

*Canadian Flag*

remarks should be a little more relevant to the subject matter.

**Mr. Thomas:** Mr. Speaker, these remarks do have a definite relationship inasmuch as they indicate the attitude of the Canadian political leaders in 1867 regarding the flag of Canada.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. My very respectful suggestion to the hon. member is that what this house has to consider is the opinions of the political leaders at this time and not as they were in 1867.

**Mr. Thomas:** If you will bear with me for one more sentence, I will come to the end of this quotation. These are the words of Sir John A. Macdonald:

During all that time the traveller will never be out of the sound of the British drum and may always have his eyes resting on the union jack.

Now, we come to the attitude, and this is a shorter quotation, Mr. Speaker, of Hon. George Brown, that great Liberal leader in 1867 during the debate on the formation of confederation. This is concerning a flag, and George Brown, that great leader of the reform party was ever a staunch upholder of the union jack. In the course of the confederation debate, he said:

It may be that some among us will live to see the day when, as the result of this measure, a great and powerful people may have grown up on these lands—when the boundless forests all around us shall have given way to smiling fields and thriving towns and when one united government, under the British flag, shall extend from shore to shore.

Again, we have mention of the British flag which in those days was the union jack. Here we have the Conservative party and the Liberal party representatives speaking with no objection to the union jack. Then we come to the opinion of Sir George Etienne Cartier, who in those days was the great French Canadian leader from Quebec. He was equally strong in his devotion to the British flag. This is a report in the *Quebec Morning Chronicle* of May 23, 1862, and reads as follows:

The vote against the militia bill of 1862 was recorded, as we know, against a measure which was to provide, in a better and more efficient manner, for the defence of the country. We feel, therefore, that we fell in defence of a measure, the passing of which we considered necessary to secure us the full enjoyment of our free political institutions, under the protection of the glorious flag of old England.

Now, there was no dispute in those days when confederation was set up; the flag was acceptable to all elements of the country—to

[Mr. Deputy Speaker.]

the Conservatives, to the Liberals, to the people of Upper Canada and to the people of Lower Canada. There was no feeling whatever, no objection to the use of the union jack. It has only been of late, apparently, that an objection has developed to the use of the union jack. This sentiment may change. There are about 5.5 million people in Quebec and there are about 3.5 million of those people, I believe, who speak no English but speak French only. There are about 10.5 million people in Canada who speak English only. Now, our problem at this time is to get together on a compromise flag, a flag to which all people can subscribe and in the selection of which there will be no winners and no losers.

I have a letter here written by a group of distinguished people which has a distinct bearing on the selection of a national flag. Bits of it have been referred to a number of times but the letter, which is not long, has never been used. There are parts of it which have never been used. This letter is signed by a group of distinguished Canadians such as Dr. D. G. Creighton, professor of history, University of Toronto; Dr. Eugene Forsey, director of research, Canadian Labour Congress. I may say that I called Dr. Forsey just to make sure that this was a genuine letter and that the sentiments expressed in this letter were honest, and the real sentiments of the people concerned. I was assured by Dr. Forsey, when I read him excerpts from this letter, that the letter was genuine and represented the opinions of these people. The other signers are, Mrs. H. A. Dyde, Edmonton; Dr. W. L. Morton, professor of history, University college, University of Manitoba; T. H. B. Symons, president and vice chancellor, Trent University, Peterborough; Jean Palardy, author, film director, Montreal; Dr. Denis Smith, assistant to the president and assistant professor of politics, Trent University, Peterborough; David M. Harley, barrister and solicitor, Toronto; Eric McLean, music critic, Montreal; Walter Pitman, head of the history department, Kenner Collegiate, Peterborough. He used to sit over in one of those seats. Then, there is Dr. Macgregor Parsons, Red Deer, Alberta and Scott Bull Symons, assistant curator in charge of Canadian collections, Royal Ontario museum, Toronto.

This letter was addressed to the Prime Minister under date of May 27, 1964, and it is just as pertinent today as it was then. I quote: