

INTERNMENTS

CAMILLIEN HOUDE—SITTING OF ADVISORY
COMMITTEE

On the orders of the day:

Mr. LIGUORI LACOMBE (Laval-Two Mountains): The second question is this (Translation): Can the minister tell the house on what day of this month will be held before the advisory committee the inquiry which is to take place in Fredericton in connection with the application for release filed by Mr. Camillien Houde?

Mr. SPEAKER (Text): Perhaps the minister will say what the question is.

Mr. ST. LAURENT: The hon. member inquires whether I can state the date upon which the advisory committee will consider the request of Camillien Houde for a review of his case. I am not in a position to state the date. I can say that the advisory committee is on its way to Fredericton, if it has not yet arrived there. It is expected to arrive this afternoon. It has seventeen files to consider, and it is the practice that the members of the committee themselves determine in what order each of these cases will be proceeded with.

WAR APPROPRIATION BILL

PROVISION FOR GRANTING TO HIS MAJESTY AID
FOR NATIONAL DEFENCE AND SECURITY

The house resumed from Tuesday, May 23, consideration in committee of a resolution to grant to His Majesty certain sums of money for the carrying out of measures consequent upon the existence of a state of war—Mr. Ilsley—Mr. Bradette in the chair.

MINES AND RESOURCES

Mines and geology branch—development of tar-sands of Alberta. Remodelling and expansion of plant of Abasand Oils, Limited, \$500,000.

Hon. T. A. CRERAR (Minister of Mines and Resources): Mr. Chairman, it might be useful and helpful to the committee if I gave a statement, which I shall make as brief as possible, in the nature of a summary of the developments in the tar sands of northern Alberta, which has been receiving the consideration and assistance of the government now for the past few years. When the government first became interested in a financial way in this development it was through the Department of Munitions and Supply. Before I touch upon that, however, it might be useful to look back over the years very briefly and get the background for this development.

These oil sands or, as they were commonly called, tar sands, were first noticed by Mackenzie when he made his trip down the Mackenzie river to the Arctic in 1789, if my memory is correct. At various times since then notice has been taken of them. From time to time a great many stories came out until the tar sands of the Athabaska area became a sort of legend in Canada. I recall over fifty years ago stories circulating on the prairies of western Canada of the wonderful sands that existed in the far northern country. In 1914 some sixty tons of the sands were taken to Edmonton by rather costly means of transportation, and were used for street paving purposes. Later in 1926 and 1927 over 33,000 square yards of roads and paths were paved in Jasper park with these sands. The interesting thing to record in both these cases is that the roads have stood the test of time in the years that have gone by since the material was laid down, which indicates that at any rate these sands have a real practical value for road-making purposes.

In 1915 the government of the day reserved over 2,000 acres from any alienation whatever by the crown, and this was later definitely confirmed by order in council. In 1930, as hon. members of the committee are aware, the resources were transferred to the provinces, and Alberta received the so-called tar sand area in the northern part of that province along with its timber and land. Since that time the complete control and administration of these tar sands in Alberta, with the exception of the few thousand acres that were reserved by the federal government, have been under the control of Alberta.

Beginning in 1922 and in subsequent years the university of Alberta carried on experimental work to determine if possible what practical value the oil sands had in the production of fuel oil. Those experiments resulted in a process by which the oil, or to describe it more correctly, the bitumen, could be separated from the sands. It might be mentioned, too, that about twenty years ago, or a little more, a substantial quantity of those sands was shipped to Great Britain for testing purposes by a company there which was interested generally in the recovery of oil from various kinds of material.

Mr. MacNICOL: In what year was this?

Mr. CRERAR: About twenty years ago, I think, in 1922 or 1923. In 1935 a company known as the Abasand Oils Limited was formed. This company consisted wholly of private