

Canadian Flag

thing to do, I think, and I hope the right hon. gentleman will agree with me in this and will therefore feel a little differently about committees than he did on November 13, 1945, when he spoke on a resolution to set up a joint parliamentary flag committee. At that time he spoke in terms which indicated that that was the worst possible course which could be taken by this parliament. As reported at page 2090 of *Hansard* for November 13, 1945, the right hon. gentleman said:

So that when an amendment was moved by hon. members on this side of the house the other day, the idea behind it was that instead of putting this matter into the cockpit of a committee where there may be engendered passions such as resulted from the placing of a similar question in committee in South Africa, we suggested that the government face the issue as a government—

Well, Mr. Speaker, we all agreed that this matter should go to a committee. We did not face it as a government in that sense; we sent it to a committee. That committee, as we hoped it would, brought about greater unity in the search for a design which would appeal to the greatest possible majority in this House of Commons. That was the purpose in setting up the committee, and I think that purpose was achieved.

Now, Mr. Speaker, are we, in face of that work which has been done, and as proposed by the right hon. gentleman, to ignore, to reject, to abandon this report? The right hon. gentleman said yesterday that it would be a step forward if we would only postpone the whole matter and forget about the report. Mr. Speaker, it would be a step backward if we were to do this, and it would prevent this matter being decided for the indefinite future.

In a very interesting television broadcast in June of this year the Leader of the Opposition—this broadcast has been referred to previously, Mr. Speaker—used these words: "It is parliament's responsibility to look after this matter". A little later, again quoting from the text of his broadcast, he said:

You say, should it go to the Canadian people. I say no.

And again—

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, the right hon. gentleman is simply quoting excerpts. I said there should be a plebiscite. I said it at that time and I have continued to say that. But I did say that there should not be an election fought on the question of the flag.

Mr. Pearson: The right hon. gentleman will have to give his own interpretation to his

[Mr. Pearson.]

words, but his words also included this expression.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Yes, you read it.

Mr. Pearson: I will read more if it will make him feel any better. The right hon. gentleman said:

Put this matter of the flag before the Canadian people and I fear the results.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Yes, that is what I said.

Mr. Pearson: Then we are agreed on that.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I do not mind the applause. What I said was, do not put it before them as an election issue. I advocated a plebiscite. Throughout the remarks which the right hon. gentleman is quoting he will find that over and over again I advocated a plebiscite. But I did say, do not put this matter before the Canadian people as an election issue, he himself having threatened to put it forward in an election and then having to withdraw.

Mr. Pearson: I really do not want to be unfair to the right hon. gentleman, but surely to clear this matter up the best thing to do—and I will be glad to do this as soon as the procedure makes it possible—is to table the full text of what the right hon. gentleman said.

Mr. Diefenbaker: That is right.

Mr. Pearson: In any event, Mr. Speaker, the matter is now before parliament. We on this side as members of this party, with one exception—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Churchill: An honourable exception.

Mr. Pearson: Well, there are more exceptions on the other side. I would be happy, Mr. Speaker, to compare the quantity of exceptions but not the quality. In any event, we accept these recommendations, Mr. Speaker, and my right hon. friend opposite rejects them. That was made clear by the right hon. Leader of the Opposition yesterday.

It has been said that we should drop this matter. Some very earnest and sincere appeals have been made to us on this side to drop it because it is premature and controversial. It has been suggested that it is premature and that, after the stand that we on this side have taken, after the development over the years and after decades of nationhood, it should be postponed indefinitely. Mr. Speaker, what would be gained by that?