

*Canadian Flag*

Like most other Canadians this week, however, I felt sorry for the Prime Minister in this matter that he is trying to handle. However, I do not intend to help tear up the red ensign to bind the wounds that the Prime Minister and his fellow cabinet ministers have inflicted on themselves and the country. Aside from the fact that no case has been made for this change of flag, there are other reasons, compelling reasons, why no further action should be taken unless at the specific request of the Canadian people through a plebiscite. There is ample evidence from the speeches made in this House of Commons, that some members are either totally misjudging the moods and desires of their constituents or are purposely misstating the situation. I am not here talking about members like the hon. member for Northumberland (Miss Jewett) who said in this house during the flag debate on July 2, 1964, as reported at page 4949 of *Hansard*, that members should pay no attention to their constituents' wishes in this matter, but should rather follow their own intellectual inclinations. I have difficulty believing that in constituencies of similar make-up, located side by side in this country, two extreme and diametrically opposed positions on the flag actually exist. However, if one were to believe the Liberal members of parliament, that is the situation.

I contrast this situation, Mr. Speaker, with the way in which the Conservative party know and respect the attitude of our fellow colleagues in this party from the province of Quebec on this issue. These members have reached a conclusion on this matter and, generally speaking, all of the members from the province of Quebec from all parties in this house reflect a unity of objective and purpose on this matter. I know that; I understand it. I respect it, and it makes sense to me that that situation exists. But how in the light of this can you explain the stand being taken by some government members from other parts of the country, other than as blind obedience to the whim of a Prime Minister who has lost his grasp on reality?

I suggest that a national plebiscite would show whether or not a majority of Canadians want the present flag removed and replaced. I would even go a step further. I sincerely believe the only reason the Prime Minister is refusing to accept a plebiscite is not so much because he and his cabinet members have no regard for the opinion of Canadian people but because he is terrified of the outcome of such a straw vote taken from one end of the nation to the other. He is desper-

[Mr. Rhéaume.]

ately afraid that a majority of Canadians would see no urgency in this matter, that same majority of Canadians who denied his party and himself political support in the last general election.

The Prime Minister has said in the house that he is a great believer in the majority decision of a special flag committee, a committee which he can load with Liberals and those of similar easy principle. But he is not willing to listen to a majority of Canadians and I want to know why not. I want to know what commitments were made by the Prime Minister, and to whom, that he would obliterate the union jack before the end of 1964, for there is no other explanation to clear up this weird and pathetic obsession with the flag.

There is another reason why I believe we should hold a plebiscite. It is because no Canadian can seriously accept, as the serious choice of parliament, the design recommended by the flag committee. For that reason the amendment should be supported. You will remember some months ago the ecstasy with which the hon. member for Leeds (Mr. Matheson) and the Prime Minister regarded the three maple leaves on the white background with the two blue bars. This was Canada. This was the flag of the Prime Minister's dreams. It was perfect; but now the same Prime Minister and the same hon. member for Leeds say, "If you think that was good contemplate, if you will, a white background with two red bars and one red leaf, because this represents Canada."

In the *Montreal Star* of November 20 I notice a report relating to symbols, in which the government announced the appointment of a man to handle the merchandising of the Arctic owl, Oookpik. I want to read the pertinent sentence where it says this man will have particular responsibility for Oookpik, the Arctic owl used internationally as a Canadian emblem. Yet we are told the reason we must proceed with the flag committee report is that one red leaf is Canada from coast to coast to coast, that this is Canada around the world. But now we find the government appointing someone to promote Oookpik as another international Canadian emblem. One is led to wonder what might have happened to the Canadian flag had the Eskimos of the north been transferred to the province of Quebec. Perhaps it would have been Oookpik on a red background with two white bars.

I mention these things to highlight the point I am trying to make, that in view of what has