

Flags of Canada

country, and because at the United Nations and abroad, Canada has no distinctive emblem, as was pointed out by the hon. member for St. Jean-Iberville-Napierville (Mr. Dupuis), and as a result of many Gallup polls carried out throughout the country confirming the fact that a majority of Canadians are in favour of a distinctive national flag, I believe that Canadian public opinion has developed to the point where today a very large majority of Canadians do want a distinctive national flag.

Therefore, we feel that parliament should accede to this expressed wish with the shortest delay. We have repeatedly raised that point in the House of Commons.

The hon. member for Drummond-Arthabaska and others have raised the point in two or three sessions; in each instance, the debate dragged on endlessly until the end of the sitting, making it impossible for the house to reach a decision.

As was mentioned by the hon. member for Vancouver East (Mr. Winch) a moment ago, had this matter come to a vote in the house, I am sure that a majority of the members would have come out in favour of a distinctive Canadian flag. I would add that if the resolutions submitted by hon. members on our side had been accepted, the government could have taken action.

That is why, during the great rally held in Ottawa early in January, the Liberal party definitely committed itself to giving our country a distinctive national flag within two years of its coming into office.

I would not like at this time to enter the realm of contention but I could, if I wanted to, put on record a series of statements, starting with those of the Conservative members who used to sit on this side of the house, but who have now emigrated to treasury benches, statements in favour of a distinctive Canadian flag, although since their coming to office they do not seem to have made any progress in that direction.

Earlier, the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate (Mr. Pickersgill) was asked what he thought of this resolution. The answer to that question is simple. Give the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate a chance to make his decision known. Cut down on your remarks and let him express his views on the amendment submitted by the hon. member for St. Jean-Iberville-Napierville, and on the resolution of the hon. member for St. Boniface (Mr. Regnier). Those who put that question to him will then immediately see that the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate will support the amendment of my hon. friend the member for St. Jean-Iberville-Napierville.

[Mr. Chevrier.]

I said at the outset that I wanted to be brief. It is still my intention. I rose only to express those few opinions, and in closing I say that, under the existing law of parliament, by virtue of the powers of this government, if we are to have a distinctive national flag, it is up to the government, either by the establishment of a committee or by some other means, to give it to us. I believe that those who spent much of their time criticizing the former administration instead of giving us a distinctive national flag, had better address their claims and their representations to the government that sits to the right of Mr. Speaker. If they did that, we soon, might have a distinctive national flag which I think, the great majority of the Canadian people want.

Mr. V. F. Dubois (Richmond-Wolfe): Mr. Speaker, the resolution moved by the hon. member for St. Boniface (Mr. Regnier) is such as to command, in a very special way, the attention of all Canadians. It reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of this house, the government should consider the advisability of introducing a measure to provide for a referendum concerning the adoption of a Canadian flag.

The hon. member for St. Boniface would like to have the two following questions asked: 1. Are you in favour of a flag consisting of a green maple leaf on a red and white field; 2. Are you in favour of the Canadian red ensign?

The first question has to do with a distinctive national flag, while the second would ask for a vote in favour of a flag denoting Canada's attachment for England.

Why those two questions? I believe the hon. member for St. Boniface should have asked only one question, that is: Are you in favour of a distinctive national flag? Then, the government would have the responsibility of choosing the kind of flag suitable for our country, according to the result of the referendum.

Since July 1, 1867, Canada is a democratic country under the British North America Act. It has the right to make its own laws, to choose its representatives through consultations in order to form a government. Since then also, it rests with Canada to select a flag suited to its essentially Canadian character. Furthermore, under the Statute of Westminster of December 11, 1931, Canada has become an independent and sovereign country. Since that time, we have our own supreme court. The cases that used to be referred to the privy council in London are now heard in Canada.