

Canadian Flag

Mr. Millar: The hon. member for Lapointe has had someone tabulate the number of times the word "plebiscite" has been used in this debate. He further quotes statistics in this regard as to the possible waste of time in this house. I should like to suggest to him that if a similar tabulation was kept of the number of times the word "Quebec" had been used in this house he would not find the comparison quite so humorous.

In this same regard, I deplore the remarks that follow when one of the French Canadian members of this party stands to indicate his support for this party in a division. Surely any hon. member who has the courage of his convictions and is prepared to stand up and be counted for or against his party is entitled to that same decency and courtesy which is due to any hon. member of this house. I for one respect the right of any member in this regard, and I do not feel that a member deserves the boos and catcalls of his fellow members.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I should like to say this.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Millar: I am pleased to hear that some of the hon. gentlemen opposite are satisfied. I feel the same way, I can assure you.

It would appear that the government is determined to follow this course of destruction, or should I say desecration, of the red ensign. If such is the case; if this government is prepared to ignore the people of Canada and their basic democratic right to indicate their feelings in this matter, may I make one final plea to the Prime Minister. When the Canadian red ensign is finally taken down from the peace tower of the House of Commons, could that red ensign be placed in a position of honour in the memorial chamber of the same peace tower, to indicate that those Canadians who served in Canada's armed forces have not died in vain and that they have not been entirely forgotten by the grateful people of Canada.

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we have before us a motion for concurrence in a report of a committee moved by the chairman, the hon. member for Humber-St. George's (Mr. Batten), and an amendment moved by the hon. member for Perth (Mr. Monteith). I should like immediately to ask the government what is its position in this regard. The Prime Minister has not made the government's position clear. Does the govern-

[Mr. Caouette.]

ment accept the recommendation of the committee, and will the flag recommended be the flag of Canada? If the report is concurred in, will the government take action to make this new flag the flag of Canada? Those are some of the things about which the house has a right to know.

What action will be taken by the government to carry out the terms of the order in council of 1945 which clearly set out that the red ensign shall be flown as the distinctive flag of Canada until parliament otherwise directs? These are things we would like to know, for in the intervening months since the Prime Minister made his speech in the house, at which time he said it was a solemn and historic moment in the history of Canada, these questions have not been answered.

Naturally there are a number of other questions that come to mind. What of the three leaf flag? Has it been dropped by the government? Does the Prime Minister now reject the three leaf flag that was the cornerstone of his argument then? These are things we want to know. However, all we have found out as yet is that the government and those associated with them seem agreed on only one thing, namely that whatever the national flag of Canada may be they are almost unanimous in the view that under no circumstances shall it in any way reveal or show or exemplify the symbols of our British or French sovereignty, or the heritage of our past. The Prime Minister has said that the flag to be determined on will be one that will bring about unity within this country. The experience of the last few months has been that while unity was promised, division has been the offspring.

I commence with that general challenge to the Prime Minister to answer these questions that are in the hearts and minds of the Canadian people. The house will agree, I am sure, when I say that while the debate has gone on for some weeks the viewpoint of the government has never been given since the declaration made by the Prime Minister in June, at which time he made it clear that the three maple leaf design with the two blue bars was the only flag for Canada. It had history, heritage, dedication, as well as a declaration behind it of His Majesty George V. None of these things is apparent today in the recommendation of the committee.

I refer for a moment to the report of the committee to lay the foundation for my argument in connection with the need for a plebiscite for Canada and for Canadians,