

Sometimes I fear Canadians overlook the fact that Canada is composed of more than the two central provinces, Ontario and Quebec. Do we realize that Cabot came to Newfoundland in 1497, and that in 1583 that island was annexed by Sir Humphrey Gilbert? Newfoundland has had a flag from those early years, the Union Jack. Nearly 400 years have elapsed, and they still look with pride on their flag. Nova Scotia too has its flag, granted by Royal Charter in 1621.

Let us look at the history of Manitoba. In 1610 Henry Hudson sailed into Hudson Bay and touched what are now the shores of Manitoba. During the next few years Captains Gibbons and Baffin sailed into Hudson Bay and again touched these shores. In 1668 the ship *Nonsuch* carried back to England a valuable cargo of furs. The result of these journeys was that in 1670 the Hudson's Bay Company was formed and immediately sent two more vessels into that same territory. On September 1, 1670, Governor Bailey formally took possession of this territory and the surrounding area for the company, under the protection of Great Britain. And what flag was raised?—the Union Jack. However, to keep the record straight, I would like to say that for a brief period of 15 years, from 1697 to 1713, the French controlled Hudson Bay, but by the treaty of Utrecht it came back under British control. Thus, the Province of Manitoba can claim a far longer association with the Union Jack than any other province in Canada, with the sole exception of Newfoundland—over 350 years, to be exact.

With this brief review, is it not a strange coincidence that it was in our City of Winnipeg that the Prime Minister of Canada in May of this year saw fit to present his proposal for a distinctive flag at a meeting of the Royal Canadian Legion, on a Sunday, during a deeply impressive memorial service honouring the 100,000 comrades who lie silent in lonely graves around the world? Personally, I feel this was a serious error on the part of our Prime Minister, and great were and will be the repercussions of the timing of his initial speech.

Throughout this debate much has been said and written, but in speaking on it I feel that I must express my own personal feelings. Judging from the correspondence I have received and what I have read, I am sure that my opinion is shared by many thousands, yes, may I say millions, of my fellow Canadians.

When this controversial issue was first raised I cannot understand why a joint committee of both Houses of Parliament, embracing all political parties, was not set up, as was done in 1946 when there was a recommendation that the Red Ensign should be our flag with but one change, that the coat of arms

should be removed and a maple leaf substituted. I am firmly convinced that a joint committee, meeting in calmness and with no political bias, and with no time limit, could have brought in a recommendation acceptable to all. However, this was not done.

It is my hope that the symbol of the Union Jack in the Red Ensign, and the fleur-de-lis, will be maintained in any flag which may be suggested or approved in this country in the future. I feel that once a new flag is raised on the Peace Tower, we will find that many of these things which have gone into our national structure and character during the past century of fairly spectacular progress will be weakened or abolished. Let us not then forget the symbols held so dear by our two founding peoples.

Secondly, I feel strongly that the Prime Minister should have welcomed the suggestion of a plebiscite as a fair means of solving a very difficult problem. There should have been a nonpartisan approach to this matter and it should never at any time have been relegated into the arena of political partisanship. It is true that a government is elected by the people to change old policies or to make new ones. Such questions as the Canada pension plan, income tax rates, agricultural policies, and hundreds of other pieces of legislation are most certainly the responsibility of any government, but the changing of Canada's flag cannot possibly be dealt with in the same general business procedure of our country.

The Conservative party, all through this debate has taken the stand that, after all, it is the people of Canada who are going to live under this flag, so why should they not be given an opportunity of expressing their preference as to the nature and design of their flag. With this view I concur.

It would not be necessary to hold a special election to settle this question. There is absolutely no reason for haste. It could be held in conjunction with the next election, whenever that takes place. A ballot could be submitted to the electorate, illustrated in colour, with the flag committee's choice of five designs, one of which could be marked with an "X" to show the voter's preference. The votes would be counted, not by provinces, but by a central committee, so that there would be no indication as to how any one province voted. By following such a procedure, all would be satisfied that as citizens of this great country they were given the opportunity of voicing their opinion as to what the new national flag should be.

This sums up briefly my feeling regarding the flag issue. I sincerely hope, honourable senators, that when the members of this house decide to have a change of flag it will be done