

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, December 10, 1964

The house met at 2.30 p.m.

CANADIAN FLAG

MOTION FOR CONCURRENCE IN SIXTH REPORT OF SPECIAL COMMITTEE

The house resumed, from Wednesday, December 9, consideration of the motion of Mr. Batten that the sixth report of the special committee on a Canadian flag presented to the house on Thursday, October 29, 1964, be now concurred in, and the amendment thereto of Mr. Monteith.

Mr. C. E. Millar (Middlesex East): Mr. Speaker, at the conclusion of the debate at six o'clock last night I was questioning the authority of this minority government to impose a new flag on the people of Canada without giving them the opportunity of indicating their feelings in this regard. Further to that and in support of this position I would like to read into the record a letter dated Quebec, September 27, 1847.

Mr. Grégoire: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. May I ask the hon. member whether the letter is relevant to the question of a plebiscite that we are discussing at the present time.

Mr. Millar: I consider it so, Mr. Speaker. Should you rule that it should be stricken from the record, I am prepared to accept your decision. This is an authentic copy of a letter taken from the public archives of Canada reproduced as one of a series appearing weekly in the London *Free Press*. It is from one James Bruce, Earl of Elgin and Kincardine, to Earl Grey, dated Quebec, September 27, 1847, and reads as follows:

My Dear Grey:

I write from Quebec and shall not trouble you with a long letter. We have been well received here. The St. Georges and St. Jean Baptiste societies turning out together for the first time and the president of the former wearing the maple leaf, the Canadian French emblem...

I repeat, Mr. Speaker:

—wearing the maple leaf, the Canadian French emblem...

My question, Mr. Speaker, is this. Is it the intention of the Prime Minister, the leader

of a minority government, to destroy a Canadian flag bearing the heraldic symbols of all the founding races of this country and substitute a flag bearing the traditional symbol of only one of these founding races? The Prime Minister has suggested that the prime purpose of the introduction of this flag in the House of Commons at this time is that a new flag will serve to unite all of Canada. With this principle I think all Canadians agree, but with the method adopted and with this suggested design many of us disagree.

Again I ask, Mr. Speaker: surely the Prime Minister of this country does not seek unity under a distinctive Canadian flag in a design such as now proposed, which in effect destroys all reference to the Anglo-Saxon traditions, substituting for this present flag a new flag design bearing only a single maple leaf which was recognized 120 years ago as the Canadian French emblem. I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that our French Canadian members in this House of Commons would not support this position. They themselves have stated on many previous occasions that they are not anxious to have the fleur-de-lis, the traditional emblem of France, as a part of a new Canadian flag, similar to the flag design presently used in the province of Quebec.

Mr. Grégoire: Question.

Mr. Millar: I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that this is more than just a debate on a new flag for Canada. The way this house is divided at present indicates that there is a basic principle at stake. Those members who support the government on every division indicate that they would be prepared to support any design as a new flag for Canada. Their attitude seems to indicate the feeling "Who cares about a new flag for Canada or what the design shall be? Let us vote and get the issue over with". I suggest that there is a much deeper issue involved and that those members who so freely call "Question, question", indicating that they are prepared to vote, are by the same token indicating that they are prepared to deny that same right to the people of Canada.

Mr. Caouette: No, sir, that is not right. That is stupid.