

*Canadian Flag*

all been put aside and a new flag for Christmas is all that apparently matters, we in the Conservative opposition have a right to register our protests on behalf of the Canadian people who do want the matter decided by a plebiscite, the only fair way. Instead of the promised legislation the Prime Minister introduced the flag resolution and I ask, why? At one time the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Sharp) took part in the flag debate. I wish to refer hon. members to page 6959 of *Hansard*, where he expressed concern about the leadership of the Progressive Conservative party. Let me assure the hon. minister that we on this side of the house have every confidence in the leadership of Right Hon. John Diefenbaker.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Forbes:** But, as one who is an ardent believer in the two party system, I personally am deeply concerned about the leadership of the Liberal party at this time. When I think of the able leaders of that once great Liberal party, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Mackenzie King and that great statesman whom all Canadians loved, Mr. St. Laurent—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I have listened with great interest to the hon. member for the last few minutes and I would think that the remarks he has been making until now will lead him eventually to the consideration of the amendment before the house at the present time. I would entreat the hon. member to keep that in mind and get to the core of his subject as quickly as possible.

**Mr. Forbes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was just coming to that, but I was prefacing my main argument with a few incidentals. I made reference to the great leaders of the Liberal party in the past and I have just one or two more sentences on that subject. The opinions of these great leaders of the Liberal party in the past on the subject of a flag have been placed on the record many times, and their contribution to the history and development of our country. I fear for the future of the Liberal party under the present leadership, if the flag resolution is any indication of his ability as a leader. I am at a loss to understand why a man with a reputation as a great diplomat would introduce such a divisive and controversial issue.

Mr. Speaker, the number of letters and telegrams that I have been receiving from my constituency indicates that the majority want the red ensign retained as Canada's flag.

I need not mention the various organizations such as the Canadian Legion, the I.O.D.E. and the L.O.L. who are requesting my support for the red ensign. Mr. Speaker, the maple tree is a thing of beauty, but I am sorry that I cannot say the same thing about the proposed maple leaf flag. As one man said to me recently, it is more of a banner than a flag. Although he did not indicate his politics to me in any way, I feel he may have been a Liberal. In any case I was happy to have him in my office. He is a retired air force chap and said he felt the present Liberal minority government has no right to impose its will on a whole people, as it is doing with the flag, because it is a minority government. I say again, if the government is determined to have a new flag this should only be decided upon by a majority of all the people voting upon it in a referendum or at another election.

The flag which the committee has asked us to accept, Mr. Speaker, has no tradition behind it, except perhaps the colours red and white which are taken from the red ensign. At the risk of being repetitious I am just adding my voice to the others raised in protest throughout Canada and here in this House of Commons against this red and white maple leaf flag replacing the Canadian red ensign which has flown so proudly in Canada and abroad all these years, and has been honoured by all. Immigrants coming to Canada have been swearing allegiance to this Canadian red ensign of ours. To me the red ensign is more than a bit of bunting; it stands for and exemplifies the hopes and aspirations of many generations of every ethnic group who have sought, and found, security and happiness beneath its folds.

I am sure no one wants to think that next year or the year after, or indeed even in 50 or 100 years from now, there should be any necessity for changing our flag. This is why we must decide right now. This matter has already caused so much disunity in this country, and this could easily happen again if at some future time any group was successful in putting enough political pressure on another weak and vacillating government. We in the Conservative party believe that this flag question has been handled in the worst possible way and we feel that the only way the people in our nation will be satisfied with any settlement of the question is to have a plebiscite. We should remember that we are settling this matter for all time