

Canadian Flag

in our flag. The Minister of Transport (Mr. Pickersgill) in the course of a recent television interview referred to our form of British government. This is also part of our tradition represented by the union jack in our flag. I mention these comments in order to emphasize our contention that the people of Canada should be consulted by means of a plebiscite before their present flag is taken from them.

To put it directly on record I will read again in part the amendment we propose to the report of the flag committee:

However, as the final vote of the committee did not reveal a sufficient degree of unanimity for the proposed design for a national flag for Canada, your committee therefore recommends that the government be authorized to take such steps as may be necessary to conduct a plebiscite to be held at the next general election in order that the Canadian people may be given their rightful opportunity to declare their choice concerning a national flag.

I think that clearly outlines the situation before us.

In an earlier speech I referred to the hundreds of letters I have received from constituents in support of the Canadian red ensign. At that time I listed the many references in them to the need for deciding the flag issue by means of a plebiscite. I will not repeat those statements now. I will merely say that many of the letters I receive continue to support the stand taken by my party on this flag issue. This is in direct contradiction to press reports which seek to indicate that public concern over the flag has declined. I have received letters recently from towns in my constituency supporting our stand on this issue. I received three today, from one of which I quote the following:

As my representative at Ottawa, please insist on the inclusion of the union jack in any proposed flag. In the interests of Canadian unity we should have one flag only.

Members on the government side who have expressed opposition to a plebiscite claim they can speak for their constituents. I agree that under our democratic system of government we were elected to vote as parliamentary representatives on behalf of our ridings with respect to all political and economic matters, with regard to which decisions can be altered later, if necessary. But voting to substitute a single maple leaf flag for the red ensign is something very different. This is a very emotional issue. It is an issue which calls for a majority decision by the Canadian people. As our amendment suggests, this could be sought at the next election, which will probably come by or before next June. Canadians will be better prepared to accept the result of a plebiscite than they are to accept the result of a vote on party lines in parliament. I would think the Prime Minister would welcome this means of solving a difficult problem.

Some hon. Members: Ten o'clock.

Mr. Pascoe: I agree with the speeches made by the hon. member for Kent (Ont.) (Mr. Danforth) and the hon. member for Regina City (Mr. More) who pointed out very cogently how the Canadian people would be affected if the flag were changed.

May I call it ten o'clock?

Mr. J. E. Walker (York Centre): May I have the leave of the house to revert to motions?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member have leave of this house to revert to motions?

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There is not unanimous consent.

At ten o'clock the house adjourned, without question put, pursuant to standing order.