

A SYMBOL OF CITIZENSHIP

The flag is one such symbol. For Canada, it has changed as our country has grown from colony to self-governing Dominion to sovereign independence — to a nation respected among nations. Canada made this change by peaceful evolution, gradually and in a way that did not weaken the bonds with the mother country. That phase of our political evolution is now completed.

Our ties to the mother country do not now include any trace of political subordination. They are ties of affection, of tradition and respect. As a Canadian, I don't want them destroyed or weakened. But they have changed, and the symbols of Canada have also changed with them. This is an inevitable process.

In World War I, the flag that flew for Canadian soldiers overseas was the Union Jack. In World War II, in January 1944, the Red Ensign came officially on the scene, though the flag designated for the first Canadian forces overseas and presented as such to General McNaughton on his departure for Europe was a different one, with the three joined red Maple Leaves predominant

I believe that today a flag designed around the Maple Leaf will symbolize, will be a true reflection of, the new Canada.

Today there are 5,000,000 or more Canadians whose tradition is not inherited from the British Isles, but who are descendants of the original French founders of our country. There are another 5,000,000 or more who have come to Canada from other far-away lands with a heritage neither British nor French.

I believe that a Canadian flag, as distinctive as the Maple Leaf in the Legion badge, will bring them all closer to those of us of British stock and make us all better, more united Canadians.

Would such a change mean any disrespect for the Union Jack, or its rejection from our history? No.

A COMMONWEALTH FLAG

I would not agree to that; I have served under the Union Jack in war and I have lived under it in peace. I have seen it flying above the smoke and fire and crashing bombs in London's blitz. I have seen it flying proudly in some desperate moments in 1915. I know it stands for freedom under law, justice and the dignity of man; for the glorious history of a brave breed of men. The Union Jack should still be flown in Canada — not as our national flag but as a symbol of our membership in a Commonwealth of Nations, and of our loyalty to the Crown.

In taking this position, I know there are others, as patriotic Canadians as I am, who disagree, honestly and deeply. Such an issue is bound to raise strong emotions. Symbols — whether badges, flags, or anthems — have a deep emotional meaning. That is why they help to make a nation great, help to inspire and nourish loyalty, patriotism, and devotion among those who make up the nation. An emotional reaction is roused when there is any suggestion that old symbols should be discarded or adapted to new conditions and new needs.

You will recall the great Legion debate just a few years ago, in 1960, when you were choosing a new Legion badge; you will remember the arguments put forward in defence of your executive's decision on that new badge.

As described by your then President, Mr. Justice Woods, it was correct according to heraldry, was distinctive, embodied the right symbolism to represent those things the Legion stood for. It was strictly your own and could not be confused with the badge of any other organization. Its central, dominant feature was the Maple Leaf.

A TRULY CANADIAN SYMBOL

Writing about this central symbol, the Maple Leaf, Mr. Justice Woods said at that time: "Consideration was given to some other form of emblem to represent Canada. As a matter of fact, a number of those who have criticized the badge asserted that the Maple Leaf was not a good Canadian symbol. Your council, however, were of the opinion that it was a widely accepted Canadian symbol. This certainly is true in Europe. Our troops wore it on their caps and uniforms in the First World War. It appears on the flag of the Canadian Army. It appears on our national Coat of Arms. It appears on the shields of our provinces."

Mr. Justice Woods then added: "When it was pointed out to us that it was improper to mutilate the Union Jack by placing the Maple Leaf over it, we did not see how we could properly carry this on in the new badge, so we removed the Union Jack and this left the gold Maple Leaf. We decided to change its colour to red. We put a white background so that it would stand out and this, in conjunction with the blue on the Legion scroll below, gives you the red, white and blue which we, of course, wanted to retain."

You will recall also that the suggestion made at the time that the question of your new badge should be determined by referendum throughout your membership was rejected by your executive as impractical.

As in the case of your new badge, so it is in any question of changing symbols. It asks a lot of human nature to expect ready acceptance of something that is going to alter that which is venerated and has been for long honoured by many.

So any suggestion for change is bound to provoke strong criticism as well as support. This is all part of the democratic process.

We, who are elected to serve Canada in Parliament, owe those who elect us more than the advocacy of non-controversial ideas. We owe Canada our best judgment and we fail Canada if we fail to exercise that judgment, or if we pass our responsibility for judgment back to the electors who sent us to Parliament.

I believe most sincerely that it is time now for Canadians to unfurl a flag that is truly distinctive and truly national in character, as Canadian as the Maple Leaf which should be its dominant design, a flag easily identifiable as Canada's, a flag which cannot be mistaken for the emblem of any other country, a flag of the future which honours also the past, Canada's own and only Canada's.

A PARLIAMENTARIAN VIEW

One of my colleagues in Parliament was asked the other day by some constituents to state his position on this issue. This is what he wrote back:

"I want to emphasize that when I am called upon to make a decision on this matter it will not