

*Canadian Flag*

forgive me. The Minister without Portfolio made a speech outside this house referring to the flag and praised the Prime Minister for his courage. I do not intend to quote him, but he can correct me if I misinterpret one of the remarks he made. He said: Let us get on and settle this flag business, when we get the new, distinctive flag the Prime Minister has put before parliament, we will hear no more of extremism in Quebec, we will stop the saboteurs, these bombers, these disrupters. What utter nonsense to say that a new flag, a piece of cloth, will settle them. Is this the reason for the sudden change? The Prime Minister had a reputation for sound judgment, and I do not challenge his services to Canada. What changed the character of this man all of a sudden? On what basis does he thrust this issue into this session of parliament at this time and say: You do this, or else? What has happened to this man? If the reason is the one suggested, then it is utter nonsense. This is no basis for choosing a flag for a country, because that problem appears to have some depth and the very strong feelings of the extremists cannot be settled overnight.

Is this a message that the Minister without Portfolio thinks the people of Canada can accept as the true reason for this flag issue being brought before parliament at this time? No, my friends, I do not accept it and my mail indicates that hundreds of thousands of people in Canada do not accept it. I was born and raised in Canada. I have lived more than half a century. I was raised in a little town in the west. My roots and my family's roots are deep in Canada. My people pioneered the west. We lived in a community in Saskatchewan that had no great services and did not have all the amenities of life that we enjoy today. We lived in a mixed community. Predominantly it was Protestant. We had only two churches, a Methodist and a Presbyterian. We had some Roman Catholic families—not many, but two that I can remember very well, because we were close to each other and played together. We had a Jewish family and we had a Chinese family. We had no problems of separatism, no problems of prejudice. These people joined us at our churches at times because they were Christian people and the Christian message coming from whatever source was interesting to them. Their own church was not available and transportation was not easy. On occasion, they joined with us.

I remember well as a lad going to the Orange celebrations on July 12. I remember

[Mr. More.]

how I fully misunderstood things because we used to have some speakers coming from Ontario. I could not understand why one Canadian would say the things about other Canadians that some of these people said. It was particularly embarrassing to me in my early youth when I was forming opinions, because we took one of the Catholic families with us to these celebrations. They came along readily because the celebration took in the whole community. In spite of these messages, no prejudice existed or developed in this community. I am glad to see it has been reduced here. Perhaps, as a result of those speeches, I can understand the feelings of my French Canadian compatriots. They have never been expressed in my family and I hope the time will never come that they will be expressed by anyone. We all want to be Canadians and to get along together as Canadians, but if the Minister without Portfolio is correct, that this flag is an appeasement of an extremist element, no matter on what side of the fence it is, then it is a shame it is being thrust on this parliament at this time.

During my lifetime we have had only one flag in Canada, the Canadian red ensign. I grew up under it. It flew from every building in my little home town when the occasion demanded it. I have seen it flown throughout Canada, and I never knew there was any feeling that Canada did not have a flag.

Today when I see the efforts being made by the government I wonder what it has in mind as the aims and objectives of Canada, and how far it has departed from the original intent of the Fathers of Confederation. I listened to the last young speaker with great interest. He belittled the efforts of those of us who want to maintain something of our traditions and carry them forward in the building we will do in the years ahead.

I entered public life actively as a candidate late in life. I may say I was active throughout my life because I was brought up to consider this part of my duty; but in 1957 I had a challenge thrown to me and I entered public life as a candidate. I certainly did not enter it to come to a parliament to take part in and witness the dissolution of the aims and objectives of the Fathers of Confederation, and of the nation we have built during our first 97 years. Because this seems to be the trend that is being followed by this government, I intend right now at the start of it, on the question of the flag issue, to fight it with all the strength I possess, not because I think a flag should be maintained at all