

*Canadian Flag*

port of the white flag containing red maple leaves proposed by the Prime Minister. I therefore believe it is only proper that I take this opportunity to raise the objections of my constituents, especially of those who have written to me, outlining their concern over the flag that is proposed by the administration.

So that my own position will be abundantly clear, I stand for the retention of the old symbols, the distinctive Canadian red ensign which today flies from the peace tower. The day may come when in the course of unity we may be required to accept some change, but I would always hope our flag will contain some symbols of our past traditions.

I cannot help but ask the question, why is the Liberal party introducing this divisive symbol to parliament at this time? No doubt in reply some Liberal member may say it was an election promise to be carried out within two years of taking office. But surely this administration, which has made so many wild promises in order to regain power, has some sense of responsibility to the electorate. I would like to know the yardstick used by the Liberals to measure the priority of their promises. Mr. Speaker, the promise to bring in a distinctive national flag is only one of many promises which were made during the last election campaign. What about the promise to institute a medicare plan, the promise to improve unemployment insurance and the promise to establish portable contributory pensions? The Liberals were going to promote freer trade by co-operating with other free world countries to reduce trade barriers. The Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson), speaking in Milford, Nova Scotia, undertook to improve trade between Nova Scotia and the West Indies, but to date no action has been taken. In co-operation with the provinces, the Liberals were going to see that more low rental homes were built; they were going to improve retraining programs and pay supplementary benefits in cases of long term unemployment. The Liberals were going to review our civil defence policy, too. However, the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Hellyer) had other ideas and today the militia, which was to have been the nucleus of our civil defence force, is seriously weakened in numbers.

The Liberals promised to establish scholarships to help young people obtain a university education. They were going to introduce a national health plan. All these and a score of other promises were made, but to date no action has been taken. It is therefore not the real answer to this question to say that a

promise is being implemented. We must look for a deeper meaning if we are to understand the Liberal motive for the course which is being followed.

In my opinion Canada's flag should be a symbol of unity. But the proposed flag or design presented on the resolution now before the house has already created widespread disunity and discontent throughout Canada. The reason is easy to understand. First of all, many Canadians have raised objections to the three maple leaf design, on the grounds that it bears no relation to the history and culture of our past and contains little promise for the future. In the second place, they raised strong objections to the method used by the Liberal government in bringing this issue before parliament.

This government has no clear mandate to provide Canada with a new flag and it is not being brave or courageous by endeavouring to impose its wishes upon the great majority of Canadians. The hon. member for Argenteuil-Deux-Montagnes (Mr. Drouin) speaking this afternoon, said his leader showed courage in bringing in the maple leaf design. If this is courage, then it is a courage born of despair. I would remind this government that it is still a minority government with the right to rule only as long as it commands support in parliament. The government undoubtedly has a right to introduce this type of resolution, but when doing so it should have stated clearly that the vote, when taken, would be a free vote. I say this because what we are considering now is an issue of the heart, not of the head. If there were a free vote, members of parliament, who are elected to represent as closely as possible the viewpoint of their constituents, could express themselves freely in debate and vote according to the wishes of their constituents. This would be for the parliament of Canada its finest hour. This would be representative government in the best sense of the term.

However, that is not the policy of the government. I would like to think that at one time it was the intention of the Prime Minister to allow a free vote. In support of this statement I would refer to *Hansard* of May 12 where hon. members will see the following recorded on page 3164:

Mr. Robert C. Coates (Cumberland): Will the right hon. gentleman give an assurance that when the design for the proposed new national flag is presented to parliament all members of this house will have a free vote, and that the defeat of the design would not be considered a vote of non-confidence in the government?

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): When the time comes to submit the decision of the gov-