

There have been some 38 speeches made by various senators since this debate began, and it seems to have started a very long time ago. I agree, as I think we all do, with Senator Aseltine that the Senate has made an honest attempt to give this very important problem a good sober second thought. I think no one will complain that anyone who wanted to speak was not afforded every opportunity to do so. This was done without any effort on anyone's part to continue the debate unnecessarily, and I think there has been a very frank exchange of views.

Senator Hugessen said last night that he thought the level of the debate on this issue was higher than any he had witnessed in his 27 years in this house. Senator Thorvaldson complained of the fact that it was reported somewhere that, "Now the shouting will start in the Senate." Well, there has been no shouting in the Senate, but there has been reasoned debate.

I desire at this point to pay a tribute to all senators who have participated, for the sincerity they have shown, for the conviction with which they have expressed their views, and for the good faith in which they put them forward. I do not think you can pay a higher tribute to a reasonable body of men and women gathered in a deliberative assembly, when you are able to say that. I know that political considerations have and do move individuals on both sides of the house. I submit, I suggest, and I am convinced, that everyone who has taken part in this debate has honestly, sincerely and with a patriotic motive tried to do what was best and to say what was best in the interests of this country.

It has been said that as a result of what we do here tonight we take away a flag. I prefer, and I believe many of us prefer to say, we are doing something positive, we are doing something uniquely Canadian. We are giving something to Canadians which is representative of the Canada in which we live.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. Connolly (Ottawa West): I say more than that, honourable senators—as has emerged already from the debate—that those of us who have these views hold them with enthusiasm.

Let me return for a moment to the question of the debate. If we have achieved a high level of debate, I think the Senate owes much to the approach taken by the honourable Senator from Carleton, Senator Grattan O'Leary.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. Connolly (Ottawa West): His performance, his approach, proves that the Opposition can do more to contribute to a high level of debate than can the Government. No matter how hard a Government tries to put a debate on a high level, if the Opposition decides that course is not going to be followed, that is inevitably the result. With regard to his speech, we have all been impressed with its imagery, with its literary allusions, with its historical references. I know that everyone did not reach that high plateau. Perhaps there has been practice for the hustings in some of the speeches. But I think we have had a good example of objective debate here, and that we may have done something for the Parliament of Canada in our department in these last two or three days. We have made a good book. There are some good things that are in our record, and they will be there for Canadians to read as they will.

Honourable senators, may I refer briefly to the speech made yesterday by Senator McCutcheon. I am sorry that he is not here now, but I know he had an engagement away and that otherwise he would have been present. He said that 20 years ago the proposal to have "O Canada" as the national anthem would not have had general approval, but today it would probably be adopted by Parliament without debate. He said the same idea should apply to the flag.

Hon. Mr. Aseltine: It should be "The Maple Leaf Forever" now.

Hon. Mr. Connolly (Ottawa West): There is much to be said for the argument advanced by Senator McCutcheon, and I can understand this argument, as can we all. I think he argued his point very impressively. But, for my part—and I think for the part of the majority of the members of this chamber—I say in good faith, that I believe the time has come to move, as is proposed in this motion on the flag.

Senator Aseltine spoke tonight for members of the 1945 joint committee, and Senator Lambert was the chairman of the joint committee in 1945-46 which dealt with the flag at that time. Senator Lambert has since changed his mind, but we should remember that in these 20 years times have changed, and Canada has changed.

Hon. Mr. Brooks: Every country has changed.

Hon. Mr. Connolly (Ottawa West): We are not living in 1945 or 1946, we are living in 1964, and if you look at the situation in Canada 20 years ago and compare it to that existing today, you must agree this is a fact.