

Canadian Flag

did not think that by holding a plebiscite we would arouse hard feelings. May I suggest to him that perhaps hard feelings might be aroused; but at least the people would have a chance to express their feelings, and that is the opportunity we wish to give them. In answer to those who ask why a plebiscite is necessary, I should like to remind them that we want to see the other side of the coin during this debate. Why have we not heard from those on the government side of the house, their reasons why a plebiscite should not be held? What is wrong with putting this question to a plebiscite?

The Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Sharp) did on one occasion make reference to a plebiscite and suggested that if Sir John A. Macdonald had held a plebiscite we may never have had confederation. My answer to that suggestion is that Sir John A. Macdonald was a man of sound judgment and knew that confederation was a matter concerning legislation and constitution, and therefore that a plebiscite was not necessary. However, on an emotional issue, such as the choice of a flag, different considerations must be studied.

I challenge my friends on the government side of this house to stand in their places and tell us their reasons for thinking a plebiscite is not the proper way of deciding this issue. When I spoke on August 31 I challenged my hon. friends to defend the position they have adopted. I refer to them sincerely as my friends, members such as the hon. members for Durham (Mr. Honey), Brantford (Mr. Brown), Renfrew South (Mr. Greene), Carleton (Mr. Francis), Wentworth (Mr. Morison), Halton (Mr. Harley), Hastings South (Mr. Temple), Peel (Mr. Beer), and Norfolk (Mr. Roxburgh). Have any of those hon. members risen in their places and defended their position on the flag debate or told us why a plebiscite should not be held? The hon. member for Vancouver Quadra (Mr. Deachman) was so anxious to give the report of the flag committee he gave it to the press before the committee presented it to the house. Why has he not been on his feet in this chamber to defend the position his party has taken on the flag issue, and told us why there should not be a plebiscite?

Mr. Deachman: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I have made my position very clear on the question of a plebiscite, and if the hon. member would take the time to turn up my speech in *Hansard*, and the speeches made by many other members on this side of the house,

during the 22 days of debate covering this whole subject, he would find ample information as to why we take this position. I think he should read my address in this chamber before making such remarks.

Mr. Hales: He still has an opportunity to express his views as to why we should or should not hold a plebiscite, and I invite the hon. member to take the opportunity of doing so.

Have we heard from the members of the treasury benches on this subject? Out of 26 we have heard from only four. Is that an honest and sincere effort on their part? I think Her Majesty's loyal opposition is entitled to the views of members on the opposite side on this subject, and they should partake freely in this debate. Let them stand in their places and present their views.

A plebiscite is necessary in my opinion for the following reasons. It is necessary because this issue affects the conscience of every Canadian. It is necessary because the symbols making up a Canadian flag are based on tradition and history and are held near and dear to the hearts of every Canadian. I do not think such a thing as a flag can be the subject of legislation. People must be given a choice, and a chance to express their view on something so important to them as a flag. The people want a voice in this matter, and who is to know how they feel unless they are given an opportunity to voice their opinions.

No one can tell exactly what are the views of the public on such an important matter as a Canadian flag. We have had ample evidence of that fact here in this chamber. The right hon. Prime Minister and his government introduced a flag in this house that he felt was the flag which would be accepted by the whole of Canada. In spite of the fanfare, public relations, bumper stickers and miniature flags, that flag was turned down by a committee of this house by a vote of 14 to nothing. That would indicate a great difference of opinion within this house; yet we are now being asked to accept another distinctive flag for Canada. I do not think such a choice can be made properly here in this chamber.

One cannot assess public opinion accurately without holding a plebiscite. Perhaps I can illustrate that point in this way. A plebiscite was held in 1942 on the subject of conscription. One might have expected that in a riding such as Waterloo North, the residents of which are predominantly of German extraction, the vote would be two to one against conscription. When the vote was counted the