

*Canadian Flag*

pursue a program which cannot be anything but divisive. After all, at the present time it has become clear that the purpose of the government is not to construct and evolve a flag which would have a unifying effect. It has become clear from the work of the committee that from the government's point of view one thing is absolutely necessary, namely to banish the union jack and any other symbols of one of the great races of Canada from our present flag. The purpose of the government at the present time is not to create, but to tear down and banish forever those symbols which millions of Canadians hold dear. The government has never committed itself publicly to doing this. In the election campaign the Liberal party never took the people into its confidence in this regard and therefore by no stretch of the imagination have they a mandate to do this.

It is therefore essential that the Canadian people should have an opportunity to vote on a plebiscite at the next election to express their views on this subject. None of us know with any certainty what the majority of Canadians or what large groups of Canadians think on this subject. There are of course opinion polls, but only a fair amount of accuracy attaches to them. One thing is clear: Canadians are divided on this issue and the longer we pursue it and are forced to pursue it the greater the division will be. To impose such a decision upon Canadians without giving them adequate opportunity to express their views would be the most divisive action of all. If the government really believes that the introduction of a new flag would have a unifying effect and that Canadians would accept it, hon. gentlemen opposite should welcome the opportunity to allow our citizens to express their views in a plebiscite.

Some contend it is only those who are old enough to have served in one of the great wars who have any interest in the symbols of those things for which this nation stands. It is said that people of younger ages are all in favour of doing away with them. I find no evidence to support this view, although I quickly admit there is very little evidence to the contrary, either. But I did read recently that a boys' magazine took a poll among 2,000 of its readers between the ages of 8 and 18 and that the returns were split almost evenly between those who wanted the union jack and those who favoured a flag without any trace of the union jack. This indicates that even the young people of the country are divided on the issue. As I have said, for some reason which it is difficult for me and for the

average Canadian to understand the government is bent on eliminating these symbols from our flag. It wishes to get to the point of no return as quickly as possible so that nothing can be done about it.

We counsel mature consideration. We say this is a matter which could be desperately divisive as far as Canada is concerned, should a flag be imposed on the Canadian people which a large group is loath to accept and which another large group would detest. This is not the way to go about obtaining Canadian unity. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, the question that naturally arises in our mind is, what is the motivation of the government? What pressure are they under? Why do they persist in this course? One explanation, of course, would be—and I am not suggesting it is the correct one—that somebody, perhaps the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson), has a sort of mania about this and his mind is blocked to anything else.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. MacLean (Queens):** I think I am dead wrong on that; I am not suggesting that is so—but that eliminates a possibility. It may be based on a distorted reasoning, namely that by eliminating the symbols that the various groups of Canadians hold dear you will arrive at a kind of neutral situation where these divisive elements will disappear. In my judgment that is entirely wrong. There was a similar situation in the island of Cyprus when they tried to get a flag for that small country. The Greek majority thought that it should be one thing; the Turkish minority wanted their colours and their symbols in the flag. They could not arrive at any agreement and they would not agree to accept both suggestions. Each side wanted the right to veto what the other believed in. So they arrived at a nondescript thing which I believe is a map of Cyprus, and so on—I think there is an olive leaf in it somewhere—that is something comparable to the recommendation of the flag committee of this House of Commons. It cannot be said by any stretch of the imagination that this has brought national unity to the island of Cyprus.

**Mr. More:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. If the members to the extreme left are not interested in the debate, I would like the opportunity to hear what the speaker is saying, and hear it clearly. I wonder whether Your Honour would ask them to desist from the half dozen loud conversations that are going on at that end of the chamber.

[Mr. MacLean (Queens).]