

Canadian Flag

Mr. Caouette: Well, it is from B.C. anyway.

Mr. Leboe: Regardless of where it is from. No clear mandate has been given to the government to bring in a new flag, and therefore to do so is not being brave or courageous but is overemphasizing the importance of the proposed action. It is not related to the majority of opinions. To stand on your head on the edge of a cliff is neither brave, courageous, nor common sense, and this is exactly what the Prime Minister is doing in his political career—standing on his head on the edge of a cliff.

No vote on the proposed resolution regarding the flag can be a free vote for government supporters regardless of where they sit in the house. I say regardless of where they sit in the house because we in this party have constantly supported the government, so long as it was going ahead with its legislative program, because the people of Canada wanted that, and because we wanted it. But right now we cannot be in the position of having a free vote in the house when we have the Prime Minister threatening the very people who sit beside him with an election which the people of Canada do not want, if this resolution is not carried. So far as I am concerned, and I said at the beginning that I am speaking personally, this is a type of blackmail when the Prime Minister says such a thing to the people who are sitting with him.

Mr. Rock: He did not say such a thing.

Mr. Leboe: He said "or else" we would have an election. I have won four elections out of five and I am not particularly resisting one. If there is a change around here I think I will be sitting somewhere around these parts. I may not be around over there, but I will be around these parts.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Pigeon: Hear, hear.

Mr. Leboe: I see one of the Quebec boys is applauding when I say "in conclusion", but he is the only one applauding. As I said on June 5:

I predict that if the resolution on the flag comes to a vote that the government party and the official opposition will divide almost to the man on party lines, giving ample proof of emphasis on party political considerations and a representative vote on the issue reflecting the wishes of the electors will be pushed into the background in the hope that ignoring the facts will make them disappear.

There have been a number of polls as to the way we are going to vote in this house.

Many guesses have been made; and understandably. The hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam (Mr. Douglas) said, "Our party is for a flag with one maple leaf". Is this a free vote? Is this a free situation? No; these are party considerations. We have got a situation where, when the vote is counted, there is going to be almost to a man a straight division on party lines. Why not? It has been taken as a party consideration. Why? Because the Prime Minister has said there is going to be an election if this thing does not carry. It was thrown right into the political arena, and therefore I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that we should at this time pass the decision over to the people of Canada. Let them have four or five different designs, including the red ensign, to choose from. Let there be a transferable ballot. Every member of this house knows what a transferable ballot is. In case there is anybody who does not, it is a ballot whereby you put your first, second, third, fourth and fifth choice on the ballot and if your first choice gets the lowest number of votes your second choice becomes the first choice, and so on. In the final analysis, one flag would have a majority of over 50 per cent of the votes in this country and we would have a flag which could be introduced into the parliament of Canada and carried through this House of Commons and we would have a permanent flag for Canada. This is what the Prime Minister said he wants and, if he is going to get it, I say to him in all sincerity, this is how to get it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Caouette (Villeneuve): Mr. Speaker, listening to the hon. member who just resumed his seat, I would be inclined to suggest to him to sit next to the leader of the official opposition (Mr. Diefenbaker), since he spoke exactly in the same way and he used the same terms, with the same objective in mind.

He stated among other things that he had on his desk an enormous number of letters suggesting him to introduce to the house the red ensign as our national distinctive flag. He also suggested to us in English:

[*Text*]

"Stand on your own head."

[*Translation*]

Since we are not used to standing on our heads but rather on our own feet, he should have said: "Stand on your own feet."

[*Text*]

"Stand on your own feet." But be Canadians.