

Registered Charities

worked during the year ending February, 1980, were 373,991,000, which is equivalent to approximately 218,000 person-years of volunteer labour.

If this volunteer labour were compensated at the average industrial wage, it would represent a wage forgone by these volunteers of \$3.5 billion for the year ending February, 1980.

The keynote address at Consultation '81 was given by the hon. Secretary of State (Mr. Fox), and I would like to read excerpts of that speech since, in the non-partisan atmosphere which exists with respect to this subject, many of the minister's remarks can be shared by many of us here. The minister said the following in that context:

There was a time when a fair amount of mistrust existed in the minds of members of voluntary organizations when they viewed government. There were reasons for that mistrust. In some cases, organizations which had established themselves to promote sound goals were superseded by government programs which took over their mandate. When we now look at that pattern, we wonder if it was the right approach. Would we have been better to have helped voluntarism to give help, rather than giving help ourselves? This is a question which I feel we should answer in seeking stronger linkages between voluntarism and government. I think that political leaders have come to realize that the voluntary movement offers a rich resource for the delivery of help and services.

The minister was speaking—and I do not wish to take his remarks out of context—of the much debated argument over the advisability of financial support of the government for the voluntary sector, and the possible costs of independence and initiative which are so vital to all voluntary activity. It is my hope, in returning to the notion of aid in kind assistance, that the independence of any agency would be both encouraged and nurtured and their effectiveness so enlarged that centrally-administered government programs could be reduced.

The minister went on to discuss some of the ways by which he felt government could be beneficial to the voluntary sector. He said:

One way is through the tax system. The give and take proposal is an example . . . In my role as "advocate minister" to the voluntary sector, I am of the view that I must ensure that the National Voluntary Organizations' tax credit proposal is given a thorough hearing by government.

● (1610)

He went on to discuss the problem of the definition of the term "charitable organization" for use by Revenue Canada in granting charitable status to a voluntary organization. This would enable it, as you know, Mr. Speaker, to issue tax deductible receipts for donations.

The minister stated that his colleagues:

—are anxious also to put at the disposal of the voluntary sector the results of government conducted research . . . This will be done by establishing a resource centre devoted to this task.

He also said:

I am committed to the development of a comprehensive federal government action policy developed jointly with the voluntary sector . . . I have directed my department to provide toward this end the support services of the Assistance to Community Groups Program, which I am renaming the Voluntary Action Program . . . I want to emphasize that this is much more than a cosmetic change. We are devoted to implementing a new thrust to co-operate with the voluntary sector.

He went on to suggest:

—a joint means by which we may ensure that information flows within your own network of organizations, and between government and yourselves.

It is my hope, Mr. Speaker, that the government would see the commission proposed in this bill as a vehicle for the marriage of the research that has already been completed over many years and what the Secretary of State calls a new thrust to co-operate with the voluntary sector. With the announced commitment of the minister and the well known capacity of the voluntary sector for moving things ahead, I believe that such a commission could bear fruit in under six months. The evidence has been gathered; now is the time to show that commitment to follow the words of praise with some government action in terms of goods and services and some tax incentives.

This perception has been confirmed for me by the significant national support I have received from circulating this bill throughout the volunteer community in Canada. I believe that this response has also been communicated to the Secretary of State and to the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen). They will be aware of the support for Bill C-233 expressed by such organizations as the United Nations Association in Canada, the Canadian Mental Health Association, The Order of St. John, the Canadian Paraplegic Association, Frontier College, the Canadian Diabetes Association, Inter Pares, The National Voluntary Organization, the Canadian Public Health Association, and CUSO, whose anniversary we were marking in the House this morning. There are many more, but I would like to go on record as thanking those organizations and others for the inestimable gift which their endeavours represent to all Canadians.

As well, Mr. Speaker, I would like to give this House some indication of the support and interest of many of the smaller agencies. I have found across my riding interest from such groups as, to mention but a few, the Kitchener-Waterloo Regional Council of Canadian Bankers, the North Waterloo Boy Scouts Association, even a chapter of the Mennonite Church. I have found that interest also among the many individuals who see this direction and stimulation by government of that sector as being vital to the quality of life we accept.

Although I would like to continue this discussion which I feel has a direct bearing on the lives of a great majority of concerned and committed Canadians, as has been borne out by the responses to me and to other members of this House, according to our tradition it is now time for the House to hear from other members and representatives of the government. I am as anxious, as are any of these groups and individuals I have mentioned, to hear the response and find out what the timetable will be for action, because there has been a lot of rhetoric around this theme for many years from the government. However, regardless of the government's decision on whether to talk the bill out or let it go on to committee, I hope that it will indicate very shortly a timetable or deadline as to when it will move to support this sector.