

*Canadian Flag*

Mr. Speaker, the resolution before us represents another stage in our development as a nation. It reflects and underlines a healthy Canadian nationalism—not a nationalism that is narrow or prejudiced or chauvinistic. There is no room for that in this age of interdependence, when the demands of even the most fervid nationalism have often to be subordinated, in the interests of the nation itself, to the requirements of internationalism.

And so, in its recognition of our new nationalism, the maple leaf flag of this resolution does not ignore the obvious truth that nationalism is not enough, or the equally obvious truth, as was pointed out to us some days ago in the house by the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam (Mr. Douglas), that, while it is a heartening and stirring thing to have a distinctive national flag, it is even better to have it flying over a free and flourishing country with social justice and social security for all.

Why, Mr. Speaker, do I think it is a desirable thing to have a new flag now? In order to answer my own question I want to look at the record. The flags we have used for Canada have already changed as Canada has evolved from colony to self-governing dominion to independent nation, to a sovereign state respected among the states of the world. As these changes of symbol have taken place to keep pace with other changes, our formal links with the United Kingdom have changed also. But our ties of friendship and, for so many Canadians, of kinship, have not weakened. They are as strong as ever. But they are not now associated with any kind of political or legal subordination, and that makes it possible for them to be stronger. There are now ties of affection, respect, tradition and adherence to the same basic ideals, cherished links through having the same Queen and being members of the same commonwealth of nations. But as our formal ties have changed, and they have—I wish I had time to go over the record of the changes; it is a good record for Canada—so have our formal symbols changed.

In this evolution I believe that the time has now come for another change, by the adoption of a distinctive Canadian flag which cannot be mistaken for or confused with the emblem of any other country but Canada. I believe that a flag of the design described in the resolution would be a good one for this purpose, that it will symbolize and be a true reflection of the new Canada and, as such, will strengthen national unity and give us a deeper sense of national identity and national

[Mr. Pearson.]

pride. It will be something around which all Canadians, new and old, native born and naturalized, of all racial stocks, can rally, and which will be the focus of their loyalty to Canada. So I believe that the position taken in this resolution is forward looking, is responsible, is wise and is deserving of support by this house and the people of this country.

It is argued, Mr. Speaker, and I can appreciate the strength of the argument, that the flag of this resolution ignores our past. In my view it does not. No one would deny, of course, that we have a responsibility to the past. But we have also a greater responsibility to the present and to the future. Moreover, our responsibility to the past will be best discharged now by being true to its real substance and its real meaning and will relate that past to a united nation in the future. To do that, Mr. Speaker, we all have to make certain concessions of sentiment, as we have in the past as our nation has grown. May I quote the words of Premier Stanfield of Nova Scotia in this connection on April 6 last at the Canadian club in Montreal, when he said:

Surely, however, it is not necessarily patriotic for me to insist that something I value highly must be adopted as a national symbol if it is objectionable as a national symbol to a large number of Canadians. Surely the Canadian thing for us to do is to find symbols which are mutually acceptable. Let us emphasize what we have in common. Surely we can have a national anthem and a flag that unites Canada.

In that same spirit the Canadian Chamber of Commerce not long ago adopted the following resolution at its annual meeting:

That the parliament of Canada formally adopt and authorize a distinctive national flag.

Because, as the resolution went on to say: A distinctive national flag would be a strong, unifying influence, consistent with the status of full nationhood.

I should also like to quote a resolution of the Association of Canadian Clubs adopted at Charlottetown as recently as June 2 last, which reads:

Canadian clubs in biennial conference assembled support a Canadian flag that is simple, dignified and distinctive; and offer their services, if and when parliament has approved a Canadian flag, in promoting its acceptance throughout Canada.

Some hon. members will say: Have we not such a flag now? I do not think so, and I should like to explain why I do not think so. The red ensign has served Canada honourably and well since it was designated for such service by order in council; but those who