

We, as members of the Senate, in this chamber, can do a service for Canadian unity, not by rejecting a design, not by imposing one of our own, but by giving, as Senator O'Leary's amendment states:

... reasonable time to the people and Parliament of Canada to reach agreement on a flag which will incorporate appropriate symbols of the founding peoples of this nation and which will be acceptable to all elements of our populations.

If you ask me how long that will take, I say I do not know.

I am not impressed with the glib statements that have been made elsewhere, that we have waited for 97 years, and this must be done now. We waited a long time to achieve the consensus, which I feel we have, for instance, on the National Anthem. We have waited a long time to achieve consensus on a number of other matters. If we have to wait a little longer to achieve consensus on this issue, then I am quite satisfied to do so. It seems to me that is the reasonable course; it is the course of reason and reality.

In this chamber we now have an opportunity to remove some of the sting of the last few months and weeks, to repair some of the damage. We could remove the stigma of closure from whatever new and distinctive flag is eventually raised in this country. We can do all this by conscientiously performing one of the duties that is ours as the second chamber, to examine and re-examine Government legislation and proposals dispassionately, fairly, reasonably and with perhaps a surer appreciation of the long-term national interest.

I support the amendment and I commend it to all honourable senators.

Hon. John Hnatyshyn: Honourable senators, I rise to express my support of the amendment moved by Senator Grattan O'Leary. I would like to congratulate him on the eloquence and clarity with which he presented his remarks. I would also like to congratulate the Leader of the Government (Hon. Mr. Connolly, Ottawa West) for the manner in which he introduced the subject in this house. There have been many interesting speeches, and I agree with previous speakers who have said that the debate has been on a very high level.

In my opinion, this amendment was moved in a spirit of compromise, in the hope that we shall adopt a flag that will be acceptable to the great majority of Canadians. I do not think the flag submitted meets with the approval of the majority of Canadians. It is felt by many that a new flag should include symbols of the founding races of this country and

other groups that have helped to build up this great nation of ours. Many people in Canada feel that the flag should have thereon the Union Jack and the fleur-de-lis.

Along with many others who have spoken, I am in favour of a distinctive Canadian flag.

Hon. Mr. McCutcheon: Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. Hnatyshyn: The party to which I belong is in favour of a distinctive Canadian flag. I agree with Senator Grattan O'Leary that both leading parties in this country want a distinctive flag. What a chance was missed to set aside party politics and to bring in a flag in a way that would not have created as many difficulties as has the manner in which the flag under discussion has been handled.

In my opinion, the creation of a distinctive flag does not mean that the past should be ignored. I speak as one whose origin is not that of either of the founding races. I am proud of my origin and proud of the contributions that my ancestors made to Canada. However, I am also equally proud of the contributions made by the founding races to make this nation what it is today. I would like to see a flag that recognizes these contributions.

People of the same origin as myself came to this country because of the freedom that existed here. The Union Jack was respected by these people because it stood for freedom. No nation can be great if it ignores its history. We are not forming a new nation. Canada has existed for 97 years, and I say, with all the sincerity I can command, that though there have been some difficulties we have done extremely well, and there is no one today who cannot be proud to be a citizen of Canada.

Hon. Mr. Connolly (Ottawa West): Hear, hear.

Hon. Mr. Hnatyshyn: The present design does not embody our history. It does not represent the sacrifices, experiences and achievements of the past. I am afraid that it will cause more disunity than unity. There are millions of people in Canada who strongly feel that the Union Jack should have a place on a distinctive flag. They are not just stubborn about it, for they are also of the opinion that the fleur-de-lis should have just as prominent a place. Surely it should be possible to work out a compromise by which the vast majority of our people would unite and agree on the type of flag Canada should have.

It is too bad this important issue has been handled the way it has. I think it would have been possible, and still is, to come to a decision that would have the support of all parts of Canada. I agree with previous speakers that