

Now, honourable senators, to make an end, I am going to make a brief appeal to this house in what I think is the spirit of this house. After all, this Senate was created as a house of conciliation, as a house of compromise, a house which, in calmness, would sit down and, without passion, take a second look.

I am going to ask you to do that very thing. I am going to ask you to see if we cannot recapture at this time, when our nation is so vexed by the torment of disunity, something of what came into this country two decades ago. After all, deeper, far deeper than anything which divides us, deeper, far deeper than the surface and perhaps hard and bitter things said by both sides during these past three months—deeper than all these things is our common love of Canada. And I would be sorry, I think I should hate myself, if ever I came to believe that the men whose faces I am looking into, some of them my oldest and tenderest friends, had less love for Canada than I have. It is to that spirit, to that spirit in this house and to that spirit in this nation, that I appeal today.

All of us remember those dark days of a few years ago, those days when our sons went out from us into the storm, those days when the telegrams came, and those days when Canadian youth on all the oceans, on all the continents and over Germany's flame-lit skies, gave Canada their last measure of devotion.

Honourable senators, if these could speak to us now, do you think they would not ask us to bury our differences and to give Canada, the land for which they died, a flag which would unite our country? Surely, there is nothing strange or extraordinary about this. Surely, they would ask us to sit down together, in the love and fraternity which came with common peril in their hour, to work out a flag that would appeal to all peoples in our country.

So, honourable senators, seconded by honourable Senator Grosart, I beg to move the following amendment:

In amendment, that the motion be amended by striking out all the words after "Government" and substituting therefor "that the Government suspend further action on the proposal for a new Canadian flag in order to give reasonable time to the people and Parliament of Canada to reach agreement on a flag which will incorporate appropriate symbols of the founding peoples of this nation and which will be acceptable to all elements of our population.

Hon. T. A. Crerar: Honourable senators, it will certainly be my effort today in whatever words I address to this house to speak with moderation. This controversy over the flag has gone on for many months. It has been the subject of debate in the House of Commons for many weeks. It has been the subject of discussion and, indeed, sometimes of controversy in all the villages, towns and cities of this vast land. That is not a bad thing. I do not think it is a misfortune if, on occasion, we are disturbed a little emotionally, or if, on occasion, feelings run rather high over differences, whether those differences be about a flag or about anything else. It is not, I repeat, a bad thing. Indeed, it is a sign of strength and virility, because a people who cease to have convictions or opinions on any matter of great public importance are a people headed in the wrong direction.

Senator Connolly (Ottawa West), in his admirable review today, sketched the development of what might be described as Canadian nationalism. I am not opposed to nationalism if it is kept within proper boundaries. I am of Scottish descent and I am proud of it. In the same way Senator Flynn, who smiles across the way at me, is proud of his French descent.

Hon. Mr. Connolly (Ottawa West): And Irish.

Hon. Mr. Crerar: I have no quarrel with him on that.

But it seems that a flag issue or an anthem issue reaches deep into the consciousness and stirs emotions that very often find expression in rather forceful language.

I make no bones about it in this house: I am for a distinctive Canadian flag, and I emphasize the word "distinctive". What does "distinctive" mean? I took the time to look it up in the dictionary, and it is quite clear from the definitions given that "distinctive" means something different, something separate and distinct from anything else.

The controversy has raged, and it is not, I repeat, a bad thing that it should, over a symbol like the Union Jack or the Red Ensign. So far as a Canadian national flag is concerned, neither one is a distinctive symbol. The Union Jack is the flag of our English and British motherland. The Red Ensign has been the symbol of the British merchant marine for over a hundred years, and even today, at this very moment, the Red Ensign stands at the masthead of a thousand ships in the harbours of the world and across the bosom of the vast oceans. How can such a symbol be described as a distinctive symbol?