

salt as well as salt for stock and other purposes. But they are held down in their efforts because of the high freight rates they must pay. There used to be only one train a week until they increased it to two or three last year when the Canol pipeline at Fort Norman was being constructed.

I think I would be in order to urge upon the federal government the construction of a highway from Edmonton to Fort McMurray. I do not think we shall get this from the provincial government. The paving materials are available right there and construction could be started at both ends. There is no doubt about the value of this paving material because it has been proved. Some pavement was laid in Edmonton twenty-five or thirty years ago, and it is still just as good as pavements made from other materials imported into the country. Such a highway would not only help to develop these oil resources, but open up many thousands of acres of new land. Fleets of trucks could be used to carry materials for the refinery and so on and bring back the finished products to Edmonton.

Such a highway would go west of Lac la Biche and, as I say, it would open up thousands of acres of the very best land. When the Alberta and Great Waterways railway, now part of the Northern Alberta railway system which is now operated jointly by the two great railway companies, was first built it went around the east end of Lac la Biche even though one of the original surveys was to the west. To the west of that lake and along the Athabaska river to Fort McMurray is to be found some of the very best land in the country. The country through which the railway now travels provides little traffic and the result is that the railroad must obtain its revenues from through traffic. The rates charged are adjusted to take care of from 150 to 200 miles of country from which little local revenue is obtained. These rates are too high to permit the successful operation of a plant on a large scale at Fort McMurray or Waterways.

The building of this highway would make this possible. The building of such a highway should form part of any effort by the federal government to develop these tar sands. We are being asked to vote \$150,000 and \$650,000, and I think I am justified in suggesting that some money should be devoted to the construction of this highway as part of our war effort and for post-war use. It would open up considerable new land and would help in developing the tar sands area at Fort McMurray and Waterways.

I think it was in 1906 or 1907 when I first visited this region. I went down the Athabaska river for about a hundred miles

[Mr. Dechene.]

and reached the Pelican rapids. These rapids would provide considerable water power and there is also a tremendous supply of gas in this area. Then you continue down the Athabaska to Eells river—this is named after Doctor Eells—and Fort McKay. A few miles farther down you reach a point where the waters of the Athabaska river and the Peace river and all their tributaries pour through a great funnel. A vast amount of water power is available here. The flow is so great that even with the extreme temperatures of the far north these rapids never freeze.

I am not an engineer and I think one of the troubles faced by the hon. member for Davenport and myself is on account of our inability to understand their reports or why they do certain things. It is like a doctor's diagnosis. One doctor will diagnose a certain disease, another diagnoses another disease; they finally operate; the patient dies, and the operation is declared to be a success. That is according to what we read about it. That is just said in passing. I am not going to enter the field of criticism which has been entered upon by the hon. member for Davenport.

I do not believe that any engineer, whether he is working for a company or for a government, will not fulfil his duties properly according to his knowledge and his lights. I have been acquainted with many engineers, and I believe they are just as proud of their work, their honesty and their integrity as are members of any other profession. That is part of their training. The hon. member for Davenport has referred to the trouble that took place, but I am convinced that the plant operated by Max Ball was not good enough to enable the government—

Mr. MacNICOL: They are not changing the separation plant.

Mr. DECHENE: It was not good enough to warrant the government expending a large amount of money in an attempt to make thorough tests of the possibilities of the tar sands of the Fort McMurray area. In order not to spend money foolishly; in order that money would not be spent without results, the government decided to follow the engineers reports—these men were members of a well-known engineering firm—and construct a modern plant which would assure that a full and final trial of the possibilities of the tar sands would be made. We would then know whether we would be justified in going on.

I know the oil is there because I have seen some of the gasoline produced by Max Ball. It can be done; but whether it can be done commercially, whether it can compete in western Canada with gasoline produced in other fields, is another question. It is sometimes