

Flags of Canada

piece without being accused of being anti-American, anti-British, and so on. We are Canadians, we speak from a Canadian point of view and this fact should be accepted by other countries. I am certain there would be greater acceptance, particularly in the United States, if we had a truly distinctive flag.

I think that any attempt to include the union jack or red ensign in the flag would merely degrade two well known and honourable flags. Between now and 1967, when Canada will celebrate its centennial, we hope that Canada will continue to grow in stature and as a nation. Right now the provinces are meeting with the federal government in order to work out ways by which Canada can amend the British North America Act without having to go to the British government for final approval of amendments. When this day arrives I think we will have passed another milestone in becoming a truly independent nation, and surely when we pass that milestone and celebrate our centennial we should feel entitled to have a truly distinctive flag.

A great many people come to Canada from the United States, Great Britain and other parts of the world and they accept the Canadian standard of living and all we have to offer to them, but when the question comes up of their becoming citizens of this country and avowing their allegiance to it it seems that they still think a great deal of their motherland. They still think that perhaps there is nothing wrong with the good old United States and they are somewhat dubious about whether they should take out Canadian citizenship although some go ahead and do so. If we were a truly distinctive country with a truly distinctive flag and saw to it that those who took out citizenship understood what our flag stood for, what our national anthem was and so on, I think they would value their citizenship more. I know that if you spend five years in some countries you are asked rather politely to consider becoming a citizen and if you say no they want to know why not.

Canada, as I have said, is becoming a nation more and more every day. At times the former government and the present government have found themselves in disagreement with Great Britain or the United States, and as far as I am concerned that is all right. Certainly we should be able to declare ourselves one way or the other with no strings binding us to any country. Mind you, I am in complete agreement with the drawing up of treaties and agreements with other countries, but we should have a distinctive flag which would

symbolize Canada as a nation. As a mature and growing nation of over 18 million people, the period of the next five years is the time when we should consider this question and solve it.

Canadians should be proud of being Canadians, of belonging to a country with a truly distinctive flag, an independent country ready to voice its criticisms to the United States or to any other country in the world with no fear of being accused of being anti-American or anti-communist or anti-anything else. Certainly we should have the right to make up our own minds as to how we wish to amend the British North America Act and whether we want to have a flag that sets us apart as belonging to the commonwealth or to any other group of nations.

While I do not support the idea of a referendum as put forward in the resolution, I support the idea that we should have a distinctive flag and that a question should be perhaps included in the census such as: Are you in favour of or do you think that Canada should have a truly distinctive flag? If it were put in that manner I think it would be wide open for those who want to retain the present flag and those who want a new one to express their views. If the majority voted in favour of a new flag then the people generally should be willing to accept it and place their faith in the government to have someone design a properly distinctive flag which would be truly symbolic of Canada.

Mr. N. L. Spencer (Essex West): Mr. Speaker, my remarks with regard to the resolution and the amendment will be quite brief. First of all, I should like to congratulate my colleague, the hon. member for St. Boniface (Mr. Regnier), for bringing this resolution before the house and also for the great deal of research and time he must have spent in gathering together the facts and other information which he imparted to the house. He told us of the efforts over the years to obtain a distinctive national flag for Canada. To that extent I support his resolution because I believe as he does, and as everyone else does who has spoken in the debate so far, that we should have a distinctive national flag.

However, I agree that there is some objection to the terms of the resolution, which was pointed out, of course, by the mover and seconder of the amendment. I understood the substance of their remarks to indicate that there was an objection to the limitation placed upon the referendum in that citizens when called upon to express their opinion only had a choice between two flags. I agree that there should be no such limitation.