

The amount of two million dollars is considered requisite to meet adequately normal expenses incurred in advance for the printing and stationery requirements of parliament and the departments of government.

Where in the estimates is the cost of printing and stationery requirements shown?

Mr. MARTIN: Office of the king's printer.

Mr. THATCHER: According to information which the minister gave me earlier in the session, 98 per cent of the printing for the government which was done by outside firms this year was printed in Ontario and Quebec. Could the king's printer not give a little more printing to firms in western Canada and the maritimes?

Mr. MARTIN: I anticipated this because the hon. member asked me the question privately some time ago. The king's printer found it almost impossible to place orders with far-away firms under the limitations of the statute, which provided that no orders involving an expenditure over \$500 should be placed with outside printing plants without competitive prices having been secured. As a result, the king's printer during the war, through the then secretary of state, asked for authority under the War Measures Act to extend this amount to \$2,500. This helped considerably in placing more orders with firms located in the eastern and the western provinces. This privilege could not be used as extensively as we would have liked because of the urgency of so many of the orders and the constant pressure which was placed on the king's printer by various government departments calling for almost immediate production and delivery of the requirements ordered on their requisitions, with the result that in many cases orders had to be placed at most convenient points. Another thing preventing more orders going through firms located at a distance from Ottawa was the difficulty of transportation and the extra cost of shipping stock and returning the finished product to Ottawa.

In an endeavour to give work outside Ottawa during the war, the king's printer gave the privilege to many agents of the government to place orders locally, especially the war finance committee, the wartime prices and trade board, the national defence department, and more especially the directorate of recruiting, on the condition that a complete report of every item was referred to the king's printer, showing the price paid in each case. Since these orders were paid for out of funds of the department placing the order, the statements I submitted in a return some time

ago do not fully indicate the exact cost under the operation of the king's printer. However, in no case was authority granted for orders involving more than \$500.

In comparing the amounts spent in each province under these conditions and realizing the difficulties under which the department laboured all through the war period, one must keep in mind the facilities of the printing plants in each province. In this regard, I could give a statement of the capital expenditure, personnel, and salaries and wages paid in each province in connection with the printing industry. It would seem reasonable that under the circumstances more orders should be placed in those provinces where the printing facilities were greater, more varied and more adaptable to the nature of the printing material which had to be produced.

With regard to the different amounts of money spent with each printing plant, it is quite difficult to explain the many differences existing between the plants. First of all, there is the difference in their equipment. Then, there is their ability to quote low enough to secure a job and to make delivery in the time allowed. So that every endeavour is made in farming out material to give every province as fair a distribution as possible. The return which I tabled some weeks ago will indicate that while the heaviest expenditure occurred in Quebec and Ontario, that was due in many cases to the ability of printing firms to make prompt delivery, particularly during the war period, and also due to transportation costs and factors of that kind. During the days of peace, when the urgency is not so great, it should be possible to effect a more equitable distribution, and to the extent that that is possible, having in mind all the exigencies, I can assure the hon. gentleman that that will be done.

Mr. BOUCHER: An increase from \$700,000 to \$2,000,000 is substantial. I wonder if the minister feels that it is really necessary, now that we are through the period where there was such a rush of printing because of the war. The statement which the minister has just made does throw some light on the situation. He said that previously the king's printer had been able to farm out work without competitive bidding up to an amount of \$500 and that was later increased to \$2,500.

Mr. MARTIN: That was during the war.

Mr. BOUCHER: We who believe in competitive bidding for printing should insist on that rule being adhered to as much as possible, because otherwise we have not that check which has hitherto prevailed. I can appreciate that, while \$700,000 may have been sufficient