

Supply—Atomic Energy Control Board

year the Chalk River plant has made over 800 shipments of more than seventy different radioactive isotopes, to industries, to universities, to research institutions and to hospitals, and it is expected that this business will expand rapidly in the immediate future. There are many who feel that the dividends from the isotope field alone may well repay all the money spent for atomic energy.

In the other broad field of industrial power, the developments in the past two years have been equally rapid. Hon. members may have noted in the press that the atomic energy commission of the United States has announced the awarding of five commercial contracts for the development of prototype power plants for use in submarines and aircraft. While no active steps have as yet been taken in Canada to design and build complete power plants, studies of the component parts that will be necessary to the solution of the overall project are being made. It is hoped that within the next ten years we may see in this country, as well as in the United States and the United Kingdom, the first atomic energy power plants in commercial use.

It is intended that the new crown company, Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, will commence operation on April 1, 1952, taking over the operational responsibilities from the research council on that date. It should be noted that for a time at least Atomic Energy of Canada will engage in two parallel operations, one commercial and the other research. It is expected that when the new pile is completed the commercial side of the operation will be self-supporting and that it will in time make financial contribution to the research activities. However, for a time we will have to ask parliament every year for grants to carry the scientific and development division, in much the same order of magnitude as at present.

It is my belief that the Chalk River establishment is laying the foundation for a major advance in the technological development of this country, a development that will play an important part in rolling back the frontiers of industrial Canada.

I am sure I will be asked why provision for Polymer should be made in the amount of \$38 million while in the case of Chalk River the appropriation is \$1. The answer is that from the commencement the Polymer operation was regarded as a business investment and capital that was advanced has been recorded as an active asset on the books of the government. The Polymer investment has always been considered an active asset. For reasons which I think will be appreciated, the same view was not taken of the Chalk River development. It was regarded as purely

experimental. At the time the investment was made no one had reason to believe any important commercial returns were to be expected from the plant. For that reason the money was not set up as an active asset, and therefore there is nothing to write off the books of the government.

The appropriation of \$1 permits the assets that have been created at Chalk River to be turned over to the new crown company. The depreciated value of those assets has not been finally determined, but would seem to be in the neighbourhood of \$28 million. They consist of the pile itself, the cost of the land, the housing and all the facilities that today make up the Chalk River plant. Any moneys spent for the new pile will be added at cost, and we will have a corporation that will have a balance sheet in conformity with the usual practice. The \$28 million, or whatever the amount may be will be represented by common stock, and any additions may well be represented by interest-bearing debentures.

Mr. Green: This very encouraging report by the minister is particularly interesting to those of us who served on the special committee in 1949. I would like the minister to clear up two questions, and the first is the position of the atomic energy control board. Under the Atomic Energy Control Act of 1946 a board was set up known as the atomic energy control board, and in his statement today the minister has not dealt with its position. There is that difference between the Chalk River project and the Polymer project. I notice that Dr. C. J. Mackenzie is to be president of the new corporation. Of course, he has been president of the atomic energy control board, and I presume will continue in that position. It would be helpful if we knew just where the board is to fit into the picture.

Then, the other question is this. Has the minister in mind setting up any sort of parliamentary committee on atomic energy such as was appointed in 1949, and was recommended by that committee in its report? The paragraph reads as follows:

Your committee has been in existence for only six weeks and in that time has been unable to complete its examination into the field of atomic energy development. Furthermore, this field is a new one, is widening rapidly, and may well be of tremendous importance to Canada. For these reasons, your committee recommends that a special committee be reconstituted next session.

In the following session, that is 1950, the same committee was set up to investigate the work of the national research council, but there has been no such committee since then. It is obvious from the interesting statement