

Registered Charities

I want to thank this House for this opportunity to speak about some of the lessons I have learned in my life from the various voluntary agencies of which I have been a part and from others. I know that all members of this House join with me not only in congratulating the volunteers of Canada for their contribution, but by passing this bill or letting it move through the House to the next stage, indicating on the part of the government and of Parliament their sense of urgency in developing and encouraging this great Canadian resource. This resource needs to be tapped as well as do the natural resources about which we talk so much, for if it is not cared for, we cannot, within the budget of Canada, replace what is there in terms of making our society the compassionate and caring community that we have and that we cherish.

Mr. Kelly: Mr. Speaker, may I ask a question of the last speaker? I will preface it by saying that I am supportive of his bill's intentions but I would like him to tell me how this new commission would affect the existence of the present National Advisory Council on Voluntary Action? Does he see one replacing the other or does he see the two of them merging or the two of them coexisting?

Mr. McLean: I think, Mr. Speaker, the commission is to take the evidence which has been compiled, for example, that contained in the government's major study "People in Action"; the reports of the existing council which are on record; and to recommend to the Minister of Finance what decisions should be taken in relation to the budget and what policy decisions should be taken by cabinet in relation to goods and services that could be made available. So the commission would be established for a short term with a specific task, not to do the work of the councils, but rather to take the evidence and turn it into political action so that we do not have more reports on the record, more briefs and more indications of support, the only consequence of which is to leave that sector frustrated.

Mr. Kelly: One further question, if I may, Mr. Speaker. The commission then would exist for one purpose only and after it has made its recommendations it would then automatically disappear. Is that correct? There will be no specific time limit on it? It would not exist for six or eight months and then disappear?

Mr. McLean: Mr. Speaker, the provisions of the bill call for a period of not more than six months, and if the evaluation of the existing recommendations can be done and presented to the Minister of Finance in three months, then the commission would go out of existence. Obviously a private member's bill cannot deal directly with finance. Therefore, I am recommending a mechanism to take the intentions of the government, of this party when we were in government, and to move that forward, not to go on and on with reports that everybody only nods to. So the commission has a specific limited frame of reference.

Mr. Douglas Fisher (Mississauga North): Mr. Speaker, I want to speak very briefly about this bill because I support it, and I would like to underline some of the sentiments written

into the bill and some of the ideas that the hon. member for Waterloo (Mr. McLean) has brought out over the past few minutes.

It seems to me the hon. member referred to some of the non-partisan statements being made by the Secretary of State (Mr. Fox) on the topic of voluntarism and he was quite complimentary about the atmosphere that the minister had created. I would like to turn that compliment around and apply it to the hon. member for Waterloo whose speech was a non-partisan effort which underlined quite clearly his evident concern for voluntarism and community improvement. I think the hon. member should be congratulated for his very evident non-partisan spirit on this.

All of us, I think, support at least the principle behind the bill. The hon. member spoke about the very delicate balance between the public and private sector. I have noticed over the past year as the member for Mississauga a distinct difference between the atmosphere in my riding and, for example, that in the city of Toronto. In my riding a great premium is placed on voluntary activity and on the contribution of a citizen to the betterment of his community. In other communities, such as Toronto, the government might be somewhat more active and step in and take an activist's role; whereas, in Mississauga the government tends to encourage local groups and let the groups do the work themselves.

• (1620)

It would be quite accurate to say that in my riding we would prefer to see volunteers take the lead in community improvement and let government provide the facilities. We would prefer to see the volunteers take on the activities and the ongoing leadership. There are literally thousands of people involved in the entire spectrum of volunteer activities across Mississauga. We have one of the largest soccer leagues in the country. There are community festivals and social activist programs.

For example, I am thinking of the joint co-operation between the federal government and volunteers in Mississauga to help the Vietnamese refugees. There are scores of families who are receiving financial aid and some training through federal facilities. They have been settled in the community thanks to the hard work and the dedication of churches, social clubs, service clubs and individual citizens who have provided them with clothing and housing as well as information on medical treatment, schooling and all social services. Above all, they have become friends of these families. We have followed the model very successfully across Mississauga where the government has made the activities of volunteers possible.

There are many other examples in my constituency where this type of thing has happened. For example, the community saw the master plan for the Toronto airport unveiled. Quite frankly, the master plan attempts to make Toronto airport a good neighbour. This is thanks to the hard work and the pounding of pavement by volunteer and ratepayers' groups.

Over the past ten years they have attempted to get across to the officials in the Department of Transport that it not only