

Canadian Flag

convinced that a very desirable result would stem from the deliberations of such a committee. Then no one could point the finger at the Prime Minister or at the government and say that this was done without consultation or without the consultation of everyone in parliament. Then people could not say that this was a political flag. They would say that we have returned to a democratic procedure in the House of Commons. Therefore I make this plea to the Prime Minister this afternoon. There would be no difficulty in bringing this committee about—I can assure him of my full co-operation in this regard—at the earliest possible moment. This committee could sit while the house was not sitting, if that were desired. I believe that in this way the matter could be approached with calmness and reason, and people from all parties and races could be represented on such a committee.

As I said before, and as I say again in concluding, I am, as is the Prime Minister, a Canadian. I am, as he is, a free Canadian within the terms of the Canadian Bill of Rights. I ask him in all seriousness this afternoon to form this committee of both houses and to give the matter to them so that all Canadians will feel that they have participated.

Mr. P. V. Noble (Grey North): Mr. Speaker, in speaking in support of the amendment to the flag resolution I just want to say that my participation in this debate is for the purpose of expressing my own firm convictions and exercising my duty to the good people I represent. They have indicated to me during recent weeks, and are still doing so, their strong feelings on this matter and that they wish to retain the Canadian red ensign as Canada's national flag. My hope has been as this debate has progressed that the Prime Minister (Mr. Pearson) would see the light and in the hour of his wisdom withdraw this resolution before it completely divides our people and inflicts wounds on this country which centuries may not heal. It is hard for sound-thinking Canadians to think that the Prime Minister of Canada, a reputed diplomat, a Nobel peace prize winner, a man held in high esteem in the commonwealth and now holding the fate of the Canadian red ensign in the palm of his hand, would bend these great principles attributed to him and consider breaking faith with millions of Canadians who have been loyal to this nation. The very least he could do is to ask for their individual expression on the matter

[Mr. Winkler.]

by way of a referendum at an opportune time.

He has intimated to members of the house that those who wished to speak would be given ample time to do so. This too could be interpreted as a camouflage to cover the dictatorial method by which the new flag can be forced on the majority of the people of this country by a minority group. There has never been an issue brought before the Canadian parliament that has been more instrumental than this in stirring up the wrath of our people right across the country. Never before has a prime minister of Canada put himself in such an outrageously vulnerable position when there were several sound and unquestionably fair ways of bringing about a satisfactory solution.

I owe a debt of gratitude, Mr. Speaker, to all those who have made their concern known to me. Their representations have been almost unanimous in support of the Canadian red ensign. I will not take the time of the house to list all 23 associations and organizations that indicated their support by letter or telegram; all the Legions in my riding were in the group and the others cover a wide field—from a young people's club and the council of women, to the county council, as mentioned by the hon. member for Grey-Bruce (Mr. Winkler). Of all the many hundreds of letters, cards, telegrams and petitions I received, only one was in support of the Pearson flag. Two others said they would support a new flag, not necessarily the proposed flag.

Now, in view of the fact that many of these people, Liberals and Conservatives alike, have put a lot of thought and wisdom into their expressions to me, I feel I am obligated to put a few excerpts from these letters on the record. But before doing so perhaps some consideration should be given to why people take this emphatic stand.

Now, Mr. Speaker, most Canadians are asking, why is this flag necessary? Which part of the country is requesting it? Who selected this flag? Why is it given priority over more pressing legislation? Why the dictatorial method of trying to force it on the country? Others say this does not look like a flag. Many products use the maple leaf as a brand name; many corporations use the words "maple leaf" in their company name; it is used as a trade mark and in many other ways. Toronto's professional hockey team has been known as the Maple Leafs for many years, yet Con Smythe the man who chose the name and who has been a key man in that organiza-