

Canadian Flag

Canada. They say, moreover: "If this has been done in 1942, why not do it again in 1964?"

I would like to tell them that there is an essential difference. In 1942, the government submitted the conscription issue to the Canadian people by way of referendum so as to be freed of a promise made to the Canadian people.

However, in submitting its flag resolution before parliament this year, the government is not going back on a promise, quite the contrary, it is fulfilling a promise made to the Canadian people.

When I agreed, in June 1962 and in April 1963, to run as a Liberal candidate, I then accepted the plank of the party platform concerning the adoption of a Canadian flag within two years of our accession to power.

There were many items in the party platform, some of them, incidentally, not very exciting. But still, when I accepted to be a candidate, I went along with the whole Liberal party program. And those who voted Liberal in 1962 and 1963 were endorsing the program of the Liberal party, including the adoption of a distinctive Canadian flag.

Therefore, when this resolution is put to the house, I think I will be expressing the desire of those who returned me to the House of Commons by voting in favour of the three-leaved emblem.

Our Conservative opponents—I should rather say our Conservative friends, because there are no opponents in the House of Commons, at least I do not think so; there should be only men working as honestly as possible for the welfare of their country—our Conservative friends say that the three-leaved design is the project of one man, the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson). I may say that is wrong. It is true that the Prime Minister kept his word. My hon. friends opposite may not be used to such a way of doing things, but we on this side of the house are proud of our leader who had the courage to give leadership to his party and to the government of this country, not by treading the easiest roads, but who accepted the difficulties threatening his undertaking, to administer the business of the country with his well-known sincerity and ability.

I think that when the three-leaved flag is officially adopted as the Canadian flag, we can say that never, in any country, a flag will have been chosen after so much consideration and care.

[Mr. Drouin.]

You know, Mr. Speaker, how, in most countries, a flag was adopted or replaced. During the night following the revolution, some rag was picked up, a design was planned and the next day, that was the flag of that country and all were proud of their flag because it meant freedom and independence.

What has the government done? It did not impose, as it could have done, some flag through an order in council. The Prime Minister asked a group of experts to study the some 5,000 projects which had been submitted.

He asked those specialists in heraldry to make a selection.

He said afterwards, not on his own behalf but for the government which is charged with looking after the business of the country—he is not imposing it through an order in council—that he was submitting the proposal to the approval of 265 freely elected members of the House of Commons so that they would make it the Canadian flag, not at a moment's notice, for the Prime Minister is leaving to everyone the time to voice freely his opinions on this matter. He also gives newspapermen the necessary time to express their opinions, he gives every Canadian citizen the opportunity to write to his member to voice his views.

I think that under the circumstances the 265 members elected by the Canadian people are qualified to give a flag to their country, and that is what I will do, and I will feel that I have done my duty when I vote for the three-leaved flag.

[Text]

Mr. J. Chester MacRae (York-Sunbury): Mr. Speaker, I am entering this debate because I think the changing of a national emblem, such as the flag is so important that every member of parliament, regardless of party and how he feels on the issue, should express his opinion and the opinions of those whom he represents in this house. To say that any member who wishes to speak on an issue as important as this is obstructing the work of parliament, that he is filibustering because he wishes to express an opinion on the matter, is to my mind a complete negation of what parliament stands for and what our freedom is. To say that we who are the official opposition should meekly fold our hands and allow this resolution to pass reminds us, and I am sure reminds the country, of a previous Liberal administration whose arrogant attitude was: "We know what is good for you; now just be quiet and take it". We have a