

Supply—Mines and Technical Surveys

same ground again. I made it quite clear that these firms went into the Arctic under the terms of a contract. They have now gone beyond the work which was contemplated and they offer the results of this work to the government, and we now ask that authorization be given so that we may have the results of that survey work now, without waiting.

Mr. Caron: If the Minister of Finance had said that some time ago we might have had an idea what he meant.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): I said it a dozen times.

Mr. Caron: Now the minister has explained what he means by commitments and what he means by tenders and what he means by contracts. I admit that my English is not as good as that of some hon. members, but the terms contract, commitment and tenders have something very similar about them.

Mr. Stearns: Could the minister tell us for how many years all the government aerial photography work has been divided among these three companies?

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): The year 1958 was the second year of the contracts with the three companies.

Mr. Stearns: Do I understand that before that time, for the past 15 or 20 years, these three firms were the only ones which had been able to provide this service to the country?

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): I am afraid my information does not extend back over that period of time.

Mr. Pearson: One other question, and I think this will probably summarize our views on this matter: is it a fact that this amount is being asked for in connection with work which is now largely completed, and that if this appropriation is not passed, one of the companies which is doing this work without remuneration would perhaps go into bankruptcy.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): We were informed that the company, having gone so far, would be in a shaky position and might have difficulty in continuing to complete the balance of the work over the remaining period. Naturally, as I said earlier, the government is interested in seeing this task completed. We do not wish this work to fail to reach completion if we can avoid it, and it happens that there are other advantages to us, now, as I have indicated in entering on this proposed basis.

[Mr. Fleming (Eglinton).]

I was asked earlier about the number of companies which tendered, and my recollection, or conjecture, was correct. These three companies were the only ones to tender originally, and the work was divided among them.

Mr. Hellyer: Is the minister now informing the house that there are no savings as such to the government if we pay for the services now as opposed to paying in the next fiscal year, but that the saving is, in fact, accruing to the company?

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): There will, of course, be advantage to the companies in being paid now for the work already done instead of their having to wait a year or two years until that work catches up with the period contemplated under the original contract. There is also an advantage to the treasury in having the work completed earlier than the contract date.

Mr. Hellyer: The minister referred to other advantages, and I wondered what they were.

Mr. Dinsdale: All the time during which this discussion has been taking place my memory has been trying to recall a similar discussion which took place on a similar item back in 1955. I have now obtained a copy of *Hansard* for that year. I find, also, that the same discussion took place in 1956. The question propounded in 1955 related to the following item:

Payments to Royal Canadian Air Force and commercial companies for air photography, and to defray the expenses of and the purchase of equipment by the interdepartmental committee on air surveys—further amount required, \$1,200,000.

It seems to me that this item is similar to the item we are discussing at the present moment.

Mr. Chevrier: May I ask a question? Did that discussion take place during consideration of the main estimates or of the supplementary estimates?

Mr. Dinsdale: As I understand it, it was on the supplementary or the further supplementary estimates.

Mr. Chevrier: What was the date?

Mr. Dinsdale: March 25, 1955. I think it is a further supplementary estimate.

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): Those are the final supplementary estimates in March, just before the close of the fiscal year.

Mr. Dinsdale: The question asked was precisely the question which has been raised