

Flags of Canada

It is obvious that a distinct national flag for Canada is more than ever in demand. Many associations and groups of all kinds are constantly sending resolutions to that effect to members of this house. Then too, many people who at one time were asking that our flag bear emblems of other countries, have now changed their minds.

Early in December of 1958, in Victoria, B.C., the junior chamber of commerce of Canada, then meeting in annual congress, took a vote on the matter of a distinctive national flag. The results of this vote, which deserves attention, was as follows.

Out of 2,400 members of that chamber who replied to the question, and among English-speaking members only, 79 per cent approved the project of a Canadian flag which would bear the emblem of no other country. On that same occasion, as a result of a vote taken among the public, also of English origin, 78 per cent of the 3,800 persons consulted gave the same answer.

More recently still, that is, at the Calgary Stampede last year, the young Liberals of that city also put the matter to a vote among the thousands of people who attended that always popular sporting event. And, Mr. Speaker, 77 per cent of those who voted were categorically in favour of the maple leaf on our flag, repudiating all other emblems belonging to other countries.

Let no one tell me that the majority of English-speaking fellow citizens are against the adoption of a distinctive national flag; the facts I have just referred to sufficiently contradict those who dare make such a statement.

All Canadians are asking themselves this question: How is it that a country such as Canada, which plays such an important role among the free nations of the world, does not yet have a strictly distinctive emblem which would show to the world its pride and sovereignty?

A flag, Mr. Speaker, is not only a sign of independence, it is first and foremost a symbol of pride and unity. It is our duty to show our pride to the face of all peoples of the globe. Since the Conservatives came to power we have achieved a degree of unity greater than it ever was before, and it surely exists among all racial groups forming our vast and beautiful country. It even symbolizes a magnificent example of co-existence and sincere co-operation between various cultures, which are none the less important to the greatness of our nation.

[Mr. Belzile.]

The patriotic and historical action we have taken today will, I am sure, bring us the eternal gratitude of our fellow citizens and more particularly of the future generations. More than ever, and while preserving unflinching ties of friendship with regard to the nation which was once their mother country, Canadians are now loudly and proudly claiming to be Canadian citizens. As to those who, each year, elect our land as their country of adoption and of choice, the very fact of their coming here to live eloquently shows that they want to have Canada as their true and only country, for themselves as well as their descendants.

Mr. Speaker, I shall not further delay the discussion on this important resolution so that all my hon. fellow members who want to do so may take part in it. In concluding my remarks I want to tender the hon. member for St. Boniface the most sincere and fully deserved congratulations for a deeply felt patriotism which does him credit. I sincerely hope that, on both sides of this house, and in spite of our differences, we may, on a question which transcends political disputes, show complete unanimity, for the greater edification of every Canadian.

It would certainly not be too bold a wish to hope that Canada will soon be endowed with a national flag.

This will give our government the opportunity to select an essentially distinctive emblem which would truly answer the justified hopes of most Canadians. That flag which is our aim, will, apart from being the symbol of our national unity, rally all men of good will in a collective effort which will further prove the ascending march of Canada towards its destiny.

(Text):

Mr. H. W. Herridge (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, I rise because I have a few words to say on this resolution. Let me say first I think it is a good thing, whether or not we come to a conclusion tonight, that we discuss this question. It shows we are interested in a subject which is of interest to many Canadians. I must say, first of all, that I find myself unable to support the resolution because it asks for a referendum. The question asked is:

Are you in favour of a flag consisting of (a) a green maple leaf on a red and white field, or, (b) the red ensign?