

*Canadian Flag*

fect. However, anyone who runs down parliament is certainly not doing this country any service whatsoever. The fact that there has been a difference of opinion as to the flag to be chosen, resulting in the production of a second distinctive national flag within a few months, justifies the stand taken by this party in this house. While it is true that ordinary citizens, men and women whom I am very proud to call my neighbours and friends, are sometimes confused, saddened and disgusted by what has transpired during the course of this debate, surely they should have an opportunity to hear the arguments on all sides of the question so as to be able to make up their own minds and decide by plebiscite what flag should be adopted.

In the early stages of this debate it is true that perhaps most hon. members of this house felt we had reached an impasse. I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that when the solution of a committee was arrived at there were sighs of relief on both sides of the house and throughout the entire country. We felt that here was the solution we had been seeking for days; here was an opportunity for members of the house, working together on an all-party basis, working earnestly and in harmony, to provide a solution for this thorny problem that would meet with the favour of parliament and the country at large.

I know that my colleagues who were members of that committee went to its meetings with a desire to come up with a compromise flag that would settle this problem once and for all throughout Canada. I assume that the members of all other parties who took part in the deliberations of the committee went to its meetings with the same desire. We are all aware that the committee worked hard day after day to resolve this very problem. The citizens of this country, like all members of the house, thought it was the aim of the committee to come up with a compromise that would take into consideration the views expressed in every part of the house, and that the committee would try to decide upon a flag that would be acceptable to all the people of Canada; not to a political party, not to a certain section of Canada, but a flag that would represent what all members of the house were striving to obtain, a flag of which all Canadians could be proud. We know that the decision made by the committee would provide a flag for Canada for years to come, and this was why its deliberations were so important and why the committee was regarded so seriously by all members of parliament.

[Mr. Danforth.]

We feel that a plebiscite is now necessary, Mr. Speaker, because in my personal opinion the committee did not come up with the compromise that was expected of them. As far as I can ascertain, and I have followed the debate very closely, there were three basic divisions in the house. First of all there was the government's proposal of a flag with three maple leaves on a white background. There was the proposal on this side of the house that the union jack should be retained as part of any new flag. There was the proposal that the fleur-de-lis of France should have a prominent place on the flag. There was also the proposal that there should be a single maple leaf. It was my feeling, and I am sure that of many members of the house, that the committee would take into consideration the desires expressed in all parts of the house and come up with a composite flag embodying the principles that had been advocated for days, a flag perfect in its composition and pleasing in design, a flag that would be acceptable to members in all parts of the house and to people in every corner of this great nation.

Not only were many members of the house disappointed with the committee's recommendation, Mr. Speaker, but there was tremendous disappointment throughout the entire nation that such a flag did not materialize. Indeed, when we learned following the sittings of the committee that such a flag design had been submitted there was absolute dismay. We felt that such a flag was free from any political implications, that it embodied the principles expressed in all parts of the house, and we personally felt after seeing it that it was a flag that could be justifiably displayed with pride in every part of this nation because on it were the traditional symbols of the two great founding races and the traditional symbol of one red maple leaf representing the very Canada we are trying to preserve.

There is a play on words, Mr. Speaker, involved in any consideration of the report of the committee. One can either say "what a compromise" or "what compromise". This is one of the basic issues we are faced with today. Many of us feel that the suggested flag was no compromise but simply an alteration. We still have a flag of one party for the nation. This is not what the people of Canada want. This is what we feel is wrong so far as the flag proposed by the committee is concerned.

In assessing the whole situation we could be wrong, Mr. Speaker, and all we are ask-