

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

At the same time and on the same date, June 5, there appeared in the *Halifax Chronicle-Herald* the following headline: "Threats to P.M. over flag". Here is the Prime Minister of this country facetiously making statements in reply to serious questions, which are interpreted in one way by the Prime Minister's office, and by his officials who answer the telephone, as meaning that no one really cares in his office whether Canadians were being threatened, and by another newspaper which did not obtain the same information as meaning that a very serious situation had developed in this country as a result of this flag issue. Regardless of what the spokesman in Mr. Pearson's office had to say, it is my opinion that the headline in the *Halifax* newspaper was more closely attuned to the feelings of Canadians with regard to this flag issue. It is the type of issue that has inflamed the passions of Canadians; it is the type of issue that can only result in further divisions in this country; it is the type of issue that will promote bigotry and bias and all the things the Prime Minister endeavours to tell the Canadian people he does not wish, and indeed is endeavouring to eliminate. At the same time, if the statement by Mr. O'Hagan is correct, it is an indication of just how much out of touch is the present Prime Minister with the views of Canadians in this country in relation to their symbols, and especially in relation to the flag now flying.

How far are we expected to go in this country when we hear reports of people being threatened with their lives because they support the red ensign; when we hear reports of red ensigns being burned, as was reported in Toronto recently; when we pick up newspapers from all across this country and see Canadians making the statement that all the Liberal party is doing with this flag issue is selling out to the province of Quebec.

An hon. Member: Shame.

Mr. Coates: "Shame" does not mean a thing from over there. It is the people in every province in this country who are saying it.

An hon. Member: Why are you saying it?

Mr. Coates: I am saying it because these are the facts of life, and it is about time that you in your life faced up to these facts.

Mr. Clancy: Yes, you have slowed us up for years.

Mr. Coates: This type of retort coming from the benches of the Liberal party is just an indication of the highly charged, emotional

state of the Canadian nation as a result of this flag issue; and it is an issue which should not be treated lightly, as the Prime Minister tries to treat it every time someone asks him a question about any flag except his personal choice. This type of facetious reply received from the Prime Minister is as great an irritation to Canadians generally as anything that can be said about this flag issue. Why the passions of the Canadian people have been allowed to be aroused to the extent indicated in the initial day of this flag debate is more than I can understand and more than most Canadians can understand.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but his time has expired.

Mr. D. S. Macdonald (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member who has just sat down has in his solemn way given the house what, even by his own admission, he does not know to be true, or false statements. He made reference to a statement appearing in the newspaper with regard to the purported remarks of one of the staff of the Prime Minister's office. He himself threw doubt immediately on the soundness of his own proposition by saying, "if the statement by Mr. O'Hagan is correct". I would remind you, Mr. Speaker, and hon. members of this house that it is the obligation of the hon. member not to guess at whether it is correct or not; he stands on the words he has tendered to this house. If he has not gone to the trouble to find out whether or not they are correct, then his words are not worth listening to.

I must say, Mr. Speaker, that I had to get out the Parliamentary Guide to look up the hon. member's qualifications because I was baffled by his statement. The statement which the Prime Minister made on June 4 in answer to the hon. member is found on page 3925 of *Hansard* and reads as follows:

Mr. Speaker, if the hon. gentleman will send me a copy of his report I will be glad to examine it, and if the circumstances warrant it can be passed on to the police and to the mayor of Ottawa.

I point out, Mr. Speaker, that this is the responsibility of the provincial authorities and more particularly of the municipal police of this city.

Mr. Coates: Mr. Speaker, I am not arguing about that statement.

Mr. Macdonald: Mr. Speaker, I have a right to my full three minutes.

Mr. Coates: The Prime Minister said—