

Canadian Flag

Would there be less controversy over a change next year, the year after or the year after that? Would the refusal to face up to this matter now not increase the controversy in the years ahead? Would there be a real chance of getting the kind of parliamentary support for this report which I hope even now we will get? Would there be any chance of that if we did nothing next year, the year after, or the year after that? Would there be any less controversy about the design next year, or would there be any more chance of finding a generally acceptable solution next year? Mr. Speaker, I think this is the time to act, especially after the consideration that has been given to this matter over the months. Let us have a decision on this matter now.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, some hon. gentlemen opposite seem to indicate that we on this side cannot be serious about this matter, and cannot be as passionately sincere as they profess to be. The right hon. Leader of the Opposition indicated this yesterday when he said we had deserted the flag that we had put forward, and that if we had been as serious about that flag as they are about their red ensign, which they partially abandoned at least in the committee, we never would have deserted that which they sneered about a few months ago as being the Pearson pennant.

Mr. Speaker, as far as I am concerned I put forth that design after a great deal of thought, consideration and discussion with experts of one kind and another—and we have lots of flag experts these days—as what I thought to be the most appropriate and most beautiful design.

Mr. Diefenbaker: And the one with the historical significance.

Mr. Pearson: Yes, and the one which has historical significance; indeed it has. The three maple leaves have historical significance; and so has the single red maple leaf, as has been pointed out.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, then may I ask the Prime Minister why it was that when he spoke in June he said the single maple leaf had no such historical significance.

Mr. Pearson: No, Mr. Speaker, I do not recall using those words. I am quite willing to admit that in my view the three maple leaves have more historical significance than the single maple leaf, but the single maple leaf appeared on the arms of Canada, and

I do not think anybody is likely to depreciate the significance of the single maple leaf, which not only has historical but a great deal of other significance, as anyone who has ever served in Canada's forces knows.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Pearson: What the right hon. gentleman is suggesting is that I insist on my personal preference in this matter; that I insist on the flag of the three maple leaves design in spite of the fact that 11 out of 15 members of a parliamentary committee, representing every party in this house, recommended the single red maple leaf on a white background, and red and white are the national colours of Canada and have been so for a long time.

Mr. Rapp: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

Mr. Pearson: The right hon. gentleman now has suddenly acquired a deep affection for the three maple leaves—

Mr. Rapp: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

Mr. Pearson:—with blue borders—

Mr. Rapp: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. It does seem to me that the right hon. Prime Minister is entitled to—

An hon. Member: Let us keep the record straight.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Rapp: Mr. Speaker, I have a point of order—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Would you kindly take your seat. It does seem to me that there is such a thing as courtesy. However, is your point of order a serious one?

Mr. Rapp: It is very serious, Mr. Speaker, and I am sure the Prime Minister would not wish to leave an error uncorrected in the record. He has stated time after time that the flag committee recommendation was approved by an 11 to 4 vote. At no time was there a vote of 11 to 4. Our chairman never voted, and the record should show that the vote was 10 to 4.

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my hon. friend's preoccupation with this question of order. It is quite true that the vote which took place was 10 to 4, but the chairman of that committee has moved concurrence in this report.