

*Private Members' Business*

More recently, in September of this year we have the following headline appearing in *The Montreal Gazette*: "Deformed rabbits become symbol in British Columbia debate on power line safety".

We learned that some rabbits born in rabbit hutches stacked near high voltage lines were born missing half or all of their ears with oddly twisted feet or curved spines. There were also a more than usual number of stillborn. According to the owner of the rabbits, these birth defects never happened until the hutches were placed near such power lines.

A spokesman for B.C. Hydro denies any link between birth deformities and power lines but adds that "it is unfortunate the community has been stressed; people are literally terrified by these fields".

In a newspaper story which appeared on November 30, 1989 in *The Ottawa Citizen* we find this headline: "Scientist finds possible power line-cancer link". From that story we learn that Dr. Genevieve Matanoski of Johns Hopkins University seems to have found a possible link between cancer and exposure to electro-magnetic fields from power lines. Dr. Matanoski is reported as saying that while her findings require further testing, the study results have changed her view of the theory about the cancer link to power lines. She stated: "I thought before the theory was wrong. I am not so sure any more".

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, there has been sufficient controversy about this issue so much so that a book has been written about it by Paul Brodeur entitled *Currents of Death*.

According to a review in *The Winnipeg Free Press* dated December 2, 1989, Mr. Brodeur details the counter campaign by the electrical industry and the military, stressing that there is no purity in the politics of science and in the interpretation of science by the military and industry. The author concludes that there are sensible steps that we can take to reduce exposure to electro-magnetic fields, including restringing or burying neighbourhood power lines. It is the technology of restringing and burying that needs to be examined closely and would require economic resources.

Only this morning at the environment committee, we learned that the TransAlta Utilities in Alberta is the only Canadian utility among more than 50 utilities participat-

ing in a North American study of the occupational health effects of exposure to electro-magnetic fields. Exposure measurements for some 2,000 volunteers are being collected over two three-month periods. We all look forward to the outcome of this study and urge through this motion the Minister of National Health and Welfare to match this effort with a government sponsored study of potential health hazards to people living near high voltage power lines.

Why do we do that, Mr. Speaker? It seems to me that a government sponsored study would be the most objective one rather than leaving the study in the hands of utilities that for understandable reasons of course would have a vested interest in the outcome of such a study. Therefore the neutrality of the sponsor is of enormous importance for this particular type of investigation.

In conclusion, increasingly transmission lines affect the lives of literally millions of Canadians and millions of people around the world. It is important to be able to determine whether there is a real threat, particularly with regard to the health of children. In that type of investigation it is also important to find out what remedial or mitigating action or even what avoidance type of action can be put into place. Bridlewood School in Ottawa and the experience in Courtney on Vancouver Island are two examples of the national nature of this issue which therefore requires the attention of the national government.

Evidently there is no clear consensus on the part of the scientific community as to the health effects of the magnetic fields created by high voltage transmission lines. It seems to me that the Minister of National Health and Welfare has an obligation to study this particular thorny problem which affects Canadians from coast to coast and advise the public, the government and this Parliament on the necessity and the content of the necessity of such a strategy or plan so that action is taken to counter any health threats that such power lines may pose to human health.

**Mr. Jack Shields (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade):** Mr. Speaker, the proposal before us today is to consider the advisability of studying the effects of electro-magnetic fields produced by high voltage power lines on human and animal health and reporting the findings to the House.