together, played together, prayed together, and at times have fought together, people who respect each other always in complete freedom and always as Canadians.

There are those in this country, Mr. Speaker, who regard the new flag as an appeasement to French speaking Canadians. There are some who think this way who are motivated by hate, and we can only feel sorry for them. There are other sincere people who are motivated by a lack of understanding of what I know to be warm, friendly, intelligent people, people who, Mr. Speaker, time after time in the annals of Canadian history, have proven their allegiance to Canada, their respect for the commonwealth and their loyalty to the monarchy as head of the commonwealth of nations. I am proud to be part of a French speaking community. I might add, Mr. Speaker, that these are people ready and willing to sacrifice their own historic symbols for what they think is in the best interests of a united country.

I would ask all hon. members who are listening to my humble remarks not to fall into the trap of hatred. I would ask them not to judge Quebec or French Canada by the acts of those who would separate our country; those who would build up a case for separatism founded upon their own failure and inability to adjust to the ever changing face of Canada and Quebec.

There are some fine people in this house who have made a strong and excellent case for a referendum; but whether we like it or not, gentlemen, such a referendum would in no time at all, in the days before its con-

summation, deteriorate into a carbon copy of another general election. Picture if you will not only politicians touring the country and voicing their opinions on the flag but countless other Canadians caught up in the swell of emotions; Canadians from all walks of life emphasizing our cultural differences and widening the still bridgeable differences of opinion in our nation. That is the type of situation, Mr. Speaker, which could lead to violence and even to anarchy.

Nor can I accept a referendum as a convenient method of shirking my responsibilities; and in this regard I speak only for myself. To be willing to face my responsibilities is one of the very few virtues I have brought to this house, Mr. Speaker. I feel deeply that there comes a time in the life of every politician when he must look the issue straight in the face; a time when he must accept the challenge or forever fade into oblivion. For I have long come to the conclusion that doing what is right is, in the final analysis, doing what is politically right.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, let me say that I visualize the day when the advantages of the many cultures of this nation will become apparent to all Canadians; when the languages of Canadians of different backgrounds from our own will not be something to fear but something to cherish. I visualize the day when Canadians from sea to sea will have learned to respect each other, yes even to love each other as we do in Quebec; a day when Canada will start back on the road to the great destiny predicted for it by Sir Wilfrid Laurier. This I may not see in my time, but perhaps it will come in my children's time—a day which I feel will be hastened by our new distinctive Canadian flag, a flag which will be this parliament's contribution to the future greatness of Canada.

Mr. O. W. Weichel (Waterloo North): Mr. Speaker, before speaking on this resolution concerning a distinctive Canadian flag I should first like to mention that on January 23, 1961 I had the privilege of taking part in the formulation of a resolution which was brought forward by the former member for St. Boniface, which asked for a distinctive flag. At that time I mentioned that if a change was necessary we should adopt the flag suggested by His Majesty King George V in 1921. I think that if a referendum or plebiscite were held all people in Canada would have the opportunity of expressing their own personal opinion.