

Supply—National Revenue

to think about it seriously this year and give it to us for the beginning of next year.

Item agreed to.

Tax appeal board—

264. Administration expenses, \$116,500.

Mr. McIlraith: This is the last item and I understand the minister will now answer.

Mr. Nowlan: Yes; I was waiting for other comments. Mr. Chairman, at least we are on the last item of my department and perhaps I could refer briefly to some of the matters which have been raised this evening.

The hon. member for Nickel Belt raised the highly technical question with respect to valuations of lots at Sudbury which were bought at a certain time and he asked what valuation might be put on them now. Frankly I do not think I can get involved in a technical discussion of that kind. He also mentioned the problem of joint property and raised many other technicalities which frankly I am not competent to deal with. Even if I thought I were I think it would be the height of presumption to try and deal with them on an estimate and give what might be construed as a legal opinion and afterwards have it used against me in another place. I would be very glad to discuss this question with the hon. member in my office, or he can discuss it with legal officers or with other officers of the department.

I can well understand how he takes more than a passing interest in the increase in the value of lots at Sudbury because I know about that from having visited my son there some 15 years ago. I saw vast expanses of rather unoccupied land, shall we say, and one can see how it has been built up during the last few years so that now you have almost a continuous town in areas where for miles you hardly saw a house. I realize the importance of the problem and I will do everything possible to provide satisfactory answers to it.

The hon. member also asked about the staff at Sudbury and the impact of this centre which we have in Ottawa upon the staff there. The hon. member for Laurier also asked about this problem of the reduction in staff. It is true we have reduced the temporary staffs who are normally employed during the rush season in the spring. As the result of centralizing operations here in Ottawa we have effected substantial reductions in those temporary staffs. We have not reduced all our permanent staff in any way, shape or form.

Earlier in my opening statement I spoke about the over-all reduction in staff. That was accomplished by efficiency and by modern methods perhaps, but we did not let anyone

out of the department. What happened was that the people we had retired for various reasons, health, age, and so on, and we were able to effect economies by not filling all the vacancies which normally occur. That is how we accomplished a reduction in staff; it was not by letting anyone out who was in the employ of the department.

The hon. member for Kindersley raised with me a theoretical problem with respect to the evaluation of oil and mineral rights and the principle which the department follows in assessing those rights on those old properties when they were not reserved at the time the original grants were made. That, again, is a technical and legal matter and I think it would probably be better dealt with in conversations between the persons concerned and the officials of the department rather than my trying to deal with it inadequately at this time.

The hon. member for Gloucester raised a question as to the number of bilingual employees we have in the district office of Saint John. I am advised by my officials that we do not have a break down of the number of bilingual people we have at the district offices in Canada. We know, through a card record of individuals, those who are bilingual and those who are not. It is the policy of this division, as it is the policy of all branches of government, to make sure that there is a sufficient number employed in each one of the offices throughout Canada to serve whichever of the official languages that is used. I am sorry I cannot give the exact number tonight, but if the hon. member wishes me to obtain it we can get it by checking the individual cards of the staff in Saint John.

The hon. member for Calgary South together with others made some flattering references to the deputy minister and his staff. I want to express my appreciation for this. I think it speaks very highly of them, and I join with what has been said by hon. members in this committee tonight. Praise has been given to officials of the customs and excise division which is a tax collecting department and a tough one. I presume that of all the tough jobs in the service of Canada, administering the income tax division is probably the toughest of all.

Mr. Benidickson: They do it very well.

Mr. Nowlan: They deal with millions of individual taxpayers, somewhere in the neighbourhood of six million individual taxpayers, I think. In addition we have scores of thousands of corporations and the number of complaints or criticisms we receive is so negligible that it does not come as a surprise to me that the officials responsible should