

Mr. WAGGONNER. Won't the next 60 to 90 days be critical there in making these decisions about revising your plans?

Mr. SIEPERT. Well, I don't know whether the next 60 to 90 days will give us the answer to this question, but we have time to make that kind of a decision. To give you an idea of a leadtime, we will need 8 or 9 months to implement the kind of decision to which you refer. I am putting in the necessary leadtime to do all the work of getting out proposals, evaluating them, and awarding the contract.

Mr. WAGGONNER. In consolidating your operations—for example, combining instrumentation support and communication support—and abandoning the idea of noncompetitive extension of contracts and going to competitive awards from this point on, by what are you going to be guided in awarding these contracts, other than dollars and cents? Is this going to be just a perfunctory operation on the part of NASA, or are you going to become so enamored with those here that it would be useless for somebody else to bid?

Mr. SIEPERT. I think that is a central question.

Mr. WAGGONNER. You know your judgments are going to be based on what the people in the field think about them. Are the people in the field saying, "We are not going to be able to get rid of the people now like you"?

Mr. SIEPERT. I don't think that will be the judgment of all the people. Some of our people will feel very strongly, through experience, that some of the present contractors are, in a sense, irreplaceable.

On the other hand, what has happened in the last 3 years is a tremendous sophistication by a number of contractors in doing the work of supporting aerospace operations. Initially, when we went on competition 3 years ago, we had some preconceived ideas of how many companies could actually bring to bear the sort of specialized experience we are after. We were greatly surprised. Certain of the contractors who won the award were ones we had never envisioned were in the field. Yet they put together the kind of technical and business proposal that was clearly superior to that of the companies who presumably were the established competition. From this earlier experience, we can't make a prejudgment that the existing contractors will have superior proposals to those who enter the competition from the outside.

Mr. WAGGONNER. You are going to consider something other than money?

Mr. SIEPERT. We must.

Mr. WAGGONNER. You say that in consolidating the support service contractors in different areas, you want no more than one interface between the Kennedy Space Center personnel and these contractors where you consolidate the different areas—Communications and Instrumentations, for example. Are you going to allow these present contractors, who supposedly have ability in only one area, to consolidate and, in effect, stay on the job? Is this perhaps big enough to be representative in the consolidated area?

Mr. SIEPERT. All of our procurement proposals in this field will leave to the discretion of the proposers whether they propose as a prime without any subs, whether they come in with a joint venture, or whether they come in as a prime with certain subcontractors under