

advertisement. (b) Request that advertisement be stopped; the Hon. Member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski)—Railways (a) Transportation of dangerous goods. (b) Distribution of departmental document.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY, S.O. 62—NEED FOR GOVERNMENT POLICY ON VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. McLean:

That this House condemns the Government for its failure to honour the commitment made both in 1974 and 1981 by Canada's Secretary of State to develop, in co-operation with the voluntary sector, a comprehensive government action policy with respect to the voluntary sector and urges the Government to provide an immediate incentive to Canada's 40,000 registered charities by implementing the give and take tax credit proposal.

● (1610)

Mr. André Maltais (Manicouagan): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think today's debate on the issue of tax credits for non-profit organizations and, especially, for registered charities is most interesting. I also think it is an issue that has evolved in the course of time. If we look at the matter of non-profit organizations, we should remember that initially, these organizations were declared to be charitable organizations and often had a distinctly religious base. I believe that when discussing the issue now, in 1984, we must look at all aspects of the problem, since many groups, formed for many purposes, are seeking to be defined as charitable organizations. Often these are research groups or groups that have sprung up spontaneously to look into environmental issues. I agree with the Minister that we must be careful in our assessment of so-called charitable organizations. Mr. Speaker, the motion presented today is a motion condemning the Government for its failure to honour the commitment made both in 1974 and 1981 to develop, in co-operation with the voluntary sector, a comprehensive Government action policy with respect to the voluntary sector.

Mr. Speaker, I think the time may be ripe to get together all these people who are working in the voluntary sector. Earlier, the Member for Provencher (Mr. Epp) made a very significant comment when he said that we must ensure that governments, whether they are municipal, provincial or federal, will support the voluntary sector. I believe that Members on both sides of the House agree with the notion of putting more and more committed people in the voluntary sector, because motivation is needed to launch a cause and give a really profound sense of commitment.

Supply

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the history of charitable organizations, it is clear that at the time, these organizations fulfilled a role that was often not fulfilled by governments. For instance, I am thinking of the matter of cancer research. At the time, research was often carried out by private organizations, frequently by religious orders, and in that case the Government paid practically nothing. So it was normal that if we wanted to encourage this form of research or support these communities or the work of these communities, that people investing money should be entitled to certain deductions. Today, however, these factors have changed. How much money do governments spend on research alone? Whether it is medical research or research on nutrition or education—Mr. Speaker, research is being done everywhere—it is directly subsidized out of the public purse. Thus, when you get organizations that are lining up to do research on heart disease or other kinds of disease, then we are no longer in the purely "charitable" sphere. These are organizations that obviously want to give even more than what the public authorities are doing. In that case, their work is complementary. And here I think we could consider a form of tax deduction. However, when you get groups that do research on the environment, can this really be considered charitable work? Does it qualify as research? I think there are grey areas that are very substantial and it would, perhaps, be only fair and reasonable to form a committee of the Senate or the House of Commons to meet the people working in this sector. Mr. Speaker, travelling in our own ridings and indeed across the country, we realize how many agencies are doing remarkable work in the voluntary sector. However, I am quite sure that all 282 Members of this House would be hard put to determine accurately whether each of these agencies is really a research organization, a charitable organization or an organization for voluntary action.

Mr. Speaker, after the historical aspect, I would like to consider the issue of the autonomy of these organizations vis-à-vis the public authorities. Nowadays, it is very hard to talk about a private business when we look at the number of grants governments give to businesses that are "private". It is also very difficult to talk about voluntary or autonomous organizations if we look at the subsidies granted by the Departments to various associations.

Mr. Speaker, I think that some kind of balance has to be restored with respect to organizations which consider themselves as being non-profitable and which normally, and I mean normally, should be supported to the same extent as their membership commitments. In my opinion, that is an important point. Perhaps the danger right now is that some non-profit organizations almost act as if they were Government Departments. Since they do not have enough patrons to support their charities—obviously commendable from the start—they come to rely on public authorities. There is a major distinction here. I think that non-profit organizations must be operationally