

that we shall not reduce staff fast enough but that we shall not be able to keep senior personnel in sufficient strength to do this job of contract settlement expeditiously. Every contract has to be audited; then there is the matter of renegotiation, which is a tremendous job in itself. Every contract must be considered by the renegotiation office to determine whether renegotiation is necessary, and if it is necessary, to work out the terms. Then there must be contract settlements. Those three occupations require a very large staff, in fact a larger staff than we are able to provide of trained personnel, and that work will continue for some months to come.

Mr. MACDONNELL: Another question. As I read it, the actual expenditures for the work will be approximately the same as the estimate, roughly \$7 million?

Mr. HOWE: No, we are really passing the estimates which were filed last April.

Mr. MACDONNELL: I mean, looking at the first two columns.

Mr. HOWE: Yes; they add up to the amount we specified for the department in April. The termination of the war will reduce the requirements of the department. I call the attention of my hon. friend to the fact that we are dealing with an over-all bill for some \$1,365 million. This is only a break-down for purposes of discussion, and this amount is not being appropriated by itself; a bill in which this is included is being prepared. I daresay my hon. friend could cut a million dollars from this amount; but a million dollars from the war appropriation bill would not be a very important matter.

Mr. MACDONNELL: I suppose that is true; and yet, if I may say so, it seems to me that that is another instance of a fact that worries me, that apparently a million dollars does not count at all. As I understand the minister, these figures are not even intended to be the actual representation of what is happening. In other words, apparently this does not take into account the fact that the minister's staff is down by a considerable number. Is that correct?

Mr. HOWE: That is correct, yes.

Mr. MACDONNELL: It does seem to me that that is an awfully free and easy way of dealing with money.

Item agreed to.

Additions and extensions to plants, \$15,000,000.

Mr. GILLIS: The question I wish to ask the minister under this item is one which I

should perhaps have asked under "departmental administration." Could the minister tell me, because I am particularly interested, why the plate mill at Sydney, Nova Scotia, was closed down? The mill was built in the last war at a cost of some \$11 million to the taxpayers of Canada. It was closed immediately after the last war, and all the equipment, machinery and so forth was moved by Dominion Steel and Coal and taken to Ojibway Falls in Ontario. On the outbreak of the recent war, the minister will remember, I raised very often in this chamber the matter of the advisability of having it re-equipped. Montreal interests wanted to buy it. Anyway, another appropriation was made by the government amounting to approximately \$1½ million, and the mill was reequipped a second time. It staggered along until a few months ago, and then was closed again permanently. That mill belongs to the taxpayers; it was bought and paid for twice; and I should like to know why it was closed and what are the future intentions with respect to it. Is it to be left idle once again until the machinery is removed, without any accounting to the people of Canada? I understand that we are still importing plate from the United States. That may not be correct. But what is the future of that mill? Does the government intend to use it? Will it be sold? Provided that capital in that end of the country can be raised to buy out the mill and go into production and produce plate, is it possible to do that?

Mr. HOWE: I assume that the reason the mill is not operating is that the custodian of it is not able to sell the product. The dominion itself was a large buyer of steel plate during the shipbuilding programme. Now that the shipbuilding programme is finished, it is not a buyer of plate at all. I can speak only as to dominion requirements. My hon. friend is quite right; the mill belongs to the dominion. If he can find a buyer I would be glad to offer a very low cost on the mill; we will turn it over to War Assets, and he will be delighted with the trade. I am looking for a buyer; perhaps he can help me out.

Mr. IRVINE: Why sell it?

Mr. FLEMING: The minister in making his statement this afternoon indicated that this first item, "additions and extensions to plants", was mostly for the Chalk River atomic energy plant. Would he be good enough to give the committee some further break-down of this large amount of \$15 million? I am thinking of a break-down along these lines: the plant itself, that is the manufacturing plant; and the settlement or town