

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE

TUESDAY, December 4, 1945.

The Joint Special Committee to select a Canadian Flag met this day at 4 o'clock p.m. Hon. Mr. Lambert, Chairman of the Senate section, presided.

The CHAIRMAN: It was suggested at the opening meeting of this committee that the minister, who is with us to-day, as the first order of business would make a statement setting forth what might be regarded as the point of view of the government in connection with the resolution setting up this joint committee. Without further words I should like to call upon Mr. Martin to speak to us now.

Hon. Mr. MARTIN: Mr. Chairman, honourable senators and gentlemen of the committee: it was thought desirable at the first meeting, as the Chairman has said, for a statement to be made on behalf of the government which might appear as a part of the record, and which it is hoped will be in the nature of an objective statement to be followed by a more technical presentation by Colonel Duguid, following the decision of last week that Colonel Duguid appear before the committee.

The resolution, passed by the House of Commons setting up this committee, and standing in the name of the acting prime minister, and spoken to on behalf of the Government by the Minister of Veterans Affairs, was put forward by the government, not as an expression of narrow nationalism, but as an expression of the government's conviction that the time had come when Canada should have a flag of its own.

Canada is today one of the important nations of the world—important far beyond what the number of her population alone would merit. We have, in two wars, borne our full and serious responsibility for the preservation of peace and civilization. In two wars, our fighting men have brought glory to Canada. Now with half the world in ruin, with starvation and chaos besetting the countries of Europe that were once the seat of power and influence, the responsibilities of this country are greater than ever before. For a young nation, Canada has done great things and Canadians have derived a glowing national pride from what Canada has accomplished. We feel that we have great things in common—that we can afford to hold our heads high and be proud of the fact that we are Canadians.

Some may say that this is in invitation to nationalism—a regression to that selfish introversion that has brought war and chaos to the world. We do not agree for a moment. It is not consciousness of community and of national bonds that is dangerous but the perversion and exaggeration of that consciousness. There has been too little, not too much, national pride in this country. We are part of a great commonwealth organization that has been an example to the world, and we have every intention of remaining a part and of helping it on to greater and better things. We hope for much from the new united nations organization, in which we feel that we will play our full and active part. Our gaze is turning more and more outward, and in carrying our responsibilities in the new world we will be better fitted to do our part if we have an essential feeling of internal unity and oneness. That is why, I think, it is important to give greater emphasis to the Canadian aspect of things and why it is desirable that the work of this committee should result in an acceptable and appropriate design.

It will be noted that parliament in passing the resolution setting up this committee has expressed the view that "It is expedient that Canada possess