

Supply

Canada. From my own years in the voluntary sector I know, for example, that one day we may be required to advocate a change in policy and the next day we may be raising funds to meet a need. If the committee indicates that we must have a tier system in Canada, so be it, but why should that be stated in the terms of reference for the task force?

I have one other question to ask in relation to the task force, and it is an important question in terms of the legal framework. Will the Minister speak to the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Bussi eres) and ask for a moratorium on the pursuit of voluntary agencies by officials from Revenue Canada under the definition of charity until such time as the committee reports? As the Minister knows, at the moment many cases are being brought to public attention of voluntary agencies being told to change their charters, definitions and purposes. Until this matter is solved, it seems to me that there ought to be a moratorium on that.

Mr. Joyal: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Hon. Member for his three questions. I will deal with the last question first. I will certainly pass on the Hon. Member's points to the Hon. Minister who is responsible for Revenue Canada.

There is no doubt that the Minister is aware of the intention of the Government to establish a new definition that will take into account the reality in Canada, and there is no doubt that the Department of National Revenue officers are well aware that Parliament, in the forthcoming days and weeks, will try to achieve a better definition to help guide Canadians in that regard. There is no doubt that the parliamentary committee will have an opportunity to hear not only from voluntary-sector representatives but from government officials as well. It will call upon the Department of the Secretary of State and other Departments which are interested.

I see that my hon. colleague, the Minister of State for External Relations (Mr. Pepin), is present in the House today. An important report is published yearly by his Department dealing with that issue. I am quite sure that Revenue Canada will have an opportunity to state its views in that parliamentary forum.

The second of the Hon. Member's questions dealt with the terms of reference of the special joint committee. I have taken note of his concern—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Guilbault): Order, please. The Chair regrets to interrupt the Hon. Minister but the time for the question period has expired.

Mr. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder if Members of the House would permit the Minister to complete his comments and permit him to receive a question from a member of the NDP. I think it is important to have this exchange.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Guilbault): Is there unanimous consent for the Minister to complete his remarks?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Joyal: In his second question, Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member referred to the terms of reference of the special joint committee. I would like to reassure him that there is no doubt that there is a direct relationship in fact between the definition of charity, which of course bears its own consequences in terms of fiscal treatment, and the general kind of public support that should be allowed to charities or voluntary organizations in Canada. In fact, if he would read the third paragraph of the terms of reference which deals with the appropriate nature of public support for groups, I think he would see that it is very clear that it will encompass the overall framework within which the voluntary sector is acting in Canada.

It is impossible to define charities according to the phenomenon of today and the impact on the financial status of those national organizations or according to their capacity for self-reliance. There is no doubt in my mind that they are very closely related. Voluntary groups which will have an opportunity to appear before the special joint committee will certainly have an opportunity to stress that direct relationship.

Dealing with his first question, I do not disagree with the Hon. Member that the objective should be self-reliance. That is the overall policy that we would like to achieve. By its very nature, the voluntary sector is a self-sustaining kind of—

[Translation]

—activity supported by the members of the community or by the individual.

[English]

However, I think there is room for government support in specific areas where in fact additional help from public sources could give a wider perspective. In my mind, seed money will in fact always remain necessary in order for groups to try to achieve their objectives. There is no doubt that groups will certainly have an opportunity to raise additional money and be self-autonomous. However, in my mind there will always be room in Canada for seed money to help those groups and associations meet their objectives. Many of those groups are national in their scope.

Mr. Orlikow: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister a question. He has said some very good things about the Government regarding the independence of voluntary organizations. That sounds very good, but in fact, Mr. Speaker, since 1978—and I will go into some detail on this a little later—Revenue Canada has been picking and choosing among voluntary organizations. It has been telling a number of voluntary organizations that when they advocate something as part of their overall program, they are jeopardizing their tax credit position. I will not go into detail, but the Planned Parenthood organization has had such difficulties. Oxfam is now having difficulties and some of the church organizations are having difficulties.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, we have seen some very strange choices in some of the economic think tanks. The Fraser Institute is one of the most partisan institutes. I am not suggesting that it does not have a right to its opinion but it is one of the most partisan think tanks in the country. It is able