

can give us any advice as to how to produce oil at Fort McMurray. I would like to see Max Ball subpoenaed before such a committee, I would like to hear the evidence of his different foremen, whoever they may be. I would like an investigation made into why the agreement was not carried out. What business did anyone have to alter an agreement which had been made by the Minister of Mines and Resources, and under which it was understood that oil would be produced, at an expense of \$268,000? Who has been responsible for altering this whole business—this comedy of errors, tearing the plant down, starting to put it into a pit, taking it out of the pit, and putting it back where it was before?

The minister referred to the moving of the tanks. That may have been necessary. But so far as the building of a townsite was concerned—no, it was not necessary. The agreement in the first place was to make that plant a pilot plant. Max Ball had about 54 men working at the plant. In January last I am told there were more than 90 men working there. The latest report I have is that there are 159. If we had given Max Ball this amount, or if the country had said to Max Ball, "Here is a half million dollars" the country would have been a million dollars in, and would have had another 50,000 barrels of oil.

Mr. REID: May I ask the hon. member a question?

Mr. MacNICOL: Not until I finish, if the hon. member does not mind. I should like to know why competent men were displaced. I have letters from men who work in the plant. I shall not read their letters, but they say what has been going on. I should like to know why the separation plant was torn down. There must have been some gross incompetence there. Who was responsible for starting to put that plant down into the pit.

Mr. ROWE: The Minister of Munitions and Supply said he wanted to experiment.

Mr. MacNICOL: No, I do not think the Minister of Munitions and Supply did it, and I do not think the Minister of Mines and Resources deserves criticism on that point either. Somebody was responsible for tearing that plant down. I saw it working myself. As I said, in 1942 it turned out intermittently, 11,000 barrels in 70 days. Surely our duty was first to produce oil. It was to get a pilot plant in operation, and to ascertain whether the recommendations that were made were

[Mr. MacNicol.]

satisfactory. Who gave instructions to build the townsite? It was all right, after the townsite was built, to bring in water from the Athabaska river. But we should know what we are doing. The minister will recall that when the piping was put in the trench, the welding was not done properly, and after the water was run in the trench had to be opened up again and the pipes taken out. The equipment that dug the trench in the first place had in the meantime been sent back to Edmonton. What a comedy of errors and incompetence! Somebody is responsible for such a waste of public money.

I should like to know why, instead of monkeying—that is a good word—with the separation plant which the Consolidated Mining and Smelting company had pronounced very good, and the minister said had been working fairly steadily, a larger refinery was not built. They knew that the refinery was too small. Max Ball was going to put up a larger refinery. If they had put up a larger refinery there would have been some reason for that. Lastly, I should like to know, after the Department of Mines and Resources had set out in the first place to produce oil because of the necessities of war, who was responsible for the non-production of oil at Fort McMurray. The minister said to-day that some inquiry had been made from so-and-so, in order that we might carry on the production of oil there in the winter time. No one has produced oil from the sands there in winter time. Have the men who are directing the work that is going on in that plant produced oil from tar sands in winter? No, they have not. How are they to know that the plant can produce oil in winter? They do not know. They should have left that separation plant alone. It was working very satisfactorily. They were getting the oil out of the sands, and the refinery should have been enlarged. I believe they had a programme for taking out the sulphur that was in the oil. I have found that the oil produced at that plant was fine oil. I have talked to the engineers at Box on lake Athabaska, and to the engineers at Yellowknife, and they told me it was first-class oil. Abasand produced all the gasoline they needed for the operation of their trucks and for their boats that went up and down the river. The plant was not in such a mess as some would lead us to believe. I should like to see a committee of this house inquire into this question, where we could examine the men who know about oil sands, not men who do not know, how to extract oil from the sands; and then after that, let the