

*Flags of Canada*

I do not believe the matter is as simple as that. In my opinion, you cannot decide on a satisfactory, distinctive Canadian flag by submitting to a referendum two designs of this type. However, Mr. Speaker, the resolution introduced by the hon. gentleman does provide an opportunity for the annual presentation of ideas on this question, and the discussion does bring forth some new and on occasion, as previously this session, distinctly novel ideas.

Recently I read in the newspapers about the great Liberal rally. The drums sounded, the horns were blown and the brass was there. They passed a resolution in favour of a distinctive national flag. Where are the brass this evening? Where is that great proponent of Canadian babies, the hon. member for Bonaville-Twillington (Mr. Pickersgill)? Where is the leader of the official opposition? Where is that very capable and likable member for Essex East (Mr. Martin), that gentleman who speaks so fluently in both languages and who has had an experience in life denied to many of us, having a good knowledge of French-Canadian culture and an intimate association with the other cultures of this country?

I cannot understand why, Mr. Speaker, after passing that resolution, after its publication in the press of Canada, these hon. gentlemen do not seize the opportunity presented to them tonight to advocate and support, whether or not they agree with the motion, the need for a distinctive national flag for Canada. Once again they have failed to take advantage of the opening of the door of opportunity, even when it was opened by a government member.

Having said that, I want to say a few words on this resolution to express my personal opinions and, I trust, make some contribution to the debate. I am delighted to see the hon. member for Lincoln (Mr. Smith) listening so carefully to what I have to say. I happened to be a member of the flag committee in 1946 which went very thoroughly into this question and, strangely enough, at that time came to a conclusion. The one member who differed from that conclusion was Mr. Lacroix. At that time we accepted the red ensign with the union jack in its fly, less than one quarter size, and the maple leaf imposed on a white background. We were told by those skilled in heraldry that as long as the union jack was a little less than a quarter size in the fly, it did not indicate domination by another nation. I forget the details, but I think the maple leaf on the white background was symbolic of Canada, and the union jack indicated that Canada was a member of the British commonwealth of nations.

This committee reported, but the report never came before the House of Commons. There were some influences at work behind the scenes. Apparently the prime minister of the day got cold feet later in the proceedings, and nothing happened. We have had quite a number of discussions since that time. I cannot go into all the bills that have been presented, but I think one of the most interesting was known as the Hollingworth bill, presented by a Liberal member in 1955. This hon. gentleman suggested that the secretary of state should be authorized to prepare a design for a distinctive national flag for Canada, and submit the same for approval of the government of Canada. During the discussions the hon. member was supported by a number of his colleagues in the house. At least it was a constructive suggestion, but the government of the day failed to take action on the bill. Personally, and I think my colleagues at that time, expressed the opinion that this was not a satisfactory way of providing a distinctive Canadian flag. There was a good deal of discussion on the bill, but that was the last we heard of it. That was the Hollingworth bill.

Later on a bill came before the house known as the Lincoln bill. I have great respect and admiration for the hon. member for Lincoln. Every time I listen to his interesting and musical burr I can smell the heather; I see the swish of kilts and I can hear the drone of the bagpipes. I give him full marks for the best of intentions and for being an excellent Canadian citizen and member of this house.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I want to say right now that the hon. gentleman achieved a distinction by introducing this bill. Some persons achieve distinction by birth; others achieve distinction as a result of great achievements in the public service, something after the fashion of the hon. member for Essex East. Some people achieve distinction as a result of their accomplishments in science and other fields of activity. However, it was left to the hon. member for Lincoln to achieve distinction in a most unusual and unique way. He achieved distinction by introducing a bill into this house 300 years too late. He should have been a member of the executive council of 1760 instead of the House of Commons in 1960. However, I give him full marks for good purpose and good intentions. I am sure I can speak for the united opposition when I say that I have their permission to bestow upon him the accolade of the royal and ancient and honourable order of Rip Van Winkles.

I want to express a few opinions with respect to this question. I often find a great