

*Canadian Flag*

are in favour of retaining it and making it permanent and official by parliamentary action must surely realize that basically—this is certainly no disrespect to the red ensign—it is the flag of the British merchant marine and that it is similar, except for a different coat of arms, to the flags of certain British colonies.

I have done some research on this and I have no doubt other hon. members have too. It is true, and this has a bearing on the distinctiveness of the red ensign and its identification with Canada, that apart from Canada and its merchant vessels more than a dozen merchant navies, British companies and other countries, British colonies, use the British red ensign as a base for their flags. Indeed, half of these are British colonies. The majority of these flags based on the red ensign have a badge or coat of arms in the fly which, at no great distance, may be easily confused with the Canadian shield, or vice-versa.

That, Mr. Speaker, seems to me to detract from the acceptability of the red ensign as a permanent distinctive and exclusively Canadian flag, truly representative of all the people of this country, and I am confirmed in this view when I examine, as I propose to do now, the way the red ensign developed for Canadian use.

The red ensign was first authorized in 1892 for use on Canadian ships by the British admiralty. It has since been authorized by the Canadian and British governments for Canadian use in various respects, but never by parliament as a national flag, and only by order in council until parliament has acted on a national flag.

It was, for instance, used on government buildings at the beginning of this century but, because of the lack of formal adoption as a national flag, it was withdrawn by the minister of public works from such use in 1908.

In an effort to clear up subsequent uncertainty as to what was the Canadian flag, even for government buildings, the colonial secretary in London stated in 1912 that the union jack was the national flag of Canada. And so it remained for many years; all through world war I, when the union jack was the flag of the Canadian forces under which Canadians served and under which many Canadians died. The red ensign, though many of my correspondents do not seem to appreciate this, was not in use during world war I in any way, shape or form for the Canadian forces.

It was not until January 26, 1924, that an order in council was passed authorizing the red ensign to be flown for limited use over all government buildings abroad, and that became essential because we were building up a diplomatic service and for obvious reasons we had to have some flag to fly over Canadian embassies that was not the union jack.

And so the situation remained until towards the end of world war II when in 1944, by order in council, the red ensign was authorized to be flown by our forces overseas. Then, on September 5, 1945, was passed that order in council to which reference has already been made more than once, decreeing that, until such time as action is taken by parliament for the formal adoption of a national flag, the red ensign may be flown wherever place or occasion may make it desirable to fly a distinctive Canadian flag. That is the authority given in 1945, not by parliament but by order in council, by which the red ensign has been flying as a Canadian flag.

It is very interesting to note that, as this evolution in our flag symbols took place, there was always very strong opposition expressed to any change. This was especially true when the red ensign was officially authorized to replace the union jack, when very great objection indeed was taken in certain quarters to the change from the union jack.

In my view, the time has come for a further and final change. If, as I believe to be the case, Canada needs a national flag and if the red ensign is not the most appropriate design for this purpose, what should that design be? In my view, it should be based on three red maple leaves because that is our formal and historic emblematic link with our Canadian past. The record shows this quite conclusively.

The maple leaf itself has been accepted as a Canadian symbol since long before confederation. It is deep in our history and in our traditions. Contemporary records all through the nineteenth century are full of references to it. For instance, during the visit of the Prince of Wales to Canada in 1860, all citizens of Upper Canada were asked to wear sprigs of maple leaves as the emblem of their land so that, in the words of the old *Toronto Globe*, they would be known to the world as Canadians. The symbolism grew until Canada came to be known, as it is known now, as the land of the maple leaf.