

Canadian Flag

hon. gentlemen opposite are concerned, with the unity of our country. We have, as they have, pride in its progress, and we have confidence in its destiny. We are sincere in that feeling. To help reach the goal of a great, united Canada, to which we are all dedicated, I believed and I still believe we should have a national flag that stands for Canada, that flies as a symbol of Canada alone, that neither dishonours nor betrays the past but looks to the future; a flag that will say one word and that word is "Canada".

For this national purpose I believe a design is required which is solely Canadian, and that will be accepted as such by all Canadians. If, Mr. Speaker, the absence from our national flag of symbols which to a large part of our people seem to represent early differences, if that is the feeling among a very substantial proportion of our population; if there is almost unanimity in that part of the population to secure the adoption of a flag which will look forward and not backward to symbols of its own origin or any other origin; and if that feeling is shared by at least a large proportion of other Canadians, whether a majority or not I do not know, whose background is not the same as Canadians in Quebec—if it is necessary to have that kind of flag which without rejecting our past looks to our future and in that way will bring us together, is the absence of those earlier symbols from a Canadian flag too much of a sacrifice for the rest of us to make in the interests of unity in this country? Well, I suggest it is not a sacrifice at all, especially when the symbol takes the form of the maple leaf which over the years has meant so much to every Canadian in war and in peace and has become so deeply a part of our symbolic history. This is especially true when the other symbol of our past, which has appeared on our flags in the past, the union jack, is to be recognized in another way.

The hon. member for Leeds, in his intervention a few days ago quoted one or two words from a speech given in Montreal in 1923 by Right Hon. David Lloyd George when he was receiving the freedom of that city. I wonder if I may quote the rest of that sentence. At that time Mr. Lloyd George was talking about Canada's military tradition after the first war, the sacrifices, triumphs, glories and tragedies of Canadian participation in that war. He was dealing with the second battle of Ypres, and he said:

The Canadian heroes—they fought it, they fought it through the whole afternoon, they fought

[Mr. Pearson.]

through the dusk, they fought against all the principles of scientific warfare right through the night, and when the dawn came the position was saved. And more than that. The maple leaf was embroidered forever on the silken folds of the banner of human history.

Has the time not come, Mr. Speaker, to embroider it now on our own national banner? Surely those of us who do believe that the time has come and who support this change in our flag can honestly and sincerely feel that in doing so we will be helping to bring all Canadians closer together in a new pride in their country and all that it has meant and can mean.

So, Mr. Speaker, I appeal for a decision now, a decision of parliament after the discussions we have had over the long weeks; a decision of parliament on this report, a report not of the government but of a committee of parliament; the recommendations in a report of a committee of parliament concurred in by the representatives of every party in this house. I appeal, Mr. Speaker, for a decision by this parliament in which all the people of Canada are represented. I appeal also to all members, once a decision has been taken, a decision of parliament, to accept it and rally around the decision. I appeal, Mr. Speaker, to the Leader of the Opposition to put his great authority and prestige behind this decision, whatever it may be. He and those who have supported him on this issue have fought long and with a passionate sincerity for what they believe. I hope we will be given the same credit for passionate sincerity in putting forward what we believe.

I ask the Leader of the Opposition, a privy councillor, a former prime minister, a dominant parliamentary figure for many years, if the decision of parliament is to support the recommendations of this committee, to join us in saluting Canada's new maple leaf flag. I ask him to help us rally a united parliament behind that flag, if this is the decision of parliament, as it is raised high to fly over Canadians who honour their past and respect their traditions, Canadians who also face the future in confidence and faith, in unity and in strength, and who wish to face that future under their own national symbols.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I spoke at length yesterday and I do not intend to traverse the arguments I advanced then or the course of that debate. I rise simply to