

*Canadian Flag*

minority, within the government or without, who will not listen to any alternative solutions to our problems, we destroy the very basis of our democratic processes and Canada as a nation will be poorer as a result.

It makes one wonder why it is so necessary at this time that the flag be dumped in parliament's lap as a political issue. A simple question on a referendum could be, "Do you as a Canadian want a new flag?" If the answer is yes then it will be up to parliament to produce one, either through a committee of all parties, a dominion-provincial conference on symbols, or any of the examples that have been suggested this afternoon. But to force a political flag on a nation, a flag chosen by the leader of a group that does not enjoy the confidence of the majority of Canadians, particularly when a free vote of the members of the House of Commons is denied, is absolutely wrong and it will be bitterly resented by hundreds of thousands of our citizens.

The *Toronto Telegram*, discussing this very thing, says:

Prime Minister Pearson is quite wrong in introducing this issue at this time. He is quite wrong in making the issue a matter of confidence...

The Prime Minister is badly advised as he pilots his mischievous piece of divisive legislation through parliament at this time.

Whatever the outcome—and the outcome is quite predictable—he will succeed simply in accentuating differences that exist in our national complex.

The date of that issue was June 17 and the editorial was headed "Meaningless Emblem", meaning the Prime Minister's personal choice of flag.

Surely there are more important matters to occupy parliament's time. If we put first things first, why are we not giving consideration to being able to amend the British North America Act in Canada? It seems strange to me that the very people who are screaming for a new flag still want the nation to go hat in hand to Westminster to ask for an amendment to our constitution.

Why are we not dealing with one of the prime objectives of parliament, which is to examine the estimates of the various departments and approve the government's spending program? To date we have approved the estimates of the Department of Agriculture and of the Post Office Department, and I believe we have sent the estimates of the Department of External Affairs to a committee. We have spent something like ten days considering the estimates of the various departments, ordinarily a job which takes a minimum of 45 days. Instead of attending to this basic job we are frittering our time away

in the heat of summer discussing the flag, and when we come back in the fall we will be expected to hurry these estimates through, making parliament seem like a rubber stamp.

I do not know who is responsible within the government for setting up the business of the house, but after 97 years of confederation surely we should get some semblance of order so that parliament can get the business of the session done, thus allowing members to go home to their families in summer and enjoy a holiday the same as any other Canadians do. Then when we come back in the fall refreshed we can get down to the country's business. The government, as I say, has given us very little opportunity to do even this basic job.

There are still items on the order paper that the Prime Minister declared urgent some weeks ago—and the flag was not one of them. The flag was not in the throne speech; it was not even included in the 35 items listed in what we have come to consider to be the Prime Minister's second throne speech. It was not until some time in May that the flag was suddenly considered important, even though the house had been sitting since February; and its importance has been blown up out of all proportion.

However—and this is a strange thing—now that we are back to debating the issue, the government is trying to minimize its importance. Their supporters are calling this a filibuster, and one of them said this just a few minutes ago. Their intention is to create an impression with the Canadian people that those of us who oppose the Pearson flag are wasting parliament's time. However, if this issue is of such minor importance that it does not deserve debate, why does the Prime Minister give it priority over all this other important legislation that is still on the order paper?

With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I would like to list some of this important legislation that we are being denied the right to discuss because we are talking about the Prime Minister's flag. I am just going to mention the important ones. There is the establishment of electoral boundaries commissions; there is an act to amend the Post Office Act in regard to delivery rates for first class mail, and so on; there is an act to establish a comprehensive program of old age pensions; there is a resolution that a joint committee of the Senate and House of Commons be appointed to consider the Canada pension plan; there is an act in respect of the rationalization of