

Canadian Flag

Minister described him as "a man of parliament". Perhaps because he is a man of parliament that man did not mock symbols. When winged swastikas fired the skies over England's cities and the earth opened to swallow the women and children of England and bury them beneath the wrecked symbols of their homes, then was seen the V for victory sign; then was heard its counterpart in music.

These symbols were evident everywhere. They were important not only to those in Great Britain but to members in this House of Commons who were aware of them in their offices in this building, and who returned to this chamber from those offices to lead Canadians to make the greatest effort and sacrifice in men, money and material that this nation has ever made. Mr. Speaker, the man who led the greatest effort against the greatest odds we have ever seen spoke and achieved through symbols. Which of us will forget the defiant arrogance of his words "Some chicken, some neck", uttered in this chamber to the French prophets of doom.

Of this man of symbols Mr. Harold Wilson has said "If Winston Churchill could write his own epitaph it would simply be this:— 'He was a good House of Commons man'." And as a good House of Commons man, Mr. Speaker, Winston Churchill holds dear the symbols of the House of Commons, the symbols of parliament and the symbols of the Queen in parliament. No one is more rationally aware than he that the principles of the United Kingdom constitution which are in turn the principles of the Canadian constitution are the principles of republic. But no one is more rationally aware than Winston Churchill, that man of parliament, of the role of tradition, habit and symbols in preserving ancient institutions after effective power has passed elsewhere. No one knows better than he how important this role is to political stability. It is those principles, in combination with those traditions, habits, symbols and institutions, which make parliamentary government of the United Kingdom type the kind of government which is most deliberately initiated today.

We know that many times in recent years attempts have been made to transplant the British parliamentary system. Many of these efforts have failed and the nations which have made this experiment have slipped into dictatorship because the leaders imported the machinery of the British parliamentary system but scorned the symbols, or mistook

[Mr. Ormiston.]

the meaning of the symbols. These were not men of evil intent; they were either men of the intellectual elite who looked upon a symbol as an emotional crutch for a lame-brain, or they were irrational men who read into the symbols the meanings of their private hates and fears.

Let us consider another symbol, one which lies before us. In the centre of the chamber rests the mace. It is a symbol of royal authority, the symbol of the authority of this house, a symbol of your own authority, Mr. Speaker. In ancient times it was a symbol of the union of church and state.

Mr. Byrne: I think this would be an appropriate moment to raise a point of order, Mr. Speaker, since a reference has been made to your authority. Simply for the record I wish to draw to your attention the fact that the hon. member is out of order on two counts. First, he is reading his speech, in the second place he is in no way discussing the question of a plebiscite.

Mr. Speaker: I must disagree with the hon. member's last contention. Symbols are important to this country, and the hon. member is relating that to the value, in his opinion, of a plebiscite. As to his reading his speech, he has rather full notes but it is not the first time members have had full notes.

Mr. Ormiston: I appreciate the observations of the hon. member for Kootenay East. I hope that at some suitable time we may hear his views on this whole subject. I was certainly trying to associate the symbolism of the past with the symbolism of the age in which we live. We must attempt to do this if we are to be in a proper position to carry out a plebiscite, because in the event of a plebiscite there will be a need for the study of symbols.

I was referring to the symbol which we see before us, and I was about to say that in ancient times archbishops carried it as they rode beside their kings into battle. They carried a mace instead of a cutting weapon so they might do their duty to their king by bludgeoning his enemies instead of offending God by shedding blood. Upon such niceties of symbolism have the multiracial British tolerated one another's eccentricities and survived. Some of those eccentricities and traditions survive in this chamber to the present day. I can recall from a study of English history that at the time Cromwell was in the British House of Commons he noticed the