

Canadian Flag

going in the right direction when we allow these questions of privilege and points of order to interrupt the hon. member who now has the floor; and I would ask the hon. member for Bow River to limit his remarks to the matter which is specifically before us at this time.

Mr. Woolliams: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now that the hon. member has had a chance to satisfy his conscience perhaps we can remain at ten o'clock and hear him sing "God Save the Queen" in this house to justify himself.

Now I ask the question: Where did the Prime Minister at any time during the last election define what he meant by distinctive?

Mr. Dupuis: Do you want an answer?

Mr. Woolliams: You listen and you will get one. I ask this question in all seriousness. It is very easy to use the word distinctive. If you use the expression "a distinctive Canadian flag" in Alberta it means one thing. But if you use the word distinctive in the province of Quebec it may mean another thing. Both places have a right to draw their inference in that regard. But when one is electioneering and says: "I promise to bring in a distinctive flag", then I think he owes the public a duty; and particularly when one is leader of a party he must assume responsibility and spell out what is meant by distinctive.

Therein lies the whole problem, Mr. Speaker. If this meaning had been spelled out, perhaps tonight members like me would not be so serious in asking for a plebiscite on this matter. We believe we should have a plebiscite on the matter because this meaning has not been spelled out. I am quite confident that the people in Toronto believed that when the Prime Minister referred to a distinctive flag he meant something of meaning to Canadians, that the symbol to be used was perhaps the fleur-de-lis or the union jack, but certainly something held dear to the hearts of Canadians and has stood for freedom and liberty, as well as Canadian traditions, as we know them. As long as we allow someone to suggest that that which is believed in by one province is the same thing believed in by every other province, we are failing and misleading the public. In this regard the government has no mandate whatsoever.

Other great leaders, most of them Liberals, have spelled out quite adequately what they meant. Right Hon. Mackenzie King, and

Right Hon. Louis St. Laurent, both Liberal prime ministers, never envisaged a flag for Canada without also envisaging the inclusion of symbols which led one to believe that we are part of French and British background. Further than that, the majority of Canadians have in their hearts a feeling of brotherhood and friendship for every race. On other occasions in this house I have said that many Canadians originated in Europe and other countries of the world, but came to Canada leaving their prejudices and hatreds in the countries they left. Whether they were Germans who hated the French, French who hated the British, or vice-versa, they came to Canada as a new land and were able to be friends over the back fence with their neighbours, regardless of their ethnic origin.

Many communities in western Canada are made up of Canadians of ethnic origins other than British and French, yet they have the right to speak in reference to the flag of Canada, just as do the French and the English Canadians. I have never been more serious in my life than I am now in suggesting that all Canadians at this time have a right to a voice through a plebiscite. At the risk of repeating something which has been said often during the last several days, I do not believe the government has a mandate in this regard, and should not force a flag, chosen by some means other than by the majority voice of Canadians, down the throats of Canadian citizens.

If the majority of Canadian people through a plebiscite choose the flag which was approved by the flag committee, I shall stand with as much dignity as any other Canadian when that flag is unfurled as the Canadian flag, as I would when any other flag was unfurled, including that flag which has been ours since confederation. However, because of the multiplicity of the effort now being made in respect of a distinctive Canadian flag, members of parliament do not have a mandate to vote here as they might feel they should, or vote because of political expediency, but must speak on behalf of the people they represent.

In that regard, Mr. Speaker, I feel sympathetic toward the people of French Canadian origin, and I must say they appear to have unanimity in what they do. However, I should like to ask them in all sincerity to remember that we can only build a united country by co-operation and unanimity. We can never thrust down each other's throat those things which are unacceptable. We