

Canadian Flag

this debate. We are fulfilling a very useful purpose today, as we have during all this session thus far. It is obvious that the government and some members of other parties do not agree with the holding of such a plebiscite in our fair country. I might say, Mr. Speaker, that I also am not too imbued with the idea of a plebiscite.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Winkler: I believe I made that very clear in my speech in this chamber on August 12, which was one of the earlier speeches in the debate after it had been resumed. On that occasion I pressed the government and pleaded with the Prime Minister to send the question to a committee. After that date I had the pleasure of attending an international conference and was away from the house for a considerable period of time; and of course when I returned on September 8 the house was still seized with the resolution presented by the government.

I believe that today the opposition has no other course to follow. The government has put the opposition in such a narrow position, without endeavouring to display any degree of co-operation, that we have no alternative but to take this course on behalf of the people of Canada, and I believe the majority of the people of Canada; the figure of 60 per cent was quoted in a recent poll, but I believe it is 64 per cent. I believe we have the right to speak for these people, and if it is their wish that we have a plebiscite, I am willing to accept their judgment.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Winkler: I believe, Mr. Speaker, that had the government moved in the proper direction and at the proper time in sending this question to a committee, it would have been resolved.

I had not intended to use these words at this juncture of my remarks, but I am forced to do so. The manner in which the subject was presented to this house by the Minister of Transport indicates to me that the old philosophy of the days of Mackenzie King has been adopted. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that the ghost of Mackenzie King is now treading the corridors of the House of Commons, because one can determine that the presentation of this subject, which will have divisive results in our country, is an endeavour to put on the opposition the blame for any crisis that occurs. They seem to be following the course of allowing the crisis to become imminent and then step-

ping in and solving it as the benefactors of the electorate. As a matter of fact, it seems to me that the Minister of Transport has indeed been in communication with the previous prime minister and maybe even received some direction, because the plan is working quite well thus far and he has the opposition, as I said, in a very narrow corner.

Mr. Greene: Has the opposition ever been anywhere else?

Mr. Winkler: Mr. Speaker, I think the humiliating defeat the hon. member for Renfrew South suffered in Toronto should be enough to keep his mouth shut for a few days, unless he wishes to rise in his place and make a speech. He is another one of those professional hecklers we could well do without.

I ask that hon. member and this house, Mr. Speaker, whether the flag debate of today is of such consequence to this country that we can afford to ignore every major daily newspaper. It may be that the government members are now considering a referendum, even though it may be undesirable to them. Because of my great respect for individuals outside this house and for the officers of this house, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to name any minister or bring the Prime Minister into this, but in view of the picture presented to us today by various newspapers in this country I believe there should be some change of heart. I have here the front page of the *Montreal Star*, the front page of the *Montreal Gazette*, the front page of the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, the front page of last night's *Toronto Telegram* and the front page of last night's *Toronto Star*, all of which seem to put the government in a pretty sorry mess. Where is the great zeal on the part of members on that side for the people of this country? Where is the great feeling they have for the pension plan? Where is the great feeling of those members in regard to medicare? What has happened to the government's attitude in regard to the labour legislation for which we are all waiting? What has happened to the government's attitude in respect of many of the other things about which we have heard so much? Because of the obvious situation presented by the newspapers of this country perhaps the government will change its mind and give serious consideration to the amendment respecting a plebiscite which is now before us.

Mr. McIlraith: Why do you filibuster the way you do?