

*Canadian Flag*

racess, I am sure that every other ethnic group will also accept that choice.

While referring to the two founding races, perhaps I should state that I believe most of us have forgotten that the two original founding races of this country were the Indians and Eskimos. The flag now being proposed does not embody any symbolism of those two races. What consideration has been given in the design of the proposed flag to Canadians who have come to this country in the last 97 years? Surely it is not too much to ask that the acceptable Canadian flag be a compromise of the feelings not only of the two founding races of this country, but of the feelings of the many thousands of Canadians from other countries.

Surely it is not too much to ask that we take our time and try to select a suitable design. I cannot understand why we should hurry in our selection of the Canadian national flag. Pressure has been put upon us ever since the flag issue was brought before us so many months ago. Our whole legislative program has been built around the flag issue. In fact, since the throne speech our debate and legislative consideration has been associated with the flag issue. We talked ourselves through both an Easter and summer recess. Now, in anticipation of a Christmas recess, none of us knows what to expect. What will happen? Who can give the answer? It is a good thing that we passed legislation creating nine statutory holidays per year. Thank goodness we can at least count on those.

The special committee on a Canadian flag recommended something which I do not feel is an honest and genuine compromise. It does not embody any symbols of our past. I give credit to the members of that committee for doing their best under these highly emotionally charged circumstances. However, in blindness to public opinion, they have brought forward something without historical symbolism, without recognition of the contributions of the two founding races, and without recognition of the feelings of the majority of the Canadian people, and for those reasons I cannot accept the committee's recommendation. I must, therefore, in all conscience, vote against the committee's choice.

Mr. Speaker, I feel that some genuine action toward compromise should take place. I think some compromise should be adopted which I can take to my constituents in Middlesex West and say: We could not retain the red ensign, but at least 75 per cent of

the supporters of the red ensign have accepted this compromise, and we recommend that this compromise be accepted. As the situation now stands, I can only say to those members of my constituency who are Legion supporters that the recommendation of this special committee of the House of Commons is not acceptable on the grounds that it does not incorporate any symbols emblematic of our past history and traditions. That is not good enough, Mr. Speaker.

The government is seized with the responsibility of adopting measures supported by the majority of the people of Canada. The opposition must criticize, constructively, and has done so. It has suggested that we compromise by holding a plebiscite. Surely the government, in light of all the criticism and objection about this flag procedure, should be prepared to withdraw this resolution and send the question back to the special committee, or perhaps to a new joint committee of the House of Commons and the Senate. Let us make a new effort to solve the flag issue. There is no hurry to adopt a new flag. We are not now going to have a flag by Christmas, even though this recommendation is adopted, and provided the Senate lives up to its usual record for speed. Let us try again in a committee to come to some compromise. Perhaps a committee made up of members of the Senate and members of the House of Commons could bring in some new ideas, so that we could adopt a flag which is, or will be genuinely accepted by the Canadian people. Perhaps as a result of the establishment of such a committee a compromise could be acceptable to both English and French speaking Canadians. Perhaps then there would be no losers or winners on the flag issue, but acceptance of a flag which would promote national unity rather than bitterness in the eyes of Canadians throughout this nation.

Mr. Speaker, I should like to touch on one other situation, namely that this government does not have a mandate from the people of Canada on the subject of a Canadian flag. It is a fact that the government is a minority government, but I do not hold that against them. They are doing the best they can. We know they have a big majority in the house on the flag issue and we know they have been well supported in the house during the 20 months they have been in office. But there was no mention in our area of a flag without symbolism of our past being imposed on the people of Canada during either of the last two election campaigns. This may have been an issue in some places. I believe the hon. mem-

[Mr. Thomas.]