

Canadian Flag

ing office a Liberal government would adopt a new flag. The second was when he announced, before he had even made a final decision on what kind of flag he was going to bring forward, that the government would stand or fall on the result. This was only a week after he had said that there would be a free vote. As everyone knows, of course, that effectively stopped any free vote in the House of Commons. His third error was when he told the House of Commons that there would be a full scale debate on the flag with this issue taking absolute precedence over everything else on the agenda. His fourth error was when in bringing down the resolution he split it so that he presented the house, not with one official flag but two.

The newspaper sums up the matter this way:

These four errors are likely to make the most serious kind of trouble for the Pearson government, for parliament and for the nation.

In forcing parliament to deal with his political flag, a flag born in haste with no room for compromise, I think he has committed one of the most provocative acts ever perpetrated by a Canadian prime minister. Whether or not the issue is pressed to its ultimate conclusion, Canadian unity will suffer as a result.

The only explanation for this unseemly haste is that it furnishes the government with a diversionary tactic to cover up the failures and inadequacies in the organizational ability of the ministry to plan and execute properly a sound legislative program. Since assuming office their record in this regard has been one of absolute, dismal failure. We have had a series of hasty, ill conceived and badly planned legislative measures introduced with great fanfare and publicity but because they could not stand up to the critical scrutiny of an alert opposition they were either withdrawn, dropped or redrafted.

We do not need to go back to the fiasco created by the so-called Gordon budget which is now completely washed up as far as a budget is concerned. We only need to go back to the Canada pension plan. I am glad to see that the minister is in the house listening this afternoon because we are now on the third revision of the Canada pension plan, I believe.

Miss LaMarsh: Three more than the Tories had.

Mr. Muir (Lisgar): Well, perhaps we will have three more yet if the government continues to act as it has been acting. Then of

[Mr. Muir (Lisgar).]

course we had the redistribution bill. What has happened to the redistribution bill?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member but I am wondering whether by discussing the order and conduct of the business of the house he is really dealing with the specific matter before the house at the moment, the flag issue. I should like him to take that into account in continuing his remarks.

Mr. Muir (Lisgar): With great respect, Mr. Speaker, I am pointing out these things as proof of my point that the government is deliberately sabotaging its own legislation and is doing so by putting the flag issue before the house when we should be dealing with other matters. If I may continue briefly on this subject, I would point out that the redistribution bill was withdrawn for the same reason that other legislation was withdrawn, and perhaps even the flag legislation could be withdrawn in that it has not been properly presented to the house.

The official opposition had agreed that certain things in the redistribution bill were acceptable to them, but the government made a deal with one of the smaller groups and accepted an amendment moved by that group which was most unacceptable to the official opposition. We have heard nothing of the redistribution bill since.

Mr. Byrne: Filibuster.

Mr. Muir (Lisgar): I will come to the point about a filibuster before I am through. It is a filibuster on the part of the government, not the opposition.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Mandziuk: A filibuster of silence.

Mr. Muir (Lisgar): These are just some indications of the desperate need of this government to make the public forget what, were it not for the serious consequences to the nation's well-being, could be described under other circumstances as a comedy of errors. I should like to quote what an Ottawa columnist, who was sitting in the press gallery a few minutes ago, had to say in this regard. Under the subheading "Grits Want Election" there appears the following:

The explanation of the present situation, I believe, lies in the wish of Liberal strategists to call yet another election this fall. But they know that this would be so unjustified and so unpopular in the country that they are trying to make it appear that the Conservative opposition is forcing an election.