

The CHAIRMAN: Maybe, Mr. Herridge, I could make a comment on that at this time. I think we agreed we would restrict our question to general administration, leaving specific items to be dealt with when the heads of the various branches are before us. Now that we are brought back on the track, we will proceed.

Mr. PUGH: May I make a general comment?

The CHAIRMAN: Certainly, Mr. Pugh.

Mr. PUGH: Items 448 right straight through to 488, are all very, very close together last year and this year. I was wondering if Colonel Lalonde would care to make any comment on that? In other words, the department seems to be running on a very even gear.

Mr. LALONDE: This only relates to the administrative group at head office where it is perhaps easier to estimate than it is in the field areas. But I believe, as I said last year before this committee, that we have reached a more or less permanent level of activity in the department for the next five years at which time it is expected there will be a decline in the work of handling the problems of World War I veterans; then there may be another period of five years in which the work of the department will have declined slightly. But as veterans of World War II grow older it will pick up again and we consider our peak load will occur between 1980 and 1985. So that the amount mentioned for departmental administration is indicative, I think, of that trend.

Mr. MONTGOMERY: If there is no more war.

Mr. LALONDE: That is right.

Mr. PUGH: Would the present administrative set-up be able to handle half as much again? You mentioned a peak period in 1985. Would the same administrative set-up which we have now be able to handle that?

Mr. LALONDE: What you mean is the number of people employed?

Mr. PUGH: Personnel. Could they handle more?

Mr. LALONDE: That is hard to say. It is always possible, I think, to handle with the same personnel a variation of even 10 per cent in the volume of work; but if you go further than that I think you do need more personnel depending on how it happened.

Mr. PUGH: Would you have any idea, percentagewise, what the peak is for which you are prepared, say in 1985?

Mr. LALONDE: Perhaps I can stick my neck out now. I do not think we will need any great increase in personnel because by 1985 the accent will be on certain aspects of the work such as treatment, welfare problems of older World War II veterans; but there will be less problems remaining. For instance, straight rehabilitation benefits will by then have disappeared. There will probably be a lot less problems for the Veterans Land Act and so on, so the volume ought to be about the same although some of the personnel may have to be directed to other fields.

Mr. CARTER: Have you attempted to anticipate expenditures say for a ten or twenty year period?

Mr. LALONDE: No. We think that would be crystal gazing. Of course, a great deal depends on what legislative changes parliament makes in the veterans' legislation. Just to give you an example, the last amendments to the War Veterans Allowance Act have made quite an increase in the volume of recipients whom we have to look after and process. That volume of work has increased a great deal in the last few years. We have handled it with the same staff.