

big pushers of the desalination program since it started, and the rest of us have joined with him. Now, how much money to date on the desalination program?

Mr. SMITH. \$211 million.

Senator ALLOTT. We have conducted a lot of tests. We have gotten several methods and combinations of methods of extracting water—good water, from both brackish and sea water. I suppose you would say that to this date, all we have really done is define possible methods which could lead to commercial feasibility.

Mr. O'MEARA. That is essentially right, Senator; however, there is considerable commercial application of desalting technology at this time. There are nearly 700 desalting plants in operation around the world, producing about 350 million gallons of desalted water every day. Now, these are located in areas of very short water supply, where there is no alternative. And as the cost comes down, the market for desalting plants will increase.

Senator ALLOTT. Well, the statement as far as America is concerned, the United States, it is probably fairly close to accurate.

Mr. O'MEARA. Yes, sir; there is only one city in the United States obtaining its municipal water by desalting sea water. That is Key West, Fla. There are several cities improving their water supply by desalting brackish waters.

Senator ALLOTT. And we have a plant in the Virgin Islands?

Mr. O'MEARA. There are several plants in the Virgin Islands, yes, sir.

Senator ALLOTT. I am just trying to put this whole thing in perspective. What you are really proposing here now it is that, having worked on this all this time and developed these various techniques, we now proceed past an experimental type plant and actually go into a production plant. In other words, it is time to find out where our technology is and where it can lead us. Is that right?

Mr. SMITH. You are absolutely correct. We are now to the point where we should and can move into large-scale proof of that which has already been learned. But the reason I hesitated momentarily is that this bill does not request the authority for us to build a prototype. It says that if we wish to come back to you and to the President within a period of time, whether it be a year or whether that time requirement is not in the bill, to ask for permission to construct a prototype.

Senator ALLOTT. Well, whatever the period is, if it is a year. But at least, I am just trying to put the program in the context of the whole development to find out where we are. I know that this is the way you are thinking, that we are now at a point in time to start getting at the problem of large scale desalting to obtain some definitive answers.

Mr. SMITH. Yes, sir.

Senator ALLOTT. Now, one of the things which Mr. O'Meara touched on in his statement was the geothermal possibilities in the lower California-Mexicali area—the idea of extracting water from the geothermal steam there. Would you also be able to use that steam as a power source with extraction?