

National Flag

be frustrated. Then, too, what of all the organizations whose annual meetings and conventions would be greatly shortened if there were no debates and no resolutions on a distinctive national flag? I can think of wives who would send their husbands off to this or that convention expecting an absence of days because there would be the inevitable jousting about the design of a national symbol. What would happen? The meetings would be that much shorter.

I wonder whether we need a statute designed flag to increase our feelings about this country. Personally I think not. It seems to me that this debate is 100 years too late. Surely we cannot compel men to assume a mantle of feeling for a flag just because a design becomes law by statute. It so happens that most of my constituents would prefer the red ensign, but most of the constituents of many other members of the house would prefer another symbol.

Dr. Frank Underhill, in his 1962 founders' day address at the University of New Brunswick, reminded us of the search for an image in Canada. It is not a new phenomenon for Canada. I should like to quote a paragraph or two from what he said. He in turn was quoting a distinguished Canadian who was a member of the assembly, Henri Joly de Lotbiniere. Professor Underhill said in part:

He was Henri Joly de Lotbiniere, a French-Canadian, an urbane sceptic about a good many of the enthusiasms and passions of his contemporaries.

Apparently the passions have lasted for 100 years.

Here is a part of what he said; and I quote his words because here already in 1865 is a man making use of the concept of 'image'. The concept, you see, is a good deal older than our contemporary advertising and public relations agencies.

"I propose the adoption of the rainbow as our emblem. By the endless variety of its tints the rainbow will give an excellent idea of the diversity of races, religions, sentiments and interests of the different parts of the confederation. By its slender and elongated form the rainbow would afford a perfect representation of the geographical configuration of confederation. By its lack of consistence—an image without substance—the rainbow would represent aptly the solidity of our confederation. An emblem we must have, for every great empire has one; let us adopt the rainbow."

We didn't adopt Joly's rainbow as our emblem, though as far as I can see, no one has since come up with a better one. Sometimes I play with the idea of submitting my own design for a national flag to the authorities in Ottawa. It would consist of a green maple leaf in the centre, surmounted by Joly's multicoloured rainbow, the whole upon a background of pure white—white to signify our Canadian innocence of colonialism, imperialism, militarism, Americanism, capitalism, socialism, and all the other twentieth century sins.

I would also refer to another discussion about a flag and its symbolic effect. In a book of essays written in 1945 the distinguished

author, E. B. White, discusses man's search for a universal symbol. The book is entitled "The Wild Flag". One of his approaches is that perhaps the time of national symbolism is past in man's history. He suggests the idea that a Chinese brought to a great meeting of survivors of a nuclear war. This idea was for a flag that would be symbolic because it could be found in all the countries of the earth. The Chinese, not a red Chinese or one from Taiwan—this was in 1945—says:

That is a wild flag. In China we have decided to adopt this flag, since it is a convenient and universal device and very beautiful and grows everywhere in the moist places of the earth for all to observe and wonder at. I propose all countries adopt it, so that it will be impossible for us to insult each other's flag.

I suggest that we continue our wonderful inconsistency of permitting the use of almost any flag a particular citizen may want to fly. If we are honest with ourselves, are flags really not about as relevant to the nations of this period of the twentieth century as the banners of the knights of old are to the contemporary scene?

I think it is a fine thing that Canada has a flexible flag policy. Some would say we have no flag but this I dispute. We may not have a flag which is all things to all of us, but history does not yet permit a flag that is all things to all of us. Perhaps our people in another generation or two will find themselves in a climate or in a mood where they may be able to create an image for Canada which we can embody in a design for a flag, but I suggest that the public interest will not suffer because this time has not yet come.

(Translation):

Mr. Leo Cadieux (Terrebonne): Mr. Speaker, I wish good luck to the hon. member for Medicine Hat (Mr. Olson) who is asking the government, through his motion, to give Canada a distinctive flag within a year.

I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that any opposition to such a measure will not come from Liberal members. My party took a definite stand on this matter in the last election campaign and committed itself to submit to parliament, within two years after coming into power, the design of a distinctive flag that could not be confused with the emblem of any other country. This commitment still stands and, furthermore, it is in keeping with the position taken by the Liberals for a long time. The flag issue is still in our program. That wish has been expressed by all active supporters of our party, regardless of their racial origin.

Several attempts made previously by the Liberals fell through because it was revealed that public opinion was not unanimous on this question. But we feel today that the idea