

*Supply—External Affairs*

merits with any proposed expenditure for which a case is made out, nevertheless we do not believe in just providing money loosely after this fashion for the government to use in any way it sees fit. I am glad to say that in the committee my amendment came very close to passing. It was defeated by a vote of only nine to six. It was supported by all Conservative and C.C.F. members of the committee although, of course, it was opposed by the Liberal members, and they were supported by the Social Credit member on that committee.

Mr. Chairman, I am going to renew that motion now, and I hope that what I have said about the extravagance in connection with the purchase of the embassy at Rio and its furnishings will alert the house to the danger of placing large sums of money like this at the disposal of the department without any strings attached to them. It is difficult enough in the case of these expenditures that are made abroad, where it is only very rarely that a member of the committee or a member of the house has an opportunity of seeing with his own eyes the results, without placing a sum of nearly \$1 million at the disposal of the department without any strings attached to it save that it must be expended abroad on capital account for buildings or furnishings.

The excuse given by the department is that they may have the opportunity of making a good buy somewhere, that there are capitals in the world where the department wishes to acquire property for the housing of its diplomatic representatives and if opportunities present themselves they should be in a position to take advantage of them. I think that is a very dangerous doctrine to follow. That doctrine, if followed, could result in a very serious weakening of parliamentary control over expenditures. We are sitting here now seven months a year, or perhaps even more, and we have estimates and supplementary estimates introduced about four times a year. I cannot see that any lengthy period is ever likely to elapse before parliament would be in a position to deal with any opportunity that is offered.

The principle of parliamentary control over public expenditure is a very important principle and we should not be parties to weakening it. Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I move:

That item 95 of the estimates of the Department of External Affairs be reduced by the sum of \$805,000 by elimination of the "unallotted capital items" on page 183.

**Mr. Pearson:** Mr. Chairman, this matter was, of course, discussed in detail in the committee on external affairs, and I am glad it was. The hon. member has also discussed it in

detail last night and this morning, and I certainly have no quarrel with that because I am just as interested in the avoidance of extravagance in the expenditure of Canadian funds as he is. The hon. member knows, of course, because he has been a guest and I am sure a very welcome guest at a good many of our missions abroad, that an embassy or a legation is not a private residence. It is the official residence of the representative of Canada, and when we buy property naturally we try to keep that in mind. It is Canada in that particular foreign capital and we want that property, that residence, to be suitable. We also want it to be permanent. In the case of Rio, for instance, we hope that this embassy will be the official centre of Canada in Brazil for 50, 75 or maybe 100 years, and so we purchase for a long time.

In purchasing we look for something suitable, a house for the job and not for any particular person. That means that an embassy, which is not a private residence, has to have accommodation for official receptions, official dinners and all those things which are an important part of diplomatic activities especially, if I may so, in a South American state. There is nothing in our mind—and I mention this because the hon. member referred to it two or three times—of keeping up with the Joneses. That does not seem to me to be a very pertinent observation in any event, because whether one wants to keep up with the Joneses in any activity would depend very largely on where the Joneses are and where they are going. Very often we should be well behind the Joneses and possibly at times we should be well ahead of them.

So far as Rio is concerned, in this capital we are not concerned with aping the customs and the habits of the diplomatic representation of any other country. We do what we think is right for Canada. If we had wished to keep up with the Joneses in Rio, some of the Joneses have spent between a million and a million and a half dollars on their embassies in that capital. We buy buildings when we are able to buy them with economy as well as efficiency, and with representational propriety in mind. So far as Rio is concerned, it is a great metropolitan capital of an important South American state, the South American state with which we in Canada probably have our most important commercial and political relationships, and I say that without implying any reflection upon our relations with any other South American state. But it is possibly true that our commercial contacts with Rio are more important than those with any other South American country.

[Mr. Fleming.]