

Flags of Canada

Boulanger) and the hon. member for St. Jean-Iberville-Napierville (Mr. Dupuis) who have both brought in similar resolutions. One of these has been discussed in two previous sessions; the other, in the form of a bill, is now on the order paper of the house.

The resolution moved by the hon. member for St. Boniface reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of this house, the government should consider the advisability of introducing a measure to provide for a referendum concerning the adoption of a Canadian flag.

That the questions submitted in said referendum be as follows:—Are you in favour of a flag consisting of (a) a green maple leaf on a red and white field, or, (b) the red ensign.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that it is a good thing to discuss this question in order to have a general idea of how hon. members feel about it. So far, I have heard no one oppose the idea of a national distinctive flag. However, it seems to me that the formula suggested by the hon. member for St. Boniface (Mr. Regnier), in the second paragraph of his resolution, will not give the results he hopes for.

The reason for this is because, as was pointed out by several members, the choice is limited to two designs: on the one hand, the maple leaf on a red and white field and, on the other hand, the Canadian red flag, that is the red ensign.

In all likelihood, many symbols are as good as, if not better, than those mentioned by the hon. member.

Furthermore, under such a scheme, it might well happen that at the time of the referendum, 51 per cent of the people would vote for the design with a green maple leaf on a red and white background, and 49 per cent for the red ensign.

What would the government do in such a case? Would they consider the majority adequate to reach a conclusion?

That is why I prefer the formula put forward by the hon. member for St. Jean-Iberville-Napierville in his amendment. The question should be included in the next census, next June. Then it would be put in different terms:

Are you in favour of a distinctive national flag bearing the symbol of no other country?

It seems to me that this amendment, first is more in keeping with the wishes of the Canadian people, in view of its phraseology, and second, that it would allow an expression of opinion by the people in a relatively short time, as the census is to be conducted in a few months.

Mr. Georges Valade (St. Mary): Why did you not do it in 1951?

Mr. Chevrier: I would point out to the hon. member for St. Boniface, who no doubt moved this motion in good faith, that at the time of the Progressive Conservative convention in 1956, the following motion had already been put forward:

That the Conservative party affirm its immediate support for the adoption of a national flag for Canada.

The word "distinctive" is not contained in the resolution, at least not according to the report I have before me, which is taken from the *Ottawa Journal*, a Conservative newspaper, for December 13, 1956.

Therefore, it seems that the motion of the hon. member for St. Boniface does not take into account the resolution submitted at the Progressive Conservative convention in 1956. That convention merely expressed vague support, whereas this resolution suggests a referendum.

That is why I repeat what I said earlier: in my opinion this amendment adequately provides for the present situation.

Mr. Speaker, there is also another matter that I would like to raise in the house, and it is this: by virtue of the law at this time, it is up to the parliament of Canada to select and design a distinctive Canadian flag. If such is the case then, our present government after more than three years in office has not yet decided or has not yet come to the conclusion that it must implement the resolution however vague adopted by their party.

I was asked a moment ago: Why did your party not take action when they were in office? Well, I think that 30 years ago, it would not have been possible to adopt a national distinctive flag, because the people of Canada were not prepared to accept it. It was the same thing in 1945 when the government of the day established a joint committee which, after considering the matter during several sittings, could not reach unanimity. As a matter of fact that was what prompted Mr. St. Laurent to state in this house regarding the Liberal party's stand that a flag was meant to be a symbol of unity, not a sign of disunity. National unity would be prejudiced if part of the people of this country imposed its choice upon another important element of Canada. That is why Mr. St. Laurent's government could not possibly have initiated such action at that time.

However, in recent years, as a result of the progress accomplished towards national unity, and also because of the petitions submitted by many organizations throughout the