

Canadian Flag

happened no Canadian can take seriously the sort of nonsense the government is advancing as a Canadian flag for all time.

I am a young man, Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact only 32 years of age this very day.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Rhéaume: I am not completely devoid of a sense of historical or traditional values, nor am I unmindful of the sacrifice of two world wars that many people, particularly veterans, whether rightly or wrongly have come to associate with the Canadian red ensign. Of course I am equally sure that it is only because there are many people in the country who escaped the sacrifice of those times, and who do not associate that sacrifice with the flag under which Canadians fought, that the Liberal party has dared to make the Canadian Legion and veterans official organizations objects of ridicule.

In 1945 when some, but not all, of the boys were coming home the Prime Minister we have now would not have dared this. His courage would not have been up to this, just as it has deserted him so often in the presence of other serious domestic issues. It is very easy now, in 1964, for the Liberal government with its professional image builders to go about the country debasing the traditions of the past, following an old Liberal tactic of building themselves up by tearing others down.

I urge the house to vote for a plebiscite as the way of giving the people of Canada a chance to show whether or not they want the traditional symbols in the red ensign replaced. I want a plebiscite to give the Canadian people an opportunity to say whether from an aesthetic or an historical point of view they are happy with a flag which has nothing on it to link it either with the future or with the past. This country was French for many years and my own ancestors lived here during the time it was under French rule. They played a small part in helping to build it. It is equally true that after the battle of the plains of Abraham Canadian history took a new turn under the English. I do not think the adoption of a new flag devoid of all reference to those two founding races would in any way change history or in any way make up for those previous conflicts.

At the present time our country is very conscious, in a bitter and hurt way, that it was founded originally by the French and the English. Perhaps hon. members will say

it is not very important for us in 1964 to put anything on our flag which will serve to remind people of the contribution of the English and the French. But the flag we are choosing, or the flag which will be chosen, should be flying 200 years from now and it should be extremely important to every member of this house that 200 years from now, regardless of where Canada has gone in those centuries our people are reminded of the fact that for many years this country was French and that for many years it was English and that those in the Canadian House of Commons in 1964 were not ashamed to put symbols on the flag to remind people of these facts.

I have said that no one has yet convinced me there is a compelling and urgent reason to change the flag we have. Although I have no particular personal commitment to the Canadian red ensign, before I will participate in the removal of this flag, someone on the government side has to convince me that the need to change it is founded on something more important than the fact that on April 8, 1963, the government of this country changed.

I am happy to see the Minister without Portfolio (Mr. Dupuis) back in his place.

An hon. Member: We have missed him.

Mr. Rhéaume: It would not be accurate to say we have missed him. But it is still nice to have him back because on this very subject, the necessity for a change, the hon. gentleman said one evening that we had to have a distinctive flag and that his definition of "distinctive" was "anything without the union jack on it".

Mr. Dupuis: Or the fleur-de-lis. Put the facts straight.

Mr. Rhéaume: I am happy to have the minister back because I should like to get the latest quotation on those three leaf bumper stickers. Last time I heard, they were about \$25 a thousand—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member has for the last several minutes been straying from the question before the house, that is, the question of the plebiscite.

Mr. Rhéaume: You must admit, Mr. Speaker, I am responding to interruptions from the Minister without Portfolio who insists on trying to put something on the record.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I realize the minister interjected a remark, but he interjected that