

Canadian Flag

house. I suggest that perhaps at this point he should limit his remarks to the amendment now before the house.

Mr. Pascoe: I was just trying to pave the way to asking if now government members would refrain from interjecting.

I am taking part in this debate on the amendment to the report of the flag committee because I consider it is my duty to do so. I consider that it is the duty, the direct obligation, of each member of parliament to explain to his or her constituents how he or she stands on this very emotional flag issue. Each member should have regard for his or her responsibilities to constituents and make a declaration for or against the attempt to thrust on Canadians this red and white flag, when there is no evidence that anyone but the most rabid government supporters want it. There has been no country-wide call for a red maple leaf flag. There is no indication how such a flag would be received. I should say that there is every indication that it will not be received and will arouse nothing but antagonism in the country.

Surely, in a decision as emotional and personal as the selection of a flag under which they and future generations will live, the Canadian people should make the choice. It is for this reason we are calling for a plebiscite. As I have said, it is up to each one in this house, whether on the opposition side or the government side, to state clearly on *Hansard*, the official record, his or her position regarding a plebiscite. We should give the reasons for our stand. I think too, Mr. Speaker, we should put on the record how our constituents feel about a plebiscite. I am sure all members have been told how their constituents feel. I know that I have received many letters, and a little later I will put a few of these on the record. We in the opposition are making our stand for a plebiscite very clear. Government supporters, not only the 47 Liberals from Quebec but those from English speaking areas of Canada, should do the same. As I have said, they have an obligation to their constituents.

Ever since Monday we have heard very little from the government members except hoots and jeers. Apparently government members wish to cut off discussion on the flag as quickly as possible—at least, we thought they wanted to stop the debate, until they had an opportunity a short time ago to do so. Evidently they want to have the red ensign scrapped and a new red and white flag substituted, with as little public involvement as possible. This must be the explanation

[Mr. Deputy Speaker.]

for their attempts to cut off debate; there is no other reason apparent. They want to force a flag vote in the house and then tell the Canadian people they must accept it. This appears to be government strategy. Apparently the strategists have counted noses in the house and are sure that, with the continued support of the minority groups in the far corner who want anything but the Canadian red ensign, they can win the flag vote. Perhaps they can win the flag vote with the help of those against having the union jack anywhere on our flag. However, this forced vote will not win flag support across Canada. Only a flag decision by plebiscite will do this, and it is for this reason we are calling for a plebiscite. We believe there should be complete public involvement in any choice of a new flag. Only by holding a plebiscite can this be arranged. That is why so many of us will be speaking on the issue between now and Christmas. We will continue to present arguments for a flag plebiscite. If the government members remain silent I am sure their constituents will wonder why. I think their constituents already know why government supporters sit in silence in their seats, and in this connection I have a clipping I should like to read to the silent government members entitled "The folly of silence".

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I should like to bring to the attention of the hon. member that he cannot quote editorials in newspapers which reflect on a current debate in the house.

Mr. Pascoe: With all due deference, Mr. Speaker, this editorial does not reflect on a current debate but on the behaviour of some hon. members. It is dealing with why so few government supporters speak. It is also a very strong argument for a plebiscite, which is why I want to put it on record. The article is as follows:

It is the utmost folly—it is just short of suicide—to take the position that citizens of any country should hold their tongues for fear of causing distress to the immediate and sometimes tortuous policies of their leaders.

I think that is a good argument for a plebiscite because it refers to the feelings of citizens of the country. This statement was made by the late Wendell L. Willkie. It is folly for citizens not to speak out against stubborn leaders on matters of great concern to them. Ordinary citizens, of course, cannot state their views here in the house, but they can certainly do so outside. That is why we