

Supply—External Affairs

Mr. Diefenbaker: What is the explanation for this, Mr. Chairman? Has it to do with some building that is being put up as permanent headquarters?

Mr. Harris: Yes.

Mr. Diefenbaker: For NATO?

Mr. Harris: Yes.

Mr. Diefenbaker: What is the total cost of the building, and how is the obligation determined for each of the countries?

Mr. Harris: The total contribution is 250 million francs, of which 6.7 per cent will be Canada's share. Of that, 5 per cent will be paid out of external affairs estimates and the balance, 1.7 per cent, out of mutual aid contributions.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Has the minister the contribution made by other countries?

Mr. Harris: No, I just have our own.

Item agreed to.

571. To provide for a gift of food and drugs as a contribution to flood relief for India, Pakistan and Nepal, \$225,000.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Under what circumstances was this contribution made to flood relief in India, Pakistan and Nepal?

Mr. Harris: In 1954, after floods had caused devastation over wide areas in India, Pakistan and Nepal, the Canadian commission in Karachi and New Delhi reported that the United States and United Kingdom were making efforts to provide a substantial amount of flood relief, and suggested that a contribution by the Canadian government would be welcome. In view of these circumstances it was agreed we would supply \$225,000, to take the form of dried skim milk and drugs for this purpose, to be divided as follows: India, \$100,000; Pakistan, \$100,000; Nepal, \$25,000.

Item agreed to.

572. Contribution to the United Nations relief and works agency for Palestine refugees in the Near East, \$500,000.

Mr. Diefenbaker: This has to do with a contribution for Palestine refugees. How long has the Canadian government been making this contribution? What has been the total to date of the Canadian contribution, and has the minister a record of the number of refugees who are to be the beneficiaries of these grants, either on the part of Canada or collectively on the part of the nations making contributions?

Mr. Harris: This arose in 1949, Mr. Chairman, when the United Nations undertook, through a relief organization, to provide for

[Mr. Harris.]

those who had unfortunately become refugees as a result of the difficulties in Israel. We have been contributing yearly since, and our total contribution to date amounts to \$3,555,929. We are the fourth largest contributor after the United States, the United Kingdom and France. We have been making this contribution in the hope that the problem could be solved. Indeed we have expressed rather strong views on occasion about what should be done. Since some hon. members are very familiar with the problem I perhaps should not say much about it, except to add that we do feel this is one of those cases where greater difficulties might have occurred if the problem were not met in the manner in which it is being met here. For that reason we continue the grant we have made.

Mr. Diefenbaker: The minister has stated the problem. There is no more difficult problem anywhere in the world, I would think, than one dealing with refugees. I personally spoke with a number of the refugees and learned that they realized Canada was making this contribution toward the alleviation of their condition. The minister has mentioned the strong views expressed on this question by Canada. Certainly there is no sorer spot than these camps which, as one visits them and leaves them, cannot help but impress one with the awfulness of the situation in which these people find themselves.

The minister mentioned Canada's contribution, and I think that is one contribution that does leave an impression upon the people who receive it. In addition, it is building a bulwark against the spread of communism in these areas.

Mr. Low: Can the minister say whether the nations who do contribute to this fund have made fairly strong representations to the effect that the contributions should be used for the rehabilitation of these refugees, rather than simple maintenance as has been the case up to this time? If so, what has been the response?

Mr. Harris: I believe the hon. member for Peace River has put his finger on the problem which, let us in all frankness admit, does exist here. Perhaps because of circumstances it was inevitable for a while that the relief item should go entirely to maintenance. One accepts the problem, and by maintenance looks after the people immediately. It takes a little while to work out a plan for the eventual rehabilitation of these people. This extended over a period of time after 1949, but we are satisfied that there is good evidence that the problem now is being looked upon as one which must be solved by way of rehabilitation and in other ways.