

*National Flag*

there is a great deal of haste since the explanatory note states:

As it is desirable and urgent that Canada possess a distinctive national flag this bill provides a method of obtaining a flag with the least possible delay.

It then goes on to say:

In this manner Canadians could have a distinctive national flag at the end of this session.

Mr. Speaker, when he discusses the attitude of some of the members of the house and some of the attitudes of former governments I would like to take him back to the meetings of the joint committee of 1946, which were certainly held under a Liberal regime. I would like to read to him the order of reference of the House of Commons for a joint committee on a national flag. On Tuesday, March 26, 1946, this motion was passed:

Resolved that in the opinion of this house, it is expedient that Canada possess a distinctive national flag and that a joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons be appointed to consider and report upon a suitable design for such a flag.

This resolution was concurred in and the committee met off and on from March 29 until July 11, 1946. To show the hon. member that this cannot be a very rapid decision by order in council and how difficult it is to arrive at such a thing as a distinctive Canadian national flag, I would like to read to him some of the evidence of that committee. This statement was made by Mr. MacNicol, one of the members of the committee:

We have had 2,409 flags.

I interject here. This is not a soap contest, Mr. Speaker. It is a flag contest. Mr. MacNicol went on to say:

Of those 2,409 flags I, by elimination of what I saw of them, have arrived at certain principles. One thousand six hundred and eleven of those flags had the maple leaf on them. So I made up my mind that by far the majority of those who sent in flags wanted the maple leaf on the flag. Therefore I marked as No. 1 choice for myself that the flag must have a maple leaf on it. As compared with the maple leaf, the other matters suggested to go on the flag were, first, stars. Two hundred and thirty-one flags had stars on them. Our American cousins have stars on their flags. The Australians and New Zealanders have stars on their flags and India has a star on its flag. Of that 2,409 flags, according to my count—and I may be one or two out because it is quite a problem to count 2,409 flags—231 had stars against 1,611 with maple leaves. So the star went out at once. You cannot have both leaves and stars. One hundred and eighty-four had the fleur-de-lis on. I must confess that in the commencement I had a very strong preference for the fleur-de-lis.

(Translation):

Mr. Boulanger: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member who just spoke is not at all dealing with the subject. I suggest he did not get the drift of my argument.

(Text):

May I ask the hon. member a question?

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Mr. Fairfield: Yes.

Mr. Boulanger: Did the hon. member understand what I said in my speech? I did not talk about that at all; I talked about the principle.

Mr. Fairfield: The principle is very broad, I must say. The speaker in this committee went on in like vein for a great length of time. He finally narrowed it down to some 76 flags.

To get back to the history of our present Canadian flag, we see that an order in council was passed on September 5, 1945, part of which reads:

That, until such time as action is taken by parliament for the formal adoption of a national flag, it is desirable to authorize the flying of the Canadian red ensign on federal government buildings within as well as without Canada, and to remove any doubt as to the propriety of flying the Canadian red ensign wherever place or occasion may make it desirable to fly a distinctive Canadian flag.

This is not the order of any of the members of our cabinet, or of any Conservative government. This took place in 1945. I understood, through the medium of the bilingual translation system, that the hon. member for Drummond-Arthabaska drew the conclusion that the flag recommended at that time was to consist of a design of red and white with a green maple leaf in the centre of it. I do not know what committee proceedings he was reading but I find that at the last meeting of the committee it made this recommendation:

That this committee recommend that the national flag of Canada should be the Canadian red ensign with a maple leaf in autumn golden colours in a bordered background of white replacing the coat of arms in the fly, the whole design to be so proportioned that the size and position of the maple leaf in relation to the union jack in the canton will identify it as a symbol distinctive of Canada as a nation.

He cannot have it both ways, Mr. Speaker. He said that our attitude is very difficult but this is not our attitude. We were not in the government at the time that flag, which was called distinctive, was recommended to the government of the day by the committee. But nothing whatsoever has been done to this date about a distinctive national flag. The hon. member wants to have a flag suddenly created in a matter of a few weeks during this session.

I should like to give him a little of the history of where some flags come from. Perhaps he does not know but flags have histories. I have here a book entitled "Flags of the World" by H. Gresham Carr. He deals with the origin of the so-called union jack which is wrongly named because the union jack is the British union flag flown at the foremast of British schooners. First of all I should like to refer to the length of time