

Canadian Flag

Why deny our historic past? Why say that we should not have on our national emblem something of the greatness of our past, and something of the French contribution? History tells the reason. In 1776 what could one expect of the French colonists in Canada of that day, who only had a few years under British rule, but that they would rebel? That is what the leaders of the army of the 13 colonies thought, but the French stood firm.

What happened in 1812 when the United States commander, General Hull, said to Canadians "You people surrender or things will be terrible because we will overrun you and destroy you"? The answer given by the French Canadians was "We shall not surrender. We stand behind those institutions which have given us freedom."

When I hear hon. members sitting opposite in this house, and some of those to my left, ridiculing the possession of British citizenship by Canadians, I am reminded of the words of Hon. Rodolphe Lemieux, who occupied the position you occupy, Mr. Speaker, and who gave his 17 year old son on the field of sacrifice in the first world war. He said:

If you ask me why I am a British subject, and why I wish to remain one, I reply...that I prize most those institutions that secure me most strongly in our rights and liberties; and am proud to be a sharer in that great work of advancing peace and progress throughout the world, for which the British empire stands.

That is the view of French Canada today among those who are being responsible in their positions.

Mr. Grégoire: Who said that?

Mr. Diefenbaker: I am not speaking about that hon. gentleman; I am speaking about the great heart of French Canada. Is it not time that we recall something of the change of thinking on the part of the Prime Minister? On June 15 as recorded at page 4322 of *Hansard* he said this:

Indeed, the three joined red maple leaves have for us a historic and heraldic significance which, in my view, make them preferable on a flag, to a single maple leaf which has not the same significance and has not, in fact, any formal emblematic authority—

What happened, Mr. Speaker? Do you expect the Canadian people led by ideas such as that not to be able to determine that they have been misled?

The Prime Minister then said in summary that heraldically and historically that was the only suitable flag, and I want to make this clear because this shows the political attitude of this government and their willingness to change their viewpoint. It is very

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

much like the position of Mr. Dooley, who said "This is what I think, but if you do not agree with me I am prepared to change my view." One cannot run a government that way.

This is what the Prime Minister said when dealing again with the three maple leaves design:

It is because this design has such a history and because, with the blue sea to sea border it makes a striking and beautiful flag, that the government is putting it before parliament in this resolution. The single maple leaf, I repeat, has not the same historical and heraldic significance even though it also, with the blue borders, I am told makes a very attractive flag.

That was what the Prime Minister said in June, that the blue borders indicating Canada from sea to sea in fact make the flag more attractive. Where are the blue borders on the flag proposed today that were so attractive in June? Then dealing with the argument about history the Prime Minister said:

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.

Then he said:

In light of this, Mr. Speaker, can there be any doubt that the design recommended in the resolution is a proper one; with Canadian history, Canadian tradition and official sanction on the highest levels behind it?

The members on that side of the house do not themselves know what they want. What they argued in June they have repudiated in September. Yet had it not been for the Conservative party, as Her Majesty's loyal opposition, we would now have the flag of the three maple leaves design; and we might have had it on July 1, the original deadline. The government then thought it would be good to have that flag for the visit of the Queen in October, but again there was a postponement until Christmas.

Is it not clear from reading what was said by the Prime Minister that the arguments which we advanced had some basis in fact? If that is not so, why did the members of the Liberal party on that committee, without direction, without suggestion and without even telepathic consideration, suddenly see the light and decide that the views of the Prime Minister in June were entirely without basis in fact? Perhaps we are to interpret what took place as an indication that the Liberal members on that committee revolted against the Prime Minister's flag—perish the thought. Did they act with such unanimity because they had been given instructions? I suggest that was not the case.