

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, December 4, 1964

The house met at 11 a.m.

## CANADIAN FLAG

MOTION FOR CONCURRENCE IN SIXTH  
REPORT OF SPECIAL COMMITTEE

The house resumed, from Thursday, December 3, consideration of the motion of Mr. Batten that the sixth report of the special committee on a Canadian flag presented to the house on Thursday, October 29, 1964, be now concurred in, and the amendment thereto of Mr. Monteith.

**Mr. J. E. Pascoe (Moose Jaw-Lake Centre):** Mr. Speaker, when the house adjourned last night I was presenting submissions in support of the amendment to the flag committee report. This amendment calls for a plebiscite which would give to the Canadian people an opportunity of making their own decision on the flag issue. The proposal is to hold a plebiscite during the next federal election, which I said was likely to be held by or before next June.

I commented on the wall of silence on the government side during this flag debate, and especially on our call for a plebiscite. There certainly has been a wall of silence over there, except for the jeers and heckling as we speak out for the millions of Canadians who resent the attempt to scrap the Canadian red ensign. I stated that it is the obligation of each one of us to state very clearly for the *Hansard* record his or her position on the flag issue, and especially on the call for a plebiscite.

I point out that if the Prime Minister continues to insist that the red and white maple leaf flag have priority over more important government business, such as the labour code and the railway problem, this debate will carry on until Christmas. This will give each member of parliament plenty of time to explain why he or she is for or against the flag plebiscite. I am sure the Canadian people are waiting to hear from the Liberal members why it is so necessary to rush the flag vote, and why they are opposed to a plebiscite. Perhaps they are not completely opposed, but they certainly have not stood up in their places and spoken one way or the other.

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We on the opposition side are making our stand in favour of a plebiscite very clear. Government members, not only the 47 Liberals from Quebec but those from the English speaking area of Canada as well, should do the same. They certainly owe it to their constituents to make their position clear. If they are opposed to letting the Canadian people decide the flag issue for themselves, then surely they are expected to explain to their constituents why they are taking this stand.

Emotions have been arised across the country. What each member is doing in regard to the flag question is being watched very closely. Statements have been made that a plebiscite on the flag would cause ill feelings and would create divisions. I believe a clear appraisal of the situation would reveal that any change in our flag, without holding a plebiscite, would be much more divisive. Some hon. members may not accept that statement but I repeat, and ask them to consider carefully, that greater divisions will be created if a flag is imposed on Canadians without a plebiscite to allow them to make the choice for themselves.

We realize that plebiscites or referendums are not the usual procedure under democratic government, but they do have a place in issues affecting the people in a particular manner. The changing of a flag is just such an issue, and that is why we are stressing the need for a plebiscite. Plebiscites have been held on other occasions to settle emotional questions of great concern to the people. The 1942 plebiscite on conscription was held to allow the Mackenzie King government break an earlier commitment not to call up men for overseas service.

If I may be permitted to refer to local matters, I would point out that in the coming Ottawa civic election a referendum will be held on fluoridation and Sunday sports to let voters decide these issues themselves. It has been argued that we are in parliament to make decisions but Ottawa has a mayor, a board of control and a council, yet they are referring these matters directly to the people because of their significance to each individual voter. In my own constituency there was a referendum in the municipal election on the question of building a new hospital. The