

my riding. I also want to acknowledge the hon. member who has brought forward this bill. I think he has an idea which is worth promoting, whether today in this House or whether it is done through the government and the Secretary of State. This is an idea which should be pushed very hard. I want to congratulate the hon. member for Waterloo. I will end my speech at this point so that he has a chance to carry on.

Mrs. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, I wish to make six main points with relation to Bill C-233. First, we support the principles of this bill, although we are concerned that it is far too limited in the assistance it offers to charitable organizations. However, we do support the grants in aid which are mentioned in the bill.

Second, we are concerned that the bill and the establishment of a commission should not be used as delaying tactics which would slow up some of the other changes which are needed, particularly changes with regard to tax reform and the provision for support services and grants for voluntary organizations.

Third, we do not feel that another study is needed. I do not really think that is what is intended because, as has been mentioned, the "People in Action" study done by the National Advisory Council in September, 1977, is very comprehensive. The study suggested many recommendations which can be implemented and which should be implemented by the government right away.

Fourth, we support the reform of the tax credit system, which has been mentioned by other speakers. We also support the give and take tax reform which has been advocated by the Committee on National Voluntary Organizations.

Fifth, we particularly want to broaden the concept of registered charities. In our view there is not much point in having these extra services available if they will only be available to established organizations, the registered ones such as the United Way, which has a professional staff and all the advantages and expertise to help it. We urge that the concept of registered charities be expanded as part of the commission's activities in this regard.

Bill C-233 proposes that a government commission be established to issue guidelines for supplying aid in kind to registered charities. As was mentioned, the bill particularly proposes the use of government telephone lines and computer time in off-peak hours. It proposes to offer special rates on charters, excursion flights and rail travel, special postal rates for informational material and the use of unused premises—government premises, I presume—or meeting rooms.

I support these proposals as far as they go, again provided that these services are made available also to consumer groups, self-help groups and advocacy groups which may not now be considered under the title of "registered charities". Why should taxpayers not have access through recognized organizations, which are registered provincially, to facilities and equipment for which they pay out of their tax dollars? Undoubtedly, maintenance and security problems will be used as an excuse by bureaucrats who resent the intrusion of ordinary citizens

into their domain. However, our experience has shown that these problems can be resolved if the responsibility to serve the public is a required expectation of all government bureaucracies and departments.

When I was an area manager for Vancouver Resources Board, all local offices of this health and welfare service were planned and administered under the direction of a locally elected board of citizens. Community facilities were designated for community use and had to be open for community groups to use on evenings, weekends and even during the daytime. As a result, people developed a much more positive attitude toward their social service centres. I think the same thing could happen with government bureaucracies. Community schools are another example of where government facilities are being opened and expanded for community use by all age groups on weekends, evenings and all summer long. Again, these facilities come under the direction of local citizens' organizations, which is as it should be. So there are precedents for these kinds of measures. From a federal point of view I would certainly support them.

If this approach works in local communities, why should federal facilities not be more accessible? The problem is, of course, that most of our federal bureaucracies are too centralized and too luxurious for many casual neighbourhood groups. They are sometimes too intimidating for poor people's organizations as places where they could hold informal gatherings. Opening the doors of public buildings could help to humanize Manpower Centres and other federal bureaucracies.

The proposal in Bill C-233 to allow registered charities to use government phones and to enjoy reduced mailing rates is a good suggestion, provided that these services are made available to low-income groups as well as to established registered societies. Non-profit societies have few funds and are cut off from communications with similar organizations across Canada. They are cut off from the government and its policies here in Ottawa. This is a particularly serious matter for organizations which happen to be located in the outlying regions of Canada, in our eastern and western provinces and, of course, in the north. From the point of view of fairness and equity across Canada, I would urge that travel arrangements and these community facilities be made available.

I would now like to move to the main concern which we have, that is to say, that this bill really does not go far enough, both in offering services and in finding a way to redefine the term "registered charities". Although we support the bill in principle, we have serious concerns about this matter. Our first concern is with the major reform of the tax credit system. The National Voluntary Organization, which is a coalition of some 120 national associations, has recommended a tax reform proposal entitled "give and take". It proposes to make two major changes to the Income Tax Act in order to increase donations to registered charities. First, it proposes to eliminate the standard \$100 deduction which is now in place, and which we know does not encourage charitable donations. Its second proposal is to introduce 50 per cent tax credit so that taxpayers can deduct 50 per cent of their total charitable donations from