

*Canadian Flag*

is one of the most important matters that the parliament of Canada has ever been called upon to decide. I have pleaded before, and I do so again, that we should not be in such a hurry to take action which we or those who come after us have reason to regret. A flag is the symbol of a nation. It becomes very important to the people of a nation. Therefore we should take all the time that is necessary. Neither time, effort nor expense should be permitted to stand in the way of choosing a national flag which will tend to promote national unity in the country rather than discord.

This afternoon we disposed of one question and we are now speaking to the main motion for concurrence in the recommendation made by the committee that we adopt the flag with the red bars at the ends and with a red maple leaf between those bars. This afternoon the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker) asked what comes next. Is the government, he asked, willing to accept this recommendation of the committee? No answer has been given to that question. The government have not put themselves on record as to whether they are willing to accept the committee's recommendation in the way of a flag. Then again, what procedure will be used if and when the house does adopt the recommendation of the committee? How will the house proceed to give effect to the committee's recommendation?

Another question which was asked was: What becomes of the two resolutions now on the order paper numbered 44A and 44B? The first of these was the one placed on the order paper by the government—by the Prime Minister—recommending that this house adopt the three maple leaf design. What happens to this resolution? Resolution 44B, also put on the order paper by the Prime Minister, calls for the house to adopt the union jack as the commonwealth flag or as the flag of the empire. Then there is another resolution, No. 45, dealing with a related topic, the national anthem. These are questions which I believe this house has a right to have answered before we come to a vote on this matter. Surely it is not too much to ask that the Prime Minister or some member of his government should undertake to satisfy the house and make the position of the government clear in regard to these questions.

The party to which I have the honour to belong, in common with all other parties in the house, is doing, I believe, whatever it can to promote national unity in this country. Opinions may differ as to how national unity can best be promoted. There are honest

differences of opinion regarding the procedure which should be adopted with this end in view. Our party has taken the stand that for the government to impose a flag by a vote of this house is not the best way to promote national unity. We have the right to present our view and to urge our view upon all hon. members of the house. We wish national unity: all parties are working for national unity. How can we have national unity, however, without a reasonable compromise between the two elements in our population which are causing the disputation and trouble at this time?

Compromise, Mr. Speaker, presupposes a giving on both sides. The English speaking people in this country wish to retain on our national flag some symbols of our past heritage. But we are quite prepared to accord the French speaking people in this country a similar privilege—that they should have some symbolism of their past history also on our national flag.

I understand the feelings of our friends. They are quite willing to forgo any symbolism of our French heritage in Canada provided they can, at the same time, eliminate all the symbolism of the British heritage in connection with our country from our flag. The English speaking people are not prepared to accept that arrangement entirely, but they are quite prepared, as far as I have been able to learn, to compromise.

I sent out 4,000 questionnaires to the people in my area. I blanketed the area which was covered and sent the questionnaire to every family within that area. I have received something in the neighbourhood of 1,000 replies, of which 50 per cent have expressed favour for the retention of the red ensign. About 40 per cent expressed favour for that flag which has no symbolism of the past, namely the three maple leaf design proposed by the Prime Minister.

The significant fact is this. The majority of supporters of the red ensign are willing to accept a compromise. If our French speaking colleagues in this country were willing also to accept a compromise, I am sure there would be no difficulty in selecting a national flag. Our French speaking colleagues have a right to express their opinions, feelings and allegiances, but I do feel that they have not shown a willingness, as have the English speaking people, to accept a compromise. Surely that is what we need—a compromise. We must consider both sides. If we can select a flag acceptable to both our founding