

*Private Bills*

how nationalistic we want to be. We still have coming into this country every day a great many immigrants, and every year we are in the process of trying to provide jobs for them and trying to educate the children of new immigrants. We are not predominantly of any one racial origin and it is hard to find in this country what I would call a typical Canadian citizen.

To illustrate this, I think I might try to show the difference between Canadians and residents of the United States. I do not want in my remarks to be taken as being anti-American when I say that the Americans are rather flamboyant; that they are flag wavers; that they are very nationalistic. That is not necessarily saying these are not good qualities, but certainly our American neighbours to the south are distinguishable from Canadians by this feeling of nationalism which they acquire very quickly.

I think it takes an immigrant going into the United States only a very short while before he starts to think and act as an American. He feels it is the only way he can behave. In that society, if one is not the nationalistic flag waving type I feel the chances of being accepted as an ordinary member of the community are, perhaps, very slight. I suggest that a flag is one of those things he can point to with pride and say: this is mine. It is part of the American spirit to be a flag waver, and I am one of the first to admit that there is no such feeling in Canada.

We do not have a flag to which people can point in the same way as the Americans do. We do not hear them making so much reference to a national flag. However, I suggest this should in no way be taken as criticism of ourselves, just as I suggested a few moments ago that my remarks about Americans were in no way a criticism of that country. Speaking to a group of new immigrants the other day and searching about for an example of a typical Canadian I found that, thinking on my feet and giving the matter just a little thought and trying to describe it I was totally unable to come up with a description of the way in which a Canadian should act with regard to his feelings about a flag; how quickly he should be absorbed; how quickly he should set aside some of the patterns of life he had brought from the old country; or how much flag waving and nationalism he would need to show in order to be a typical Canadian citizen.

This is of importance, I think, when we consider the problem of whether we should now have a distinctive Canadian flag. The United States flag is a distinctive emblem, and I am suggesting that citizens of that

country take on somewhat flamboyant American characteristics much faster than we do in this country and to a greater extent. I suggest that if we have one distinguishing characteristic in Canada it is simply that not too many of us worry too much about taking on a distinctive national character. Really, what marks a Canadian as a good Canadian citizen is the fact that he does not worry about being a conformist; that he does not worry about creating the impression that he is similar to everyone else. I think the average Canadian citizen prides himself upon being a little different and on not worrying too much about whether he is conforming to a national pattern, no matter how exemplary that national pattern might be.

Therefore, I am one of those who believes that this is the spirit we should continue to foster in this country, the spirit that the typical Canadian is the one who likes the greatest freedom to act as he wishes as long as he is not bothering his neighbours, and who wants to give his neighbours the right to act in the same way, without requiring him to conform to a pattern. It is going to be very hard to typify this type of person. I suggest we have a much more independent, a much more individualistic type of person in this country and, accordingly, we are going to have much more trouble getting a flag to suit people of this type.

We are certainly not going to get unanimity on it, and I think that government measures intended to pick out a flag to suit everyone and change the customs which have developed over the years will be extremely hard to determine. I think we would have difficulty in determining what design we should use or what scheme should be adopted to bring it into being. On the other hand, I feel that this bill suggesting that the governor in council should bring it out is putting a heavy load on any authority. While we all, as members of parliament, must take sides on specific issues as they come up; while we must be prepared to lambast the government if we think it has failed to carry out its duties from time to time; and while we must be prepared to give leadership to the people of this country on controversial issues, it is hard to expect the small group of men who represent the government of this country to be able to come up with an idea for a flag which is going to meet with general approval throughout the country and which is going to carry out the objectives of those various groups which are so concerned about the flag they have in mind. In other words, most of those people who are most desirous of having a distinctive national flag have a particular idea of the kind of flag they want.

[Mr. Nugent.]