

We give it a continuous and sustained approval or, if you prefer, an everyday consent. We are members of this family because we want to belong to it of our own free will.

This participation does not mean, however, that we are going to turn the Canadian flag into a British flag. This does not mean that although we were born on the knees of France, we propose that the Canadian flag be a replica of the French flag.

In other words, this does not mean that our flag will show any symbolic elements of France, of the United Kingdom or the British Commonwealth. France has given herself a flag which sets it apart from other nations, because, wherever this tri-coloured emblem is flown, the presence of France is always felt. In the same way, wherever the Union Jack—or, if you wish, the Royal Union flag is streaming in the wind, whatever the continent or country, it represents the United Kingdom. This is to say that the people of those two countries had enough courage and pride to identify all that was dearest to them and to assert themselves distinctively in the eyes of the world.

Let us now turn our eyes to the United States, which also gave itself a distinctive flag, which is everywhere recognized as typically American. It is a beautiful flag. The Union Jack is a beautiful flag. The French tri-coloured flag is also a beautiful flag. All flags are beautiful when they are authentic; all flags are beautiful when they are not a lie; all flags are beautiful when they are not an error.

Honourable senators, our country is the only one who to this date has presented an ambiguous flag, a flag where Canadians do not recognize themselves and where foreigners do not recognize Canada. There was evolution; the time is ripe, and as was stated by our leader, the honourable Senator Connolly, this evolution must be recognized. We must show to the world what we stand for.

Why hide it? We enjoy an excellent reputation, and we are loved everywhere. We are well looked upon at the United Nations. I have just returned, as a matter of fact, from the last NATO meeting, in which Canada took part. I had the honour of being sent there as a delegate of the Canadian government. I must say that we were extended the most cordial welcome.

We entertain trade relations with more than 150 countries. We have established embassies just about everywhere, we have numerous diplomatic missions, we send delegates throughout the world, and yet we fly a flag which even Canadians do not understand.

Honourable senators, how can you expect strangers to believe we are a free people, a proud people, an independent nation, a completely autonomous nation, heading toward its destiny, taking full advantage of its freedom, when the flag we are flying is a foreign emblem?

Keep in mind that we greatly respect the flag of other countries. I must say at this point, as a Christian, how much I respect the British flag, because it was born out of Christian fervour which was stronger then than today. Of what is the British flag made up actually? Of the superimposition of the crosses of St. Andrew, of St. George and of St. Patrick. Not only as a Christian but as a Roman Catholic, I must say that this flag deeply impresses me. All the same, the royal union flag, the British flag or Union Jack, is still not our flag, because it belongs to another country.

Honourable senators, why should we take as our own what belongs to someone else? Do we need it?

As I said earlier, honourable senators, when Senator O'Leary gave the definition of a flag, he said that it was the embodiment of history. In answer to this, I would say that it is the attire given to the soul of a nation. What symbol was chosen? The maple leaf. It could not be a better one under the circumstances. It was a brilliant idea.

Indeed, in our rich, abundant Canadian vegetation, is there any product more valuable than the maple tree? It existed in Canada before the arrival of the pioneers. The maple has been used for multiple purposes. The maple tree has provided us with heat, light and, more than any other Canadian product, it has been a source of comfort. The products of our Canadian forests are nowadays, after two centuries, an important economic asset of our country, because the maple tree has continued to multiply.

Moreover, I think it is the only tree whose sap can be turned into food. As far as I know, there is not in Canada a more natural product, more genuinely, more generally and more basically Canadian than the maple.