

*Canadian Flag*

As I have said previously, as one who is neither Anglo-Saxon nor French, as a Canadian it grieves me to see how this flag issue has divided the country. If we are going to adopt a distinctive national flag the time to do it is when the country is united. Certainly the divisive tactics employed by the government in this issue cannot hope to unite the country.

First of all we had the commission on biculturalism which did a great deal to divide and crystallize the positions of the two founding races. Now we have the flag debate which is doing the same thing. The government should accept a referendum, get the matter out of the House of Commons and proceed with the legislation which it says it wants to present.

**Mr. Grégoire:** Then let us vote.

**Mr. Slogan:** We had a vote.

**Mr. Grégoire:** When?

**Mr. Slogan:** We had one this afternoon.

**Mr. Grégoire:** That wasn't a vote on the flag.

**Mr. Slogan:** Speaking from behind the curtains they are very vociferous, but when challenged they run away with their tails between their legs.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. The hon. member should not be interrupted, particularly by someone who is not speaking from his seat in the house. I would ask hon. members to keep that in mind and allow the hon. member to continue without being interrupted.

**Mr. Slogan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your graciousness in rising to reprimand the hon. member—

**Mr. Grégoire:** I deserved it.

**Mr. Slogan:**—who is speaking from behind the curtain and who admits he deserved it. I think many hon. members privately would prefer a plebiscite. The *Ottawa Citizen* of May 13 had an article headed "Put flag issue to voters."

Barry Mather (NDP—New Westminster) has called for a national plebiscite on this question.

If it could not achieve unanimity I think the best the committee should have done was to have narrowed the choice down to two designs. I think both sides were willing to accept a certain degree of compromise. On one side were the proponents of the three maple leaf flag, and on the other the proponents of the red ensign. It is perfectly obvious, because of the amount of emotion

engendered in this debate, that neither of these designs would have been acceptable to the other group. For that reason my original suggestion was that the committee would do a great job by narrowing the choice to two designs, one of which would be acceptable to the proponents of the red ensign, with its main ingredient being the retention of the union jack and the fleur-de-lis, and the other the single maple leaf design.

**Mr. Matheson:** May I ask the hon. member a question? If he is suggesting that a plebiscite be restricted to two designs would it not make sense that the two designs be those which received the most votes in the committee, namely the three maple leaf flag and the one maple leaf flag?

**Mr. Slogan:** You want to have your cake and eat it too. I said I thought that in the spirit of compromise there should have been two designs, one that would satisfy the opposition to the three maple leaf design and the other which would satisfy the opposition to the red ensign. I would have been much happier had the committee recommended two designs instead of one. Both designs could then be put on a ballot in a plebiscite at the next general election.

There is a large section of people in the country which has strong emotional ties to the union jack. I do not believe the wishes of these people should have been overridden. I believe they should be taken into consideration in a plebiscite.

Back on July 21 the *Montreal Star* printed a small article headed, "Red Ensign Advocated by 149,465." I quote from that article, which said that the office of the Secretary of State had received 149,465 signatures on letters and petitions since July 1945 favouring the retention of the red ensign as Canada's national flag. This shows there is some sentiment in the country.

What about some of the polls that were conducted? If we are talking about a plebiscite perhaps we may conjecture a little on the outcome of it. There was the Gruneau survey which showed that in nine provinces the red ensign was leading and that in the province of Quebec the three maple leaf flag was leading, but because of the preponderance of opinion in Quebec, on a national basis there were more votes for the new design than for the red ensign.

In view of this, what has the government to fear from a plebiscite? If these polls are accurate to any degree—and I am not saying