

VOTE 15. - VALUATION AND ORDNANCE SURVEY

20. Irregularity

In 1996, some £1.88m was received by the Ordnance Survey Office in respect of map sales. Customers pay by way of cash, cheque or credit card over the counter, by post or by telephone.

In April 1997, the Accounting Officer informed me that financial irregularities had been uncovered in the map sales office and that the Gardaí had initiated an investigation into the irregularities at his request. He stated that, because the investigation was ongoing, he was somewhat circumscribed in what he could say about the precise details of the irregularities. However, in broad terms, evidence of irregularities uncovered was supported by the internal audit carried out in February 1997 and included

- operators holding cash for which there were no matching receipts
- customer cheques which could not be matched with any receipt issued
- different amounts on customer and office copies of receipts
- the alteration of receipts prior to their submission to the accounts office
- receipt books from which receipts were missing when the books were returned to the accounts office.

It was not possible at that stage to estimate the extent of the financial loss or to state the length of time over which the irregularities took place.

As a result of the discovery of the irregularities and the recommendations contained in the internal audit report, new control procedures had been implemented in the map sales office and in the accounts office, including, *inter alia*, controls on the issue and accounting for receipt books, daily reconciliation of sales and new checking procedures in the accounts office. Furthermore, the map storage and retrieval computer system was being upgraded to provide for simultaneous receipting and map production and it is intended to integrate this system with the till system in a later stage of the information technology development programme. The Accounting Officer stated that the new procedures had been issued in writing to all staff and would be kept under review. He was confident that their implementation would prevent a recurrence of the irregularities under investigation.