

Senator FANNIN. Were they not going to have three?

Mr. O'MEARA. Yes, sir.

Senator FANNIN. And they discussed having just one on an experimental basis, as I recall, and then finally, the private industry pulled out because of the increased cost and also the information could not be verified that it would be that successful, as I remember. Then they talked about a big reactor and I can recall—why I am bringing this out is just what followup has taken place since that time?

Mr. O'MEARA. One comment about the project I would like to put in the record, is when the project was abandoned, the partner in that project that was to construct the desalting plant, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, was the only partner that wanted to continue the project. The desalting plant and the cost of water from that desalting plant was still considered by MWD to be a viable project.

Now, in the 5-year program that we are asking the Congress to approve today, we would expect to proceed with a prototype plant in the range of 30 to 50 million gallons per day.

Senator FANNIN. What are we doing to encourage private industry to proceed on their investigations?

Mr. O'MEARA. The Office of Saline Water continues at all times to support the development of processes and we do this through contracts with private industry.

Senator FANNIN. Have those been rather limited? I can recall that we had great hopes of building projects and of getting more cooperation—I will not say cooperation—more of a coordination of effort by private industry, but I have heard very little about that in recent years.

Mr. O'MEARA. No, sir; I think we are working very closely with private industry and considerable progress is being made.

Senator FANNIN. Could you give me a figure as to what we are spending now with private industry in this regard?

Mr. O'MEARA. In the development of process technology, we are spending approximately 75 percent of our annual budget. This year, that budget is \$28 million.

Senator FANNIN. Is that a concentration on the distillation system, or is it combined membrane-distillation?

Mr. O'MEARA. It is divided about equally, sir, between membranes and distillation processes.

Senator FANNIN. With the experience we had with atomic energy, we did not have a real breakthrough. We had a few plant failures; that is, they were not equally souped. As I remember—the chairman here is much more familiar with this than I would be, but as I recall, in our atomic energy activities, we built, I do not know how many, but I believe we had maybe five or six that were proven uneconomical and impractical. That is when we then had these breakthroughs.

Do you think this will perhaps be true in this activity, that we must go ahead and build some large plants if we are ever going to know whether or not we will have some success? Because in trying to achieve success and building those large plants, we do develop the techniques. Is that your idea?

Mr. O'MEARA. Yes, sir, the breakthrough, in your context of the word, will be achieved by applying the technology we now have to large-scale production.