

*Canadian Flag*

I suppose that every symbol can be misunderstood. People can say the wrong things about anything. The choice of responsible people is to take the path of courage, and one does not deviate from the right because the weak or the ill-informed may criticize. It is my belief that our flag needs these symbols as a reminder to every citizen, from whatever part of the country he comes, that his way of life is cherished and respected by other Canadians who have a different culture and who ask of him only that he gives the same respect to their way of life.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, let the Canadian people vote on the flag in another election or by a referendum as suggested in the amendment by the hon. member for Perth (Mr. Monteith). Why all the rush about a new flag before Christmas? Is this the only way the Prime Minister could bring about an election, or was this what he had in mind when he suddenly introduced the flag resolution, which had not been included in the speech from the throne last February?

The Prime Minister has been known to change his mind. I suggest that if he would change his mind on this issue, it would be to the advantage of his party and himself to submit this matter to the electors of Canada and they could make the decision at the next federal election. I hope that the Prime Minister will reconsider and withdraw his motion even at this late date, and submit the issue to the electors.

**Mr. C. F. Kennedy (Colchester-Hants):** Mr. Speaker, I have been waiting for some time to have an opportunity to put forward a few views on this important question and on this amendment to refer the matter back to a committee in order that the people of Canada might have the chance to express their opinion on the subject. I have waited because there are so many members in this house who have not yet risen to speak in this debate, and I would think that this question should be as important to them as it is to me. I have already expressed myself briefly previously, and I intend to be brief again today. I still contend that the people of Canada should have the opportunity of expressing their opinion on this question, and I put forward these reasons for feeling in this way.

During this debate an inference has been drawn by some government members, the very few who have spoken, that a new flag was an election promise. If it was, it was a very indefinite one and must certainly have been regional, because there was no mention made of a flag in the last election campaign

in which I participated. I would be glad to oppose anybody from my area who would come forward and say that it was his intention to vote in favour of destroying our present flag.

In my opinion, the action which is being taken is not a creative move at all. It is simply a move to destroy what we have. It is simply a move to remove a symbol, of which many people of this country are very proud, from our national flag. This is proven by the willingness of the government to accept almost anything, provided it has no connection with the red ensign. I am referring to the union jack part of the red ensign when I say that. Hon. members opposite should—and I challenge them to do so—stand up and say why they do not like the union jack portion of our present flag and why it should not be represented on a new flag. I have yet to meet anybody who could put up an argument as to why it should be obliterated from a new flag.

Among the loyal Canadians in this country are the veterans who stood and fought for our country, and they have been most adamant that our national symbols should be preserved. A symbol means, or should mean, something to a person. If it were not for symbols—and symbols include literature or anything representing the past—our coming generation would learn nothing of the past. Under the symbols we have had thus far this nation has progressed. We may not have reached the highest goals over the years, but we have stood for the principles which underlie the British and French traditions handed down to us. Why then, without permission from the people, has parliament the right to vote on this question and throw away these things which mean so much to so many people?

How many people in this country have participated in several wars in order to defend the principles to which I have referred, the basic principle of which is freedom? When I speak of those who participated in the wars I am referring not only to those who actually took up the sword and fought on the battlefields, but also to the vast number of people who supported our soldiers and made it possible for them to be effective and to put forth everything they had, many of them giving their lives. Surely the opinions of these people, our veterans should have some direct bearing in this regard; and as far as I am aware they are adamant that we should not lose our present flag which bears the symbols for which they have stood over