

Flags of Canada

amended because of a different principle, and Your Honour has had to deal with that.

It strikes me, on the face of it, that it would not be in order—I say this with respect to Your Honour—to give priority to either of these bills in view of the fact that the matter of referring this subject to the country is one which is not contained in the other bills.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. members for the distinctions they have drawn. There is, of course, a very distinct principle in this motion; that is, that there be a referendum to the Canadian people to decide as between two flags. I assume that referendum is for some purpose, and that purpose is to provide a method of establishing a Canadian flag. I am quite prepared to accept that distinction, if the house is agreeable, and to allow the debate to proceed, although I must say I have little hope of maintaining any distinction between the debate which will arise on this motion and the debate which we have already had or will have on the other bill.

Mr. Herridge: My group believe this resolution is much more acceptable than asking the lord lyon king of arms of Scotland to design a flag for us.

Mr. Speaker: If the house will then permit me to accept this motion, with the very definite reservation that it will not be too weighty a precedent, I shall be glad to call upon the hon. member for St. Boniface.

Mr. Laurier Regnier (St. Boniface) moved:

That, in the opinion of this house, the government should consider the advisability of introducing a measure to provide for a referendum concerning the adoption of a Canadian flag.

That the questions submitted in said referendum be as follows:—Are you in favour of a flag consisting of (a) a green maple leaf on a red and white field, or, (b) the red ensign?

(Translation):

Mr. Speaker, I rise today with pride and humility to speak in favour of the resolution appearing in my name on the order paper with regard to a referendum on a Canadian flag. Lacking the eloquence to deal with a matter so dear to the hearts of all Canadians, I shall be brief.

If I rise today to discuss the matter of a referendum with regard to a national flag, it is because the people want it. Canada needs a flag. It is a necessity. The pride of the whole nation is at stake. It is not only a matter of self-esteem, but of national pride. It is essential for strengthening the unity and harmony of the two great races which, along with all the other ethnical groups

living together in Canada make up the Canadian people. A country must be proud of the flag which represents the nation. A flag would be the symbol of our independence and brotherhood.

Personally, I believe that the love and faithful devotion we feel for our country can only be strengthened by such a symbol.

Comparing nations with individuals, the lack of a flag makes us like a man who has grown up without a name and, who wants to gain not only the respect of his fellow men, but hopes to become a leader or chief. He cannot succeed for want of a name.

Canada has been making tremendous efforts in favour of peace and disarmament. That is an excellent reason why as an independent country with a growing influence in world affairs, Canada should have its own flag. Because it has no flag, other nations can say that Canada cannot speak with a single voice. We lack the unity we are urging other nations to achieve as a prerequisite to peace and disarmament. As a result, our efforts to get the support of other nations in favour of peace and disarmament can only be weakened. If we are unable to pick our own flag, it means we are controlled by another country, and therefore incapable of independent action.

Mr. Speaker, a number of my French-speaking fellow Canadians are afraid that the resolution I am proposing involves some risk. They fear that the Canadian red ensign may be chosen. By way of reassurance, I shall tell them that, if my grandfather had borne the same name as my grandmother, I would be called MacIntosh, and as a true Scotsman, I only go in for a pretty sure bet.

I am certain that the province of Quebec has no monopoly on patriotism, and also I am sure that if a referendum did take place Canadians would choose a flag with a maple leaf design and without any symbol from some other country. In fact, when the special joint committee on a distinctive Canadian flag met for nine months in 1945 and 1946, an hon. member, Mr. McNicoll, spent 25 hours studying the 2,409 designs which had been submitted at the time. And this is what Mr. McNicoll found. Of the 2,409 designs submitted 1,611 showed a maple leaf, which means two in three, or 61 per cent; 383 had a union jack, that is one in six, or 16 per cent; 231 had stars; 184, fleurs-de-lis; 116 a beaver; 49 a crown; 22 a cross, and 14 the great bear.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that was a real referendum taken among all Canadians who were interested in the choice of a flag. Sixty seven