

Inquiries of the Ministry

Foy, in the county of Quebec and the municipality of St. Nicolas, in the county of Levis, both in the province of Quebec.

Motion agreed to and bill read the first time.

CANADIAN FLAG

REPORTED ACCEPTANCE OF DESIGN BY CABINET

On the orders of the day:

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask the Prime Minister whether there is any basis in fact to the press report that the personal flag to which he has given his support has now been accepted by the cabinet.

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, there is no basis for any statement that any personal flag of anybody's has been accepted. There is basis for the statement that the cabinet decided this morning on a design, which it will shortly submit to parliament in the form of a resolution.

Mr. Aiken: A supplementary question—

Mr. Diefenbaker: I would be glad if the hon. gentleman asked his question, but first of all I should like to know if the Prime Minister will tell us whether this is the flag he exhibited to a group of newsmen last Thursday night at his home, and did he at that time say "This is my personal choice as a flag design"? Did he also say that he had sent a telegram to the Queen informing her that the red ensign would not be the Canadian flag?

Mr. Pearson: No, Mr. Speaker.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, some of those who are laughing at the moment are not laughing inwardly. May I ask the Prime Minister this. Did he on Thursday night meet at his home with a select group of six members of the press gallery, show them a model flag, and state that this was his personal choice?

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, I did meet with certain members of the press at a social occasion; I do not deny that. Indeed, the right hon. gentleman does that himself quite frequently. I hope that when he meets his friends from the press at his home they have as good a time as I hope they would have at my home. Mr. Speaker, we had a cup of tea, and there was some discussion of the question of national emblems. The national flag issue certainly came up, and I expressed in a personal way to my friends my views on that subject.

[Mr. Deschatelets.]

Mr. Diefenbaker: I ask the Prime Minister this. Is the report by Val Sears in the *Toronto Star* that "Mr. Pearson personally had chosen a flag design," and that "he had sent a telegram to the Queen informing her" as I said a moment ago, true?

Mr. Pearson: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Val Sears was not at this social gathering in question.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pearson: Perhaps that will explain the inaccuracy of the right hon. gentleman's report.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Is the report inaccurate in stating that the Prime Minister said that he had telegraphed the Queen and had advised her that the red ensign would not be our flag?

Mr. Pearson: Yes, it is inaccurate.

Mr. D. M. Fisher (Port Arthur): I want to ask the Prime Minister a question about the hour long film that was prepared on his career and personality. I wanted to ask the Prime Minister if his—

Mr. Speaker: Order; I understand there are one or two supplementary questions. The hon. member for Pontiac-Témiscamingue.

Mr. Pickersgill: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member for Port Arthur has been recognized. Surely he cannot be interrupted in this manner.

An hon. Member: Are you afraid of it?

Mr. Speaker: The question is quite easy to solve. The hon. member for Pontiac-Témiscamingue.

Hon. Paul Martineau (Pontiac-Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask the Prime Minister if the flag design of which he expressed approval is the one that was approved by the cabinet this morning.

Mr. Pearson: My hon. friend should wait for a few days, and he will see the design of the flag.

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): I have a supplementary question for the Prime Minister. I wonder if he would tell us whether in the consideration of government business the government is going to give priority to the resolution with regard to the flag over the introduction of an address to the Queen in the United Kingdom asking for an amendment to the British North America Act to provide the foundation for the pension legislation.

Mr. Pearson: Well, Mr. Speaker, the question of the address to the Queen of Canada with regard to the amendment of our constitution can only be decided when we get the agreement of all the provinces on the exact