

Private Bills

There the bill which was reached first took priority; the other appeared on the order paper and when it was called I myself raised the point of order which prevented debate until the identical bill had been disposed of.

In another case of this type, in resolving a conflict between a government bill to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act, if I remember rightly, and a private member's bill relating to the Unemployment Insurance Act, but not identical, I took the view, after we had some discussion—as we have had today—that the two bills were not identical. That being so, it was open to the government to proceed with its measure and to debate the second reading, as was open to the private member with his measure, until the house had taken a decision on one or other of the bills, which would prevent the second measure from coming up because the house had decided the principle involved.

We have two bills here. I think it depends on the way one assesses the principles of these bills, whether one comes to the conclusion that they are so closely related that they should not both be proceeded with concurrently.

I have come to the conclusion that they can be distinguished. One could say that the principle of both bills is to establish a distinctive national flag. I rather look at them as two bills, each providing a method for the establishment of a distinctive national flag. One bill, as hon. members will recall, was debated and stands for resumption of debate on second reading. That bill deals with the heraldic method of establishing a Canadian flag. This bill puts the onus on the governor in council. The motion before the house which I allowed to proceed does not necessarily provide for a flag at all; it simply calls for the government to establish a referendum on the issue.

If one regards the principle as being one of method of disposing of this important issue of the flag, I think the two bills are distinguishable, and that the debate may proceed.

Mr. Laurier Regnier (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, I am in favour of the principle of this bill and I think the government would be very well advised to make a decision on this matter. In 1945 and 1946 the committee examined some 2,695 models of flags and after about nine months' study came down to two models. I think the line of division in the committee was between those who wanted a flag which had the maple leaf on it, without the union jack, and those who wanted the maple leaf with the union jack. A study was made by the Hon. Mr. MacNichol in the committee and he found there were 1,611 flags

with the maple leaf and only 383 with the union jack. It was 67 per cent one way and 16 per cent the other way.

I should like to read a letter in order to show the great interest in Canada on this subject of a national flag. I have here a letter which I received from 49 Rothsay avenue, Toronto 18, Ontario, dated February 3, 1961. It is addressed to myself and reads:

An enthusiastic congratulation from us to you on your recent stand in parliament on a distinctive Canadian flag. We are solidly in favour of a distinctive Canadian maple leaf flag.

We are high school students who believe that our first loyalty goes to Canada; not to England and the union jack or the United States and the dollar bill.

The defaced red ensign offends our national pride. A people without its own flag is like an unheralded king, a bannerless army, a nameless citizen. A country which uses a borrowed flag cannot truthfully mark its soldiers' graves, decorate its streets or give unfaltering symbol to its youth.

The youth of Canada today feel that our national anthem is "O Canada" and not "God Save the Queen". Today in our high school ten students and myself have started to collect signatures for a petition of 300 names. The response is terrific. On our first day we have collected close to a hundred signatures. We will present our petition to the school principal in order to get "O Canada" played at least three times a week—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I suggest the hon. member's letter is not relevant at this point. The question before the house is whether the governor in council shall prepare a design for a distinctive national flag.

Mr. Regnier: Thank you, Your Honour. I will just read the last paragraph of the letter, which I think deals with the matter in question:

We wish that there were more M.P.'s who wanted Canada to have her own flag. You are on the right track and may you have every success in your commendable efforts.

This letter is signed by Mr. Bill Evans, president, native son youth.

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but it is six o'clock.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Chevrier: Mr. Speaker, I take it that the business for Monday and Tuesday is as announced last evening; that is, a motion to go into supply and the other business mentioned?

Mr. Churchill: The business for Monday and Tuesday is as announced. I am waiting to hear the subject matter of the debate on those days.

Mr. Chevrier: It will come in due course.

At six o'clock the house adjourned, without question put, pursuant to standing order.