

*National Flag*

advocated by our party has gained way and that this same public opinion is now ready to accept almost unanimously a really distinctive flag. I might even add that public opinion expects this flag and that it will feel frustrated as long as the Canadian government and the House of Commons do not assume their responsibility in this field.

I have scrutinized the program submitted by the Conservative party to the voters last June, and nowhere have I seen any reference to a flag. So I take it that this is not in the Conservative program, and I think I understand why. How indeed can you give Canada a distinctive flag, recalling no other emblem, when you simply refuse to compromise? I found in *Hansard* for November 13, 1945, Vol. II, page 2089, the following statement by the present Prime Minister:

I cannot see eye-to-eye with those who say we must not have a national flag. On the other hand, I cannot see eye-to-eye—and my sentiments so carry me that I must be restrained when I say this—with those who would deny the union jack a permanent and a prominent place on the flag of this country; and the place of honour on any flag is the upper quarter. Some say, why not compromise? I will compromise on anything, but not to the extent of the removal of the union jack from our national flag.

Mr. Speaker, if there is no compromise, there will not be a national flag. That statement has to be confronted with the one made by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Pearson), on November 6, 1961:

The Liberal party intends to restore national unity by taking into account the aspirations and the recent evolution of our two main racial groups. It is time to give that unity the symbols it should have. That is why the Liberal party will endow our country with a distinctive Canadian flag and will ratify "O Canada" as our national anthem. Those symbols will not prevent Canadians, on the contrary, from paying tribute to the Queen and from maintaining their ties with the commonwealth.

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, the leaders of the two main parties represented in this house have taken completely opposite stands. The leader of the Conservative party was still going back, in 1945, to the time when Canada was considered a colony and a plantation. We of the Liberal party fully appreciate the complete evolution towards sovereignty which we have achieved in Canada. To this entirely free country, we wish to give the required national symbols. That is why our program includes a definite pledge in this regard.

As far back as November 6, 1945, the Right Hon. Mackenzie King introduced a motion in this house providing for the setting up of

[Mr. Cadieux.]

a joint committee of the House of Commons and of the Senate to look into the matter. If we look at *Hansard*, we see there were discussions on the matter in 1931, 1932, 1933, 1935, 1937, 1938 and on several occasions afterwards. Besides, the setting up of a committee of officials was suggested in 1925 to study that matter.

All this means, Mr. Speaker, that the question of a flag has been a recurring topic for over 35 years. It could have been settled earlier. The people are getting impatient and already, their representatives stand indicted. Old arguments which had some value in years gone by should not be brought up any more. In Canada, a time limit is proposed to us by history, as was said a little while ago. In four years, the Canadian confederation will be one hundred years old. In my own province, it seems sure that a world fair will climax the celebrations. I wonder which flag will fly over Canada's pavilion.

We are talking, Mr. Speaker, about a distinctive and truly Canadian flag. Throughout the world, people consider that as a symbol. The flag we would choose, after an agreement it is so hard to reach, would give our collective and often boastful statements about our national accomplishments, a ring of undeniable truth. What little pride we have left would slowly come back to life. We could rally round something respectable and universally accepted. I, for one, would be happy to recognize my country on the roofs of buildings in Vancouver, Quebec city or Halifax.

That symbol, Mr. Speaker, would mean that millions of Canadians, of British or French descent, as well as a great many new Canadians, have felt, at one time, a common ideal strong enough to bring them together in a particular nation. It would mean that one day, freely, of its own accord, and sovereignly, the Canadian nation will have taken its place in history.

Our inability to decide upon a symbol may, on the other hand, very well develop into another symbol, that of division which undermines us from everywhere, the symbol of parochialism, the symbol of our ineradicable prejudices, the symbol of our lack of brotherhood.

I would not want, Mr. Speaker, to end these remarks without urging every hon. member here to put aside, in the near future, his false modesty, his complexes, his sometimes concealed parochialism. In 1944, I attended the first November 11 parade of the French liberation troops on the Champs-Élysées in Paris. Very early in the morning, the pavement in all the streets of the French capital resounded with the host of people who crowded the