

Voluntary Sector

because it provides the kind of criticism that is essential to review programs to make them more relevant to human needs. Studies of self-help volunteer action should also include the full range of citizen action groups which have emerged in recent years and have a voice in planning and improving communities. For example, neighbourhood improvement committees, local area councils and some other groups are all very important, as are tenant action groups and environmental groups.

● (1520)

There is now a great impetus in the anti-nuclear movement which promises to be active in the future as well. These groups are all important, as are the anti-poverty groups that I have mentioned. They are important not only in local communities but also as national movements which can have considerable impact on society and governments. Non-profit co-operatives in the areas of housing, food and day care, as well as many other kinds of community enterprises, are all forms of self-help volunteer activity. I expect and hope that the Conservative government will see this in line with their philosophy of trying to develop self-reliance and individual human rights. I am pleased to hear that the government has recognized co-operatives. I have heard that term used several times and it was included in the Speech from the Throne. I am anxious to see how this will be encouraged with the needed start-up funds and technical resources.

This committee should examine a new form of development, one which is not too prevalent in Canada but which could have great meaning. I refer to community development corporations. These can be organized with help in the beginning to train and employ local people to deliver the services needed in local communities. They can also develop expertise and business skills which may result in one very essential kind of job creation, as well as important services in the local communities.

These important aspects of volunteer activities in Canada often lead to needed reforms and contribute to the healthy development of self-reliant communities. People who participate in them develop confidence and skills that help them become more employable. Some go on to work in public life and some become politicians. Not only is it a service to communities and not only is it important as a form of active citizen participation, but it also gives great opportunities for individual growth in many ways.

I hope there will be greater recognition and support for the self-help movement as a very vital part of the volunteer sector in Canada which should be actively encouraged by this government.

I should like to note also that the "People in Action" report that I referred to earlier points out that some form of honorarium to cover the cost, at least, of child care, transportation, or the other expenses incurred by people who volunteer, particularly those in low income communities, is another element that should be considered carefully.

[Mrs. Mitchell.]

I am pleased that there seems to be a very positive response from members to my proposal that a subcommittee on self-help voluntary action should receive particular attention from this committee.

I fully support the views of others who have spoken who say that priority must be given to grass roots community organizations, to volunteers working in local communities and citizen action groups, as well as local community service agencies.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I should like to quote a passage from the "People in Action" report. I believe this statement might well form the basic assumption for the special committee which has been proposed. On page 134 of the report there appears the following statement:

The federal government has a responsibility to ensure that there is a general social, economic and political climate in which the basic needs of the people can be met, their basic freedoms can be exercised, and opportunities for growth and a better life can be accessible to all. Where equality of opportunity is not present, the government has an obligation to correct the imbalance. In particular, the government has an overriding responsibility to remove any and all barriers to equal participation in the democratic process and equal access to government. No person or institution should be in a privileged position.

[Translation]

Mr. Eymard Corbin (Madawaska-Victoria): Mr. Speaker, if I rise today, it is to express my opposition to the arguments in favour of setting up this committee. I believe that the government, even though it is new at its job and is still a student government, cannot truly justify setting up this committee in view of the major cost in time, travel and money to those who will be on it.

Our major role should be to sit in Parliament when Parliament is in session, and to take part as much as possible in its work and committee work here in Ottawa. I have never been in favour of proposals aimed at making committees travel. I have had to sit on such committees in the past. I therefore speak from personal experience when I say that during their travels, these committees accomplish nothing which could not be done here in Ottawa.

Therefore, instead of setting up another committee, which, in my opinion, is a simple diversionary tactic to keep its backbenchers and perhaps opposition members busy, immediately after receiving the report of the Canadian advisory committee entitled People in Action, the government should have put a group of experts to work, because there are such experts in the government, very well paid and very able experts, I am happy to say. They should have agreed immediately to analyse the 80 or so most concrete proposals made by the Canadian Advisory Council and come back to Parliament with some sort of legislative statement of the type usually tabled as a white, red or green paper, I am not sure which, but with concrete legislative proposals which come immediately before the legislative process as such, and referred that document to a committee. I believe that the action taken by this government simply aims at delaying even more the implementation of the many excellent recommendations contained in this report.