

*Supply*

National Voluntary Organizations, pointed out on Sunday evening that our world has become demoralized, that hope has diminished. He said that internationalism is in decline and a new militarism is in ascendancy. He struck a note of urgency about today's world and a note of pleading about Canada facing it with a sense of purpose and moral commitment.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, today's question is one which all Hon. Members of the House will want to face. It is a question, unfortunately, that the present Government has not been preoccupied with. The first meeting of this coalition of voluntary agencies ten years ago heard the then Secretary of State announce that he was seeking a whole new relationship between the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector. He announced the establishment of a national advisory council on voluntary action to undertake a full study in government and voluntary sector relations. The report, *People in Action*, is now a distant memory. Five Secretaries of State have followed and, with the exception of the Hon. David MacDonald, the current Government has placed responsibility for voluntary action in the hands of four Secretaries of State.

I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that there is a recurring trend in government's approach to this concern, in its approach to the fundamental question I have posed. That trend is a complete dissonance between words and deeds, between rhetoric and action.

My colleague, the Hon. Member for Edmonton South (Mr. Roche), has raised in the House the issue of voluntary action since 1974. Hon. Members will recall that my Private Members' Bill was referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs in order that it look at incentive tax proposals. However, that reference has not been called before the committee and, therefore, representatives of the voluntary sector and voluntary groups across the country cannot come to testify before it and give of their expertise.

Let me give you another example, Mr. Speaker. At the Coalition of National Voluntary Organizations' most recent plenary conference, Consultation 81, which was held three years ago, the then Secretary of State, now Minister of Communications (Mr. Fox), pledged to the voluntary leaders from across Canada, and I quote from his published statement:

I am committed to the development of a comprehensive federal Government action policy developed jointly with the voluntary sector.

The current Secretary of State (Mr. Joyal) latched on to this rhetoric early in his incumbency. At a conference of the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy in Toronto in November, 1982, he announced this:

With this in mind I intend to place this matter before cabinet. My plan of action has five objectives.

His first objective was:

To determine the legal and fiscal framework within which Government and the voluntary sector can work together.

What has happened as a result of these words? Thirteen months later, in December of 1983, the Throne Speech picked up the same rhetoric, speaking of, "Canada's massive, diverse

and vital voluntary sector". The speech went on to promise, and I quote:

The definition of a registered charity under the Income Tax Act and related matters will be referred to a joint parliamentary task force.

● (1120)

I note, Mr. Speaker, that the Secretary of State has tabled today a motion regarding a joint committee of the Senate and House. However, I believe, to be consistent with his own words, that the frame of reference of this joint committee must be broadened to address not only the legal framework but also the fiscal framework. A tax credit proposal should be part of this reference. It should be studied by this committee, not just the definition of charity. The Coalition of National Voluntary Organizations' brief to the Macdonald Commission had a number of comments to make. It spoke about the mood of Canada's voluntary leaders. Here is what they said to him a few weeks ago:

The voluntary sector displays imagination, initiative and drive, and is full of ideas for improvement of the Canadian community in the future. This sector is threatened, not by change, but rather by neglect, misunderstanding, ignorance and a consequent absence of consistent and supportive behaviour on the part of government.

The immense contribution of voluntary action to the economy and democracy is often merely assumed, is taken for granted, and is thereby largely invisible in quantifiable terms. Government has demonstrated all possible support short of actual help. Key structural changes, which will enable the voluntary movement to respond to the challenges of the coming decades are important, not only to the tens of thousands of voluntary groups in all parts of Canada, but is fundamentally important for the future of Canada.

In the choice, Mr. Speaker, of futures that the voluntary leadership of our country placed before the Macdonald Commission, they contrasted two alternative scenarios for Canada in the year 2000, a polarized Canada or an integrated Canada. They said that the voluntary sector is a key player in an effort to build an integrated Canada. I support their contention. My Party is committed to strengthening the voluntary sector because we also see voluntary groups as key players in the Canada of tomorrow. We see the role of government as creating the conditions whereby groups in the community can play their full role in the country's future. We have to create incentives and eliminate barriers to full participation in national development by each of the social partners. It is for this reason that we believe in incentives to the private sector to do the job it can do best, that is, to create jobs and innovate with technology so that more wealth can be created and distributed within Canada.

In my Party, Mr. Speaker, we do not have to be persuaded that the voluntary groups across Canada are large employers of lower and middle-income Canadians. We do not have to be persuaded that they offer many less advantaged Canadians a bridge to employment, to participation. We do not have to be persuaded that they are a tremendous engine for training, learning and for citizenship in Canada. Voluntary groups are also the most highly labour intensive part of Canada's service sector. We are now at long last beginning to get the statistics. This is a tribute to the leaders of the Coalition of National Voluntary Organizations who have continued to dig away and press the Government to have Statistics Canada begin to