

*Canadian Flag*

by Mr. Bourassa in 1904 about the replacement of the red ensign with the union jack was made in 1945 by Mr. Church, a member from Toronto, because at that time the union jack was replaced by the red ensign.

I have another interesting proof here, Mr. Speaker, of the fact that the red ensign was used and accepted as our flag. It is in the form of an original election poster of Sir John A. Macdonald during the 1880's. You will see that it depicts Sir John A. Macdonald with a farmer on one side of him, a mechanic on the other, and in the background we have not the union jack but the red ensign. At the bottom, of course, is the slogan which everybody remembers: "The old flag, the old party, the old leader." I had always thought, Mr. Speaker, never having looked into the matter before, that the old flag referred to in this slogan was the union jack. This poster demonstrates the fact that the old flag referred to was not the union jack but the Canadian red ensign which evidently at that period of time was accepted as Canada's national flag. I think it has been accepted since that time by most Canadians as our national flag.

I believe there is no question about the fact that it is use and tradition and the love that people have for a flag which makes it meaningful as a national symbol, not a statute of parliament. In actual fact, very few countries have a flag as a result of legislation or statute. In nearly all cases, excluding the new nations of Africa and Asia which have just arisen in the last three or four years, flags have come into use through tradition and acceptance by the people, just in exactly the same way as our Canadian red ensign has come to be accepted through use.

In addition to the fact that the Canadian red ensign has become our flag through use and acceptance, there has been official recognition of it on at least three occasions of which I am aware. First there was an admiralty warrant of 1892 which authorized its use on Canadian merchant ships. It had been used on them before that, but this was an official authorization for its use for that purpose. Then there was the order in council of 1924 when the government of Mr. Mackenzie King prescribed the use of the Canadian red ensign for Canadian government offices and buildings abroad. You will note that they were "Canadian" and it was used at that time for that purpose. Finally there was the order in council of 1945 to which frequent reference has been made, which authorized the Canadian red ensign for general use in Canada. It was on that occasion that

it was used on the peace tower of this building in place of the union jack to which I have already referred.

All I have said with regard to the use and acceptance of the Canadian red ensign during the past 100 years makes it clear that it is quite incorrect to say we have no flag or we have had no flag. Definitely, we have had a flag and we still have that flag until it is modified or changed in some way.

I regret very much, as I am sure most Canadians do, that the flag question has now become a partisan issue. Apparently this was not the Prime Minister's intention in the beginning. If we consult *Hansard* for May 12, 1964, page 3164, we find that the hon. member for Cumberland (Mr. Coates) asked the following question:

Will the right hon. gentleman give an assurance that when the design for the proposed new national flag is presented to parliament all members of this house will have a free vote, and that the defeat of the design would not be considered a vote of non-confidence in the government?

The Prime Minister replied as follows:

When the time comes to submit the decision of the government in this matter to the House of Commons I would hope every member of the house would vote as his conscience dictates, and that there would be no question of confidence or non-confidence in a party sense.

I believe nothing could be clearer than that. What the Prime Minister intended at that time was a free vote on this question. I submit that this is a question, above all others probably, upon which there should be a free vote. This is not a question which should be a partisan one. It is too divisive and, so far as the country generally is concerned, it packs too much potential dynamite to be converted into a partisan matter. This is particularly true in a House of Commons which, as has been pointed out many times before, is a house of minorities. However during the course of the next week the Prime Minister apparently changed his mind.

A week later, on May 19, the Prime Minister stated that the government would stand or fall on the flag question. He went on to intimate that it would be a free vote because each member would vote according to his conscience. That is merely playing with words, Mr. Speaker. A vote such as is now proposed on this question is the very opposite of a free vote. By definition a free vote is one which does not involve the fate of the government. I know of no other definition.

The vote we are going to have will be a regular vote of the house, and in view of the developments that have taken place indications show that to a large extent, though