

Canadian Flag

others—do not accept that. Nor will we accept this attempt to destroy our British heritage. Why does the Prime Minister feel that he can ensure unity in Canada by appeasing one province and antagonizing nine others? The results of attempts at appeasement are evident to any student of history. From the Danegeld to Munich, appeasement has never worked. In my opinion it is not going to work now.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there is an amendment to the resolution before the house calling for a national referendum on the flag issue. This would give every Canadian of voting age the right to express his opinion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. May I be permitted to mention that there are conversations going on across the aisle, which makes it a little difficult for the speaker to be heard by the Chair.

Mr. MacRae: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Was this government elected solely on the promise it would give Canada a three maple leaf flag? I would say it was not. This was never mentioned in my constituency of York-Sunbury. I am afraid it was only mentioned in those constituencies where it was felt it could get a few votes. There are many factors that enter into the election of a political party. We must remember, too, that this government is not in a majority position in this house; it is in a minority position. It is here by sufferance of the splinter parties, who for the most part are like the mule, without pride of ancestry or hope of posterity.

Some time in the next four years there will have to be a general election. A referendum could be taken at that time with very little expense or cost to the treasury. Furthermore, this would provide a cooling off period for emotions and tempers to subside. The Prime Minister would not be put in the position of forcing his personal choice for a flag upon the Canadian people who for the most part do not seem to want it. Here is a sensible and workable alternative to an action whose only result can be to divide our nation further.

Much of the work of this parliament still remains to be done. The Canada pension plan is still only in its formative stages. Nothing has been done toward providing the promised 10,000 university scholarships. This promise has not been fulfilled. Nothing has been done for eastern agriculture, or in any event very little. These and many other urgent matters are awaiting consideration.

I appeal to the Prime Minister and to those who advise him, especially those from Ontario, the maritimes and British Columbia, to use their common sense on this matter to help to save Canada, not to destroy it, to keep it the great nation it has become over the last two centuries and to ensure the great future which could be in store for our children and for those generations yet to come.

Mr. Heber E. Smith (Simcoe North): Mr. Speaker, we have been constantly reminded in the last weeks by the newspapers and on radio and television and by our semi-silent friends opposite that we must instantly desist from discussing the flag and adopt Mr. Pearson's pennant as our national flag. I do not know what you would call this but it seems to me something like closure by public opinion or closure by public relations.

With my colleagues from the province of Quebec and with their people I can sympathize, and I hope I can understand their position. But to those zealots and others who think that they can instantly cure the imagined wrongs of the past by quick passage of this resolution I suggest that they could profit by listening a little longer.

It is quite true, I think, that the rest of Canada has in the past neglected Quebec, but I think too that our sins have been sins of omission rather than sins of commission. As long as the people of Quebec seemed to us to be content to be more or less hewers of wood and drawers of water, and as long as they did not make too onerous economic demands on the rest of Canada, we were content to ignore them. But now they are bursting into the highly industrialized second half of the 20th century and they cannot be shrugged off any longer.

Many of those in the rest of Canada who strongly support the new flag are doing so in the sadly mistaken belief that this action will quiet Quebec's economic aspirations. I do not think they could be more wrong. The flag controversy is only a symbol of much greater and deeper problems. But I think too that when we talk about this problem there is something on the credit side for the rest of Canada. Quebec's civil law, its religion and its educational system have been carefully protected by our constitution, and for the use or misuse which Quebec has made of this protection it is not the rest of Canada but Quebec and its people who must bear the responsibility.