

a plea and prophetic overtone, deserves careful consideration. It reads:

We have thought deeply about the flag issue, and believe it necessary to write this open letter to you as an expression of our common feelings. May we emphasize that we do not speak as political partisans, but only as concerned Canadians representing several parties.

We applaud your decision to seek a distinctive national flag for Canada, and recognize your courage in doing so. We believe, as you do, that the flag should be a source of national unity, and that it should be unmistakably Canadian in character. However, we protest that the maple leaf flag is neither of these things. Its only advantage is that it is innocuous, that it produces tepid approval, mild disapproval, or indifference, and that it can therefore be adopted without any display of strong feeling whatever. We have a despairing feeling that this insipid flag, instead of promoting national unity, will produce only an indifferent response, and in doing so will subtly undermine the Canadian will to survive.

Hon. Mr. Connolly (Ottawa West): Would the honourable senator again tell me the date of that letter?

Hon. Mr. Yuzyk: The date of this letter is May 27 of this year.

Hon. Mr. Connolly (Ottawa West): It was written before the committee reported on the new design, I take it?

Hon. Mr. Yuzyk: Yes, that is right. I am reading this in order to give the opinion of prominent historians and leaders. It continues:

We believe profoundly that this negative approach to our national symbol erodes our national spirit.

The very essence of this country's history, and the reason for our national distinctiveness, has been the long and often turbulent marriage of French and English heritages. We have faith that in their depths, Canadians pride themselves on this union, and on its parliamentary and non-revolutionary tradition. Canada has a continuous history of three hundred and fifty years of French-speaking and English-speaking life together in North America, and two hundred years of union. The creative tension between the two founding peoples has been a guarantee to other racial groups of their continued identity, in contrast to the American concept of the melting pot. These are the positive facts of our

history; we cannot change them; they give Canada its sinews. The nation is strong enough to face its own past proudly, and to assert it. Whatever may be said about the use of the maple leaf as a Canadian emblem in the past, it has never gained anyone's vigorous allegiance, and it involves no commitment to the human factor of Canada.

We believe that Canada has a distinguished culture of its own. We believe that this is a positive culture. We believe that the basis of this positive culture is a frank acceptance of both the English Canadian and the French Canadian civilizations. We believe that a distinctive Canadian flag should reflect this positive fact.

We are not in the position of a country with a revolutionary tradition, creating itself anew; we exist because we have inherited the past without a revolutionary upheaval. It is false and dispiriting to adopt a flag which subtly ignores the truth of our own nature. This is not the kind of symbol to rally a bewildered and demoralized nation.

We respectfully suggest that you withdraw the maple leaf design for the time being, and that you convoke at once a private meeting of the parliamentary leaders of all parties to agree upon a new design which asserts our history. We profoundly believe that the present proposal will only deepen the spiritual malaise of Canada.

Substantially, I hold the same viewpoint as expressed in this letter. A leaf does not excite me and certainly does not inspire me, no matter what is said or written about it. That the maple leaf is distinctive, I agree, but by itself I cannot associate it with civilization and culture. I am not, however, opposed to its incorporation in the flag, together with other symbols that are representative of human achievement.

The most precious asset that Canada possesses is our human resources. I brought this out in my maiden speech of March 3 this year. Canada was founded by the British and French peoples, who together with many other peoples, now forming a significant proportion of our population, over one-quarter, have developed the civilization, the culture and the way of life that we have today. It is a pluralistic and multicultural society with a Christian foundation, evolving on a democratic basis, which makes us different from that of the United States and gives us our separate identity. By and large we have accepted as our guiding principle "unity in diversity". Because of adherence to this principle of recognizing human values, Canada