

Flags of Canada

thinking on the matter and in this way prepare all individuals for making the best selection possible.

However, taking action in a situation of this nature which crosses the complex lines of heritage and culture requires serious study. We cannot deny that a national flag would be an indication of greater unity but judging from the opinions expressed from time to time on this question the adoption of a flag of a particular design at this particular time may well create a little dissension.

While a flag itself is only a symbol it should be truly emblematic of the spirit and character of its people and before a referendum is even considered we as a people must recognize the need to designate in our flag a design which is typical of a free and independent nation.

The suggestions contained in this resolution regarding the type of flag are quite restricted and certainly offer only a limited choice. Surely in asking for a referendum it would be unwise to offer only one other pattern besides that of the red ensign and expect a popular reaction to such a move. Those who have prepared and submitted other designs are equally entitled to consideration should steps be taken to promote the acceptance of a flag other than that in use at the present time.

I am prompted to say something further about the adoption of a Canadian flag because only as recently as Friday of last week I received several suggestions in this subject from a group of high school students from the town of Neudorf, Saskatchewan. The designs in question were both original and artistic and were forwarded with the approval of the local chamber of commerce. This action certainly shows an awakening in the minds of some of our younger students to the need for some action as suggested by the hon. member for St. Boniface, but even as we are discussing the possibility of a distinctive flag the fact remains that in the face of change, custom and tradition die hard and there are those—and I must include myself in this group—who are imminently satisfied with existing arrangements.

It will be recalled that during the war a referendum was called on the conscription issue and in spite of the wishes of the majority no action on the part of the federal government was forthcoming. More recently in Saskatchewan a plebiscite was held on the time zone question which proved little except that such a vote was an expensive proceeding in view of the result achieved.

In conclusion I should like to make this point. I believe that we, the representatives of the people, should be guided by the wishes

of those whom we represent and if any government action in this respect is taken in the future it should be done on the basis of a referendum.

(Translation):

Mr. J. A. Habel (Cochrane): Mr. Speaker, the question now before us is one, as I said before, of great importance to me. I would say by the way that if we laughed a bit during the speech of the hon. member for Joliette-L'Assomption-Montcalm (Mr. Pigeon), it is because he seems to be carried away so easily that he makes us laugh even if he is speaking about rather serious questions.

There is nothing new in the question now before us. I talked about it in May 1939 in the Ontario legislature during the visit of their Majesties in Canada.

I remember very well that my first words went something like this: The previous speakers talked about their Majesties, the King and Queen of England; they also talked about the British empire. I added: I am sorry that no one saw fit to mention the fact that we were talking about receiving our king in Canada. In fact, His Majesty George VI had been crowned King of England and also King of Canada and of the other dominions of the empire and of the commonwealth.

Thus the king of England was at that time, as Her Majesty the Queen is now, Sovereign of Canada as well as of England.

I sincerely believe that the great majority of Canadians are happy to safeguard this symbol of monarchy. Our people are quite happy to live under a monarchy.

However, this does not prevent the question of a flag from making the headlines from time to time and to give rise to a discussion which in time will inevitably show the way towards the solution of that problem.

Mr. Speaker I have here a letter from a grand-niece of mine, daughter of my nephew whose father is French Canadian and whose mother is English. They live in Toronto. On December 14, I received from that grand-niece of mine a letter which I shall not quote in its entirety because the little girl tells me at the same time about the whole family. But here is the main point of her letter:

(Text):

The question I wanted to ask was, why haven't we got a Canadian flag?

(Translation):

A little ten year old girl attending an English school in Toronto puts the following question to her uncle: How is it that we do not yet have a Canadian flag?