

Canada Pension Plan

technocratic kind of logic on this area of activity. Volunteer work can only be effective if, while recognizing its tremendous value and considerable economic and social impact, we respect its specificity and autonomy.

Trying to institutionalize volunteer action to meet the requirements of an administrative and bureaucratic logic rather than the needs of the people would probably mean paralyzing it. I suggest the independence of this sector should be preserved and respected, something we could not do if we wanted to control everything. One need only imagine the burden which bureaucracy would represent for volunteer groups to understand that this could block the most creative initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, other will deal with the impact such a measure could have on the very nature of the Canada Pension Plan. For my part, I felt the need to emphasize the constraining aspect of this measure which, although not deliberately, would act as a sort of choker stifling the creativity of the volunteer sector.

Mr. Jean-Claude Malépart (Montreal—Sainte-Marie): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to speak to the motion of the Hon. Member for Thunder Bay—Nipigon (Mr. Epp).

Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member is to be congratulated on his desire to give recognition to, and find a way of thanking, thousands of volunteers in Canada who work with such dedication for various community services, sports and cultural activities and social services.

Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to say these congratulations do not extend to the Government. The Parliamentary Secretary has just given us a demonstration of this Conservative Government's philosophy. First of all, she enumerated and congratulated and gave statistics on volunteer work. She then started to criticize the motion by saying that we could not quantify the time spent by these people on volunteer work. She then gave us a series of measures that are not applicable to this specific proposal in relation to the Canada Pension Plan, and she told us that we would hear the rest from another Member in another speech.

● (1830)

Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that a bunch of public servants were given the job of looking at this motion and finding all the negative points so that she could say it was not acceptable. On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, there are some things the Government could have said but didn't, namely that the Hon. Member's suggestion, although perhaps not the best in terms of the Canada Pension Plan, does provide a way to recognize the value of the work done by these people in our society for all Canadians, for our youth and for our senior citizens.

Mr. Speaker, that is your typical Conservative philosophy: *nyet*. When someone suggests compensation for people who are doing a good job: *nyet*. Mr. Speaker, they have no compassion, no class and no gratitude.

I agree with the Parliamentary Secretary when she mentions the sums of money that would be involved—I don't have the figures—how much it would cost, how many hours of work would be involved, and how much the dedication of these people is worth. On the other hand, they are not even capable of finding a way to recognize and appreciate this work.

She mentioned Volunteer Week. That is too easy. It doesn't cost anything to say: Tomorrow is Volunteer Week. Next week is Tom, Dick and Harry Week. The week after, somebody else's week. But what is this Government doing to show these people they are important to our society? Who are these people?

First of all, there are fathers and mothers who are beginning to do volunteer work with children after working hours, in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada, in hockey for instance, the kind of people like Wayne Gretzky, Maurice Richard, Guy Lafleur, people who were first trained by volunteers. Then there is figure skating for those who have daughters. Other activities include majorettes, flag bearers, painting, theatre, ballet. These people are all volunteers who generously give not only their time but also their money to ensure the success of the events.

After that you have everything. It so happens that I had lunch today with Mrs. Solange Denis, a well know Canadian personality, and she was telling me about the number of hours of volunteer work done in a home near here, a home for elderly and sick people.

These people expect to hear words of encouragement from the Government. At least, reading the text prepared by an official, the speaker should have said: We thank you from the bottom of our heart. Never in our lifetime could the Government pay and thank you for everything you are doing. Unfortunately the proposition as worded is not applicable, but we will set up a committee to find not only a year but a week for volunteers. Perhaps the Prime Minister should have certificates delivered to all volunteers throughout Canada.

Mr. Speaker, we could have taken this opportunity to establish a committee. The Government could have amended the proposal, and I am convinced that the Hon. Member would have been willing to say: We are going to establish a Parliamentary Committee because there are volunteers in every Canadian constituency, people of all ages and social backgrounds in sports, cultural activities and social work. We could have sat down together and invited these people to appear before us. Instead of deciding what they should be given, we could have met with them and asked them what they would like the Government to do to recognize their contribution and to make them feel important in our society.

This would have shown our concern for these people and encouraged them. I was in charge of recreational activities for 25 years. I have already said that, at the age of twelve, I took part in a choirboy strike, which was not too popular at the time. When I played midget hockey, our coach was a father of seven children. He worked during the day for very low wages and