

Canadian Flag

refer to one or two matters arising out of the Prime Minister's speech.

I was particularly interested in his concluding remarks in which he called on the opposition to rally around Canada's flag. Apparently that speech was written for use after parliament had decided the way the Prime Minister wishes it to decide, because as yet that appeal has no effect whatsoever. We are discussing the question as to the nature of the design of Canada's flag, and until parliament makes its decision there is no reason for anyone to answer a specious challenge such as he has just placed before us.

I am going to mention just one fact because it must be clarified, and it is this. In all that speech, covering the areas that he desired to cover and of course detouring from those he did not wish to cover, he was unable to make one argument to support his stand that those people sitting opposite, the government of today, had any mandate from the Canadian people to bring about a flag upon which no vestige of the union jack is to appear. As a matter of fact he was challenged several times during the election campaign—I believe twice—to say what he had in mind and what the Liberal party had in mind for a distinctive national flag. On no occasion did he answer that.

As far back as 1961 he gave an interview in Amherst, Nova Scotia, in which he spoke of a distinctive national flag and he was asked this question. In that distinctive flag—and I am simply paraphrasing because I do not have the material before me—in that distinctive flag would you remove the union jack, and his answer was "I am not telling you."

He puts up the old argument that we who oppose this are therefore opposed to Quebec. That argument I hurl back at him and into his teeth.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Diefenbaker: We are not trying to impose a flag. We are trying to give the Canadian people an opportunity to say what that flag shall be, because there was no mandate to the Liberal party in 1961 through 1963 that gave them any authority on the part of the people of Canada to thrust our past aside.

We are not trying to impose a flag on any province or portion of Canada. Our endeavour, I repeat, is to give the Canadian people an opportunity to determine a matter that was never before them excepting in a nebulous way. Indeed, the Prime Minister was most careful to say, when he was injecting these

suggestions, that because we oppose the viewpoint expressed by the flag committee we are anti-Quebec.

What did he say in Amherst? He said the choice of the flag would be made after consultation with the ministers from the province of Quebec.

Mr. Pearson: That is not true.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Who brought this—

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, I have to rise on a point of privilege and tell my hon. friend that that statement is not true and never was said.

Mr. Diefenbaker: All right.

Mr. Pearson: It has been denied. It was denied by me immediately after the purported report of the broadcast.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I understand that the recording is still available. We have a complete transcript of that speech. It was he who first brought this up. It was he who said the choice would be made—a completely unworthy statement on his part—and he has been trying to run away from it since because he realized its import. On the same occasion when he was asked "What are you going to place on the flag?" his answer was the courageous one, "We won't tell you; we are not letting you know." Therefore there was no mandate.

The reason I mention mandate is because of his rather thinly veiled threat of closure. Well, we have heard these threats before. First he said the government would stand or fall on the three maple leaf flag. Then when he found himself in a position where he might fall he decided not to stand.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Then he backed away from that and said "If you don't watch out you are going to have an election." It was at that time I said an election fought on this issue would not be beneficial for Canadian unity, and I still have that viewpoint. He said "You will have an election," but we did not cringe; we did not gasp in the face of the threat, so what did the Prime Minister do then? He followed the customary course of backing up and saying "Of course there should not be an election." So the course has been to tell us what he is going to do and place the veiled threat before the house.

In this case, however, he knows he has these allies of his who sit over in this corner, the Cr ditistes. Allies they are today, but only a few short months ago they were un-