

software? Is that activity more important to the public good than the activity called skiing?

That is a subject worthy of debate by Members of the Liberal Party, who tell us that the purpose of a granting mechanism is to allow a small group of people to decide what is in the public good. They will make infallible, perfect, wonderful decisions time after time. I throw that dilemma out to them. Which activity is more in the interest of the public good, skiing or chess? Skiing gets infinitely larger grants from the Government of Canada, whereas chess does not get a dime.

What would happen if these voluntary activities were treated equally in the tax laws of Canada? What would happen if the proposal put forward by this motion and the National Voluntary Organizations was adopted into law? I will tell you what would happen. The broad mass of Canadians could vote on which activities were in their mind in the public good. The way the vote would be through the process of donating.

If you adopt the 50 per cent tax proposal, then when a dollar is donated, in essence the public would pay out of tax revenue 50 per cent of that. There would really be a truly democratic matching situation where individuals collectively decide what is in the public good instead of a Cabinet Minister, committee or Parliament? We would have a much stronger voluntary sector. We would have a voluntary sector that better meets the needs of local communities and Canadians. We should take Government out of the middle, take these granting committees out of the picture for the most part and return the voting principle to the taxpayers of the country. Let them decide which parts of the voluntary sector are doing the job that needs to be done. Let them decide through the use of their pocketbooks, and let us encourage them to do so through the use of the pocketbook.

I was really disturbed today when I heard the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Roberts) say in this House that we have \$150 million for grants for young people, but he will not tell us what the criteria are. Somebody is deciding. Those criteria are not out. We caught the same Minister with his fingers in the cookie jar to the tune of \$300 million under the Special Employment Initiatives Program. The money was spent before Members of Parliament knew what the criteria were.

That is the danger of a granting system, a danger that we do not have and should not have to face. All we have to do is adopt the recommendations put forward by the National Voluntary Organizations. If a 50 per cent tax credit is too rich, maybe 40 per cent is not. Maybe 50 per cent is not rich enough and it should be 60 per cent, but the principle should be non-negotiable. There should be no temptation on the part of any Cabinet Minister or any elected Member of Parliament to use public funds to secure votes for themselves personally through some kind of granting mechanism, giving money to this group instead of that group. The temptation is great for some Members. We caught the Minister of Employment and Immigration, who seeks to become the Leader of the Liberal Party, with his fist in the cookie jar, passing out grants in a fashion that is not accountable, not responsible, not any of

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those things that Members opposite stood up and told us were desirable.

I had a bias when I began this speech. That bias comes from my first ten professional years which I spent as an employee in voluntary organizations. From there I moved to public sector organizations. I had a small business, I dealt with large business. When you talk about productivity, the biggest bang for your buck in terms of good consequences, I state unequivocally, is in the voluntary sector. A dollar spent in the voluntary sector will give much more back to society than a dollar spent in any other way. The difference is immeasurable.

Next to that comes small business. Most small business owners really volunteer a huge part of their hours. A huge part of their talent is voluntarily put into their small business activity. That is the nature of a true small business. Where the waste comes in is with big business and with big government. When funds are free, when an organization gets grants instead of having to convince its friends and neighbours to make donations, there is waste. When you have civil servants in charge of large organizations, you get even more waste. I suggest to the Members of this House that \$1 million spent to facilitate voluntary sector organizations in the provision of recreational services will produce five to ten times as much activity of good quality as the same \$1 million spent for a city recreation service.

One of the things in the background of my life that convinced me to run for office ultimately was when my own daughter as a teenager went down to the city recreation program and volunteered to teach gymnastics. She was told to fill out an employment form. She had to be paid because of the insurance regulations. That is not the kind of world in which I grew up. In my day we were looking for volunteers for the YMCA. We went out, recruited and trained them. They provided really first-rate service. It was not a job, it was a labour of love. There is something very special about the quality of an activity in which people voluntarily place their money, time and effort. Anything that exists in legislation that can be changed which goes against the maximal utilization of that is wrong and should be changed as quickly as possible.

● (1650)

The Hon. Member for Waterloo is on the right track and I would hope that the Government is listening. I would hope that we will see quick action that will move in that direction.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Questions or comments? Debate.

Mr. Jesse P. Flis (Parkdale-High Park): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Calgary West (Mr. Hawkes) reminded all of us in the Chamber that we have not debated the topic of the voluntary sector for four years. I would remind the Hon. Member that members of the Official Opposition and the NDP also have a role to play when deciding what is debated in the House. We do have an Oral Question Period. How many questions have been asked over the past four years about charitable and non-profit organizations?