

Canadian Flag

various votes, and an amendment has been moved this morning which was put forward as a compromise, something on which perhaps—

Mr. Churchill: No.

Mr. Pearson: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that was the expression used; it was an honest effort to find a compromise.

Mr. Churchill: As a preliminary to a compromise.

Mr. Pearson: I stand corrected, Mr. Speaker; it was put forward as a preliminary to a compromise.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pearson: Perhaps that makes me even a little more suspicious about it. Preliminaries can sometimes take a good many weeks in this house. The committee considered a motion for a national plebiscite. That was defeated, and I will not say anything about it. They considered the adoption of only one national flag. As pointed out by my right hon. friend yesterday, the motion for one national flag was carried 14 to 0; and of course we all agree that there can be only one national flag. Then the committee voted on the Canadian red ensign as the national flag for Canada. That motion was defeated by 10 to 4. Now as a preliminary to this compromise we are asked to send the report back to the committee and have them reverse that decision, which was 10 to 4 against the red ensign, which is now to be sent back to be voted on.

That is indeed a pretty far reaching preliminary. But I would point out to my right hon. friend that when that vote was taken on the Canadian red ensign, to the preservation of which as a Canadian national flag he and his supporters are dedicated, that did not prevent, and I am glad it did not prevent, the Conservative members on that committee considering other designs and, indeed, supporting other designs, including a design which they favoured strongly and which was not the Canadian red ensign but which did have symbols of our British and our French associations.

The right hon. gentleman took strong exception to Liberal members on that committee swallowing—I think that was the word he used—the three maple leaves flag and, in the interests of getting the maximum amount of support possible for a Canadian national flag, accepting another maple leaf design. They considered this matter in exactly the

same light, I assume, as did the Conservative members on that committee after the red ensign vote was defeated, and they also cast around for other designs which might be satisfactory to the committee.

Therefore we find other votes were taken. The three maple leaves design was retained by a vote of 8 to 6, but the single maple leaf design was retained by a vote of 13 to 1. I honour the members of the committee from this side of the house for the compromise they were willing to make to get the maximum basis for support, and I do not think, Mr. Speaker, they should be criticized for that any more than the other members of the committee should be criticized if, after taking a vote on the red ensign, they also looked around for some other flag which would receive the maximum amount of support.

In any event, Mr. Speaker, 11 of the 15 members of this committee agreed on a red and white Canadian flag built around the symbol of the maple leaf. The right hon. gentleman wonders why they deserted what he and others have called my flag, the one with three maple leaves. I wonder what he or his supporters would have done, Mr. Speaker, if I had tried to impose my will upon the Liberal members of that committee so as to force a majority committee report on a design which had previously been put forward in this house by me, thereby attempting to make that committee report what hon. gentlemen opposite would have called a government design. What kind of committee would it have been then?

Therefore the committee, in the exercise of its judgment, its wisdom and its desire to get a recommendation for a flag which would have a strong basis for support from every party—and it succeeded in this—made the recommendation which it did. I congratulate the committee on that recommendation, and I think the work they have done justifies the decision that was taken some weeks ago to set up this committee.

I remember, Mr. Speaker, that at the time we on this side agreed that the debate on the resolution should be brought to an end until this committee was set up and had reported we were accused of abandoning our position. We were laughed and sneered at for retreating. I remember some very strong words which the right hon. gentleman, the Leader of the Opposition, used in Fredericton when he arrived there for an important occasion and learned about the committee being established. It turned out to have been a very good