

*Canadian Flag*

they think they have too much common sense; but then they get carried away. If we find ourselves in a position where another government can bring in another flag, then who will be the laughingstock of the nations of the world?

The Prime Minister said, as reported at page 4319 of yesterday's *Hansard*:

It will not be the flag of a person or a party; it will be the flag of the people of Canada—

I ask him for how long—till we get another prime minister? In my opinion this is certainly not the way to do it.

The Prime Minister referred to the hon. member for Leeds (Mr. Matheson) and quoted him in connection with the flag's sending a message. I say to you, Mr. Speaker, the flag does not send any other message than the image we create here in Canada. I do not care what flag hangs on the pole, the message received by the people who see that flag will be according to the image we ourselves create. It is not the flag that makes Canada; it is Canada makes the flag. Let no one say a flag is going to make a nation; it is a nation that makes a flag.

I dealt with the order in council and I mentioned that in it at two different places it represents the Canadian red ensign as a distinctive Canadian flag. I feel that the red ensign should have a running chance with any other flag that might be presented. If the red ensign has been the flag of this country for 40 years, and we have waited 97 years for parliament to do something about a flag, I cannot see why we should get into this—I was going to say godawful hurry—debate on a flag issue at this point, when we have such a large body of opinion in the country telling the Prime Minister and the members of this house that it does not necessarily want the flag that has been proposed in this resolution.

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, that the time has come for this house and its members to waken up to their responsibilities and listen to what is being said in this country. We have no divine right as parliamentarians to pass over a large body of expressed opinion. I have said in this statement that the government may or may not have had more seats, had it not had something about the flag in its literature. I was going to say propaganda, but no one knows what effect if any this point had in the election.

I agree wholeheartedly with the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam (Mr. Douglas) that we should not be embroiled in a flag

[Mr. Leboe.]

fight at this time, and take up the time of the house with this issue when we have so much major legislation before us. I say to you, sir, that western and eastern Canada will never submit to such arbitrary action on the false premise that the elected representatives are doing what they were sent here to do.

I have said that the establishment of a national flag is not an administrative problem. It is aside and separate from any other issue, a distinct and peculiar problem and requires, therefore, particular action having regard for the feelings, emotions and desires of the majority of Canadians. We cannot brush aside all these things and say to the people at large that we, as a group of little dictators here, can do something without any reference to the people of the country who have voiced a very strong opinion on it.

On my desk I have two communications in favour of a new flag, but the rest of the communications are in favour of the red ensign. Anybody who wishes may look through my files to verify this. I say that the choice of a national flag is one place where the democratic voice of the people must be heard before action is taken.

I said that all the members in this house could not deny the democratic right of the people to voice an opinion on something that is supposed to last, shall we say, forever,—a flag that is going to represent Canada's future and its past. Are we as a little group, who have never been returned to this parliament on the basis of this issue, to decide that question? I say it is wrong in principle and it will be just as lasting as it is wrong because another prime minister, if he has a majority in the house, can bring in another flag.

**Mr. Churchill:** That is right.

**Mr. Leboe:** These people laugh.

**Mr. Caouette:** You people.

**Mr. Leboe:** If you are going to be prime minister some day, maybe you might.

**Mr. Pigeon:** Never. We will have a revolution.

**Mr. Leboe:** We got some reaction out of that.

**Mr. Caouette:** The reaction of the Conservatives.

**Mr. Leboe:** The flag which the hon. member had on his desk a little while ago would likely be the one he would promote.