

of the Legion for almost 20 years, as one who has been honoured by his own branch many times by being elected to their executive, and more recently by being elected their honorary president, I feel that I know something of the work of this organization of veterans. I tell you, honourable senators, it is a splendid work. Knowing the Legion as I do, I have a tremendous respect for it and for those men and women who make up its membership. I believe those men and women who served their country in time of war are entitled, as of right, to have their views on the matter of a flag given more weight and deeper consideration than the views of non-veterans. I regret their views were not given more favourable consideration.

Honourable senators, some people believe a new flag, without any symbols of our past, must become law because young people expect it or demand it, because the youth of our land want something new and something different, and because after all they are the ones who must be considered, as the future of our country is in their hands. Now, whether or not the youth of our land want a flag without those symbols I do not know. Personally, I would have liked to have seen them consulted in some way, to obtain their views, after they had a full knowledge of what was involved. I believe those views would have been very helpful in deciding this question.

Honourable senators, the hour is late and already I have taken up too much of your time. You will notice, however, that I have not in any way discussed the design of the proposed new flag. I do not intend to discuss it now. To end my speech, as a word of praise or commendation for the new design, I think I can go this far, Mr. Speaker, and say that I do not consider it to be as ugly as the original design containing three maple leaves.

(Translation):

Hon. Jacques Flynn: Honourable senators, since I opposed the amendment proposed by my excellent friend, Senator Grattan O'Leary, and since I intend to support the adoption of the main motion, I believe that for the record I should explain my position. You will understand that I am not too happy to part with my friends on this issue.

The debate which was held in this house during the last three days definitely improved the climate. Personally, I appreciated this discussion, because in my opinion the debate which lasted too long in the other place did not in any way contribute to the "bonne entente" in this country.

This flag issue is not a new one. It appeals to emotions and may appeal to the electorate, because this issue of a national flag could be turned into an electoral affair.

I have no congratulations to offer the government, because I believe that it did not present this problem in an appropriate manner. It should have taken all possible care not to hurt people's feelings. For my part, I agree with those who, on this side of the house, suggested that a joint committee of the House of Commons and the Senate should have been given the task of looking for a Canadian flag design.

I said that the issue was an emotional one. Reason has very little to do with it. This is shown by the fact that both sides have often used the same arguments to draw completely different conclusions.

The debate has been going on for six months. We have reached the point where a final decision will be taken, and that in a few minutes. In my opinion, once the debate had been started—no matter how badly—a conclusion had to be reached.

Essentially, the division has always been, to my knowledge, between two groups: on the one hand, those who are for keeping and officially recognizing the Red Ensign; on the other hand, those who consider that a Canadian flag should not bear any sign of subservience to another country or anything borrowed from another country. Basically, that is what the debate is all about.

Look what happened in the other place or what happened here. I appreciate that some want to recognize and retain the Red Ensign. I have often discussed this matter with those who feel that way, and I understand them. As far as they are concerned, the Red Ensign, including the Union Jack, stand not so much for a country but for the British parliamentary tradition and the principles of individual freedom, as preserved by laws, the Magna Carta and the triumphs against absolutism and monarchy.

But I believe that what the staunch supporters of the Red Ensign never understood is that for a great many people—no doubt the great majority of French Canadians, but others also—the Union Jack can represent but only one country: Great Britain.

There is nothing wrong with that. But we cannot ask those who consider that the flag should symbolize our own country to have the same feelings when looking at the Union Jack.