

National Flag

Then, farther down, I read this:

As another means of making manifest a Canadian identity, my government will invite the provinces to a conference for consultation regarding the choice of a national flag and other national symbols.

There have been suggestions in speeches from the throne in the past which did not come to fruition. I am interested, therefore, in putting a time limit on the adoption of a flag. The government can set up a committee to bring in a design that is suitable to the committee and to the government. Certainly, it is going to be difficult to have unanimity amongst all Canadians. However, I believe if we did get a design approved by the house, from that date forward Canadians would learn to respect that flag as the flag of Canada. I urge support of this motion, therefore, to set up a committee with a specific task and a specific time limit on that task.

Mr. Barry Mather (New Westminster): Speaking in favour of the proposal before us, I think it should be a matter of wonder to all members of the house and to many people in Canada that almost 100 years after we were born we are still debating whether it is possible for us to have our own flag in Canada. I think we are a remarkable people in that regard, Mr. Speaker, because if we have any national characteristic it seems to be the one that we do not have any national characteristic. This is the most distinguishing thing about us, that we do not take unto ourselves national symbols as other people do.

At the same time, Canada is the second largest country in the world geographically and a middle power. Its people and achievements are known throughout the world and respected by everybody, with the exception it seems by our own selves. The time, I believe, is long past when we should be still talking about whether we can have a flag of our own. In the past ten years many new nations have been born, and many of them have at once unfurled their own national flags and taken unto themselves their own national emblems. As I say, we are still discussing, as we did a week or two ago, whether it is possible for this country which is nearly 100 years old, to have our own national anthem. We are still wondering whether we should sing "O Canada", when for years the natives have been singing "O Canada". Our school children, as we read a few weeks ago, are asking, why can't we have our own anthem and our own flag.

I think our hesitancy about going ahead and establishing these national symbols for Canada lies somewhat in the past and in the feelings of the two older groups of people who originally settled this country, the French

speaking and English speaking Canadians. This situation, however, has changed radically in the last 15 or 20 years. As we know, a flood of immigrants from European lands have come to Canada and they do not share the old ideas in regard to the old symbols which we have had in the past and which have always loomed so large in the eyes of French speaking or English speaking Canadians. These newer Canadians from Europe are looking to the new land to give them some rallying point in one flag or anthem to help them say this is their own country. I agree that we need a national flag for Canada, not from any sense of petty nationalism but as a rallying point or community emblem to help us come together to form a nation in the best sense of that word.

I agree with the mover of this motion when he says we should not get ourselves concerned with the details of the proposed flag. This is not for us to decide. What we should decide is the principle, and go ahead and take steps that will establish this flag for Canada. Finally, I have one additional reason for taking action at this time and that is to produce a flag for the Canadian centennial celebration. In a few more years we will be celebrating our national birthday, and I think it would be most fitting, on January 1, 1967, for a new Canadian flag to be unfurled not only across Canada but around the world. I have very great pleasure in supporting the good motion moved by my friend opposite.

Mr. R. G. L. Fairweather (Royal): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Medicine Hat said we are drifting along in the discussion of this subject, that of considering a national symbol, and of course he is correct. I had a great deal of pleasure in reading the debates of 1865 of the parliament of Canada, in what was then the province of Canada, when proposals were being considered with a similar end in view. Obviously, no results were forthcoming 97 years ago. I do not share the view that suddenly, say on November 21, 1963, all Canadians can be patriotic or loyal to a certain design.

My approach admittedly is perhaps unorthodox. I realize there are tender feelings when we are considering national symbols; but with great respect may I say I share some of the sentiments so well expressed by the hon. senator from Temiscouata when he spoke in the other place on November 7. I think Canada would be poorer if the endless debates of individuals and groups were finally resolved by the adoption of what this motion calls a suitable distinctive national flag. For instance, the mail of members of parliament would become less voluminous. We should think of all the designers whose ideas would