

Flags of Canada

conflict between my emotions and my intellectual conceptions. I notice the hon. member for Trinity (Mr. Hellyer) listening very carefully. He is as usual hoping I will make a slip and upset our political apperçu. Let me say first I am a great believer in the value of a knowledge of history, the value of traditions and the value of the symbols that represent history, traditions and culture. I have a great affection for my French-Canadian colleagues. I love their Gallic vivacity, and their sometimes volatile approach to life, their liveliness. I am very fond, also of their charming ladies.

I may say, too, that I have a great respect for the union jack. I was brought up in a home where the union jack was very much respected. The union jack, to me, is symbolic of the struggle for freedom in Great Britain through the centuries, the development of parliamentary institutions and the laying of the foundation of the democracy we enjoy today. You cannot sweep that history away overnight, or by a motion. You cannot forget it that easily.

If I had my way on this question I should like to see a flag upon which were emblazoned the symbols representing the traditions and history and culture of our French-Canadian colleagues and their compatriots all over Canada. They have a great past and history. The fleur-de-lis represents the chivalry of France. What more inspiring national anthem is there in the world today than the Marseillaise. I ask that of anyone. When it is played it almost makes you wish you were a Frenchman. The Canadian people of French ancestry have made a great contribution to the evolution of democracy and the development of many facets of our national life. As I was saying before, I wish we could design a flag acceptable to all Canadians that would provide for the representation of the symbols that represent the traditions and culture of the French, the history behind the union jack, and in some way include symbols that would represent the other races that go to make up our nation. However, that is my personal opinion. I am a democrat and I am willing to accept the decision of the majority, on this and any other question.

I am sure that the time will come in the future when public opinion will be crystallized sufficiently to make a decision. As I said before, I should like to see a flag which blended the symbols of these races that make up our nation. However, there is a strong sentiment in favour of a distinctive national flag. Let me say this, though.

When you say "a distinctive national flag" I find that opinions as to what composes a distinctive national flag are as varied as are the flags of the world today. I speak to one

[Mr. Herridge.]

person in my constituency and he says, "Certainly I am in favour of a distinctive national flag with a union jack on it". I speak to someone else and he says, "Yes, I am in favour of a distinctive national flag but I do not wish to have a union jack on it; I want something distinctive on it". In my opinion we can have a satisfactory compromise; that is to say, when the time is ripe, when public opinion is crystallized, we can have a distinctive Canadian flag and at the same time fly legally in Canada the union jack as the symbol of our membership in the commonwealth of nations.

The matter of obtaining a design is not as simple as it appears to be on the surface. I was on the committee in 1946 and at that time I think that we had 2,600 designs.

Mr. Hodgson: There were 2,695, to be exact.

Mr. Herridge: I thank the hon. gentleman for his assistance. The hon. gentleman is so inactive that the figures remained in his mind throughout the years. I thank him for the assistance. These designs were submitted then. Personally, I am of the opinion that that is not the correct way in which to choose a national flag. A flag is something to be designed by experts, those interested in heraldry who understand procedure, history, custom and practice and the meaning of symbols. I think that part of the matter is for experts. Let them submit for adoption not more than half a dozen designs. I would prefer to see two or three.

A properly designed flag conveys a signal. That is the point. As I mentioned with regard to the flag the committee suggested, we were told that the maple leaf in the centre on a white background to anyone on the sea or elsewhere or to anyone who understood the signals, meant Canada and that the union jack in the right hand corner, a little more than quarter the size of the flag, represented Canada as a member of the commonwealth. Design is extremely important. For instance, when you come to design a flag these matters must be taken into consideration.

I may say that I have done a little bit of reading on this subject; I did it some time ago, about as many years ago as when the figures mentioned by the hon. member were imprinted upon his mind. Vertical lines in flags represent strength. Horizontal lines represent repose. However, lines at an angle of 45 degrees in heraldry represent instability and represent, shall I say, something falling rather than support or strength. These things all must be considered and many people do not understand that designing flags is a science and an art. I therefore believe it is a question of the public having some understanding of