

## Canadian Flag

cussing a matter that was never mentioned in the speech from the throne in 1963 or in the speech from the throne in 1964. There were many references to pieces of legislation to be passed by the parliament of 1963 and the parliament of 1964, but those pieces of legislation are shoved aside and suddenly we are presented with the proposition that the government has promised somewhere, somehow, sometime that it would produce a distinctive Canadian flag.

If you, Mr. Speaker, feel I should not mention the lengthy number of items referred to in the two speeches from the throne in 1963 and 1964, items that have not been implemented, then I will lay aside that portion of my remarks. But I am certain all hon. members of the house know very well the questions that have been pushed aside because of the government's action in bringing in the flag question at this time.

Dealing with a plebiscite, personally I would rather see the government withdraw the flag committee report completely and just let it die on the order paper, let it die at the time of the Christmas recess. But if it will not follow that sensible course of action, which was the course followed in 1945 and 1946—and I have had lengthy discussions on the matter with the chairman of the flag committee of 1945 and 1946, and with one of the members of that committee who is sitting in the house today, God bless him—I wish it would pay attention to the fine example set under the leadership of Mackenzie King, who used to be held in high respect by the Liberal party when living. But of course Mackenzie King dead is Mackenzie King dead, and today we have smarter men than that great man who held the office of prime minister longer than any other Canadian. He let the flag committee report go to the wall in 1946, and I suggest the same treatment be given to the flag committee report of 1964.

Among the items mentioned in the 1963 speech from the throne—and I apologize to the Speaker for referring back to it—was a promise that the committee on privileges and elections would review the Canada Elections Act. I asked if any action had been taken on that, but the government's answer is that that committee met in 1963 but the session ended before the committee could report. If the committee discussing the Canada Elections Act in 1963 was allowed to die at the time that the session ended in 1963, then I would point out that is a very good precedent. It ranks with the flag com-

mittee report of 1945 and 1946, and I think we should follow the same practice in 1964 and just let the committee report go to the wall when we adjourn for the Christmas recess.

The government's present intention of giving priority to the report of the flag committee is putting this parliament in a strait-jacket. Not only is it putting the opposition in a strait-jacket; it is putting the government into one as well. They would like to take some necessary action to bring the trustees of the S.I.U. before a parliamentary committee, but since we are allowed to discuss only this flag question we may not be able to take the action required to bring these trustees here. We have to stay with the report of this flag committee, we are told, until a decision has been reached. I sincerely suggest that the entire report be withdrawn and that we proceed to government business which requires the attention of the House of Commons and which should be on the order paper at the present time.

I have admired those speakers who are defending the red ensign, and I regret that it should be necessary to defend the red ensign in this dominion which has been built up under the wing of, and with the help of, the British empire. I have admired those people who have pointed out that our discussion of the flag question has brought changes in the position taken by the government with regard to the matter, and I sincerely hope the discussion we are now pursuing—and it will continue until the Christmas recess, I assure you, Mr. Speaker—will result in further action by the government which will be of benefit not only to Canada as a whole but to the government party as well.

There have been quite a few retreats. I regret to use that word but, being a Liberal, I hear it so often it just comes naturally to me. There have been quite a few improvements—I will use that word this time—in the government's actions in connection with this matter. Hon. members will recall that on May 19 it was to have been a government bill, absolutely a government bill. I could read from *Hansard* of May 19, 1964 if it is legitimate to refer to previous debates in the current session, and draw attention to an exchange between the hon. member for Digby-Annapolis-Kings and the Prime Minister.

Mr. Nowlan: Let us not evade the question any longer. We are now told that the government is going to put a design before parliament. Does the government accept responsibility for it?