

sector. Let us hope that the Government will not deal with peripheral matters in the belief that the voluntary sector will see that as being sufficient in dealing with their basic concerns. Let us hope that the Government will deal with a legal definition of a charitable organization and above all with providing the incentives to contribute to charitable causes.

I hope that the Hon. Member who presented this motion will not feel that I have in any way been negative about the thrust of her concern. I applaud her interests, concern and involvement and respect them very much. I hope that she will continue to challenge us in the courageous way that she had in the House today.

Ms. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to support our colleague who introduced this motion again as she did earlier last year.

In my opening remarks, I would like to say that from what I sensed when this matter was raised before, there certainly seems to be sympathy from all Parties for the principle of the Hon. Member's motion. I believe this is not a partisan question but one of community involvement and of how people can help each other to work for a better world. I think we would all fully support that.

It is regarding procedures and processes that I would like to raise a few questions. I commend my colleague from the Liberal Party who spoke at length about the National Voluntary Organization as well. I had considerable material on that organization for my remarks but perhaps I will not dwell on it to the same degree in the interests of time.

When I was thinking about the recommendation in the motion, it occurred to me that we need to have much more time to dig into this matter in a thoughtful way within a committee through consultation with the voluntary sector itself. I do not think that that consultation should be only with the National Voluntary Organization, an organization which in many ways is not only comprised of volunteers but of paid staff and is a fairly large organization. The consultation should also involve community groups and I would like to concentrate some of my remarks on the concept of volunteerism as a self-help movement.

When we talk about volunteerism in a formal way through the National Voluntary Organization and organizations like that, we are talking about agencies and organizations that have considerably large budgets in some cases and need professional staff members. We often forget about neighbourhood issues which need to be dealt with. Before offering our support, I wonder what will be the other purposes of the proposed organization. That is something about which we would like to know.

● (1750)

The Hon. Member who presented the motion implied that this would be an organization which would fall under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of State and which would provide co-ordination and information sharing. I assume that there would be some type of networking between volunteers and

volunteer organizations. In some small ways I suppose this is being done now under the auspices of the Secretary of State.

I am sure the Hon. Member who introduced the motion and who appears to have a great deal of experience in communities will agree with me when I say that the real need is for small self-help organizations in local communities and how they can survive. During the 1960s and the 1970s some of us were involved in community development. We were working in the communities. We were helping to activate and organize many different types of citizen action and self-help groups in low income communities. There was a great wave of movement in this direction back then. All the people involved initially were certainly involved as volunteers. What we find now is that this has moved on to the point where some structures are needed to maintain this movement. I know that in communities in Vancouver, and I am sure in many other communities, there was a network of information centres which were established. These were usually small store-front operations where people could meet in order to share information. They would trade their talents and skills in order to help one another. The store-fronts provided a raft of information which would lead to other information and referrals to agency-type services. These were not costly voluntary services; they were very economical services. However, they required some funding. Normally, a place was required, which meant rent, a telephone, and so on. A co-ordinator was usually required. In most organizations which are solely volunteer a paid co-ordinator is still needed in order to keep everything together.

What has happened since the 1970s is that the funding which was available for these types of operations is no longer available. As I have said before, there was not a great deal of funding involved. In fact, some of the funds came under the Canada Assistance Plan shared funding, which has now disappeared. Therefore we have seen very healthy volunteer centres close down. When there is not a support service and someone to recruit, train and help develop volunteers the volunteer effort sometimes goes by the wayside.

I can think of other types of services which evolved during that same period of time. I am reminded of family centres which provided a very important service to the community. I hope the task force on child care will look into this type of organization in which mothers, particularly single mothers, can get together with other single mothers. Often, there was a friendly older person, or persons, from the community who were almost like community grandmother figures. The people involved in these types of organizations said: "Look, we have to have a place where we can get together in order to help one another". Again, in my community, there were several family centres which were opened. They were inexpensive operations. Some of them were in store-fronts with one or two staff members. This was necessary because they looked after children. The mothers, and sometimes the fathers, came in to these centres where there was a wonderful type of mutual support and where learning about parenting and so on went on.

I am also reminded of poverty groups which need some funds in order to operate. There are also women's centres