

Flags of Canada

Otherwise we are going to be carrying on in the years to come as we have been doing in the past, I imagine, almost since the time of confederation. Let the people decide by referendum—and in this I agree with the sponsor of the bill—whether they want it. If they say yes, then let the government—this government or a succeeding one—have the fortitude, after all their studies and consideration, to bring in a design, have the guts to stand by it and let us pass it.

As I said, there will be backers of 2,700 designs who perhaps will not like the design chosen. There will be a few weeks or a few months of criticism and obstruction. But if I know the people of Canada at all and the way in which they react, my opinion is this. If that decision is made and passed by the House of Commons and the Senate, it will not be long before they will all be saluting the flag and will be proud of the fact that they have now obtained what they want, namely a distinctive flag.

I put that suggestion forward. In conclusion I say that this is an emotional matter. I am quite happy under the flag under which I now live. If the majority of the people, however, want something different, that is all right. It is then our responsibility to see that they get it. I hope the amendment will not be considered with a view to just putting forward a referendum on two ideas for a flag. That is why I rather like the principle of the amendment. I think this is a wonderful time to have a referendum by including it as one of the questions in the census. I want to commend the hon. member for that suggestion. I think it is a wonderful idea. But I suggest that his amendment be amended, or that he consider amending it, in order not to ask again "Are you in favour of a distinctive national flag which does not contain an emblem of any other country?"

How partisan can you get? There once again we are running into the old trouble with regard to the union jack or the fleur-de-lis. We are now getting a great influx of people from other parts of the world. On that score we are running right back into the trouble that has been bothering us all this time. I think this idea of a referendum in the original motion is good. I think the principle of the amendment with regard to having the referendum put in the census is a wonderful idea. Then if the government in the census gets the answer that Canada wants a distinctive national flag, let them have the gumption to bring in a bill embodying a design, and I think we shall then finally solve this problem of a flag for Canada.

Mr. Harris Rogers (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, in entering this debate may I say that my remarks will naturally be brief, inasmuch as my

colleague the hon. member for St. Boniface (Mr. Regnier) covered the matter rather fully and in detail. At the outset I want to say that in his remarks the hon. member for Vancouver East has made a suggestion that I think could be worked out in principle.

It is not considered good form to refer to one's background or activities in life. However, Mr. Speaker, in order to keep the record straight I think I should be permitted to do so today. I belong to that component of British origin that descended from the united empire loyalists. On tracing the lineage back one finds that it is quite a mixture. In it there are traces of Huguenot, English, Irish, Scots, Welsh and Dutch which, I submit, when all welded together have made me a Canadian and a proud one. Apart from this consideration I served in the armed forces for some nine or ten years. So altogether—let us have no misunderstanding about this—I have always been loyal to the crown and to the union jack and our membership in the commonwealth of nations. Be that as it may, in all sincerity I think the time has arrived when we should have a distinctive Canadian flag.

Geographically Canada is the third largest nation in the world. Our population is made up of peoples from all over the globe and the flow of immigrants must be kept up if we ever intend to build a nation in keeping with our heritage. The time has passed when we can sit back and be told that the British and French laid the foundations of present day Canada. During the second world war, following an accident in my first unit, I was given the honour of recruiting and organizing a second army service corps unit. I found it difficult to pronounce the names of most of the servicemen who formed that unit. Suffice it to say they were simply Canadians, and proud of it.

This is Canada, and in my humble opinion nothing could give us more confidence and national unity than a distinctive Canadian flag. We have Canadians in the services—in fact, they are ambassadors of the highest order—serving all over the world. From what I can gather, their hue and cry is for a distinctive Canadian flag, something they can cling to and something they can look to with pride.

I submit that the purpose of a national flag is to indicate the sovereignty of a nation, which I contend our present flag does not altogether do. It honours the union jack, which is an honourable symbol but not the symbol of Canada. This has been quite an issue over a number of years and dates back to 1925, as far as I can find out, when the government of the day set up a committee of civil servants to study the problem. This was short-lived, in as much as it did not