

Canadian Flag

I quote what the Canadian corps association have to say:

We feel the supporters of the Canadian red ensign are more democratic in their viewpoint than the supporters of the maple leaf design for they are willing for this question to be submitted in referendum form to the people of Canada and to abide by their decision, where the maple leaf design supporters are reluctant to trust the approval of their proposed new flag to the people of Canada.

We would also like to point out in this letter, that the Canadian corps association, dominion command, considers the advice of the prime minister that a referendum on the flag would cost over \$10 million is again simply another smokescreen in the flag question. Those who support the retention of the present Canadian national flag have not urged that the flag plebiscite need be conducted immediately—we do not wish to see our government waste money either, for it is the people of Canada who supply the money. The flag question ballot could be placed in with the regular voting ballots in the next scheduled general election of this country, and there most certainly is no need of either an election to be called, nor a \$10 million immediate referendum when the question can be placed before the voters of this country, when the next regular general election is scheduled, and in the meantime, the present national flag should be flown as it has been for the past many years until the people of Canada signify to the contrary.

Our organization fully realizes that there are many important national problems before the present members of the House of Commons that should most definitely take precedence over the flag question, and again we reiterate, that it is not the supporters of the retention of the Canadian red ensign as Canada's national flag, who are forcing this issue to the foreground in parliament.

I have an editorial from the *St. Croix Courier*, published in St. Stephen in the county of Charlotte, New Brunswick, which newspaper ran a survey of its readers concerning a referendum or a plebiscite. It asked the people to answer this question: "Are you in favour of a public plebiscite to determine the flag issue?" I am going to read the editorial which contains the answer.

When the time finally arrives in the House of Commons for members to cast their votes on the flag issue, or rather on the amendment as provided by opposition leader Right Hon. John G. Diefenbaker, regarding a plebiscite, we would remind Dr. A. M. A. McLean to harken closely to the voice of the people who sent him to Ottawa to represent them.

Although we cannot say the result of our local referendum by special form in the *Courier* was encouraging, it did give a broad and penetrating viewpoint of the feelings of the people who considered it worth while to fill out the form and mail it in as requested.

As of the writing of this editorial we had received a total of 307 forms all duly completed and signed.

Remember, these were answers to the question "Are you in favour of a public plebis-

[Mr. Flemming (Victoria-Carleton).]

cite to decide the flag issue?" And what was the result? Three hundred people said yes, and only seven said no. That was the result of this questionnaire put out in the county of Charlotte.

Now I wish to quote an editorial which was published in *The Legionary*, the official organ of the Legion in Canada. This is an editorial in the July issue and the pertinent part reads as follows:

The Legionary therefore takes what is probably the last opportunity available to make one more appeal to the Prime Minister to let the people of Canada decide this crucial question. We do so because we earnestly believe a national plebiscite is by far the most clearcut way of settling the problem once and for all, and because we sincerely believe it is the only means of avoiding, so far as it is possible to do so, making it a partisan issue. Even if a "free" vote of M.P.'s and senators were allowed, there would be a natural tendency—human nature being what it is—for government supporters to vote for the government's own design, and it is far from certain that a parliamentary vote on an issue of this nature would accurately reflect the feelings of the whole people of Canada.

The Legionary believes that the flag question is such an issue and again strongly urges the Prime Minister to let the Canadian people decide it, one way or another, through a national plebiscite. It is the most democratic way of solving this problem. It is the only way to ascertain what the people really want. And the request for a plebiscite is sure to be warmly supported by all Canadians of good will and moderation because, no matter what the result, if the issue were settled by a parliamentary vote only, grave doubts would arise in the minds of a great many citizens that it represented the will of the people. These doubts would linger on for many years and would remain a serious obstacle to the attainment of national unity.

So please, Mr. Prime Minister, let the people decide. It would be a statesmanlike solution and might well be a nation-saving move.

That is a quotation from an editorial in the official organ of the Canadian Legion. They say this would settle the matter permanently and for all time.

The amendment of the Leader of the Opposition specifically provides for consideration being given to this most important question. It provides that the people shall have the responsibility of making this decision. It allows this parliament to consider that the question has been dealt with, and the matter decided. It transcends ordinary partisan considerations and deals with the matter in a way which would be less expensive and more effective. I fail to see how any member can be other than impressed by this argument. If the house wishes to hear another argument as to the desirability of a referendum, just let hon. members look at the column by Bruce West in today's *Globe*