

Canadian Flag

to you, sir, that to the best of my knowledge no Canadian in Canada is anxious to remove the fleur-de-lis from the red ensign; no Canadian in Canada is unwilling to consider a compromise; no Canadian in Canada, as far as I know, is unwilling to put this red ensign to the test of a national plebiscite. The only fair way in which Canadians will ever be able to know what the Canadian public really thinks about our flag or about a flag design is to secure from them their opinions on the matter.

The Prime Minister took great pleasure the other evening in placing on record certain letters he had received from Canadians who supported his flag proposal. I wish to take a few moments in order to put on the record some of the views of those who have written to me on this subject. I have a letter here from a gentleman in Halifax, Nova Scotia, who has something to say about the red maple leaves which appear in the flag design proposed by the government. He says:

I do not know that it is obligatory that the flag should be approved by the college of heralds, but the college is certainly the final authority in such matters. For the official specifications for the coat of arms for Canada granted in 1921, the three maple leaves in the section at the bottom of the shield are green on a white field and not red. This follows the design of the sprig depicted in the coat of arms of the province of Quebec, three green maple leaves on a yellow field. In the Ontario design the maple leaves are gold on a green field.

I was chairman of the committee of the general synod of the Anglican church which adopted a coat of arms in 1938. The arms consist of the cross of St. George with four green maple leaves in the centre of the shield. The original design suggested red maple leaves and the Garter King of Arms promptly told us that red maple leaves would mean a dying church and the only proper colour was green. Moreover that was the colour of the maple leaves in the Canadian coat of arms of 1921.

I certainly hope the red maple leaves on the design before us do not indicate a dying nation.

Also, I received a letter from a Canadian in Ottawa making clear in great detail how long the red ensign has been in use in Canada and referring specifically to a pamphlet put out in the early years of this century by John S. Ewart entitled "Sir John A. Macdonald and the Canadian Flag". This article tells us that for many years the red ensign has been in use in Canada and exhibited as our national flag.

With regard to a referendum, I have received many letters both from people living in my own constituency and from residents of other areas in Canada urging that the govern-

ment should not endeavour to foist its personal preference on the Canadian people but, rather, that it should secure the opinion of the Canadian people on what the design should be. The Prime Minister took great delight in reading letters he had received in support in reading and in support of his point of view, I happen to have available to me a copy of a letter he received from a lady who is not a Canadian; she is a resident of Rochester, New York.

I wish to read what this lady had to say, just to point out that all the letters the Prime Minister has received do not support his particular pennant, are not in agreement with his handling of this matter, and indicate just how autocratic he and his party have been in the procedure they have followed in this instance. The letter reads as follows:

There is just one tragedy. I have no influence to stop this flag from being presented to the people and I have no influence to change the government's mind. Actually, in a free country, two different designs, the red ensign and other should be presented to the country and a vote taken. Then the people who are supposed to be free would really be exercising their rights as free people. There is just one thing I can do. That is, turn my face away from the new flag and blink violently once or twice and swallow a great big lump in my throat—I remember most vividly a very handsome young man, who was not a born Canadian, who in 1940 put his hand up lovingly on a red ensign and said, "I am going to fight for my adopted country. I shall protect this flag. I shall be brave and some day I shall kneel before the Queen". His page in the Book of Remembrance is turned each July 1st—and several years ago the Queen visited the chamber where the book is on July 1st and I wept all that day and wondered if my darling air force officer knelt before her and if she knew it.

Mr. Speaker, that is the type of letter that shows the shame in the action that has been taken by this government in autocratically and dictatorially forcing a personal pennant, a flag that is meaningless, on the Canadian public in its efforts at this time.

Mr. B. S. Mackasey (Verdun): Mr. Speaker, at this moment I am very conscious of the fact that I am but a backbencher, participating however in a rather historic debate, one in which many great orators have already expressed their opinion and the opinion of their colleagues. Speaking in this house is not an easy task. One is always aware of the fact that this is a house of debate, made up of an audience that is both critical and at times very cruel, but an audience that in the final analysis fulfils its mandate to the people of Canada.