

deposits which, because of their grade, location and volume have the most immediate potential importance for petroleum production.

And whereas the contractor has carried on investigations since 1930—

Here again I wish to interject that that is not quite correct. The Abasand company did carry on from 1930, but not the present contractor. The agreement continues:

And whereas the contractor has carried on investigations since 1930 into machinery and processes for mining the Alberta tar sands, extracting the bitumen, and refining petroleum products therefrom.

And whereas the oil controller, Department of Munitions and Supply, and the director of mines and geology branch, Department of Mines and Resources, recognizing the necessity of exploring all possibilities of producing petroleum products greatly needed in this emergency and afterwards, have recommended that a test or pilot plant should be developed for the purpose of proving what can be produced from the Alberta bituminous or tar sands—

Well, Mr. Chairman, if they had only kept on with the plant that was there, they would have got somewhere. And, had a new refinery been put up, or had the present refinery been enlarged, in 1943 and 1944 they would have perhaps produced not less than 50,000 barrels of oil. In contrast to that, we have nothing so far as the production of oil is concerned.

What was the next step? It was to take over the plant. On April 14 the Minister of Munitions and Supply said. "We are simply taking it over." That is not the Abasand company; that is the government. He said:

We are simply taking it over to conduct certain experiments. We hope to recover from paving material produced for the Alaska highway the costs we expend, and the property will not be returned until the money is recovered.

Then, in another place:

We hope to have a small commercial operation as a by-product of the research this summer.

That was last summer, 1943. The minister was optimistic. If only he himself had been able to go there, I venture to say he would have produced oil. Then he said:

We hope to have a small commercial operation, as a by-product of the research this summer, producing bituminous material for the Alaska highway, so that there will be some revenue to offset the expenditure.

Well, there has not been any revenue from oil for the Alaska highway, as everybody knows. I will not say anything about it. Everybody knows what position it is in to-day.

What was this to cost? In his statement the minister said:

Developments within recent weeks, following upon the insistence of the oil controller for constructive plans, have included the provisional taking over of the management of Abasand Oils Limited by Mr. Earl Smith, refinery

engineer of Canadian Oil Companies Limited, at Petrolia. Mr. Smith, in his first report, estimates that an expenditure of \$268,000 will be necessary for repairs, replacements, and remodelling of the present Abasand plant—

I have no doubt that Mr. Smith is qualified, but his programme definitely was not carried out. Instead of that, the plant was torn down, for the reasons I have given, one of which was to erect it in the pit, and afterwards take it out again and put it up at the point from which it should never have been taken.

I now feel it incumbent upon me to say a word about Max Ball. I have not seen nor heard from Max Ball since 1942. I saw him at the plant when I was there making an investigation. I should like to express, as a Canadian, my sorrow at the fact that Max Ball, in some way or other, was forced out of the plant. He is not now there. Had Max Ball been left in charge of the plant, with his staff, there is no reason under the sun why he should not have done as well in 1943 as was done in 1942, and no reason why he should not have done much better in 1944 than was done in 1943. Instead of that we have produced nothing. Most of their difficulties might have been overcome if they had not sent men up who, so far as I can ascertain, had had no experience in connection with taking oil from oil sands. Those men may have had experience in ordinary oil production, but not oil from oil sands. Had they had that experience, this comedy of errors would not have taken place, and all this unnecessary expenditure of money would have been avoided.

And yet I say I am in favour of the vote, because we are into the mess now, and we have to get out of it the best way we can. There is oil there, and if the government has to have another half million or another million, I will support such a vote.

I believe I have recorded everything in connection with oil sands that can be usefully recorded on this occasion. Let me say that I must confess I am deeply disappointed when I think that in 1942 an appeal was made to the house to vote a sum of money for an investigation by the Consolidated Mining and Smelting company, and in 1943 there was an appeal for another sum of money to proceed with the development of oil at Fort McMurray; in 1944 again we have set out another sum of money—and still we are producing nothing. Somebody is responsible for that. I do not blame the minister one iota, but I would like to see a parliamentary committee set up with power to subpoena witnesses. Let us bring here before a parliamentary committee everyone we can bring who