

else, in my belief in the independence of this chamber and our right to make a completely independent choice in these important matters. I say that is what has led me to the conclusion which I want to express, in favour of the adoption of the resolution that is now before us.

(Translation):

Hon. Cyrille Vaillancourt: Honourable senators, I have no intention of trying to convert anybody. If I mention the fact, it is because the senator for Winnipeg South (Hon. Mr. Thorvaldson) took Senator Lambert to task a while ago for apparently having changed his mind in the last twenty years. Do not imagine that I shall try to change the mind of those who do not have my opinion. However, I do want to say how glad I am to see the present debate taking place in such an atmosphere of serenity.

Most flags came out of a revolution or a coup d'état, where a dictator takes over, but very few countries proceeded as democratically as our Government has. That is what a people living under a true democratic system—as ours does—can do—

Since this debate started in the Senate, it seems to me that we are dealing with this matter in a true democratic manner. I found one or two speeches deplorable, however, because they contained some unfortunate remarks about the Province of Quebec. Eventually, those people will no doubt, on second thought, be sorry for having said such things.

After the speech of our leader, senator Connolly, there is no need to review the history of our country since confederation. He did so with a great deal of appropriateness and eloquence.

At every international conference that I attended, I have always been embarrassed to note that our country was the only one without a distinctive flag, while the smallest nations represented were proud to display theirs.

It will be argued that we have had the red ensign for some time. But we know its history, and the difficulties it went through since Confederation, but we cannot say that it is truly a national flag, it is the flag of our navy.

At the time of Confederation, England refused to give us the right to have our own distinctive flag; consequently, the red ensign was proposed by Sir John A. Macdonald as second best.

At first, it was tolerated, but later on the permission was withdrawn. There was even a day in South America when diplomats were in an uproar because certain countries objected to our flying this merchant marine flag.

Some suggest that the adoption of the proposed flag will divide the nation. I rather think that speeches delivered in certain quarters and that certain press reports will promote the division of our nation far more than would a flag. Quite the contrary, a Canadian distinctive flag will unite the whole nation. It is obvious that unanimity can never be reached on a flag design, but once we adopt this flag, such unanimity will be achieved gradually, and in a few years everyone will be glad to fly the new distinctive Canadian flag which will be a rallying sign and a symbol of loyalty towards our country.

Some accuse us of ignoring our ancestors because the Union Jack and the fleur-de-lis do not appear on our flag. We are even called ingrates. The fact that I do not wear a necktie which my grandfather or my father wore, does not mean that I do not appreciate my ancestors. Similarly, when our children are leaving us, it does not mean that they do not love or appreciate us any longer because they establish a home and live as they wish and not as people lived 25 or 50 years ago. They are not ungrateful because of that.

As a symbol to represent our country, is there anything better than the maple leaf? As far as I am concerned, I have personal feelings about this whole matter of the maple leaf, and you realize why. To me, it is a symbol, it is the image of the strong and powerful tree rising straight up to the sky with its roots digging deep into the ground. The maple resists every storm and can live hundreds of years. Is that not a symbol of vigour and strength aptly representing a nation that wants to be strong and vigorous? When looking at that tree, you find an inspiration of greatness, beauty, pride and nobility. Could there be a finer symbol than that maple leaf? Some people say that the maple leaf was selected to please the province of Quebec. If that were the case, they would have selected the sugar maple leaf—*acer saccharum*—but they preferred to select the red maple—*acer rubrum*—which is found just about everywhere in all Canadian provinces, and not only in the province of Quebec.

I should like, at this point, to volunteer information on the colour of the maple leaf. When fall comes and the leaves fall, the red maple leaf grows a deeper red, while the leaf of the maple sugar tree—the *acer saccharum*—becomes yellow, not red.

To leave out the Union Jack or the fleur-de-lis from a distinctive flag does not mean that we forget our ancestors or that we disown them; on the contrary, we are proud of them.