

Flags of Canada

prevented from taking place here in Canada. To many of them the union jack will forever be a reminder of their homeland or birthplace, simply because it represented a haven here in Canada against the old established inequities which had held for them little or limited hope for the future in the land of their birth. To them a Canadian flag without some resemblance to the union jack just does not seem possible.

Before we leave this aspect it might be well to mention those who through the history of their homelands were at one time or another, because of their national background, in conflict with Great Britain. Their decision to come to Canada was not overcome by the fact that we had a Canadian flag in the form of the union jack. In most cases it was because of this flag and what it represented that they became interested in emigrating to Canada.

I have known some of these people who could never really cherish any great warmth of affection for Great Britain as such, but who nevertheless looked upon the fruits of her handiwork here in Canada as most desirable. That feeling has continued to grow during the two wars, and with the advent of atomic power, together with our geographical position, almost as the axis upon which contending forces in world power are revolving, a new appreciation has been growing in this country in so far as the contribution of the mother country—and I refer to Great Britain—in placing us on our own feet as a distinctive nation. The British connection which to many people, if not altogether repugnant was not too desirable, has now taken on a new complexion, particularly in so far as the gallant stand that the people of Britain made for all mankind during the last war.

These people coming to Canada from all around the globe to find security from the insecurities of their homelands have seen, sometimes almost unwillingly, the union jack emerge as the symbol of their fondest hopes and dreams built here in Canada. Those who in the years gone by have looked upon the wars in Europe as something detached from Canada, and who considered our intervention on the side of Great Britain, and sometimes France, as something compelled by colonial ties with either of these nations, are today faced with the other alternative because the shift in the power balance of the world has placed their chosen land in the position where it could conceivably become the battleground should world conflict again overcome the better judgment of men and nations.

The contribution of French culture to Canada's personality is a living reality. We see it everywhere we go in Canada, and

[Mr. Nasserden.]

particularly so in the province of Quebec. The constitution of our nation embraces and compels a recognition of a continuing application of those influences that should not be forgotten in building the fabric of a distinctively Canadian flag.

Those who say that there must not or should not be any indication of that unique influence in the pattern of a distinctive Canadian flag do not have any more proper appreciation of Canadian history than those who would deny the identities that are called to our national mind by the union jack.

As the hon. member for St. Boniface stated today, we should have a flag that would represent the image of our nation. This debate should serve a useful purpose at this time; it will inspire all of us to give this matter increased attention. There is still time in which a decision can finally be reached without a referendum.

Whatever the design finally approved by parliament and the Canadian people, it should be a reminder to us of our beginnings as a nation. It should reflect the part that Great Britain played in the development of our institutions. It should also reflect the personality of Canada as it has developed under the enriching influence of French culture. But more than that, it must also reflect the personality of a nation having that third dimension, that of those who chose Canadian citizenship after the destiny of Canada was decided in the articles of confederation.

Because of our history this nation has a distinctive personality. It would be a poor Canadian who would be ashamed of any of that heritage. It is one of our greatest strengths upon which we can build in the future. It is also one of the best examples that any nation can show to her friends and neighbours in the world community.

We cannot rewrite the history of our country. Our task is to take that history and bring it into the fabric of our national life in such a way that unity may be multiplied until all our people can truthfully feel distinctively Canadian. That day is nearer now than ever before in our history.

I want to congratulate once more the hon. member for St. Boniface for giving all Canadians a reminder that there are still some objectives which remain to be achieved before the true distinction of Canadian citizenship becomes clearly established here in Canada.

(Translation):

Mr. L. J. Pigeon (Joliette-L'Assomption-Montclair): Mr. Speaker, even if we do not share the views of some of our fellow members, be they Liberal, C.C.F. or Conservative, it is nevertheless permissible, under our democratic principles, to speak accord-