

Canadian Flag

Batten that the sixth report of the special committee on a Canadian flag presented to the house on Thursday, October 29, 1964, be now concurred in, and the amendment thereto of Mr. Monteith.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Caouette: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege.

At the beginning of this afternoon's sitting the deputy leader of the Conservative party, the hon. member for Three Rivers (Mr. Balcer), suggested and asked that the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson), who was not at his seat then, should move some kind of motion to apply definitely the rule of closure in the case of the flag debate. I strongly support what the deputy leader of the official opposition suggested this afternoon, to the effect that a member of the government or the Prime Minister himself should move immediately a motion to apply the rule of closure so that the matter of the flag can be dealt with once and for all.

[*Text*]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I understand the hon. member for Digby-Annapolis-Kings (Mr. Nowlan) has the floor.

Some hon. Members: Question.

Hon. George C. Nowlan (Digby-Annapolis-Kings): Mr. Speaker, are these Christmas carols which we are having from the lower end of the chamber, or are these hon. members motivated by Christmas spirits or otherwise in engaging in this performance at the moment?

Mr. Mandziuk: Christmas nuts.

Mr. Nowlan: Yes. At ten o'clock last night, Mr. Speaker, when I discontinued the remarks I was making on the amendment which is before us I had suggested that a decision on this matter had to be made by parliament because that is set forth in the order in council which established our flag. I refer to the order in council passed under a preceding Liberal government under the aegis of Right Hon. William Lyon Mackenzie King, which stated that this flag would be the flag of Canada until the parliament of Canada decided otherwise.

I am a little intrigued as to just what the mechanics are to be whereby the parliament of Canada defines and fixes the flag of this nation. As I understand it, Mr. Speaker, we have before us at the moment a motion for concurrence in the report of

a committee, and it is that motion which we are debating today and have been debating for the last few days. Is this motion going to be construed as a definitive action on the part of the House of Commons to establish the flag of Canada, or is there going to be some other motion following this or some other legislative process brought in which will help establish this flag?

After all, this motion deals only with the report of a committee of the House of Commons. The parliament of Canada consists, as you well know, Mr. Speaker, of Her Majesty the Queen, the Senate and the House of Commons. I am wondering what action will be required in this matter on the part of the Senate. Are they going to have a concurring resolution, or just what will be done to establish a legislative decision of the parliament of Canada.

As I have said, all we have before us at the moment is a motion for concurrence in the report of a committee of the House of Commons. Surely that is not going to be the end of this matter. I think before we have a vote and finalize this debate the government should take the House of Commons into its confidence as to the legislative processes to be taken to establish this flag once we have adopted, if we do adopt concurrence in the report of this committee.

Certainly as far as I know the hon. gentlemen in the other place have not had a committee dealing with this matter. Are we going to ask them to concur in the report of a committee on which they had no representation and of which they have no knowledge? Are they going to set up a committee to study this matter? What are to be the mechanics to establish this as an action of the parliament of Canada? This is something on which I think we have the right to be informed, because this matter involves more than just passing a motion.

The hon. member for Port Arthur, who I am sorry to see is not in his seat now, said last night "After all, the government will change. A Conservative government might be back in office", as I am sure it will be following the next election. Then, he said, that government could bring in another resolution on another flag, or another legislative enactment, re-establishing the red ensign as the flag of Canada.

In the opinion of this party we cannot change flags in the way some hon. members would apparently change shirts. We think there is something more important than