

Canadian Flag

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Diefenbaker: All I have to say in that connection is that the Prime Minister spoke in Hamilton, and that was not the view he expressed there. In fact he said that the 22 days that had been spent on the flag debate before the committee was set up were not lost. He boasted at that time of what his government had achieved. He said that nothing was really lost because we would have had a vacation at the time if the house had not been sitting.

Again, there is the argument that it is costing Canada millions of dollars for the sitting of parliament. Sir, the members of this house receive their pay whether or not the house is sitting, and the total cost per week does not run into millions of dollars. I have mentioned the cost and the results. The Prime Minister made the situation perfectly clear when he set out in detail the tremendous record of achievement. So there will be no mistake, so that all may read, in his interview with Mr. Berton he said:

We have spent 23 days in the House of Commons debating the flag, which I think is too long, but those 23 days were at a time when normally we would have been having a holiday so while we may have spent a long time we have not sacrificed parliamentary business in doing that.

I want to thank the Prime Minister for that clear and unequivocal statement, which clears up the situation. I have already dealt with what happened in the committee and I am not going to repeat what I have already said in that connection. However, I want to point out now that we in this party believe, with all Canadians, in a distinctive Canadian flag, but we say that such a flag should have thereon the union jack and we also say it should have thereon the fleur-de-lis. You say to me that the Conservative party is trying to impose its viewpoint on one province. Not at all. We are not trying to tell any province or any group of people what they should do. We are Canadians who put the nation first, and we ask that the Canadian people as a whole shall make the decision.

Let me tell you that I speak as one of mixed origin. I can look at both sides of the question. On one side I am of German and Dutch origin. My people came to Canada 150 years ago. The German people made their contribution to this country in the area of Nova Scotia around what is now Lunenburg when they came there in 1750. In western Ontario and eastern Ontario many of the United Empire Loyalists were of German or

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

Dutch origin. We are not separating people by origins in that way. We are building Canada.

It is said that the union jack is a foreign flag. I saw an argument advanced the other day that any flag with a union jack on it would be a sign of subservience because it is foreign. I do not answer that except to say that Right Hon. Mackenzie King never had that view, and Mr. St. Laurent never had that view. Yet we are to erase the whole of our past; that is what we are asked to do. We are asked to forget the legacy of the missionaries, explorers, nation builders and statesmen of the French race, to wipe out the legacy of Champlain, Frontenac, Lafontaine and Cartier, to wipe out the contribution of the British to Canada.

No other race has that viewpoint. The British and the French came here because of freedom in this country. They founded here a country that was the first in any part of what is the commonwealth today to have religious freedom, the first in which slavery was abolished, and the first country in which representative government was developed. These are our traditions, and we are asked to wipe them out.

We are asked to sanctify disunity by supporting a flag that will bring about greater division. As a matter of fact the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pickersgill), whose views receive frequent reference in the house, speaking at Quebec city on February 2, 1962, realized what the divisive effect would be of not having a union jack on any distinctive flag when he used these words:

Mr. Pickersgill said the union jack was too intimately associated with Canadian history to be completely abandoned for the sake of other designs. He warned that if the union jack is dropped completely from the Canadian flag this might cause a deep rift among Canadians.

Those were wise words.

Mr. Pickersgill: Whether those were wise words or whether they were not, they were not my words.

An hon. Member: Misquoted again.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I have just quoted from the Canadian Press dispatch, and this is not the first time the hon. gentleman has had to repudiate a statement he has made. I can understand that he may have some objection to the fact that I characterized his views as being wise.

The stand we have taken has been a stand for unity within the country. I recall an hon. member speaking on June 30, at which time he waxed poetic in regard to the three maple