

*Canadian Flag*

of this country has offered little or no support for the recommendation proposed by a committee made up of members, the majority of whom are his supporters. Surely his silence is an indication of childishness and petulance, and an apparent display of contempt for parliament. This attitude is an example of the great disregard for the wishes of the people that this government has adopted. Surely it is only a matter of common courtesy on the part of the Prime Minister of this country to stand in his place and give us some indication of his reason for asking concurrence in the report of a committee of this House of Commons.

This issue has been alluded to as one of the most important measures to come before this house in a great number of years. No one in Canada will dispute the fact, whether they want a change of flag, or not. Surely, in view of that fact, the Prime Minister of this country should stand in his place and answer the questions asked by the members of the house. I think tonight of the many times during my school days when I had the task of putting the union jack on the rope and hoisting it on the flag pole. I think also of the action taken in later years by the government of Right Hon. William Lyon Mackenzie King which gave to Canada a new flag in the form of the red ensign. There is a lot of history throughout those years and a lot of that history was Liberal history. There is no question in so far as that is concerned.

Earlier in the day when I listened to the Prime Minister count the number of speeches that have been made on this question I thought of the questions that are going unanswered in this country today and I could not help but think that he would have been better employed inquiring into other activities that certainly interest Canadians and must interest him as the chief administrator of the country. The changing of a flag is not a simple measure such as a money bill or many of the other changes that parliament makes in statutes. In my view it is a part of the constitutional set-up of the country and I am surprised that throughout this debate very little attention has been given to it by the chief guardian of the constitution of the country, the Prime Minister himself. In saying that, I know he has to be in other places at times. He has many duties; but the Prime Minister of this country has no duty that is greater than his duty to sit in his seat in the House of Commons when an important measure is under consideration, and we had hoped that we would have seen him more frequently.

[Mr. Nasserden.]

I think too tonight of the traditions of this country. I am in the unhappy or happy position, whichever way you want to look at it, of not having either a French or English background. I believe that most Canadians of my generation with a background not altogether dissimilar to mine want no part of the feuds that have been a part of the history of this country. It may be said by some, and I believe this is the argument of the Prime Minister, that perhaps because of these feuds, these things that have happened in the past, there should be no reference to the founding elements of this nation in the new flag. But as one of those who have never been a part of either of the two founding elements of the nation I cannot help but feel that we in this parliament today are in much the same position a firm is that decides to change its name, or when an organization decides to make a new beginning. But I ask you, sir, in all sincerity, how can a nation make a new beginning without some of the foundations upon which it was originally built?

When I look at the recommendation that has been made to parliament by the committee and consider the action that was taken by the Liberal members of the committee, I must say that, while I do not want to reflect on them, the decision taken by them in the committee indicates to me that they must not have been consulted when the Prime Minister brought in his three leaf design in the first place. It may have been his design, but the design that was endorsed by the Liberal members of the committee was another design altogether, and the outstanding fact to be remembered in this whole matter is that not a single Liberal member of that committee went to bat for the Prime Minister's design.

The thing that bothers me about this whole matter is this. We have heard a great deal of talk about unity among those who sit on the benches opposite, unity among the members of the government opposite and the unity they have given this nation, but when it came to supporting the design they had supported earlier in the house when it was brought forward by the Prime Minister the Liberal members of that committee did not give evidence of that unity. How can they ever explain the inconsistency of their position? Is that not the reason why the Prime Minister's seat is empty tonight? He cannot come into the House of Commons tonight and explain away the inconsistency of that position. That is why hon. members opposite are