

Adjournment Debate

I note that the government moved speedily to clean up environmental pollution at Port Hope resulting from radioactive waste.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member whose allotted time has expired.

Mr. George Baker (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, the particular chlor-alkali plant which was the major contributor to mercury contamination of the English-Wabagoon river system converted from mercury cells to membrane cells, terminating the use of mercury completely in October, 1975. Thus there will be no further mercury added to the system from that source.

In March, 1972, Environment Canada issued the chlor-alkali mercury effluent regulations under the Fisheries Act, limiting the quantity of mercury that could be discharged to receiving waters from these plants. Since then all the chlor-alkali plants have reported daily figures of their mercury discharges to liquid effluents as well as their purchases of mercury for any use. These records indicate that direct discharges of mercury to receiving waters, including the Dryden plant, have been reduced to a level of only about 1 per cent of that discharged prior to the discovery of the problem.

The whole process has now been changed in the Dryden plant. Unfortunately the vast amounts of mercury discharged to the environment in the past are now contained in bottom sediments from which they will continue to find their way into the food chain.

We have an estimate of approximately \$350 million to dredge and dispose of the contaminated river sediments; however, physical removal of contaminated river and lake sediments may cause more release of mercury due to disturbance than would occur from the undisturbed sediments. On the basis of analyses over several years it now appears that the problem is decreasing year by year. However, estimates of time for complete self-recovery of the English-Wabagoon river system can be placed at 20 to 30 years.

We are actively continuing a policy of collaboration with provincial governments. As suggested by the hon. member, the Canada Water Act is one of the available strategies. However, that act is not normally used to deal with this type of problem and is not considered appropriate in this case.

• (2210)

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION—EXTENSION OF
COVERAGE TO ISOLATED AREAS—REASON FOR DELAY

Mr. Jack Marshall (Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, the question I directed to the Secretary of State (Mr. Faulkner), who is responsible for the CBC, concerns the inefficiency and not upholding a promise to extend television coverage to remote areas of Canada.

I have been raising this matter for eight years. All I have received are tales of woe and excuses. If a CBC producer would look into my files, he would find the greatest story that could be told. It would not cost a cent for this story that could run for 13 weeks on television. It concerns the

[Mr. Symes.]

extension of television coverage to citizens in remote areas of Newfoundland. These people are Canadian citizens. They listened to promises when they came into Canada. They heard about the good things Canada offers all its citizens.

After reading the speech by the Minister of Communications (Mrs. Sauvé), I was prompted to direct this question to the Secretary of State. It is hypocritical the way she agrees with everything I say. I am sure the parliamentary secretary will also agree because she lives in a rural area.

The minister indicated in her speech that the CBC signals can be made available to communities in the North Atlantic and that, as funds become available, and provided the people want it, there is no reason why any of these small remote communities should lack CBC radio and television. However, all I get from those concerned in the CBC are tales of woe.

In the 1974-75 annual report one of the excuses they give is a shortage in Canada of engineers and technicians specializing in broadcast transmission. If that is the case, why could a small satellite not be put up which would extend television coverage to northern Newfoundland? People in five small communities there have been waiting for years to get this public service which they deserve. They are denied this because of a lack of efficiency on the part of the CBC. I realize the problems they have, financial and otherwise. I can tell the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Baker) that the fishermen in northern Newfoundland know how to bring television coverage to that area, but no one will listen to them.

I repeat that I have been raising this matter for eight years. In have tried to be reasonable. I can only come to the conclusion that, as usual, we in Newfoundland are low on the priority scale. I hope the parliamentary secretary will have an answer.

I have one other grievance. I warned the minister about ten days ago that I would be asking him this question. However, the only answer I received the other day was that he would get a detailed reply for me. I hope the parliamentary secretary will have that answer and be able to give me a date, not in 1978, but within the next few months. I hope the CBC engineers will get off their fannies and realize that those in northern Newfoundland are also Canadians and are entitled to television coverage.

Miss Coline Campbell (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, priorities in the implementation of the accelerated coverage plan are based on criteria which take into account population, isolation, geographic equalization across the country, engineering considerations, cost and operating factors.

As will be appreciated, the 600 engineering projects in the plan must be carried out on a tight logistical schedule, with the above priorities set on a national basis, using a formula considered to be as equitable as the CBC can make it. The CBC understands the wish of individual communities to receive service as quickly as possible, but the sheer size of the total project, and its attendant requirements for staff and the manufacture of the necessary equipment, must dictate the speed at which the plan can proceed.