

August 11, 1924. OPH/abc

Mr. Robert Ranson,
Hotel Wellington,
Miami, Florida.

SUBJECT: Peat.

My dear Mr. Ranson:

I have been away, and on my return I find your letters of July 12, 17 and 30. You are obviously disappointed, and so am I. You feel that you have not been fairly treated, while I feel that we have taken extra pains to find out how you can contribute to our peat investigation. You want the matter to rest on recommendations, while I have asked to be shown just a few things. Please read again my letter of January 8. You are not warranted in believing "that whether I replied or not I would be damned either way". This was a request for information in a form which much experience has shown to be necessary concerning any of our illusive problems. If you knew me better you would find more sympathy with your type than you have credited me with. Having devoted so much of your life to a project that has not yet assumed a successful form, where continued interest could only be maintained by hopes and dreams and visions, I can understand how dear they are to you. Neither do I belittle them. They are the necessary seeds of progress and accomplishment. If you had chosen you might have written on Item 3 before either of the others. I am interested in each of the phases of our problems, but I do try, and try hard, to keep the three phases separate. This is true not only of peat but of other problems, and to keep our thinking clear is not necessarily "knocking".

Your statement that you can produce peat for a dollar a ton interested me to the extent that I thought

it necessary to follow it up. Such a belief surely must rest on some tangible evidence or be simply a "hunch". A good engineer making such a statement would have plans to propose in more or less detail, with established analogies on some actual experience. This I have tried to discover by asking you direct, and by sending a trusted and capable man to see you. All that I have so far is that "a man how dead told you he could do it for less". Frankly, if you were in my position, responsible for spending the other fellow's money, would you feel justified in employing a man on this basis? It is a serious matter to us. While we are anxious to encourage people, we are equally anxious not to mislead people. The past history of peat exploitation seems to have been particularly unfortunate, as you yourself have pointed out, in misrepresentation, and much of this was unintentional.

I still think that my letter of January 8 was a proper request that is far from "knocking".

Very truly yours,

Chief Mechanical Engineer.

CC Files

Hon. Duncan U. Fletcher, U. S. Senate. ✓

W. W. Odell, Minneapolis Station.