

Canadian Sovereignty

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that our country enjoys full sovereignty and that it acts, in the international field, as a distinct and personal entity.

That is why distinctive, personal and typically Canadian external signs are imperative. That is the essence of this bill.

I am not suggesting here any specific design nor any anthem in particular. I merely wish that hon. members make a decision on the principle of a distinctive Canadian flag and a distinctive Canadian anthem.

In a few years, we shall celebrate the centenary of confederation. At that time, we shall have to possess external signs of national sovereignty and political maturity; otherwise our hesitation and irresponsibility will prevent us from being abreast of our emancipation.

I therefore urge hon. members to limit their speeches and express themselves today through an unequivocal vote.

Mr. Samuel Boulanger (Drummond-Arthabaska): Mr. Speaker, after reading and studying the bill proposed by the hon. member for Sherbrooke (Mr. Allard), some doubts come to our minds as to the mover's intentions. In fact, the bill makes three requests: a flag, a national anthem and a national independence day.

The hon. member for Sherbrooke, who is generally not too profuse, did not restrain himself this time and set his teeth to a three-decker which may very well choke him.

When considering the language of the bill, one wonders whether the hon. member does not want to reduce or camouflage his government's responsibility.

Section 3 of the bill reads as follows:

It shall be the duty of the Canada Council to prepare or have prepared, after competition or otherwise, a design for a suitable distinctive national flag free of the emblem or emblems of any other country and to submit the same to the Senate and the House of Commons of Canada within one year of the coming into force of this act.

Mr. Speaker, this has already been done by a special committee. There are thousands of designs in the government's records. The most suitable of those designs should be selected and submitted directly to the government which is responsible for selecting a flag.

We have been talking about a distinctive national flag for a great many years. Mr. St. Laurent expressed his views quite clearly in the house on this matter. Even though this government has been in power for five years,

[Mr. Allard.]

we still do not have the opinion of the Prime Minister (Mr. Diefenbaker) on the distinctive national flag Canada should have.

An hon. Member: What did you do during the 22 years you were in power?

Mr. Boulanger: The Liberals were in power 22 years and there was some talk about a distinctive national flag; the prime minister of the day, right hon. Mr. Louis St. Laurent, did not hesitate to state his opinion on that point.

If the present Prime Minister is against a distinctive national flag, let him say so; if he does not want one, let him speak out.

Mr. Asselin: Are you also in favour of two flags?

Mr. Allard: Mr. Speaker, could I ask a question?

Mr. Boulanger: You may ask your question when I am through. Mr. Speaker, section 6 of the bill reads as follows:

The anthem mentioned in the previous section—

That is section 5 which reads:

It shall be the duty of the Canada Council to select after competition a distinctive national anthem for Canada and to submit the same to the Senate and House of Commons of Canada within one year from the coming into force of this act.

In this section of the bill, the member for Sherbrooke (Mr. Allard) is proposing that the Canada Council write another national anthem. But we already have a national anthem which is recognized by every Canadian from coast to coast. I wonder why the hon. member for Sherbrooke insists on complicating matters.

I do not think that we can find one single member in this house who is opposed to "O Canada" as our national anthem. It has been sung for years all across Canada.

As for the section concerning a Canadian independence day, it seems to have been put there to ensure that the bill will not be passed.

Mr. Speaker, if this government does not have the authority to give us a distinctive flag and a distinctive national anthem, I wonder why it should be left to the Canada Council to make a choice.

The present government has repeatedly indicated that there are differences of opinion among its members. This has been demonstrated many times, especially as far as national defence is concerned. If a minister says one thing, another will say just the opposite.