

struction committee on November 30, Mr. Timm stated, I presume in reply to a question by myself:

Mr. Chairman, the former plant of Abasand was so constructed that when we attempted about a year ago to make a run with that plant, they would run a couple of days and then closed down for changes and then run again for a while, so that we could not get any reliable data from the operation. We had our engineers go up there to try to get some cost data from the plant and it was found that this was the situation so that the government decided that there had to be so many changes made—and besides that the plant was out of balance, the recovery end, that is the separation end, was so much larger than the refinery end, and so forth. They met all kinds of difficulties so they decided to tear out the machinery in the plant and put it together again.

That is where the mistake was made. The Consolidated Mining and Smelting company did not recommend that; they recommended that the plant should be repaired or improved and enlarged. What happened is almost incredible, and I should like to know who is responsible. This was a brand new plant built in 1942. It was well constructed, by men who knew as much as anyone how to extract oil from tar sands.

Mr. ROWE: Who pulled it down?

Mr. MacNICOL: I presume it was done on orders from the department. I have a picture of the plant here. Why was it pulled down? It was pulled down because someone told the men on the job that the plant should be put down in the pit so that they would not have to bring the sand up to the mill. Then after they had started to place the plant down in the sand pit, which is about fifteen to twenty feet deep, someone told them that the Horse river would overflow and drown out the plant. They then proceeded to erect it again and I believe it is now constructed just where it was before. I am not censuring anyone, but someone must be responsible for this needless waste of public money.

This plant had been erected in 1942 and had operated intermittently, as the minister has said. The refinery had been built to take care of from two hundred to three hundred barrels per day, whereas the separation plant could produce four hundred. The refinery could not absorb the full production of the separation plant, and yet in seventy days, according to the statement of the Minister of Munitions and Supply, they produced 11,000 odd barrels of oil. That is a plant that was pulled down and is now being rebuilt.

I am for this vote. I am for anything that will help to rebuild the plant that was destroyed. When I go up there next summer I

[Mr. MacNicol.]

expect to find exactly the same separator that operated in 1942. I may be wrong and I shall not be able to tell until I get there, but go I will if I can to see what has been done. I am anxious that oil should be obtained from these tar sands to be used in the prosecution of the war. That is why the Consolidated Mining and Smelting company was sent up there to investigate. Since that time we have had two years of war, 1943 and 1944, and up to date not a barrel of oil has been produced.

The old company should have been left in charge, because they were the only ones who knew how to extract oil from these sands. They had discovered how to do this after many years of trial and error and they were doing a pretty good job. According to one report I have, they produced 30,000 barrels of oil in 1941, even with the difficulties they had to overcome, one of which was in connection with mining. I was there when the mining difficulty was overcome.

Mr. ROWE: How much have they produced since?

Mr. MacNICOL: There was nothing produced in 1943 and nothing in 1944. The latest report I have is that they will not be producing anything until next fall.

Mr. ROWE: They may pull it down by that time.

Mr. MacNICOL: That is a very good interjection. So far as I can find out the men on the job there to-day have had nothing whatever to do with the extracting of oil from tar sands. Unless they follow the Abasand procedure they will have to develop their process by trial and error. That is what I expect they will do. I do not want to pass any comments about anyone's ability, but the manager is an oil man from Petrolia, Ontario. We all know how much oil sands there are around Petrolia. There the oil is pumped out of wells. If working there gives a man sufficient experience to operate an oil sands plant, then I might just as well hang out my shingle as a doctor, and I know nothing about medicine.

Coming back to the agreement, which I think is important. The government entered into an agreement, which was not followed by those operating the plant. What was the agreement? It states:

And whereas the government during the past thirty years has investigated the extent and quality of northern Alberta bituminous (or tar) sand deposits and the most conclusive results to date is that the Horse River reserve, near McMurray, is known to contain substantial