

Supply—External Affairs

me. I have searched through *Hansard* of last year in order to get the answer, but I could not find it. I am wondering if the minister would give an answer now on the question of the circulation of mail similar to that which the Soviet has the privilege of doing through our postal facilities. I am wondering if we utilize a similar system in Russia to inform them about our democratic way of life so that they can become familiar with it, or are we not privileged to do that?

Mr. Pearson: Well, Mr. Chairman, we have not attempted to circulate in the Soviet union anything comparable to the bulletin that they circulate in this country. This is a free country and subject to the observance of the law, people, even diplomats from the Soviet countries, can use the mails for the circulation of their literature. In any event, this would be a rather expensive undertaking in the Soviet union. When we considered this sometime ago we felt that the expenditure would probably not be warranted, because we would have no assurance that anything we sent through the mail would ever reach the destination we had intended.

However, there has been an easing in that situation for the time being. My hon. friend may have noticed in the press that the United States is now beginning to circulate United States information in the Soviet union and this is something I think certainly we should reconsider. We are in the process of doing that. But in so far as Soviet embassy literature in this country is concerned, they have the same freedom as other embassies and legations to use the mails as long as they do not contravene the laws in doing so.

Mr. Hahn: I was not indicating, at least I hope the minister did not interpret my remarks as indicating, that I did not think they should have the same privileges as other Canadians in using the mails. I just wanted to find out if we had the same privilege in the Soviet union.

Mr. Nicholson: I am glad the minister mentioned the new policy of the United States, because I noticed in the Sunday New York *Times* some pictures of the first edition of this bulletin. Is the minister co-operating with Washington with a view to giving some publicity to Canada in this publication that is going to be circulated in the U.S.S.R.?

Mr. Pearson: If we do it I think we ought to do it as a strictly Canadian venture. I think it would be more effective, if we did it at all, to do it ourselves. It would also be more expensive.

Mr. Nesbitt: Did the Department of External Affairs have any official as an

observer at the recent conference attended by the President of the United States at Panama?

Mr. Pearson: No, we had no observer at that conference. It was, as my hon. friend knows, a conference of representatives of the American republics. It lasted for a very short time and no substantial business was discussed. A declaration was signed by the presidents of the American states, but I think that was the only thing that was done there. We had no observer.

Mr. Nesbitt: When other conferences take place among the inter-American countries, such as the Pan-American conference of which we are not a member, do we normally have observers at those conferences?

Mr. Pearson: Yes, Mr. Chairman, it has been our practice. When there are inter-American conferences dealing with substantial matters, either political or economic, we usually have someone there to keep track of what is going on.

Mr. Nesbitt: Has the government considered any change of policy with respect to closer relationships between this country and the South American countries? I mean by that, of course, such as contemplating any entrance into the Pan-American union, or anything of that nature?

Mr. Pearson: There was a very interesting speech on that matter this afternoon by the hon. member for Roberval, in which he expressed the view that we should establish a closer association, possibly through membership in the organization of American states. We have not done so. The matter has been under consideration for a good many years. In the earlier days—and I am thinking now of the 1930's—our application for membership would not have been, I think, unanimously approved, but there is no difficulty of that kind now, I admit. Nevertheless we have not taken that particular step.

I would like to emphasize, however, that if we have not done so it is not, as I have sometimes read and heard stated, that we have been restrained from doing so by any influence outside of Canada. This is a decision we can make quite freely on our own. We have, however, as my hon. friend knows, increased our contact with the South American states in exchanging our diplomatic representation in that part of the world.

There are two or three South American states and three or four Central American states where we have not yet established diplomatic representation, but our relations