

this analysis. On the contrary, we have noted relatively equal distributions for most of the demographic variables.

More striking still is the almost identical distribution of men and women, the high percentage of people with high school education or better, and the high rate of employed persons.

At present the highest ratio—31.5 per cent—of persons who did volunteer work during the reference year, that is from February 1979 to February 1980, belong to the “social services and welfare” group. That group includes a relatively wide spectrum of social services, including child care, canvassing organizations, service clubs and so forth.

Although we do not have more detailed breakdowns, there is reason to believe that a large part of the respondents in that group work for a canvassing organization.

● (1750)

In order of importance, religious organizations rank second among organizations, representing 25.5 per cent of all volunteers. As far as recreational organizations are concerned they include one quarter of all volunteers. Then there is education with 16.3 per cent and health with 7.9 per cent.

However we can say that there seems to be some relation between paid and voluntary work because according to our findings, the work done by volunteers vary to some extent according to their professional work for which they get paid.

Finally, the Government cannot remain indifferent with regard to the potential of the voluntary sector. Not only can voluntary organizations provide direct and complementary services to institutional resources but, in addition, the voluntary sector can become a place for privileged training for young people and adults. It can also be perceived as the anteroom to the formal sector where young people can prepare themselves to enter the world of paid work.

The voluntary sector, because of the jobs that it still manages to create, may be considered in this period of financial crisis and unemployment as a buffer in terms of jobs created and also in terms of jobs saved. We know that the services rendered by voluntary organizations allow in many cases public institutions to save paid jobs, but we now have the tendency to overlook the fact that at present the voluntary sector is one of the few areas where jobs are created. Of course, those are temporary, and short-term jobs offering very low wages, but in spite of those aspects for many people work is the important thing. Under the circumstances, we understand the interest of the Government which finds in voluntary organizations some openings for young people, women, or marginal workers looking for jobs and this at a relatively low cost.

Remember, Mr. Speaker, that each year, the general public and the Governments hand out millions of dollars in gifts or grants to voluntary organizations. Whether under manpower programs or direct subsidies such as New Horizons, etc.,

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thousands of Canadian volunteers are managing public funds. In my constituency, noteworthy tourist activities such as the crossing of Lake Simon, the Montpelier Summer Festival, the Lachute agricultural fair bring in thousands of dollars and create hundreds of jobs. Mr. Speaker, such activities are entirely organized and managed by volunteers.

In short, the Government is for more than one reason concerned with voluntary action. However, at present, many volunteers are restless either because they are wondering about the results of their action or they are physically or morally tired of always being at the forefront and finally because the costs of their action go beyond their financial resources. Consider the cost of fuel, of child care, etc.

The want of relieving forces and the financial crisis are adding to the already very heavy burden weighing on that fellowship chain both so strong and so vulnerable.

Mr. Speaker, this is the subject of my motion: That the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs be empowered to study and report on the volunteer sector in order to evaluate its social and financial impact and to recommend appropriate ways of offering fiscal or other compensations to volunteers and voluntary organizations.

The tax system should be thoroughly amended to bring a more significant support to people and organizations involved in the voluntary sector, whether it is in arts, recreation or community action. Without such steps, Mr. Speaker, the crisis now threatening the voluntary sector could cost a lot more to the Governments than the few thousand dollars which would entail a reasonable and stimulative fiscal compensation that would help democratize and extend to all strata of the community the access to volunteer and community work.

[English]

**Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East):** Mr. Speaker, first I would like to congratulate the Hon. Member who raised this issue and who spoke so eloquently in support of greater recognition for volunteers. On behalf of the New Democratic Party, I will certainly strongly support the proposal which she brought forward, a proposal to study the volunteer sector to evaluate its social and financial impact and to recommend appropriate ways of offering fiscal and other compensation to volunteers and to volunteer organizations.

I recall that in 1979, a similar proposal was made. For a short time I sat on the subcommittee which was established to look at volunteerism. We had really just begun to get into the subject when there was no more Government and we had to go to the polls.

My Party recognizes the very many hours of volunteer time and the very valuable contribution that many thousands of volunteers have made to community services, the movements for social reform and many kinds of self-help services across the country. I think we all recognize that these are very important and essential contributions that these people, the majority of whom are women, are making to society.