

Canadian Flag

ber for Villeneuve (Mr. Caouette) said it was the issue upon which he and his colleagues were elected, or at least one of the main planks in their platform. It was not a plank in any platform in our area and for that reason partly I say that the government did not have a clear mandate from the people of Canada to change our flag.

The promises made in our area included a national pension plan which involved an increase in old age pensions out of the first contributions made to the plan, an increase in old age pensions without any increase in taxation, which we will admit had a very attractive sound to the people. Then there was the promise in regard to wheat. We were to have \$3 wheat on the prairies. This was a very attractive plank in their platform. We were to have a support price of \$2.40 for soybeans in southwestern Ontario.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Would the hon. member kindly resume his seat. It may be that the hon. member's comments are relevant to the motion now before the house but that is not readily apparent to the Chair. I would ask the hon. member if there is any way that these comments and remarks can be related to the motion now under consideration.

Mr. Thomas: Mr. Speaker, I was pointing out that to my mind the government has no clear mandate to impose a flag on the people of Canada. I was outlining the problems and issues that were a part of the election campaign in our area and I was going to make the point that the flag was not one of those problems and issues in our part of the country, but these other things were. All of the kinks were to be taken out of the Department of National Defence and out of government administration in general. We were to have a greater measure of world peace. The country was to come closer to Utopia than ever before, but there was no mention of the flag issue.

With the government having no mandate to impose a flag, the only suggestion I can make is that unless the government can find some way of approaching this problem other than simply imposing a flag by a vote of the house, unless we can set up a new committee of the Senate and the House of Commons or a new committee of the house alone and keep on trying to find a satisfactory design, then I think the only fair thing for the government to do is to withhold the imposition of a flag until they get a new mandate from the people of Canada. I think

they probably need a new mandate in other respects as well. I think the whole policy envisaged by the government aimed at creating national unity, of which the flag is only one part—the opting out provision, the re-writing of our constitution, the British North America Act—all of these things together with the imposition of a new flag should be taken again before the people so that the people may have a chance to express their confidence or lack of confidence in the government. We need an election before a flag is imposed by a vote of the house.

The contract of confederation was entered into in 1867. That is 97 years ago, and for 97 years it has worked and served Canada. Some will say not well; some will say that it has served us well. But I should like to take the house back over the years to those days when confederation was under consideration and to place on the record the feelings of the leaders of the two parties then, including the leader of French Canada at that time. The Conservative leader, of course, was Sir John A. Macdonald. His attitude toward the empire, toward Canada and toward the flag is well known. In 1884 he spoke in Toronto on the future of the Canadian Pacific Railway, which is perhaps the greatest monument to his courage and resolution. These words of his are to be found on page 36 of J. Pope's "Flag of Canada" published in 1912. These were the words of Sir John A. Macdonald:

This will be 10 days from London—

He is speaking of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

—to the new city of Vancouver on the Pacific coast. The run across the Pacific to Yokohama may be made in 14 days; the whole trip will thus be made in 24 days from London to Yokohama, a saving in time of at least 20 days over the route via Gibraltar and the Suez canal. The English colony of Hong Kong may be reached by the Canadian Pacific Railway in less than 30 days from England, or 16 days less than by Gibraltar and the Suez canal.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member because his remarks are, of course, of great interest. But it does seem to the Chair that he is straying rather seriously from the matter which he should be considering, the adoption of the sixth report of the special committee on the Canadian flag. Again I say it may be that these quotations are related to the question whether the house should adopt or reject the committee recommendation, but I would suggest to the hon. member that perhaps his