

*Canadian Flag*

railway branch lines, which is something that is hanging over the heads of the western farmers like the sword of Damocles; there is an act to reform the Senate, which is something that is long overdue; there is a measure to amend the Crop Insurance Act, which is another thing that cannot be made operative on the prairies unless the federal government takes the stand that they are going to assist in this regard; there is an act to amend the Coal Production Assistance Act; an act to set up the department of forestry and rural development; there is an act to amend the Farm Improvement Loans Act; to increase the maximum amount which can be lent to an individual farmer; and there is another very important resolution, to refer the subject matter of the water levels of the great lakes system to the standing committee on mines, forests and waters.

These are some of the things the Prime Minister is holding up. In other words, he is scuttling his own legislative program; and he can pin it on no one but himself.

Parliament is to be dragooned into approving Mr. Pearson's flag which a recent, independent survey, the results of which were published in a recent issue of a French Canadian newspaper, showed 30 per cent of the people in Quebec and 70 per cent of the people in the other provinces do not want. They do not even want the flag. Personally, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the flag should represent a nation's history, its struggles, its sacrifices, and even its differences—because all nations have differences—and certainly its beginnings. In my humble opinion, a nation not interested in its past is just like an individual who will not recognize his mother on the street, and such a nation has little hope for the future. In this I agree with Bruce West, a Toronto columnist. I am going to quote very briefly from his article:

I believe that the impatient efforts of many to discard a banner which symbolizes almost a century of our history may be a symptom of something gravely unhealthy in the affairs of Canada.

I believe such an action might be one more large step toward the day when, stripped of our ancient background and heritage, we may stand as hardly more than another banana republic against the already powerful magnetic pull of our huge neighbour to the south. I hope I'm wrong. But I can't help feeling it, just the same. I feel that upon the day the red ensign is discarded, some vitally important threads are going to be removed from the already strained fabric of this country.

He goes on in the same vein, telling how the country is not going to be united through this divisive issue. To me, Mr. Speaker, the

[Mr. Muir (Lisgar).]

shield on the red ensign represents our original settlers, who were prepared to submerge their differences in those days—they were different races of people, but particularly our two races of people—to build a nation. The maple leaves on the shield are merely our geographical symbol. The union jack represents our association with the British commonwealth of nations, one of the greatest organizations in the cause of world peace. Even the crosses on the union jack pre-date any nation and represent our Christian background as far back as the crusades and the search for the Holy Grail. I would like to read a letter from a French Canadian to the editor of the *Citizen* in Ottawa. He says:

Those who imagine that all Canadians of French extraction are averse to the red ensign as a distinctive national flag are mistaken. The combination of Christian crosses in the union jack express for many of us a faith that is world wide, and they ante-date any particular national entity or epoch in the history of the past 2,000 years...

As I have said, I think most Canadians are prepared to accept a compromise on our national symbols, and this is Canadian tradition. But if changes are to be forced under other circumstances, such as those the government are employing in this flag resolution, they will find them wholly unacceptable to the great majority of our people. The Prime Minister still has time to alter his collision course. If he does not, in the face of the bitter opposition encountered, he is ignoring the views of a great segment of our population and is causing sorrow in the hearts of many loyal Canadians. He may live to regret his haste in this regard, for he is sowing the wind of dismay and he may reap the whirlwind of bitterness. I am going to read a very short portion from the editorial of a local newspaper because I do not want to put too many quotations in my speech.

It says:

The Canadian people have never been directly asked if they want a new flag. Surely this is the first step; it seems to us the question should be asked directly, in a national referendum, and not in the conflict of a partisan election.

If we give birth to a flag out of today's dissension, by a pressed vote in parliament, what will it mean? Further dissension, undoubtedly.

Consider, instead, with what pride and fanfare a flag—and maybe a better flag—might have been produced by a dominion-provincial conference that will, in due course, have to consider constitutional changes.

Today is hardly the time, in the face of angry dissension, to force the flag issue on the Canadian people.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. I apologize for interrupting the hon. member but his time has expired.