

Canadian Flag

jack nor the fleur-de-lis has the deep significance that it has for those of us who are of French or British stock. It seems to me that these people have a right to a national flag that is distinctly Canadian and that for them is meaningful and significant.

Mr. Churchill: Would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Douglas: Later, please. Moreover, Mr. Speaker, there are millions of Canadians who were born in this country and who look upon Canada as their native land. This number will grow with the passing of the years. These young people have no deep feeling of attachment for the land of their forefathers; to them this land, Canada, is their native land. In the years that lie ahead they will have a struggle to retain Canada's national identity, lying as we are along the border of the United States, exposed to their movies, their magazines and their television shows. I suggest that if the young Canadians of this generation and future generations are going to retain their national identity they need a flag that speaks not of Britain nor of France, but a flag that says to them "Canada, my native land". I am supporting the maple leaf design because I believe it is the flag for the Canada of tomorrow.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Douglas: The New Democratic party believes, however, that a single maple leaf is to be greatly preferred over the sprig of three maple leaves proposed in the resolution. The Prime Minister has good, traditional, heraldic reasons for adopting the three maple leaf design. But in this flag issue we are breaking tradition in many respects. We are breaking a lot of heraldic rules in putting, for instance, the two blue bars on the flag—of which I approve. I think we ought not to be bound by either tradition or the advice of heraldic experts.

I think there are two very compelling reasons for using the single maple leaf rather than the design proposed by the Prime Minister. The first is the matter of identification. One of the purposes of a flag is that it can be easily identified. A person looking at our flag from some distance ought to be able instantly to recognize that flag and the country which it symbolizes. This can certainly be done much better by a single, large maple leaf standing out on a white background, with a blue bar on either side.

But I think there is a more important reason, Mr. Speaker. One of the problems of

Canada has been to bring together the many diverse groups which make up our population, and I think one single maple leaf would speak of national unity. There are not three Canadas; there is only one Canada, made up of two founding races, with two official languages, with two cultures, with many ethnic groups—but one country, with one purpose and one destiny. I think we need a flag which says to the world that, though we have come from many lands speaking many tongues, we are united together in common bonds of allegiance to parliamentary democracy, to social justice and to democratic institutions.

I was pleased that the Prime Minister said in the course of his address yesterday that when it came to the matter of design parliament will decide. I hope the Prime Minister will allow the members to decide in a free vote. I hope that the members will be allowed to vote according to their personal preference. I know from conversations I have had that there are members in all parts of the house, how many I do not know, who would prefer a single maple leaf. I hope that the government will make it clear to their supporters, and that all of us will make it clear in the various parties, that this is a matter of individual preference. It is not a matter of partisan politics. It is not a matter of party discipline. It is a matter of selecting what we think will best denote to the Canadian people what Canada means as it is depicted pictorially on a flag.

Before leaving the question of the single maple leaf, may I say that I would have moved an amendment to give the house an opportunity to express its opinion on a single maple leaf design, but since the official opposition have an amendment before the house it would not, of course, be possible for me to move that amendment at this time. However, later in the debate we shall certainly introduce an amendment to give the house an opportunity to say whether it would like a single maple leaf rather than the three maple leaves proposed in the resolution. I hope hon. members will give this matter some thought, and we hope that enough of them will vote for such an amendment to make it possible for us to have a flag which, in our opinion, would not only be distinctively Canadian but would be representative of the national unity which we are seeking to build in this country.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, may I just say a few words about the two blue bars, which have been neglected in most of the discussions.