

Canadian Flag

And that the committee for such purposes be revived.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by Mr. Thomas, seconded by Mr. Mandziuk:

That the sixth report of the special committee be not now adopted but that it be referred back to the committee with instructions to strike out in paragraph 7, all the words after "Canada" and substitute "be the Canadian red ensign."

And that the committee for such purposes be revived.

Is it the pleasure of the house to adopt the said motion?

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I will come to the amendment which has just been proposed when I deal with the votes that have already been taken by the committee whose report we are now considering. I believe I am the 71st member of parliament to take part in this discussion. I was the first of 174 speakers on the original flag resolution, and I am the 71st in this second discussion involving the flag recommended in the committee report.

Last evening it was suggested that before a vote is taken the views of the government should be made clear in respect of the committee report. Indeed, the impression seemed to have been created last night that if only the Prime Minister, speaking on behalf of the government, would give his view on this matter we could then go ahead and take a decision. So I am very happy indeed to oblige this morning and I hope the result which was indicated last night will be realized after I have spoken.

The question was asked last night, where does the government stand on this matter? I would point out first, Mr. Speaker, that what we are considering is not a government motion but a motion for concurrence in the report of a committee of this house, a report which is before this house not as a government motion, a report on which every member of this house has the right and the duty to vote as a member in a free vote. It is not, therefore, a question of where the government stands; it is a question of where every member of this house stands.

I am speaking this morning as one member of the house who is Prime Minister. I am speaking for myself, but I am also authorized to state that every member of the government, as a member of the government, supports the recommendation of this committee; and we are very happy indeed to have with us in this support not only members of the Liberal party but also members of opposition

[Mr. Thomas.]

parties, including front bench members of the official opposition.

I was asked yesterday by the Leader of the Opposition what steps the government proposes to take if this report of a committee of the house is adopted by parliament. I can assure him, as I assured the house last June in answer to a similar question, which answer appears on page 4319 of *Hansard*, that if the recommendations in this report are accepted by parliament the government will then take the necessary action to implement those recommendations. The recommendations of the sixth report of the committee provide for a distinctive Canadian flag.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Before the Prime Minister goes on, may I ask him this question. If parliament concurs in the committee report, what are the plans of the government with regard to the Senate?

Mr. Knowles: Abolish it.

Mr. Pearson: I dealt with this question last June, but I am glad to deal with it again. This is not an unreasonable question by my right hon. friend.

Mr. Diefenbaker: There have been so many changes since June.

Mr. Pearson: There is one respect in which there has been no change since June, and that is the official opposition have prevented a decision being taken on this matter.

If the recommendations of this report are accepted by the House of Commons, they will be considered by the Senate. If they are accepted by the Senate, they become recommendations of parliament and the necessary formal steps will be taken afterward to bring these recommendations into effect. My right hon. friend knows, I think, what those steps are. In any event, I put them forward previously and I will be glad to go into that later.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Will it be by resolution in the Senate?

Mr. Pearson: Actually the formula will be laid down to the house if and when the recommendations are accepted. I would be very happy indeed, if the houses of parliament take positive action in regard to these recommendations, to associate a former prime minister and privy councillor with me in the formal steps that will be later required.

The recommendation of the committee for a Canadian flag was criticized yesterday by the right hon. Leader of the Opposition in