

Canadian Flag

those who support the report of the committee. I think a grave error will be committed and Canadian unity will suffer if this flag design is adopted. It is just another step, many Canadians feel, along the road. Within the last few days a Liberal member has prophesied that within 15 years Canada will be a republic. We in this party do not accept that belief. During the past months great harm has been done to the unity of the nation, greater than during any other period of my lifetime. I say that after measured consideration.

We are not going to build a nation with two flags; we will not make Canada into a nation by building states within a state. These things are the antitheses of everything for which in the past all our prime ministers have stood. Our view is that a new flag is not this nation's greatest need. Our responsibility is to build a nation, for no flag will bring about unity of a nation; the unity of a nation will bring about a flag which is acceptable to all.

The beliefs we have advanced have been deeply felt. I know there are some who say we are too emotional on this question. Mr. Speaker, the things of the spirit bring about those feelings. We have spoken for a flag which would bring with it a spirit of remembrance and honour for those who discovered this land; a flag which would have on it an exemplification of the richness of Canada's past. We have spoken for an emblem, the union jack, which has never on this North American continent been an emblem of oppression or dishonour. We have spoken for an emblem under whose folds our churches, our schools, our religions, all the precious things of our lives, have been protected and guaranteed. We have spoken for the millions in this land who cherish that emblem and whose voices are stilled. Some say we should apologize for that stand. God forbid that in this country we should apologize for standing for those things which made this nation great.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Yesterday an American sent me a calendar showing the United States flag, the original one which Washington carried at Valley Forge, and the first Betsy Ross flag. On that calendar were these words of Woodrow Wilson, great philosopher president of the United States:

The flag is the embodiment...of history. It represents the experiences made by men and women, the experiences of those who do and live under that flag.

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

I am about through. I ask this house: In what way does the design now proposed embody our history? It denies Cardinal Newman's saying that all greatness rests upon the shoulders of past generations. In what way does it represent the sacrifices, the experiences, the achievements of the past? Are we to eradicate the past, to remove all vestige of the things which brought my forefathers here on both sides, and the forefathers of hon. gentlemen everywhere in this house? Edmund Burke said all human society was a partnership between the living and the dead. This design denies that partnership. There is nothing in this design for memorialized sorrow or old renown. There is nothing for those who with sword and crucifix went into the wilderness where they left their names and often their bones as a sacred heritage for us all. There is nothing for those who came in the glorious days of French Canada as explorers and navigators and builders. There is nothing of the heroic and legendary pioneers, tales of whose courage are our common glory.

The reading of history proves that a nation which forgets its past condemns its future. This design forgets our past. Individuals and nations cannot ignore the fact of a nation's past when determining the shape of its future. Are we as Canadians to have a flag which treats our memories, our past sacrifices, all the milestones of greatness as irrelevancies? Let Canadians have an opportunity of saying what they want. That is the fight we fought. It is the fight we are continuing to fight. Had it not been for us, you would have the design which is now disavowed. If viewpoints change so much in three or four months, is it beyond the realm of possibility that, should this new design become our flag in a few months hence, Canadians as a whole will feel their past has been forgotten? Once done, I can see no change for the future. I make this last appeal: Do not tear down in this nation the whole history of our past.

The house divided on the amendment (Mr. Monteith) which was negated on the following division:

YEAS

Messrs:

Aiken	Chatterton
Alkenbrack	Churchill
Bell	Clancy
Bigg	Coates
Cadieu (Meadow Lake)	Crouse
Cantelon	Danforth
Cardiff	Diefenbaker