

Supply—Mines and Technical Surveys

which will completely reimburse the three companies concerned or the value of all of the photography they have done up until last October.

But this will not be any saving to the government. Of course, we are happy that this job will be completed much sooner than it was supposed to be completed, but early last fall the Department of Mines and Technical Surveys knew that 50 per cent of the job was completed, and as the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River said, this amount could have been provided in the supplementary estimates of January last.

Mr. Caron: Furthermore, it was said a while ago that the committee speaks of contracts, and if there is a contract there must be a commitment. The minister says there was no commitment, but the committee speaks of a contract with this company.

Mr. Dumas: The minister mentioned an amount of \$1,900,000 in the main estimates. Was that \$1,900,000 voted to pay those three companies? Was that the full amount covering this job in the Arctic?

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): The sum was not provided entirely or exclusively for the work in the Arctic archipelago. Some of it was for work on the mainland.

Mr. Denis: Am I right in understanding from what the minister has said that the amount he just mentioned of \$2,300,000 would be allocated? There would be no public tenders asked because, if the work is done, how can the minister then ask for tenders? There would be no tenders at all; is that right?

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): I do not think my hon. friend followed what I have been saying. There were original contracts awarded to these three firms to undertake this work on a six-year basis.

Mr. Denis: For what amount?

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): The total amount ran to something like \$6 million. That was the total program. I am, of course, giving round figures now, according to my recollection. It was expected at one time when the contract was entered into that this would work out on a fairly uniform annual basis, but for the reasons I have indicated the work was expedited. My hon. friend asks about tenders for this work. These were the three companies which were successful as a result of the tenders and were assigned the work. Therefore it is a question of operating within the original contractual arrangements between the parties following the original tender.

Mr. Dumas: How many companies tendered for these contracts?

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): I cannot give my friend the answer, but he knows perhaps better than I do the fact that there are not likely to be many companies in a position to undertake this work in that area. I cannot give him the answer to that question offhand. I can look it up and see if there were any others, but it would not surprise me if these were the only companies that tendered, and the work was shared among them.

Mr. Cardin: Despite the very valiant efforts of the Minister of Finance to answer the questions which have been asked, there seems to be in some minds, certainly in mine, a great deal of confusion as to whether or not there was any commitment. I wonder if I might make the suggestion to the minister that the Minister of Mines and Technical Surveys come in, because I understand that is under his department and I am sure he would be in a position to answer the question we really want to ask.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): I am giving to the committee the information which I have. That is the information I have on this subject. I have given the answer to this question on three occasions, now.

Mr. Chevrier: Much as we like the Minister of Finance in the circumstances we would prefer to hear the Minister of Mines and Technical Surveys.

Mr. Caron: I think we need still more clarification. First of all, the minister said that there was no commitment at all, and then a while ago he said tenders have been asked for and contracts given. Is there not something of a commitment, when the government has asked for tenders and given a contract?

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): The hon. member is thinking of something quite different.

Mr. Caron: How can the minister say such things to the committee? When he was sitting on this side of the house he was the first to protest if he did not get the information he required. Now he refuses to give us the information which we need before we can vote on this item. Instead he tries to pass on all kinds of answers which are not true.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): I think the hon. member is now reaching a point where I must ask him to reflect on what he is saying. I was asked whether there were any commitments with respect to the amounts the house is now asked to approve. I have given the answer. There were no commitments. The hon. member is now talking about something quite different. I think this is about the sixth time I have said this, and I had hoped we would not need to go over the