

*Canadian Flag*

that in a flag. If parliament decides on a flag I think that flag is binding on the people of Canada, and we certainly do not want to be put in the disgraceful position of shifting flags every time there is a change of government. So there is no substance whatever in the fact that because, generally speaking, we are individually in support of the red ensign or some modification thereof—a design showing our historic traditions—if the government changes and this party comes back into office the flag of Canada will also be changed according to our will at the time.

A flag is a much more important matter than that. We are legislating not only for the people of today but for Canadians of the future. I think this question must be treated much more seriously than it has been treated heretofore. Therefore we are particularly interested in knowing by what legislative process the parliament of Canada is going to express its judgment regarding what should be done.

The flag proposed in the report of the committee has had removed from it all the emblems, the traditions and the heritages of which I think all Canadians are proud. We resent that. We do not think we should have a flag of that nature. If this flag with all the tradition and history of a century or more is going to be hauled down simply because the House of Commons passes a resolution, and perhaps the Senate passes another resolution, then that is a very undignified and improper way to change a flag bearing the traditional emblems of a century or more.

I just now recall a few lines from the poem by Charles Wolfe, "The Burial of Sir John Moore after Corunna" as follows:

We buried him darkly at dead of night,  
The sods with our bayonets turning,  
By the struggling moonbeam's misty light  
And the lanthorn dimly burning.

This government wants to bury this flag by the dark shades of night without any more action than a resolution in the House of Commons. That, sir, is not good enough. In the old days of imperialism when one nation won a war, defeating another, and the flag of the defeated nations was taken down a guard of honour was supplied by those who had won the battle, and they saluted the old flag as it was taken from the mast and a new one was hoisted. We are going to have nothing of that kind apparently, but instead a resolution passed by a possible majority in a minority House of Commons. The resolution if passed by hon. members

[Mr. Nowlan.]

would then be sent to the other place where somehow or other these things are all going to be cooked together and we are going to have a new national flag.

That is one of the main reasons we have been anxious in this party to have a plebiscite. If a plebiscite is held and we obtain the concurrence of the majority of Canadian people, as strongly as any one of us feels individually on this matter, the people of Canada having had an opportunity of speaking, we will be prepared to accept their choice. However, without that opportunity, and particularly because of the vague and indefinite procedure before us, and I do not think even government members know what is to be the procedure, we are not prepared to accept a change in this way.

We as Canadians I think should learn something more of our past, and we as Canadians have been lacking in our appreciation and recollection of history and tradition. We have been poor in maintaining our traditions, historical sites and monuments, as well as about other matters which contribute to the tradition of a nation. I remember that a few years ago we had here in the city of Ottawa the old Supreme Court of Canada building. It was a blacksmith's shop or a stonecutter's hut which became the Supreme Court of Canada building. It was a rather poor and meagre building, but in that building was enacted a great deal of the constitutional history of this country. A few years ago we tore that building down because we wanted to make parking spaces for 12 or 14 automobiles, and one of the great historical sites of this country disappeared.

I also remember a strange debate that took place in this chamber, and I am sure the President of the Privy Council (Mr. McIlraith) will also remember it, because he and I crossed swords emphatically on that occasion, regarding the demolition of the west block. The government at that time was determined to have it destroyed and some of us kept the debate on those estimates going so long, parliament was dissolved before the estimates were passed and the building was not destroyed. That is why today we still have that beautiful building rather than one of those ghastly monstrosities of yellow, black, purple and red sheets of plastic overlooking Wellington street.

I have mentioned those things as examples of the fact that we have been very derelict in our attempts to preserve tradition. I suppose it is in keeping with that practice and