

As the seconder of Senator O'Leary's motion, I need hardly say I rise to support it and in Shakespeare's phrase:

I would we were all of one mind and one mind good.

It is obvious, of course, honourable senators, that we are not all of one mind, and the duty therefore devolves upon me to state as briefly as possible my reasons for supporting the amendment.

It seems to me that before we vote I should remind honourable senators of what this amendment proposes. It puts forward three propositions; first, that further action on the flag be postponed at this time; second, that there be a reasonable time now given in an attempt to reach a greater degree of agreement on the design of our new flag than presently exists; third, that the design which is most likely to achieve that greater degree of agreement is one which would contain the appropriate symbols of our heritage and history.

By implication it seems to me that the amendment goes even further. Indeed, if I read the main motion correctly, it meets most of its objectives. It assumes that we will have a new flag. It assumes that we will be a distinctive flag, and it assumes that we will have it soon, or within a reasonable time.

I say that, because it does seem to me that a good deal of the discussion that has taken place, and indeed most of the arguments that have been put forward, presumably against the amendment, have completely ignored this basic fact.

Honourable senators, it seems to me that the arguments that have been put forward so far have not been arguments against the amendment, for the reasons I have indicated. I would say, as a matter of fact, I have not heard a single valid argument as to why we should not at this time devote a little more effort and thought to what is so important in these days in the interests of national unity, namely, that we should have more agreement.

I have heard excellent arguments for a distinctive new flag, and with most of them I agree. But, we are nearing a vote, and I ask honourable senators to search their minds and hearts carefully and cautiously, and ask themselves if there has been put forward here any valid argument why Senator O'Leary's amendment should not be adopted.

Its essence is that there be no precipitate action at this time, and that there be a further effort to reach agreement. Some will say—indeed, some have said—that this advocates delay. Of course it does, but not delay merely for the sake of delay; not delay to

avoid decision, but delay to improve decision; not delay to thwart the will of the majority, but delay to give consideration to the feelings of the minority, if, indeed, it be a minority, a fact about which I think there is considerable doubt.

Some will say, as some have said, that no further agreement is possible. That to me is counsel of despair. I would very much doubt if there is a single honourable senator in this chamber at this time who has not in his private or public affairs known innumerable occasions on which something which at one moment seemed impossible proved, after time and effort had been spent on it, possible. Why, then, should anyone say that no further agreement is possible between the protagonists on this issue? What evidence is there to support such a suggestion? On the contrary, as I hope to point out in a moment, there is very considerable evidence that further compromise and agreement is possible if time is given.

There are five main reasons why I think action should be delayed. The first is that if at this time precipitate action is taken on this matter we will have a flag, as many honourable senators have said, born in a climate of intense partisanship. We are going through a period when divisive issues between Canadians have been, and are being, magnified far beyond their true importance. I can fully understand the objection of any Canadian in Quebec or elsewhere—because I am aware that the objection is taken elsewhere—to the Union Jack on any new Canadian flag. To those who see it as a symbol of continuing conquest I am entirely sympathetic, but I can also understand the deep emotional attachment of other Canadians to that same flag. However, I believe, as surely as I stand here, that this Government should in generosity and magnanimity, in consideration for the deep feelings of Canadians, give time in which those two viewpoints can be brought closer together than they are at the present in the suggested precipitate adoption of this flag.

It is unfortunate that this issue comes to us at this time as the result of an election pledge, but that is the fact and we cannot escape it. It is unfortunate that it comes at a time when—and I shall not lay the blame here or there—a new divisiveness has arisen among Canadians. We have heard a great deal lately about co-operative federalism, and yet here it seems to me we are faced with a situation where, whatever the percentages may or may not be of Canadians who are for or against this design, every survey I have seen and every bit of evidence that has come to my hand makes one thing clear, that there is not a majority of Canadians in a majority of provinces who are in favour