

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

community of the full effects of microwave energy on plant and animal life in general.

I can begin, Mr. Speaker, by indicating that recently I received a petition from approximately 500 residents of an area in central Manitoba, stating that due to recent releases of information concerning the possible effects of radiation on humans, livestock and vegetation, they requested that a thorough on site investigation be made of all surrounding areas adjacent to microwave towers.

As I say, this was signed by just slightly less than 500 farmers, hatchery operators and poultry farm operators from a central area of Manitoba. A few days ago I addressed a letter to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) bringing this petition and the concern expressed by these people to his attention, and giving him some slight background information on a particular case in point where the operator of one of the largest poultry farms in Manitoba, who had operated his farm with great success over a period of six or seven years, in late 1962 experienced very mysterious symptoms in his poultry flocks. All through the course of 1963 to 1966 inclusive these symptoms persisted. The minister is an experienced agriculturist and he must know something is drastic when feed conversion ratios are cut in half, when the mortality rate rises to 60 per cent in a flock of 10,000 to 15,000 birds, and when chickens and turkeys lose their feathers in a very obvious way.

All manner of experts were brought into the picture, including veterinarians from the central midwestern United States, from eastern Canada and western Canada, from the Department of Transport and from other government departments provincial and federal, and no one could give a diagnosis as to the probable cause. It was by a process of elimination that some of them suggested that perhaps there was some mysterious, if not mysterious at least unknown, relationship between the biological condition of these flocks of poultry and the presence of a microwave relay tower in the very near proximity of the farm.

From 1964 onward this particular poultry farm operator and others tried to solicit the advice of different government departments, at both the federal and provincial levels, and they really did not get very much co-operation. I hesitate to say this, but what is involved here may be on the frontier of human scientific knowledge and, because many of these people were reluctant to give

[Mr. Schreyer.]

any firm opinion, that poultry farm operator was left on his own to sink or swim.

The net result was that he was pushed into complete bankruptcy in the fall of 1966, and the role played by the Industrial Development Bank certainly left a great deal to be desired. It was prepared to take a \$25,000 loss rather than get in and try to help this individual get all the support and advice necessary to cope with the problem.

I know the minister is going to get up and say, in his reassuring tone, that a grant has been given to the University of Manitoba. So it has, I understand—an initial grant of \$3,800. Mr. Speaker, that amount of money will hardly even begin to do an adequate job of research.

I may say that I have asked the opinion of experts, and we believe it would be much more helpful if a field study, rather than any laboratory experiment, were made. We would like on-site research under actual field conditions. We are given to understand that we are getting more and more information as we go along. This problem could result from a combination of factors, such as leakage from this microwave tower, improper installation of some part or another, plus atmospheric conditions at the site. Without going into the technical details, I would urge the minister to take a personal interest in this case.

As I say, evidence would seem to indicate we are just on the frontiers of scientific knowledge in this respect. It would be a pity if the appropriate government departments did not bother to concern themselves a little more directly. I do not think—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. member's time has expired.

• (10:10 p.m.)

Mr. Schreyer: May I just finish this sentence? I do not believe our society would want to be so callous as to leave an individual on his own in a situation where there is so much yet to be done.

Hon. H. A. Olson (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member wrote to me several days ago and I answered his letter at that time. I outlined what the Department of Agriculture has done up to this time. With regard to the complaints of alleged biological effects on poultry by microwave power radiation, I may say that this was brought to our attention in the fall of 1967 by the president of the Manitoba farmers union. On inquiring into the matter, we were advised that these complaints had originally been