

Supply—Mines and Technical Surveys

them in 1954 and then criticized him for not doing so.

There is something wrong here. There is a lack of understanding, an oversight. I do not know. Is it because the then minister of transport, now the member for Laurier, is taking a different view of the matter since he has been on the other side of the house? Maybe.

Well, here are the facts, and there can be no mistake about that. We have acted on the instructions of the cabinet on every point and they have not been changed since that time. We are proceeding in exactly the same way as last year, and two years ago, and I have no reason to believe that a change will be effected in the future. This is the usual procedure followed in the department.

The hon. member for Laurier also criticized our attitude saying that we had failed to award the contract to the lowest bidder. Now, this is just not so, because we have worked out the price of the contract. This is what the hon. member said in his speech of March 28:

(Text):

I state that it—

That is the contract.

—was given without the calling of tenders... In this case the minister, for some unknown reason,—

(Translation):

You will note, Mr. Chairman, the words chosen by the hon. member.

(Text):

—decided not to call for tenders... and simply awarded the contract on the basis of information obtained through the filing of tariff rates.

(Translation):

What comments on my part is the house expecting? The explanation is there. I gave the reason, and I have no other to offer. The contract was awarded to the company which had filed its scale of charges and duly submitted them and which according to the estimates of the officials of the department, was offering to do the work for the lowest price. As a matter of fact, according to our estimates, the price represented, for the scale of charges only, a difference of \$25,000, in favour of the Autair Company, as compared with the other tenderers.

Consequently, I feel the explanation I have given justifies to a degree my attitude, and I wanted to correct unfair statements made about me by the hon. member for Laurier.

(Text):

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Chairman, what the minister has said is, of course, very interesting and perhaps we should not blame the minister for the fact that he was not here prior to 1957, and that he did not know that his present colleagues, when they were over here

[Mr. Comtois.]

on this side of the chamber, advocated a policy of competition in this field instead of the policy that was followed by the previous Liberal government and promised to bring that policy of competition into effect. In some respects they brought that policy of competition into effect and have done great harm to the air industry in doing so. I think the present Minister of Transport is trying to correct some of the mistakes that were made in this regard by his predecessor who is now the Minister of Trade and Commerce. What the minister is saying is that he followed the old Liberal policy and that he did not follow the policy of his colleague the Minister of Transport. That is what he is saying.

That is very interesting, because at the very time these contracts were being let the minister will recall that the Minister of Trade and Commerce, who was then the minister of transport, was creating chaos in the air industry by this new policy of competition in this field. It is hard to understand why this new policy of competition which was applied everywhere else should not have been applied to the polar shelf. This was the Tory policy that was going to correct the mistakes that had been made by the Liberals. The minister boasts that he did not follow it but rather stuck to the old Liberal policy because it was the better policy. We are flattered that he should say that. However, it is very odd that he should be saying that when his colleague, the present Minister of Trade and Commerce; was boasting about how he was introducing competition into this field.

There is another aspect of the minister's explanation that strikes me as being a little bit odd. The minister says that the reason why there was no sense in calling for tenders was that they had to file tariffs and the tariffs had to be fair. But then he also told us that Autair's submission which was not a submission—if you understand what that means, Mr. Chairman; it is like "Alice in Wonderland", a submission which was not a submission—of \$25,000, if I remember the minister's statement correctly, was lower than anyone else's figure. How could it have been lower if the tariffs were the same for all of them and the minister was merely selecting the firm that could do the job best? How could one be cheaper than the other? It is hard to understand that. If there were not tenders, how does the minister explain this so-called saving of \$25,000? His explanation, to a simple person like myself, does not make any kind of sense at all.

First of all the minister says he did not follow the new policy of his government; he followed the old policy laid down by my hon. friend from Laurier, which we think was a better policy, of course. But then the minister