

recollection, I would say that seventeen years is the maximum. But if a patent is not exercised it can be cancellable at any time after three years.

Item agreed to.

Office of the Chief Electoral Officer.

35. Salaries and expenses of office, \$16,692.

Mr. CASTLEDEN: If I might refer back to item 35, I understand that some provinces when holding provincial elections do not extend the right to vote to the men in military service. Is there any regulation whereby the provinces can or cannot decide that matter?

Mr. McLARTY: Not as far as the jurisdiction of the federal government extends. The matter of qualifications for voting in provincial elections is within the purview of the provinces alone.

Item agreed to.

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

37. Departmental administration, \$238,455.

Mr. COLDWELL: Some little time ago the French consulates throughout Canada were closed. There has been considerable discussion both in the public press and among people interested in international affairs, because it is said that the consuls, some of whom were not particularly favoured by the government, are in Ottawa and are still active around the legation. Could the Prime Minister tell us something as to what has been done in this regard, and make some definite statement regarding the French legation in this country? Many people feel, as I do myself, particularly since Laval has taken over the premiership of France, that, while the Prime Minister has told us on several occasions that the legation represents the French people, nevertheless it is, I think, a generally accepted principle that a legation represents a country and that a country is represented by its government. It seems very difficult indeed to divorce in the public mind the activities of Pierre Laval from those of the government of France and, therefore, from its representation in Canada.

I might tell the Prime Minister that I know there is considerable uneasiness in the country, although I believe the gentleman who heads the legation at the present time is highly regarded by most people who know him. Nevertheless he represents a government which at the best is unfriendly, and which at any time may be at war with us if certain eventualities occur. At least that is an opinion at which one would arrive after studying the situation at Alexandria and elsewhere.

Would the Prime Minister say something about this situation? I believe we should close the legation and send the representatives of Vichy back to France, particularly as I say because of the attitude of Laval who is now the chief minister in the French government.

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): My hon. friend will recall that a short time ago we had Mr. Dupuy who is our chargé d'affaires to France, come back to Canada in order that the whole situation might be reviewed fully with him. I had Mr. Dupuy meet my colleagues, and also had present our minister to the United States. We went very fully into the advantages to Canada at this time of having a representative at Vichy who could keep us informed upon certain developments there. I also had Mr. Dupuy visit Washington while he was here, with a view to exchanging information with the Secretary of State of the United States, or the under secretary, and ascertaining the American views with respect not only to Canada's continued representation in France but also the continued representation of the United States in France.

Apart from that, I have myself had intimate conversations with both the Secretary of State of the United States and the under secretary on this very matter, and while I am not in a position to disclose the reasons—my hon. friend will not expect me to do that—I can say to him that both the United States government and our government are of the view that it would be a mistake to withdraw our chargé d'affaires from France at the present time. I have also discussed this matter with Mr. Churchill, Prime Minister of Great Britain, and I can assure my hon. friend that if it were felt by any of these countries that a risk was being run in any way to the interests of any of the three, there would be no thought for a moment of maintaining our representation there. I think perhaps that side of the question has not been thought of sufficiently. Attention has been drawn to the fact that there is representation of Vichy in Canada; but the withdrawal of the French minister from Canada would mean the withdrawal of our chargé d'affaires from France, and considering all aspects of the situation I believe our interests would be better served by preserving the present relations. There is also, of course, the broader aspect of the question, which is the desire on the part of all free peoples to encourage as much as possible the people of France, who at the moment are under the heel of the oppressor, and to give them no reason to believe that the nations which are still free