

A brief background description of the project should come first. This radio astrophysical observatory is about a 20-minute drive south from Penticton. It is situated on a quiet site which was chosen after a great deal of searching, because it was about as far south in Canada as it could be located. It is near a settled area, one of the few in all Canada which is perfectly suitable for this type of scientific work. It is free from almost all types of electrical interference, and this is an absolute necessity having regard to the type of scientific research being undertaken. The site is acknowledged as one of the best in the world for radio astrophysical observations. Canadians have an investment in it of close to \$3 million, although it would be worth much more in terms of today's values. The annual staff payroll is close to \$200,000.

The research work has been recognized and commended by leading researchers in many countries. In May of 1971 it received the following commendation from the National Committee for Canada of the International Astronomical Union:

Those members of the committee who are not engaged in long baseline work wish to extend their heartiest congratulations to the long baseline team of Messrs. Broders, Chisholm, Galt, Gush, Legg, Locke, McLeish, Richards and you on their award last month of the Rumford medal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Such high recognition of Canadian research in astronomy brings honour to the nation and underlines the success of co-operation among institutions for astronomical projects.

The future of this site and its research potential is in serious danger from possible land development projects in the area. To date the federal government has done nothing to protect the observatory from this danger. I understand that any electrical appliances in the area would ruin the work being done, and appliances in the area would ruin the work being done, and appliances do come to the area when homes are built.

There are several solutions. At present the Okanagan-Simikameen regional district has rejected one proposed development. Other developments are pending. It has, however, warned the federal government by resolution that it will not be put in the position in coming years of defending the observatory. The federal government could buy up sufficient property to protect this project, but this has been rejected by the minister.

I feel that the federal government should approach the provincial government with a view to having the area set aside as a game preserve or for park purposes. Perhaps even some other solution can be worked out. In any event, there is immediate and pressing need for federal govern-

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

ment action and I urge the minister to look into the matter again without delay. We can have both an outstanding research facility and a recreational area. Both could be a credit to the district, to the province and to the nation. I trust we can agree upon an early and favourable solution to protect this valuable scientific installation.

Mr. Gaston Clermont (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, the site of the Dominion Radio Astrophysical Observatory near Penticton, British Columbia, was chosen about 15 years ago for its freedom from man-made radio interference, a requirement for the detection and study of the extremely weak radio signals from astronomical objects. Considerable land was acquired at that time and the government of British Columbia, by order in council, placed a map reserve on all Crown land within a much larger buffer zone surrounding the site. Because of the nature of the countryside it was believed then that these actions would ensure the usefulness of the site for a very long time. In particular, it was not envisaged that large-scale housing developments would ever be built in the region. The government of Canada was, therefore, concerned when it learned that two such developments were being proposed on privately held land within the buffer zone.

The President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) has made known the government's position on this matter. On several occasions he has expressed the view that the purchase, or the expropriation now of an area large enough to protect the observatory is not a proper solution to this problem. I understand the hon. member for Okanagan Boundary (Mr. Howard) has made numerous representations on this question. In a letter of April 27, 1972, to Mr. Bruce Howard, Member of Parliament for Okanagan Boundary, in response to his representation on behalf of the community in question, the President of the Treasury Board said:

I do not think the federal government should be expected to expend substantial sums to protect the investment in its observatory if its purposes can be achieved more economically elsewhere.

If the community collectively or the provincial government, as the case may be, concludes that it could develop more satisfactorily by continued housing development which would drive out the observatory rather than limiting development and permitting the continued operation of the observatory, this choice, in my view, should be a local one and not one for the federal government to try and make.

I would expect the representatives of the community to take whatever action is considered to be in the best interest of the community at large.

Motion agreed to and the House adjourned at 10.24 p.m.