

right to do so—that I have been a member of that organization for too long, and have participated in too many of its democratic processes, right through from its branches to its provincial commands and to its dominion command, to sit idly by and allow such a sweeping, destructive condemnation to appear on the record of this house. As a one-time member of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs of the other place, I can say that my colleagues and comrades there never shared a view such as that expressed by Senator Pouliot.

I should like to add further that the well-trained veterans' officers in the service bureau of the Dominion Command can render efficient and valuable service to members of Parliament, and, yes, even to senators, all of whom at some time or other must be asked to assist in the problems of veterans.

Suffice it to say, I have the highest respect for the Royal Canadian Legion, for its executive and staff from the top down. In saying that I am sure I have the support of the majority of veterans of this country, and the support, I might add, of a notable upholder of the Royal Canadian Legion, its efforts and its work, in the person of a former Minister of Veterans Affairs and the present distinguished Leader of the Opposition in this chamber.

Without either condoning or condemning the practices of some labour unions, I should like to point out that the comparison that Senator Pouliot made was not valid in that he was comparing voluntary membership, on the one hand, with compulsory membership on the other.

I am sorry that Senator Pouliot is not in his seat. However, he will read my remarks tomorrow morning and, being the distinguished gentleman that he is, will understand the point I am attempting to make.

In considering the resolution as amended, I think most of us will agree that it would be rather difficult to ignore much of what has already been written and said on this subject. In my remarks I promise you I shall make a conscientious effort to deal with the subject as objectively as possible, and attempt to remain strictly relevant, by first granting that the topic under discussion is an entirely new one for this chamber as of December 14. In so doing, it is nevertheless necessary to review the background and the purported reasons why we have this subject of a distinctive national flag—to use the words of the resolution—before us now. I might say as well that I may not find it the easiest thing in the world to remain entirely objective, because by its nature the subject is a very personal one for most Canadians and, I am sure, for

all parliamentarians. Most honourable senators who have already spoken have pretty well demonstrated that fact.

In so far as background is concerned, it is my understanding that this subject is before Parliament in the year 1964 because the promise to “adopt” or “attempt to adopt, if possible” a distinctive national flag within two years of being elected to office was included in the platform of the present Government party prior to the last federal election. I want to state immediately that I recognize and accept the fact that its background extends considerably farther back than that, which fact, incidentally, Senator Pouliot brought out very well yesterday afternoon. However, I repeat that this election promise has been offered as the basic reason for this resolution being before us at this time.

I then ask: Is this good and sufficient reason in itself? I think not, and I do so not because I consider the subject unimportant, nor do I seek to dismiss responsibility on the part of those so promising. I do feel, however, and very strongly, that this should be a question of relative values, and in the light of the events of the day a party, once having assumed power, must make a responsible and realistic assessment, and thereby establish priorities. I believe, too, that in this instance the mood of the day should have dictated that discussion and decision on such a subject was indeed untimely, and, heaven knows, there were and are priorities sufficient and grave enough to excuse any government for not proceeding in this direction at this time.

Notwithstanding these much more urgent and pressing problems, this Government strove and finally succeeded by rather drastic and questionable practice to bring this very contentious issue before us for discussion at this time. And it anticipates, I presume, decision and disposition of the matter to that degree within the powers of this chamber.

Thus, it is not at all strange that many very strongly suspect the Government's real reason for this action—quite over and above the keeping of an election promise within a defined time limit. Surely, it cannot be argued that there was any great public clamour for a new flag at this time. I know of none, but I will say that once the Government of the day introduced the subject in the other place, I am sure all honourable senators here will have noted that the greatest, strongest and most united representations we have since heard come from those who support the retention of the Red Ensign as Canada's flag. I am not advocating that course, because I fully comprehend the necessity for understanding and compromise, thereby automatically but consciously and willingly sacrificing even some of those things we cherish.