

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): We have succeeded in getting the Lands branch all housed in the Norlite building which is just across the street from the West block. When I came to Ottawa they were scattered in four or five buildings.

Mr. GARLAND (Bow River): Sixteen.

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): My hon. friend mentions the classification. The classification is done by the Topographical surveys, but the Lands branch is now all housed in the Norlite building. That explains how we are able by the amalgamation of the work to reduce staff. I do not know anything about the Spinney report, but since coming to Ottawa I think I am safe in making the assertion that the Interior department has been reduced by twenty-five per cent. That has not been done in one or two years; it is a gradual decrease spread over several years. My hon. friend has spoken about the scattering of the staff around in offices in this city. This makes the work of the department very difficult and expensive, as anyone who has to do with the staff will understand. Files have to be carried from one building to another and, of course, delays occur. I would be delighted if Dr. Roche and the Civil Service Commission would finish their survey of the Interior department. They have a free hand to make any recommendations as regards reductions and savings, and I will guarantee that I will carry them out. That has been a standing offer ever since I came to Ottawa. I do not think any minister in a short period of three or four years, with all the ramifications of a department and with all the other duties to which a minister is called upon to devote his attention, can become sufficiently acquainted with a large staff, to form an estimate whether his department is overmanned or undermanned. I shall be glad to see the minister who is able to do that. A minister is asked to carry out innumerable duties. He has the duties of his office to perform. It seems to me the ideal position is that he should be relieved altogether of staff affairs, and that they should be looked after from another source. I would like the Board of Audit or the Civil Service Commission to look after these matters. As a matter of fact, the Civil Service Commission have a representative in the Interior department continually. It is his business to look after staffs, to examine into recommendations that are made for promotions, requests for help on account of increased service and so on, so that while the minister cannot escape the responsibility of signing recommendations and requests of one sort or another, perhaps

[Mr. E. J. Garland.]

for an increase of pay, nevertheless, a very close scrutiny is kept upon the department by the Civil Service Commission and I will welcome any suggestion on their part that will tend to reduce the expenditure or the personnel.

Mr. GARLAND (Bow River): The minister is to be congratulated on his frank statement. At the outset, I intended to make it quite clear that I placed no blame upon himself personally. I agree with him that the difficulties he has to face are too numerous for him to spend time running around the department in order to find where he can dispose of a man here and another one there so as to cut down expenditure. I notice the total salaries and bonus for the staff are given as \$3,706,009. Could the minister give the total salaries and bonus for the current year?

Mr. STEWART (Argenteuil): Our estimate for this year is \$3,548,241.25.

Mr. GARLAND (Bow River): Although the minister may have effected a reduction of 25 per cent in the number of employees—and possibly he is correct in his estimate, although I have not had time to check it up—there has not been the same ratio of reduction in the cost. There has been a reduction of about \$160,000, or not quite that.

Mr. McTAGGART. On that point: I do not know whether the civil service in the Interior department is overmanned or undermanned, but I want to put in a word for the officials in that department at this time. I do not think anyone in this House or out of it has a right to criticize the staff of the Department of the Interior until he is familiar with the enormous quantity of work it has to do. There is the other side of this story. The Department of the Interior are acting as administrators for thousands and thousands of acres of land in western Canada, and a tremendous quantity of correspondence is coming to the department in relation to those lands. In my experience, in the main, there has been a slowness in answering the correspondence. That may be because of the fact that the department is undermanned. I believe that the department is doing everything possible to facilitate the work of administering Dominion lands, and I should be very loath to see the staff of that department undermanned because I feel it might reflect in this way, that the administration and correspondence in connection with Dominion lands in western Canada might be further hindered.