

Canadian Flag

person who is not a Liberal who somehow got in there? Then, I thought, no, I can look around the Liberal benches and realize, since I have friends over there, that a good proportion of them believe a plebiscite would be a good thing.

Mr. Grégoire: Ready for the question?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order; the hon. member who has the floor has the right to continue his remarks without being interrupted.

Mr. Pugh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Winkler: Before the hon. member proceeds, and since there was a break at this point, I wonder if he would clarify one point for me? It is the first time I have heard it raised in this house so far as I recall. I have listened with interest to his remarks, and would he reaffirm the statement that the Liberal members on the committee, in fact, did vote against the design that was proposed by the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson)?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order; this point raised by the hon. member may be very interesting. Certainly, it seems to me that the point was made previously by the hon. member who has the floor. However, it does appear to the Chair to be a little remote from the amendment which is under consideration.

Mr. Pugh: I rather think the hon. member who posed the question has run into the same thing in his riding as I have and, no doubt, as a lot of Liberal members have as well. It is this: How was it that 14 members in the committee could have voted for a flag if they did not want it? The answer is very simple. There was no vote for that flag. There was a preference vote between the three maple leaf flag and the one maple leaf flag. These were the only two flags left before the committee. We were asked for our preference. We Conservatives could not vote for the three maple leaf design. Were the Liberals going to vote for the three maple leaf design? Well, after sweating it out here during the summer and most of the fall, you would have thought that possibly the Liberals would have voted for a flag which had been put to us on a take it or leave it basis. You would have thought that. I am glad the hon. gentleman did pose the question because a lot of people do not understand there was a preference. However, everyone voted against that Pearson flag; no one voted for it, not even one teeny, weeny, little Liberal.

Now, to me, it is a shocking thing—

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Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order; in the remaining minutes the hon. member has at his disposal, I wonder if he would limit his remarks to the subject matter of the debate?

Mr. Pugh: Well, yes, Mr. Speaker; if I had another 20 minutes, I would go on—

Mr. Grégoire: No, no; spare us.

Mr. Pugh: If I had another 20 minutes, I would go on extolling the virtues of the hon. member for York-Humber, the one Liberal who spoke this morning. I would recommend to the people all over Canada that they read his speech. I would recommend that they take his speech to heart. I would recommend that Liberal members should take it to heart. I hope that when you open your mail and when you read your newspapers or listen to other news media throughout Canada tomorrow, you will really take these remarks to heart because, in my opinion, they present the crux of the whole situation. As I say, Mr. Speaker, if I had 20 minutes I would take portions of that speech and put them forward.

However, may I content myself by saying, in conclusion, that there is merit, not only merit but absolute necessity, in the idea of holding a plebiscite at the present time. My reason for saying this is that the people of Canada have before them something that goes deeper than a little piece of legislation which is brought before the house. It goes to the very depth of our being, our historical background, and all of those things which count. This is not something that can be settled as easily as some legislative matters.

However, there is a far more important factor in my opinion, and that is that parliament is not the place to settle the flag question. This flag issue should be removed from parliament now so, as some hon. members suggest, we can get on with other more important business. I have another reason which I feel is cogent and irrefutable, and that is that so far as the public are concerned the flag question has become political in the extreme. I feel that if there is any choice made in this House of Commons, people all over Canada are going to remain divided on this issue. There is not going to be any settlement of it by a vote of this House of Commons. There will always be a substantial number of people who will feel the flag has been railroaded through. Later on, it will be felt that the flag has been railroaded through by a minority or, as the hon. member for York-Humber has said, by a