

Canadian Flag

the question before the house or anticipate a matter appointed for the consideration of the house.

What we are considering today is an amendment put forward in the name of the hon. member for Perth (Mr. Monteith). The main motion is something which will come before us in the future in certain circumstances, that is to say, if this amendment should be defeated. We would then be speaking on the main motion and have an opportunity to deal with the subject in general terms. Furthermore, the hon. member is continually reading either from letters or from notes, a practice which is not in accord with our rules.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, once and for all to make the hon. member stick to the subject under consideration, that is, the question of a plebiscite. If the rules were enforced I think it would shorten many of the speeches being made in this house.

Mr. Webb: I want to thank the hon. member for his consideration.

Mr. Speaker, I believe my time has just about expired. I assure you that if I have not been relevant to the motion before us, on the next occasion I will try to be more relevant. Today we are living in a world of turmoil and our only hope is our faith in God and the simple fruits of His teaching, together with the history and tradition of our past. More and more we hear about patriotism and I suggest in closing that real patriotism is when we understand that Canada is a nation, not a denomination.

Mr. D. V. Pugh (Okanagan Boundary): May I say at the outset that I am in favour of the amendment and in favour of the proposal that a plebiscite should be held.

I take this view because, among other things, the people of Canada are only now beginning to find out the truth behind what went on in the flag committee. In the second place, I am in favour of the amendment because I do not think the government ever had a mandate to introduce a new flag. I will return to this subject later. My third reason for supporting the amendment is the confusion and indecision of the government previously with regard to its proposed flag, the Pearson three maple leaf flag, which has been withdrawn and dumped into the ash can. My fourth reason is the lack of unanimity within the flag committee.

Before proceeding further I should like to pay a tribute to the chairman of the flag committee, the hon. member for Humber-St. George's (Mr. Batten). He ruled that commit-

[Mr. Langlois.]

tee with a very firm hand. He was fair in the extreme—a lot more fair than many of the Liberals who are sitting in the house at the present time and who apparently do not want to hear anything at all about the flag. The hon. member for Humber-St. George's saw that the business before the committee was carried out properly and in an orderly fashion.

[Translation]

Mr. Grégoire: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege.

I should like to point out that this is the third speech made by the hon. member for Okanagan Boundary (Mr. Pugh) on the matter of the flag. Since he has made the hat trick during this debate, it gives me pleasure to send him a hat with a red maple leaf.

[Text]

Mr. Pugh: Can I have a ruling, Mr. Speaker, on the question of privilege?

Mr. Speaker: There was no question of privilege. I understand you were making some preliminary remarks and that you were about to deal with the subject under discussion.

Mr. Pugh: I suppose it is difficult for some hon. members to realize that remarks appreciative of another member who has carried out a most difficult task as chairman of one of our committees should be well received. As far as privilege is concerned, the hon. member for Lapointe (Mr. Grégoire) is a great authority on privilege, and what he said comes in at one ear and goes out the other. That is all the attention his remarks deserve; nothing more and nothing less.

Today we are considering an amendment to the motion for concurrence in the report of the flag committee, an amendment which would require a plebiscite to be held at the time of the next election giving the people the right to declare their choice with regard to a national flag. The amendment is based on the fact that the committee did not reach its decision with sufficient unanimity. As was stated earlier, some 72 per cent of the members were in favour of it. I would point out that the last time a flag committee reported, 95 per cent of its membership expressed approval of the flag chosen on that occasion. But for some reason or other that flag was never brought before the house. I do not need to remind Your Honour who the prime minister of the day was but I must commend him on at least one thing—his common sense in not bringing forward an issue so divisive for Canada.