

Canadian Flag

the province of Ontario. I do not criticize anyone else because it may be that if we were to raise these points we could get closer together. I believe, too, we should let the people on both sides, whether they are revolutionary or whether they are not, whether they are vocal or whether they are quiet, decide the issue by means of a plebiscite, and perhaps then we could achieve some unity in this country. Perhaps some day the Minister of National Health and Welfare will find I am hammering my desk for her, although I do not know.

I should like to say to the house that I believe there are three alternatives open to the government today. We have one before us right now in the form of an amendment providing for a plebiscite. The government, of course, could accept the amendment and we could go forward with a plebiscite. The second alternative is that the Prime Minister and the cabinet could decide to drop the whole issue and maintain the status quo until a more opportune time. The third alternative would be the application of closure. I wonder, Mr. Speaker, what has been discussed with government members. We have the amendment, and I wonder which of these alternatives the Prime Minister has informed government supporters he is going to follow. Whichever one it is, I should like to remind him that we refuse to change our position.

Miss LaMarsh: Let us vote.

Mr. G. D. Clancy (Yorkton): Some weeks ago I spoke in this house and said I was opposed to a plebiscite. I gave my reasons. I said I did not want to see bitterness engendered; I did not want to see a wedge driven too deeply between the various groups in our country.

I have changed my position, and I want to put it on the record. I am going to vote for a plebiscite. Let me tell you why. As I look across the house I find there is not one member in this house who represents an area west of Toronto. Oh, I apologize; there is one. I have changed my position and I am going to give you the reasons for that change.

Mr. Groos: Would the hon. member also change his position and admit that there is at least one other member from the west sitting in the house today?

Mr. Clancy: Once again I apologize. I have been around here so long that when the new boys walk in I do not always recognize them.

Now, I am going to make my position clear. I am voting for the plebiscite. I am not

bilingual, Mr. Speaker, but I want to draw attention to one fact. I believe the French word for rabbit is "lapin". I suppose the plural would be "les lapins". Well, watch those on my far left vote; watch them bolt for the curtain.

Some hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Ralph Cowan (York-Humber): Mr. Speaker, inasmuch as this house has voted to continue the debate on this plebiscite question, I am happy to take some part in the discussion because I am fully in favour of allowing the population of Canada to rule on this very emotional question of a flag for this country.

We have a distinctive Canadian national flag now. As I pointed out in speaking on the original motion on August 24 last, orders in council passed in 1924 and 1945 bear that out. It is referred to five times as a distinct or distinguished flag which certainly cannot be confused with that of any other nation. If there are some minds which cannot distinguish the Canadian red ensign from other flags, I see no reason why the entire nation must be brought down to the mental level of those who cannot tell the red ensign from any other flag. We do not have to descend to the lowest common denominator.

The Prime Minister, when speaking before the Royal Canadian Legion in Winnipeg on Sunday, May 17, in the second paragraph of his remarks stated that there was too little of the emotion of patriotism to be found in Canadians. I sincerely hope that I will not be carried away by my emotional approach to the flag. I hold it in the highest respect, in the highest regard, and I always will, despite what action may be taken by this parliament in a vote that may come before Christmas, although I sincerely hope not. The things for which the flag stands were created by the experiences of a great people. Everything for which it stands was written by their lives. The flag is the embodiment not of sentiment but of history. It represents the experiences made by men and women, the experiences of those who lived and those who died under the flag. It is not something to be laughed at. Last night I expressed my convictions and I expressed the opinions of the majority of the voters in the riding of York-Humber, as fine a constituency as there is in the city of Toronto. I hope you, Mr. Speaker, did not hear the laughter behind my back by people I did not wish to identify and therefore did not turn around.