

Canadian Flag

leaf on a white background, in other words representing the two original races of our nation unified with all the other races by the maple leaf. That is what they tried to bring about, again without success.

I would emphasize this fact; that during the entire progress of the committee I refrained from discussing this question with members of that committee so they would not feel in any way that the course they were to follow was dictated in any manner, shape or form. Now we have before us a flag—

Mr. Deachman: I rise on a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker, and it is a serious one. Mention has been made of an article I wrote and of the fact that there was no communication on the part of the right hon. gentleman with anybody before the decision of the committee was brought down. I have in my hand the *Globe and Mail* for Friday, October 3 and I wish to read the following—

Mr. Diefenbaker: This is not a question of privilege. I never mentioned the hon. member. Has he a guilty conscience?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Yesterday when the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra rose on a question of privilege I referred him to Beauchesne, citation 145, which is to the effect that when a member makes a statement it should be accepted by the house. If other members are not prepared to accept such a statement they have to bring a motion and take responsibility for it.

No charge has been made against the hon. member so far in the address of the Leader of the Opposition, and if citation 145 protects the hon. member to my right surely it would operate in this case, too.

Mr. Diefenbaker: It is perfectly and patently clear that the Conservative members of the committee in introducing their alternative, after the refusal of the committee to accept the red ensign, changed or altered their submission in order to show not only the British tradition of our country but the French as well. They did that to indicate the degree of entire objectivity which characterized the Conservative representation on that committee.

That is the background to the question. I now ask the house—and I intend to answer the question—why do we want a plebiscite? Sir, it is because there is division within our country—

Mr. Grégoire: You have made it.

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

Mr. Diefenbaker: Oh, the prattlers prattle, but we had nothing to do with introducing the flag question. Did we bring this matter before the house? Has it become a divisive action for a party in the House of Commons to stand against a proposal which a government advances when that proposal does not represent the views of millions of Canadians?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Diefenbaker: We are calling for a plebiscite because we trust the people of Canada to arrive at some decision which will be generally acceptable. I believe this with all my heart, that if this matter were allowed by the government to stand in abeyance, no one suggesting any retreat or departure or deviation from the parliamentary course; if it were allowed to stand and if at the next general election a number of questions were asked in a plebiscite, then whatever was believed by a majority in this country as shown by such a plebiscite would be acceptable to all Canadians, because we are all desirous of bringing about unity in the national purpose and for national ends.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Grégoire: Not true.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I cannot translate into understandable words those interruptions, but no doubt they are intelligible to the hon. gentleman who is making them.

Sir, there are many people in this country who want the red ensign. There are many others who want a red ensign with a change therein so as to recognize the contribution made by the two original races. Some there are who, convinced by months of propaganda, now want the three maple leaf design. After all, it was a concept which was widely advertised, and it was placed on stamps by coincidence. There are Canadians who like that design. Certainly the Post Office Department, though I admit the Postmaster General did not know anything about this—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Diefenbaker:—had that stamp issued. It was just what some call the purest of coincidence, in keeping with the fact that ministers opposite apparently do not communicate with one another or pass on information.

My correspondence shows there are fewer people who want the one maple leaf design, the recommendation of the committee. You can understand that. You cannot expect the Canadian people to be able to follow the