

Canadian Flag

The confusion of our era, the complexity of situations and the flood of problems require strong governments everywhere. The confusion of the ordinary citizen can only be handled by governments that know where they are going. For months and months, Canada has had the weakest government since confederation.

There is a great deal more along these lines but I wish to confine myself to the subject before us, so I shall not quote further. The actions of the government so far bear out what this article says. First, the party opposite put forward a flag consisting of three leaves on a white background. Eventually they dropped this because it did not have the support of one of the larger minor parties. This was the flag to end all flags. The hon. member for Leeds (Mr. Matheson) who was one of the designers, I understand, got up and told us what a wonderful flag it was. Now he is just as sure that the white flag with the red borders and the maple leaf in the centre is the flag which will fill the bill. So I do not think there is any doubt the government is incapable of presenting a new flag which will represent this nation.

As a matter of fact, government supporters, and particularly members of the government on the front benches, have never given any satisfactory reason for the adoption of a new flag in the first place. In this regard, the *Toronto Telegram* had this to say:

The Canadian ensign must not be lowered without the consent of the people. The voice of the people can be heard on this issue only through a national plebiscite. Here is a matter which touches the hearts—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I regret to interrupt the hon. member. Perhaps I should have brought this to the attention of one or two of the previous speakers. The hon. member will understand there is nothing personal involved, but it is my duty to call the attention of the house to citation 157 of *Beauchesne's* fourth edition, subsection (6). Perhaps I should read this.

On the 17th March, 1933, a member quoting a newspaper in debate was ruled out of order by the Deputy Speaker who said: "The rule is quite clear, that the quoting of a newspaper, an author or a book which reflects upon debate before the house, either directly or indirectly is entirely out of order, because members are here to give their own opinion and not to quote the opinion of others...Members may quote an article or a book stating facts, but a commentary on any proceeding or any discussion in the house, with the object of swinging an opinion to one side or the other, is out of order."

In view of what is said in this citation and in several others which could easily be quoted, I conclude it is not in order to quote

editorials or articles which would tend to influence a debate one way or the other. Hon. members are called upon to give their own opinions.

Mr. Muir (Lisgar): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There were only a couple of lines left.

The fact of the matter is that this is far too important a matter to be settled by parliamentary compromise. There might be some sense in having parliament settle the question if there were a possibility of compromise, but this house has shown it is not prepared to compromise in order to settle this matter. No compromise can be reached because the government refuses to make concessions. Compromise means meeting half way or coming to terms by giving up part of a claim. But there is nothing to show that the government was even prepared to give a little, in connection with the stand of the official opposition, in order to reach a compromise on this question. I refer to the situation in the house and in the committee; they were not prepared to compromise. On the other hand, I have not yet heard a supporter of the present proud flag who was not prepared to accept some compromise on it. The only way you can reach a compromise is to have co-operation on both sides, and if one refuses to compromise then compromise is impossible. This, Mr. Speaker, is the situation in this parliament.

The flag was considered by the committee. That committee was chaired by the hon. member for Humber-St. George's (Mr. Batten), a man for whom all members of the house have a great deal of respect, and I share that respect. I wish I could say the same in regard to some of his colleagues on that committee, but unfortunately I cannot do so. I cannot do so because the committee report showed that there was no attempt on the part of the government members on that committee to compromise, to meet half way the views of those representing the official opposition. I would point out to you, sir, that the official opposition, as of the last election, represents 2½ million Canadian people. Are we going to deny the right of 2½ million people to have some say in what is going to be on their flag? I leave that for individual members to think about for themselves.

There were several reasons, of course, why the committee failed. I believe one of the reasons was that it came too late, after positions had hardened in the house. We had asked for a committee at the beginning and I believe that had this been brought about