

War Appropriation

I am going to refer to my own constituency. In my constituency there are several rather unusual possibilities for increasing production and consumption. One of those is coal. In Alberta we have extensive deposits of high quality bituminous coal and quite a large percentage of it is in the Lethbridge riding of Alberta. Up to the present time we have done very little in Canada by way of utilizing our coal for the production of desirable means toward improving our standard of living. For example, very little is done with respect to processing coal to obtain power for rural electrification and the like. There is a great need for rural electrification and consequently a great opening for the use of coal to produce power for that purpose. Almost nothing has been done in Canada with respect to processing our coal for petroleum. The minister pointed out this afternoon, and has pointed out previously in his speeches in this house, that Canada is dependent largely on outside sources for her petroleum, oils, gasoline and the like. With the tremendous deposits of coal which we have in Canada I maintain, that it is a reflection on our intelligence to have to be importing our oil from outside when nations such as Germany, Italy and Britain have been producing their oil needs in such large measure from coal. We have such tremendous quantities of coal. I am told that the amount of gasoline and oil products which we need in Canada could be produced from about twenty million tons a year. This would add greatly to the prosperity of the coal mining areas in our country and would add greatly to our own security and self-sufficiency in time of stress.

Much has been done in other countries in the way of processing coal to get certain chemicals. Very little is being done in Canada. Men process coal in order to get plastics, explosives and solvents of one kind and another. All of these are possibilities of the future; I submit to the minister that he should take into the most careful consideration the possibility of processing our coal deposits in order to produce those very desirable commodities in our country. I am told that in Britain and in Germany they have used coal to obtain coal tar for the building of highways. We need highways in Canada very, very badly. We have much difficulty in getting highways that will stand up to our weather. It ought to be a sound proposal to obtain coal tar from our coal deposits and with it to build highways.

I should like to refer the minister to a good brief which has recently been submitted to the royal commission on coal that has been sitting across Canada. This brief was submitted by the Lethbridge board of trade. It is called

[Mr. Blackmore.]

"A Fuller Utilization of Coal Deposits." If he will read that brief he will obtain some ideas which I think will help him to avoid too much study in the matter.

May I turn from our coal deposits to the possibilities of irrigation. Every gallon of water that runs down the slopes toward Hudson bay should be carefully stored and beneficially used on the thirsty soils of the west. We have all too little water in western Canada, and of that which we have a great amount, in fact by far the major portion, is being allowed to run to waste year after year with nothing being done about the matter. May I particularly draw the attention of the committee to the project for the utilization of water in my own constituency, called the Lethbridge southeast water conservation project, or the St. Mary's and Milk rivers conservation project. In this project it is proposed to take the waters that run in four rivers flowing through southwestern Alberta and store them in ten reservoirs, the combined capacities of which will be 738,700 acre feet; then to distribute that water over 345,000 acres of land in the federal ridings of Lethbridge and Medicine Hat, the total cost being \$15,178,439. The land upon which it is proposed to put the water is choice soil. It has been semi-arid for centuries; consequently it is very rich. The climate there is unusually fine and the location with respect to transportation and markets is good. By utilizing the land and water we can add greatly to the stock raising capacity of Alberta and the west, the dairy producing capacity, the capacity to can goods and the capacity to produce sugar. Sugar beets particularly grow very well with high yields and a high percentage of sugar content. Up to the present time the people of Canada and particularly the present government of Canada have greatly neglected the possibilities of producing beet sugar in Canada. It is an amazing thing to me; nevertheless it is obviously true.

Beet sugar is one of the most important commodities which we can produce in Canada. During this war we have had to go short of sugar. During a future war—let us not forget that a future war is a possibility—we might not be able to get the meagre supplies that we have been able to get from abroad. It is only the part of ordinary common sense to put ourselves in a position where we can produce our own sugar, and we can do that successfully in Canada.

May I return to the water conservation project? I would suggest to the minister that he read the report of the committee