

*Supply—Mines and Technical Surveys*

by members of the opposition here this afternoon, and in reply the former minister of finance, Mr. Harris, said:

As I think hon. members know, we have been carrying out a program of aerial photography in Canada, and estimates are made in advance of the amount of work expected to be done during the coming flying season. Last year happened to be a particularly good year in some parts and not so good in others. The contract for the photography was carried out not entirely to the extent that had been expected. In addition to that aerial photography, however, the people concerned were able to take photographs not of the area that had been set out but of other areas, and when they completed their work the Department of Mines and Technical Surveys realized that the photography that was being offered at that moment was of an area which they would have on their program in a few years and they might as well acquire it now. That accounts for the fact that they purchased this additional amount of aerial photography during 1954-55.

So it seems there is precedent.

**Mr. Pearson:** I doubt whether a precedent is established, but even if it is, the questions asked by the opposition in those days were perfectly reasonable ones. Fortunately for the government, the minister at that time knew the answers.

**Mr. Fleming (Eglinton):** I am struck by the similarity of the answer given by Mr. Harris in March 1955 to the answers given today by the Minister of Finance, and I am more than interested to recall, Mr. Chairman, that in that debate the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River was parliamentary assistant to the minister of finance.

**Mr. Benidickson:** Mr. Chairman, I think perhaps the Minister of Finance this afternoon has a better understanding of the technique of getting estimates through the committee than he previously displayed. I wish to suggest to him that one way of rendering it extremely difficult to get his estimates through is to suggest that the questions being brought up by the opposition are raised as smoke. The hon. member for Brandon-Souris indicated that this was something that exercised the minds of members of the Conservative party when they were in opposition. This is something about which they wanted more early information. When they spoke about these things the public had every reason to believe that should they ever form the administration they would practice what they preached at that time. Instead of that the minister will not admit that parliament is not being treated with proper respect when he presented to the committee on January 30 supplementary estimates without making reference to this point. That was the question I raised.

The hon. member for Brandon-Souris did not indicate and I do not recall whether we had supplementary estimates in the session to which he referred prior to the presentation of this item on March 25 but I do submit that the Minister of Finance indicated that work had been done. Indeed, he said that most of it had been done due to favourable conditions last summer. He then went on to abuse the opposition by simply raising smoke that had no significance.

At this time I invite the minister to admit that this is not a wise practice. I should like to know if he is still of the opinion he advertised, as did the hon. member for Brandon-Souris, when they were on this side of the house and if he would give an undertaking that in another year he would avoid as much as possible bringing in at a later stage than he could have brought in proposed estimates for the committee of supply. I believe that is the essential point.

The other matter is that the minister has very noticeably retracted from the position he originally took.

**Mr. Fleming (Eglinton):** Not at all.

**Mr. Benidickson:** I refer to the fact that he talked originally of economies in connection with what is being proposed under this item. After the hon. member for Villeneuve reported on information that was available in the committee on mines and resources the minister changed his tune.

**Mr. Fleming (Eglinton):** He did nothing of the kind.

**Mr. Benidickson:** The minister now talks in terms of advantages. He does not mean the kind of advantage which I would imagine is the chief advantage. However, he spoke of an advantage rather than an economy, introducing a new word. I think there would be some advantage in getting this information for Canada earlier than would be provided for if it were lengthened for a six-year term. That is not what the committee was told.

**Mr. Fleming (Eglinton):** It is what the committee was told.

**Mr. Benidickson:** If the hon. member will examine his *Hansard* he will find he emphasized there was an economy that would accrue in connection with this extra appropriation. That has not proven to be the case. The work was done on contract. Certainly the minister's final description was more appropriate when he referred to an advantage.

If the hon. member for Brandon-Souris and the Minister of Finance were speaking sincerely when on this side of the chamber