

*Flags of Canada*

in this house a proposal for the adoption of a Canadian flag. This resolution was debated on February 14, 1938 and during the discussion both the then prime minister of Canada, Right Hon. Mackenzie King, and the leader of the opposition of that day, Right Hon. R. B. Bennett, declared themselves in favour of a distinctive Canadian flag. I should like to quote excerpts from the speeches of these two statesmen. On February 14, 1938, as reported at page 438 of *Hansard*, Mr. King said:

I would conclude this part of what I have to say with the observation that the continued use of the union jack gives a false impression abroad, and particularly in the country immediately adjoining.

Further on, as reported on page 440 of *Hansard*, Mr. King went on to say:

Let me conclude with these words. There has never been a time, I believe, when the relations between Canada and the mother country were so cordial so completely friendly, helpful and co-operative in every way as they are at the present time. The present is the time, then, to consider this question. It will not be disposed of, in my opinion, until it is settled in Canada as it has been in the other dominions. If we do not settle it now, some issue may arise in the course of a few years which will provoke another discussion and lead to the settlement of the question in a manner that may be misunderstood elsewhere. Today there is no possible danger of misunderstanding on the part of anyone in this country, in Britain, in Europe or elsewhere in the world, as to what Canada has in mind in seeking to have a distinctive national flag.

Now I should like to quote the words of Mr. Bennett as reported at page 442:

Upon the large question, I expressed an opinion in the house some years ago that I believed it was desirable, as I do tonight, that the country should have some flag by which it could distinguish itself from other parts of the world.

I might also refer hon. members to page 415 of *Hansard* of 1938 where there are quotations given in support of a distinctive flag from the *Winnipeg Free Press*, the *Hamilton Herald*, the *Winchester Press*, the *Stratford Beacon-Herald*, the *Collingwood Bulletin*, the *Recorder and Times*, Brockville, the *Kingston Whig-Standard* and many others. The Canadian Weekly Newspapers Association, Saskatchewan division, passed a resolution calling unanimously for the selection of a suitable flag to be known as the flag of Canada.

As I said earlier, the greatest work in this direction was done by the joint committee of 1945 and 1946. In 1956 at Windsor, Ontario the Ontario command of the Canadian Legion adopted a resolution demanding a referendum in respect of the two flags which were submitted by the minority and majority reports of the committee of 1945. This was, in a sense, erroneous, because the committee only reported one flag, but two flags were

[Mr. Regnier.]

voted upon during the sittings of that committee, I believe on the last day of its deliberations. One of them was the flag coloured red and white and containing a maple leaf. The other was a flag which had not, in fact, been submitted at all. It was a flag which had been manufactured by members of the committee, though it is claimed some ten models had been produced to which the latter flag was similar.

The line of division in that committee was between those who were in favour of a maple leaf without the union jack and those who were in favour of a maple leaf with the union jack. As I mentioned earlier, if the committee had decided on the evidence before it, the position would have been clearer. The division was 67 per cent in favour of the flag with the maple leaf without the union jack, and 16 per cent for the flag containing both the maple leaf and the union jack.

In my first speech in the House of Commons I dealt with the subject of a distinctive flag for Canada, and I give credit for that, in part, to the first two people who wrote to me after my election in 1958. These letters were both dated April 2, and they asked me to work for a Canadian flag. I have also received cards from people in my own constituency, some containing pictures of a suggested Canadian flag, asking me to do the same thing. One of the letters I received came from an old man, who claims he was 90 years of age last October. As a matter of fact I received three letters. The first two letters were written by the man's daughter explaining that her father was too old to write. I answered those letters, and the third letter arrived in the handwriting of this old Canadian. I should like to name him; Mr. W. Gascon, of the city of Ottawa. He had kept clippings on the subject and had himself written to newspapers in an endeavour to have a flag adopted.

I should like at this point to commend the past president of the Canadian Legion, Montgomery command, who has a file about six inches thick on this subject. He is the one who brought me the draft of the resolution which was passed by the Ontario command and also the draft passed by the dominion command at the convention of 1958 held in Edmonton, asking for a referendum on the two flags which had been voted upon in the committee of 1945.

In the committee of 1945-46 a number of questions were raised. I wish to quote from the proceedings dated May 29, 1946 of the joint committee of the House of Commons and the other place: