

Canadian Flag

against it. I would like to comment on some facets of this. We are going to have a free vote on this question of the amendment and a plebiscite. The question of the amendment and the plebiscite will be decided by people who, as I mentioned when speaking on August 24, have sincere hopes of senatorships, or diplomatic appointments, or who would like to be judges.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Cowan: It is a free vote, however, and those who would like to go to Kuala Lumpur, Scotland, Copenhagen or Russia, are also free to vote as they like, just as it was free for them to make these trips around the world. They do not make any reports to the government at all; they just come and go. They are here at times of stress and strain to vote, and they are away on other occasions. I think the government should have a board in the outer lobby setting out these members who so willingly sacrifice their time and are absent from home to go to Copenhagen, north Russia, south Siberia and the far end of China. The names of these members should be shown, because the country does not realize the sacrifices that many of these people make and are going to make on their behalf in connection with this free vote. They draw learned conclusion in their own minds and consciences, but there is no report made to parliament as a whole; there is no written statement as to what they picked up for the guidance of members of parliament. Just those who participate in travel at government expense know what they have learned; and frequently they are defeated in the following election, so the vast store of knowledge they have acquired is lost to the nation as a whole, more's the pity.

Mr. Churchill: Along with their bumper stickers.

Mr. Cowan: Mr. Speaker, I would like to emphasize this to point out that there cannot be a free vote in this Canadian House of Commons. I was not in the house when it was suggested that the sessional indemnity should be increased to \$18,000 a year. I left for Toronto on a Friday afternoon train and was not in the house on the Monday when it was voted on. I was in the Gravenhurst-Orillia district talking on a matter that was of interest to the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources and the Department of Transport in connection with a suggested canal from lake Muskoka to join the Severn river.

[Mr. Cowan.]

I was there when this increase was voted, but I will state that if I had been in the house I would have voted for it, because I think the \$18,000 a year indemnity is necessary to the great majority of members of the House of Commons. But I would like to present some figures regarding salaries of \$18,000 or more a year.

Some hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

An hon. Member: They don't want to hear it.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure the hon. member will not mind my interrupting. I think the record should be kept straight. Parliamentary committees, associations, or members going on those various trips to C.P.A., I.P.U., NATO and Canada-United States meetings are the subject of subsequent reports to parliament in each case. I think the hon. member will find that in each case those reports are recorded in *Hansard*. Certainly I know of at least three such reports, and I know of two reports which will come to the house in due course. I am sure the hon. member did not wish to imply that hon. members who are representing their country in foreign countries are not carrying out their duties in the proper manner, because I wish to assure the hon. member that they are. I have seen the reports, and those reports are then filed with the house. I am sure the hon. member meant something else.

With regard to the \$18,000 indemnity, I do not see how this has a bearing on the question before the house, which is the matter of a plebiscite on the flag question. Would the hon. member try to confine his remarks to the question of a plebiscite, whether it should be held, where it should be held, how it should be held.

Mr. Cowan: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have your statement that you know three or four such reports have been received. I know of 30 trips that have been taken.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Cowan: With regard to the matter at issue, I simply point out that we are all the product of our experiences. We are all the product of our education, and our decisions are guided by our past experiences, by our present status in life and by our hopes for the future. We do have hopes for the future for ourselves, for our families, for our loved ones and for the country as a whole. The fact that