

Canadian Flag

[Text]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Richard): I would ask the hon. member who has the floor please not to invite the type of points of order which we have been getting over the past few minutes.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Richard): Order, please. It is no use commenting on points of order made by other hon. members, once the Chair has ruled that a point of order is not in order. Would the hon. member please proceed.

Mr. Coates: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your ruling but I can only say that it is a cause of some irritation to a speaker when members such as the hon. member who has just taken his seat—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Richard): Order, please. The hon. member should realize that the Chair has taken that into consideration, and that is why I am inviting him to resume his speech.

Mr. Grégoire: Question.

Mr. Coates: Mr. Speaker, it would appear that as long as I speak about the matters which I feel must be involved in a flag design for it to be acceptable to me, there will continue to be interruptions from those who do not wish to see the symbols of our past represented in the design of a flag to which they can bow down and adhere.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think one could at least say this about the flag design which was embraced by the government last May, that it could be anchored to a degree to events which had occurred in our past. This was the main argument of the Prime Minister when he proposed this design and gave his reasons for adopting it when he spoke in May. But surely we have a far different situation today, for we have a flag design proposed which is completely new, completely devoid of any associations with our past, with no associations with the traditions of this nation or with the fact that we have been a nation for 97 years. This is a flag that would probably be most suitable for a new nation on the continent of Africa, a nation which is emerging, having been given its democratic rights as of now. But how ridiculous it is that a country which is 97 years of age is proposing to adopt a flag design that is so similar to the flag of Peru that the only difference is that one has its coat of arms in the centre and the other has a maple leaf.

[Mr. Plourde.]

Mr. Matheson: That is not true.

Mr. Coates: I hear "That is not true" from the hon. member for Leeds (Mr. Matheson). Let the hon. member for Leeds stand on his feet and say whatever he wants about his love story, or whatever it is he wants to speak about, but let him do it in his own time and not mine.

Mr. Matheson: Would the hon. member permit a question on this matter. Would he kindly tell this house, having made that statement, the proportion of red-white-red on the Peruvian flag compared with the recommended flag; and would he also tell us all the colours which are involved in both these flags? Because he is not telling the truth.

Mr. Coates: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member might have been the father of the other flag, but if he is the father of this one it is illegitimate all the way. Because unless you become a mathematician or an upholsterer or a dress designer or a furniture dealer there is absolutely no way to associate this flag with any facet of Canada's past, and indeed it bodes ill for Canada's future if this is where we are going in the matter of selecting a flag design which is supposed to be representative of a nation 97 years old, and a good many hundreds years of age in development.

Surely we in this house are correct in demanding from the Prime Minister and the other ministers I have already named an explanation as to how we are going to have a distinctive flag, one which is representative of something. If Canadians have been shocked up to now by what this government has been trying to do to arrive at a flag design, it is nothing in comparison with the shock they are going to feel when they see this flag flying from the flagpoles of the nation. That is when the shock treatment will really set in—when the people see this meaningless flag flying from the flagpoles of the nation, having replaced the beautiful flag which today flies from the peace tower and from every other flagpole across the country.

We have not yet arrived, Mr. Speaker, at a position where we in this house can take a vote on the flag committee's report; and we will not arrive at that position until the Prime Minister is ready to come into this house and explain why he, in the words of the hon. member for Leeds, loves this flag today when his love affairs with the last one was constant only until the flag committee was set up.