

Senator Hollett besought us not to deal with this matter in a political way, and I agree with him that we should not. All he asked us to do was to consider very seriously the amendment that stands in the name of Senator O'Leary (Carleton). I propose to do just that for the next moment or two, and in no political way whatsoever. Senator O'Leary asks for delay:

...to give reasonable time to the people and Parliament of Canada to reach agreement on a flag which will incorporate appropriate symbols of the founding peoples of this nation—

He and other honourable senators who have spoken have made it quite clear that what they mean by "appropriate symbols" is the Union Jack and the fleur-de-lis.

—and which will be acceptable to all elements of our population.

There is a fundamental mistake in these two suggestions, namely, "a flag which will incorporate appropriate symbols of the founding peoples of this nation" and "which will be acceptable to all elements of our population." The reason I say that is that every single representative of French-speaking Canada that I know of has said repeatedly throughout these last six months that he has no desire whatever to have the fleur-de-lis as part of the flag of this country. So, you cannot have a flag incorporating appropriate symbols of the founding peoples which will be acceptable to all elements of the population.

So much for the people. The amendment also asks that there be reasonable time so that the Parliament of Canada can reach an agreement on an acceptable flag. Does Senator O'Leary (Carleton) or any other member of this house, or indeed anybody in this country, believe for a moment that under conditions as they exist in the House of Commons today there could possibly be agreement as to a flag, under any conceivable circumstances?

Some honourable senators who spoke this afternoon and evening made rather bitter attacks upon the behaviour of the Prime Minister in connection with this flag issue. I am not here to defend the Prime Minister, but I will say in answer to those charges—and this is the only political element that I am going to introduce into my speech—that so long as the party opposite is led by its present leader in the House of Commons we shall never have agreement on anything. That is as far as I propose to go in this respect.

An Hon. Senator: You are referring to Mr. Tommy Douglas, no doubt.

Hon. Mr. Hugessen: I was glad to hear Senator Hollett discussing the First Great War.

We have heard one or two people tell us that they were Canadian soldiers serving under the Union Jack in two wars. He and I served in the First Great War, and I think we are members of a somewhat diminishing band. There are only a few of us who served in the First War remaining in the Senate. When anybody tells me that we in the First War served under any particular flag, I am apt to regard that statement with a certain amount of irony.

The western front, as Senator Hollett well knows, during nearly four years was a front of fixed trenches with no movement of any kind—trenches extending back two or three miles from the respective front lines—and we lived in those trenches. My honourable friend knows as well as I do that from one month's end to another we never saw a flag, and that a flag had nothing whatsoever to do with our life in the trenches. In fact, if anybody were so ill-advised in our trench warfare as to stick up a flag on the top of the trench, the only result would have been that it would have attracted the fire of the enemy artillery.

Now, as Senator Hollett knows, and as some of my honourable friends know, in the First World War—and I served a year at the front—we had no concern about flags; our interests and concerns were on a very much more personal and perhaps a lower level. We were concerned more with when the next rum ration was coming round and, even more important than that, how we were going to get rid of our lice. Perhaps I might have gone on and expatiated a little on the system we adopted to achieve that result, but I will not do that, other than to say that a flag would have been of no use for the occasion whatsoever.

The only time we ever saw a flag in the First World War was when we were sent away back to divisional headquarters or army headquarters, or to a point miles behind the front line. There perhaps one might see a pennant flying on the hood of some general's car. That was the only connection that we ever had in any way, shape or form with any flag.

Hon. Mr. Hollett: No, no.

Hon. Mr. Hugessen: My honourable friend's experience may be different from mine, but that was mine.

To turn to another subject, this resolution is designed to change our present Canadian flag, to bring in the new maple leaf flag. As honourable senators know, our present flag is the Red Ensign, of which the most important and outstanding feature is the Union Jack in the top left quarter of the flag.