

Senator O'Leary (Carleton) gave us a rather lengthy list of those in his speech yesterday when moving the amendment. I will not repeat them.

In a recent major speech by the Prime Minister of this country, one further reason was advanced for introducing this very contentious topic, and I must say that in this instance the argument for "at this particular time" was not put forward too strongly. His argument was in support of the necessity for "change", and on this occasion he cited the example of that which was done in 1945 when the Union Jack was replaced by the Red Ensign. He pointed out that although many people opposed that change he now felt certain that such action was, and I quote, "a desirable and inevitable stage in our national progression". Perhaps I will have more to say on this particular point when another resolution will, I understand, appear before us shortly.

Honourable senators, up to this point I have attempted to refute what I believe were the two most substantive arguments raised for bringing forward this resolution to both Houses of Parliament at this time. At least I would hope that they are the most "substantive", in that they were the key ones advanced by the Prime Minister himself. Now I come to the point where it is necessary to face the fact that, whether we like it or not, the subject of a distinctive national flag is before us here and now. I believe it will be well at this stage to state what I feel is my objective. I can only say that I am very unhappy with this design we have been asked to approve. Were I to list all my reasons, many of them would simply be a repetition of those outlined when the amendment was proposed.

I believe the reasons outlined when the amendment was proposed were "substantive ones." Following my line of argument, this is the reason that I heartily endorse the amendment.

Someone has, perhaps unkindly, called this proposed design an "extinctive" rather than a "distinctive" flag. In all seriousness, this pretty well describes my feeling about it. To be more specific, I sincerely feel that our loss has been too great. In the spirit of understanding and compromise to which I have referred, I personally would willingly and very gladly accept the third choice of the Commons Flag Committee. To my mind, this design made room for both: it allowed for a retention of the history, culture and traditions of the two founding nations, and it was very obviously conceived in the bicultural mood of the day.

I apologize for referring to Senator Pouliot by name when he is not here, but I must

quote his words. Yesterday he stated, in part, that the Union Jack was "perhaps the most beautiful flag in the world." I concur with him wholeheartedly, except that I remove his "perhaps". Therefore, the closer we come to such beauty, even with certain variations, I say that we would then be giving our country a flag second to none, a beautiful, meaningful flag for a beautiful country, meaning everything to us as Canadians. Then we could be truly as proud of our flag as every last one of us is of our country. I believe this should be the case.

Now, I have just expressed my view, but what of the views of the majority of Canadians? Here I do not agree with the proposer of the amendment, in that I maintain that neither the elected representatives of the people nor we here in this chamber, nor both combined, have the right to decide for all Canadians on a matter of this deep personal significance. I stand for a plebiscite in the next general election, but I will not argue the case here because it would not be relevant to the amendment and, incidentally, I have no intention of proposing a further motion. Consequently, I will support the amendment, in the hope that before another year has passed, perhaps others will see this subject as I do at the present time.

Senator Cameron has indicated that there will be no unanimity, irrespective of the length of time we may take. Another senator from this side of the house has agreed with him. I shall not prejudice the mentality and future views of Canadians except in a hopeful spirit, and I believe that time can soften the "hard-shells" and make possible a worthy compromise. Very true, it can be said that one body of this Parliament has already spent much time on this subject, but I was very happy to hear Senator Crerar say, in effect, that in his view this time was not wasted by any means. I believe he referred to it as healthy controversy.

Again, speaking on the time element, in so far as this arm of Parliament is concerned, no opportunity was afforded the members of this chamber to participate in any way in this most important question until December 15. I deplore the fact that there was no joint committee of both houses set up for purposes of recommendation, if for no other reason than to serve as a guide for the Canadian people, offering them suitable and appropriate choices for their final decision.

Senator Pouliot said yesterday that if the Leader of the Official Opposition had followed the example of Mr. Godbout, there would be no problem at all and we would not be faced with a contentious issue, that unanimous approval would have been the order of the day. All I can say to this is that, if I followed