

Supply—Mines and Technical Surveys

a great number of other members of this house. I happen to know, because flying is an important industry in the constituency I represent, that none of the flying companies of the financial standing of these that were named would go ahead with a project of this kind. They have not got the resources to do it; they have not got the bank backing to do it, and it is just another example of the fatuous remarks that are so often made by the Minister of Finance.

It is difficult for the committee to believe that one of his colleagues has not encouraged these companies to go ahead and that the government would purchase these services. There is not anybody in this house, including I think most of the backbenchers on the government side, who would think for a moment that these companies would go ahead. It is not their business to go ahead and supply information of this kind without having a customer in sight. There is only one customer in sight in this country in connection with matters of this kind and that is the government of Canada.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): Mr. Chairman, my friend is not getting away with remarks like that. He started out talking about commitments and said commitments should not be made without approval of the committee. I said there is no commitment. The committee has this opportunity to pass on the matter now. It is true that these companies are not in a strong financial position, but the companies thought it was good business to take advantage of these conditions.

Mr. Chevrier: Does the minister mean by the last statement he has just made that there was no assurance given by any department of government to these three companies, or any one of these three companies, that they are to do certain aerial surveys on behalf of the government of Canada, because if his answer is no, I will be tremendously surprised.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): The answer is no.

Mr. Habel: You are the only one in the house; where are the other ministers?

Mr. Hellyer: I wonder if the minister would show the house all the contracts or letters or memoranda that exist between the government departments and any one of these three companies? Surely, none of these three companies would undertake the aerial photography of any part of our northern country without some written assurance by some department of government that they would be compensated for that work.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): I am informed that there was no commitment given to these companies. They were up there, conditions

[Mr. Benidickson.]

were favourable and they knew they had an opportunity to go ahead with what was expected originally to be a six-year program. They took advantage of favourable conditions to proceed with this work, to accelerate it and make savings for all concerned thereby.

I am quite sure their hope in proceeding that way was that payment would be accelerated. That is why, having accelerated the program, they come forward and offer the government the advantage of the work they have done and we recommend to the house that advantage be taken of it.

Mr. Hellyer: Mr. Chairman, I do not think the minister has recently been in private business. If he had been, he would want more than a hope of being paid before he started on an expenditure of that type.

Mr. Chevrier: I should like to ask the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources a question since this item is one that concerns his department. I should like to know from him whether or not any of these companies—and they have been mentioned here as photographic air surveys—have been given any undertaking by officers of his department or by himself that they would get aerial contracts or that they could assume that they would receive contracts for topographical aerial surveys of Canada?

An hon. Member: Ask permission to answer first.

Mr. Chevrier: Could I get an answer from the minister?

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle): In the first place, Mr. Chairman, this is not in my department but in that of mines and technical surveys. In the second place, the answer is no.

Mr. Benidickson: We know that we had the minister with us a short time ago before our luncheon recess. I am surprised that he is not here to assist the Minister of Finance at the moment. In addition—and the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources can deny it if I am wrong—it is my recollection that on all matters of this kind there is an interdepartmental committee so that when the government makes a purchase of this kind it will be an enterprise that will redound to the utmost benefit of as many as possible departments of the government. My understanding is that the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources is represented on this interdepartmental committee. I am sure that the officials of that department would report to the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources. Perhaps the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources is the acting minister of