

works its way through the tanks? There is not much that we can do in a situation of sunken ship—most of them sunk during World War II—to require anybody to indemnify the Government from the cost of cleaning it up, is there?

Mr. MOORE. No, sir; there would not be in those cases unless there were some funds provided for that purpose.

I do understand, and this is prior to my association with the Department of the Interior, but I do understand that there has been an examination—I think largely at the instigation of a member of this committee, Congressman Howard—of the large number of sunken vessels along the eastern coast—I do not know how extensive this was—to determine whether or not these sunken vessels did in fact actually contain oil after this period of time, and I assume the Coast Guard will be able to speak to this point later. But it is my understanding that in most instances, there was no oil found in these sunken vessels. It had during the interim dispersed or leaked.

One of the things that is commonly overlooked in talking about oil is that it does not remain in its released state indefinitely, and it can be in the process of time broken down and it can be consumed by minute organisms so it does disappear. It is entirely possible that much of the oil that was in these sunken tankers that were sunk during World War II has been largely dissipated in this process.

There is a problem, however, of identifying the source of oil specifically. One of the procedures under discussion for this purpose is what is being referred to as the tagging of oil; that is, the classification of oil in various cargoes and its identification on board vessels, so that if it is discovered loose in the ocean, then the source can be at least narrowed if not necessarily pinpointed.

#### MANDATORY INSURANCE PROPOSAL

Mr. WRIGHT. What thought has been given to some layman for requiring all ships of the United States and any foreign ships using U.S. harbors to carry insurance to indemnify this particular kind of damage?

Mr. MOORE. I will have to say, Mr. Chairman, at this point, I do not know what has been done in this particular area.

Mr. WRIGHT. Might not this be a pretty good idea to require all ships, vessels, that contain a sufficient quantity of petroleum matter, or other pollutants, for that matter, to enter into some sort of insurance program whereby there would be knowledge and certainty that you would somebody to whom we could hit to recoup the cost the Government would incur in cleaning up the beaches, the oil from the waters?

Mr. MOORE. Mr. Finnegan tells me there was some examination of this particular question with regard to insurance. If I may, I will let him speak to that particular question.

Mr. WRIGHT. Sure. Thank you.

Mr. FINNEGAN. Mr. Chairman, there is very little discussion I should not say—we did some looking into the problem, but what we could find out is the insurance companies who might undertake to write this type of risk wanted to limit their liability, which might cause difficulties if you had a large spill of oil which was pretty expensive. They still wanted to limit their liability to the value of the vessel.