

Canadian Flag

The Prime Minister, speaking in the House of Commons on June 15 last, said "This is a serious, a solemn and historic occasion..." You can tell from the chatter behind the curtains how serious and important they consider the event. This is a serious, a solemn and historic occasion, as the Prime Minister said. Might I have order, Mr. Speaker? It is just a small request.

Mr. Speaker: I must say I think you have very good order and rapt attention, certainly better than a great many others.

Mr. Cowan: The Prime Minister said:

—this is a serious, a solemn and historic occasion and I venture to hope, as I also mentioned a moment ago, that the debate will be worthy of the occasion.

I would like to congratulate the Speaker on the ruling he made—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have not got the authority with me, but many years ago Mr. Speaker Glen said it was not hardly proper to even smile at the Speaker let alone comment on anything he has done or said. Of course if you are dissatisfied with his decision you can always move a motion, but please leave the Speaker out of this debate.

Mr. Cowan: Mr. Speaker, I was well aware of the rule, but I am on *Hansard* as having expressed the wish to congratulate you. I have been cut off in my wish, but you can take it as read.

I would like to remind the members of this Canadian House of Commons that charity covers a multitude of sins, and flags can be used to cover a great deal of inaction and indecision. They are trotted out at times of stress and strain and thus serve as a divertissement from other questions that should be before the house.

I sat in opposition after being elected in June, 1962 until the house was dissolved in February; I suppose you can say from June to February but I prefer to say from September to February. I sat on the other side of the house in the fall of 1962, and at that time I was very interested in the remarks by the then leader of the opposition on December 19, 1962. I quote those remarks from *Hansard*:

It is a traditional and fundamental right of parliament to vote taxes before they are collected and to approve expenditures before they are made. When these rights are ignored, when they are violated, parliament itself is being violated and we are taking a step toward its destruction. No matter how wide a circulation we give and no matter in what form, to the bill of rights, and no matter how much we talk about *Magna Carta* and the bill of rights, no matter how emo-

[Mr. Cowan.]

tionally we may wrap ourselves up in parliamentary or national flags, both these rights I have mentioned are being deliberately and systematically violated by the present government.

I am wondering if this party has been committed, as we are told by some people, to bringing before parliament a distinctive national flag within two years from April 1963. I am wondering why we are wrapped up emotionally in national and parliamentary flags rather than in questions that should be occupying our attention at this time. I have looked over the speech from the throne in 1963 and the speech from the throne in 1964. The speech from the throne read on May 16, 1963 stated:

The greater Canada that is in our power to make will be built not on uniformity but on continuing diversity . . .

"Unity in diversity" is quite a phrase. I do not use it. The words contradict each other. However, the speech from the throne in May, 1963 stated:

The greater Canada that is in our power to make will be built not on uniformity but on continuing diversity . . .

They tell us the present flag is causing offences in certain parts of the country and that therefore we need a new flag that will not cause the offence which some people claim it occasions them. I say if there is some objection to the union jack in the Canadian red ensign then let us follow the fine, high sounding words in the speech from the throne on May 16, 1963:

The greater Canada that is in our power to make will be built . . . on continuing diversity . . .

In that speech from the throne we were promised that the parliament of 1963 would establish a Canadian development corporation. Where is it? We were told there would be a new department of agriculture act to be placed before us—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I regret having to interrupt the hon. member, but I do hope he is approaching the question of the plebiscite and that this is all preliminary to moving in that direction. I hope these preliminary remarks will be relatively short because the question before the house is the amendment, and the amendment deals with the plebiscite.

Mr. Cowan: Mr. Speaker, I have said before and I repeat that I am 100 per cent behind holding the plebiscite, but I am wondering why we need to hold a plebiscite on a question that was never even mentioned in the speech from the throne. I am wondering why we should be spending our time dis-