

*Supply—Citizenship and Immigration*

any basis of humanitarian thinking, if these people should be destroyed. Therefore what we say and what we have done, and what will be said and what will be done, before the situation is cleared up is something which must be taken with the greatest of concern, forethought and carefulness, bearing in mind that any misstep might result in the tragedy that we are all so concerned about.

Let me say in closing that this experience has been a privilege for me. In spite of some of the criticisms which have been made, if the situation were to arise again where I might be asked to carry out such an assignment I would be very happy to do so. I cannot emphasize too much to the members of this committee the regard in which Canadians and Canada are held, not only by the nationals of Africa but by all those with whom we came in contact. By offering our good services and taking the initiative in an effort to free these hostages we were doing something which perhaps no one else could have done, and I am sure all members of the committee will understand this.

I could go on and make a few remarks about external aid but I think I might do that a little later on, if it is considered relevant, as at this time we are closing our deliberations on the estimates of the Department of External Affairs. I will just leave this statement as it relates to the hostages by itself, because we do not want to do anything to detract from the urgency and the gravity of the situation.

Item agreed to.

**The Deputy Chairman:** This completes the estimates of the Department of External Affairs.

DEPARTMENT OF CITIZENSHIP  
AND IMMIGRATION

Indian Affairs—

15. Administration, operation and maintenance including expenditures on works on other than federal property, grants and contributions as detailed in the estimates, recoverable expenditures under agreements entered into with the approval of the governor in council with the governments of the provinces and territories and with local school boards in respect of social assistance to persons residing on Indian reserves other than Indians and the education in Indian schools of children other than Indian children, and to authorize the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to provide, in respect of Indian commercial activities, for the instruction and supervision of Indians, the furnishing of materials, the purchase of finished goods and, notwithstanding any other act, the sale of such finished goods, \$47,742,400.

**The Deputy Chairman:** The committee will now proceed with the examination of the

estimates of the Indian affairs branch, vote No. 15. This item is to be found on page 62 of the blue book, the details on page 65.

**Mr. Howard:** Mr. Chairman, I had the opportunity on another day when these items were before the committee, as did other hon. members, to make a few comments, but since that time there has been another development in the field of Indian affairs which I think is worth a comment or two. Incidentally, I understand that just within the past few days—the move may still be taking place—the Indian affairs branch, along with other offices under the minister's jurisdiction, is moving into a brand, spanking new building. Many of the personnel are there already. I hope the atmosphere of freshness, vigour and newness which exists in this new building will also have some effect on the minister and his officials, so that they may come up with fresh, invigorating approaches and policies in regard to Indian affairs.

Since the last time these items were before this committee a federal-provincial conference has been held on Indian affairs. This was a conference from which the native Indian people were excluded. Because of the exclusion of the very people whose rights and freedoms were being debated in that conference there has developed a very large degree of resentment against this government and against the provincial governments for participating in a conference held behind closed doors, and for discussing and debating and doing heaven knows what else with Indian affairs and the rights of the people themselves.

The reason given by the minister for holding this conference in secret was that it was a dominion-provincial conference, and dominion-provincial conferences have traditionally been held behind closed doors. This reasoning may be sound if this conference, as with conferences in the past, had been about fiscal arrangements, taxes, statistics or dollars and cents, but at this particular conference the federal and provincial governments were not dealing with cold, inanimate statistics but with human beings, a group of human beings incidentally who populated this part of the world countless thousands of years before Europeans ever dreamed it existed. This conference dealt with our first Canadians and their basic rights, their fundamental freedoms, their position under the law and the whole field of their social activity.

I echo, Mr. Chairman, their resentment as being excluded from this conference. They do not know what went on behind these