

Canadian Flag

ensign while two of my correspondents would like to see a mixture of both so as to show our dual culture. Out of 14 letters from British Columbia three are in favour of a distinctive flag, nine for the red ensign and two for the union jack with the fleur-de-lis. I received eight letters from Alberta, out of which one was in favour of a distinctive flag and seven for the red ensign. In short, out of those 100 letters, 52 were in favour of a distinctive national flag, 44 in favour of the red ensign, while 14 were for the red ensign with the fleur-de-lis.

All this simply indicates that opinions vary concerning the choice of a flag for Canada. I am saying that by giving the people of Canada an opportunity to express their opinion on this question, we would simply acknowledge a privilege of which they would like to avail themselves. In urging a plebiscite there is no question of trying to hide facts or to prevent the people of Canada from expressing their views but merely of giving all Canadian citizens an opportunity to make their opinions known to their members of parliament and to the government, so that there will be no danger of causing a rift in the nation.

During the discussions before the appointment of the committee as well as during those that followed, members of parliament, especially those from the province of Quebec, said that the question was one of national unity and that the adoption of a flag would promote national unity.

During the proceedings of the committee, you should have heard certain members of the province of Quebec declaim their speeches and tell us how much national unity would be damaged or hurt, if we were to adopt a flag in which the union jack or the red ensign would be included.

I suggest that Liberal members should read in particular the speech made by Sir Wilfrid Laurier, on February 5, 1896. I also suggest that they should read the recommendations made by Right Hon. William Lyon Mackenzie King and Louis St. Laurent, who are considered the most brilliant prime ministers Canada ever had. They will see that, far from discrediting the union jack and the red ensign, those former prime ministers recognized and stated that there could be no Canadian national flag which would not include the union jack or the red ensign.

I ask my hon. friends opposite why they now deny what their leaders themselves have always professed?

Mr. Drouin: That is not true.

Mr. Ricard: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Argenteuil-Deux-Montagnes says: "That is not true". I suggest he read page 2096 of the *Hansard* for November 13, 1945, where he will find the words spoken by Right Hon. Louis St. Laurent and Right Hon. William Lyon Mackenzie King.

But there is an authority even closer to us who gave us his appreciation on national unity. I am speaking of the hon. member for Bonaville-Twillington, the present Minister of Transport (Mr. Pickersgill), who made an explicit statement at a press conference in Quebec as published by the *Quebec Chronicle* on February 2, 1962, and I quote:

[Text]

He warned that if the union jack is dropped completely from a Canadian flag this might cause a deep rift among Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, our party has not advocated anything else since the beginning of the debate, and it is not because I wish to be recognized as a supporter of the union jack or the red ensign that I quoted these words; on the contrary, I only wish to allow the house to judge by itself the soundness and value of the allegations of our friends opposite.

We were also told that the fleur-de-lis had no signification for French Canada—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must confess that I am wondering about the relevancy of the remarks of the hon. member for St. Hyacinthe-Bagot in connection with the amendment now being considered.

Mr. Ricard: Mr. Speaker, it is simply because a plebiscite was suggested in which the Canadian people would be asked to decide on the symbols of the French race as well as those of the English race, and this is the reason why I am presently making these remarks.

We were told that the fleur-de-lis had no meaning for French Canada—

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Ricard: —and I will point out, Mr. Speaker, that if you read the speech delivered by the hon. member for Terrebonne (Mr. Cadieux), you will find that he followed the very course of action I am advocating at this moment. Furthermore, knowing you have always discharged your duties with impartiality, I do not see how you could deny me a privilege which has been granted to other members.