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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

WASHINGTON

July 12, 1924.

Hon. Duncan U. Fletcher,  
United States Senate.

My dear Senator Fletcher:

The present investigation of peat is directed towards its possible utilization. The existence of peat in large quantities in Florida is conceded, and for the present it seems unnecessary to enlarge on that phase of the subject. What seems to be lacking is the means of reducing peat to possession at a cost that shall not exceed its value.

It is not the plan to bring out a report on the potential resources of peat in the various states, but rather on the present prospects for making a commercial product therefrom. The Bureau of Mines reports that after a rather careful study they have been unable to find that in this necessary field Mr. Ranson has anything to contribute. His methods are those of demonstrator producing qualitative illustrations of the existence of peat, of its several kinds, of the fact that fuel and gas and oils, and so forth can be made from it. All of these things, while new to some, are conceded at the present moment by the Bureau of Mines, and they do not care to further accent these facts. The Bureau has not found evidence that on the engineering side of the problem Mr. Ranson is well qualified, even after many years spent on other phases of the problem. To check this judgment, however, opportunity was given Mr. Ranson to help by preparing certain papers which would be paid for according to their value for present purposes. It is believed Mr. Ranson so understood the matter. M  
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It is recognized that your interest in the matter is that of making available to Florida and the South some commercial product from the dormant peat resources. There are places where the fuel problem is much more acute than in Florida, and where large sums have been expended on peat, but so far no satisfactory answer has been obtained applicable to our conditions.

In all the peat localities there is much in common, so that when a really favorable program can be outlined it will be applicable in Florida as quickly as in any other place, and the peculiar interests of Florida will not be omitted from consideration.

Mr. Ranson's letter to you is returned herewith.

Very truly yours,

E. C. FIRNEY  
First Assistant Secretary.