

Hon. Mr. Thorvaldson: Who is asking for it in this house?

Hon. Mr. Crerar: It is not a distinctive symbol.

Now, if we are to have a flag—and, as I have said, I am 100 per cent for it—then it should be a distinctive flag, and one that when anybody looks at it he or she will say “There is the flag of a nation that has achieved its independence.” It should not be possible to confuse it with anything else. To be otherwise, I think, would be, shall I say, almost a degradation of a national symbol or a flag.

Now may I say a word or two about Senator O’Leary’s (Carleton) amendment? I can understand the senator’s feelings expressed in the eloquent address he gave us a few moments ago, but what is to be gained by postponing this matter further? Senator O’Leary’s plea, if it means anything, means delay. He said, in effect, let us think about this for a while longer, and perhaps we can come up with some symbol that everyone will agree upon. Now, is that a likely possibility? I ask it in all reason. Here we have been discussing a flag for months, not only in this Parliament, but as I said earlier, throughout the whole country. It has been discussed in the newspapers; it has been discussed wherever people have gathered together. What more can be said about it?

This Parliament has the responsibility, and it should not evade it, of determining the symbol we should have. Ours is a representative Parliament with members elected to the House of Commons. In passing I may say that in my judgment it is more appropriate for this issue to be discussed and settled in the House of Commons than it is in the Senate. After all, we are not elected representatives; some people think we should be, but we are in fact appointed representatives, and in a matter of this kind I shall be guided, if I had no guidance of my own, by the consensus of opinion expressed in the House of Commons. This opinion was expressed last night, or I should say early this morning, in a very definite manner. May I say here that I consider it to be of great significance that after the final vote had been taken, and after months of controversy, some of it bitter controversy, all members of the House of Commons stood together and sang “God Save the Queen” and “O Canada.” In my view that was a fitting termination to a long and, at times, an acrimonious debate. Perhaps we can learn something from that. I would hope that the discussion in this house will be moderate.

I respect every other man’s opinion. I respect those among our people in Canada who would cling to the Union Jack. I respect the

opinion of those who would like to see the Red Ensign as our national flag. But these are not of Canada. We are now nearing the end of 100 years of our Canadian Confederation, and I think the time has come when we should definitely establish our own distinctive flag. One of the reasons which prompts me to urge this is the cosmopolitan nature of our population. I have here the figures which I received the other day from the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. They show that 43.8 per cent of the inhabitants of this land are Anglo-Saxon in origin, 30.4 per cent are of French origin, and 25.8 per cent are of origins other than those two. Whom have we brought and welcomed to this country? We have almost every nationality in Europe. We have among them our Ukrainian friends, who, believe me, have perhaps a finer understanding of what freedom means than many others; we have our Icelandic friends, Germans, Poles—all of these. Why did they come to Canada? They came to a land of freedom.

I remember well many years ago when a Ukrainian settler back in the bush settled upon a homestead, after receiving the title to it, knelt down and kissed the ground that was his own. That is the sort of thing that makes for Canadian nationhood. I say to this house that we cannot hope to unify all our different peoples in a great spirit of unity unless we have a distinctive symbol.

What made the United States the great country it is today? Its population was even more diverse than Canada’s, and yet under their symbols, their national anthem and their flag, they have unified their country.

Many years ago I played baseball. I am still interested in baseball, and one thing that I watch on television is the World Series. It has been a striking fact to me that before the ball game starts on the diamond the people stand in their thousands and listen to the singing of their national anthem. While that singing is going on the flag—the Stars and Stripes—is slowly rising majestically to the masthead. Who can measure the impact of that on a people? Who can measure how it solidifies them, and how it gives them a pride in their own country? Then, if the dark days come they stand and fight and fight and fight to preserve their heritage. That is what I hope in future years will develop in this country. But, I do say to this house that it is essential for us to have a flag and an anthem—a flag that has no similarity to any other flag, and a distinctive flag within the meaning of the dictionary term. If we get that I shall be content.

I shall not live to see the full blossoming of all this. These controversies will pass away, and this flag, whatever it is, will be accepted by the Canadian people. I am