

Voluntary Sector

12. How many persons are involved in (a) choosing the works (b) maintaining the collection?

Return tabled.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker: Shall the remaining questions be allowed to stand?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS

STRENGTHENING OF ROLE—APPOINTMENT OF SPECIAL COMMITTEE

The House resumed from Friday, November 30, consideration of the motion of Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton) (for Mr. MacDonald, Egmont):

That a special committee of the House of Commons be appointed to inquire into and report upon means to strengthen the role of the voluntary sector in Canadian society;

That the committee, taking into account the scope of activities now being carried out by the voluntary sector, the problems being faced by voluntary groups and the extent, nature and impact of current government support, report its conclusions and recommendations with respect to the measures that could be taken by the federal government to strengthen the role of the voluntary sector

- (1) as an objective that is desirable in its own right,
- (2) as an alternative to public dependence on government services, and
- (3) in ways that would enhance the ability of such groups to operate independently of government

together with such other matters as the committee considers relevant;

That the committee submit reports from time to time, as appropriate, and in any case a final report not later than May 31, 1980;

That the special committee be composed of seven members of the House of Commons to be designated at a later date;

That the committee have the power to appoint from among its members such subcommittees as may be deemed advisable and necessary and to delegate to such subcommittees all or any of its powers except the power to report directly to the House;

That the committee have power to sit during sittings and adjournments of the House of Commons;

That the committee have power to send for persons, papers and records, and to examine witnesses and to print such papers and evidence from day to day as may be ordered by the committee;

That the committee have the power to adjourn from place to place within Canada; and

That the committee be empowered to retain the services of expert advisers and to commission studies or research to assist in its work and that it also be empowered to retain such professional, technical, clerical and stenographic help as may be required.

Mrs. Margaret Mitchell (Vancouver East): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on behalf of my party today in relation to the proposed special committee on voluntarism. I should like first of all to review the purpose of this special committee, which is to "inquire into and report upon means to strengthen

[Mr. Friesen.]

the role of the voluntary sector in Canadian society". Several questions need clarification, however.

First, what is meant by "voluntary sector"? I assume the government refers to non-profit activities in the fields of health, welfare, environment, recreation, education and many other community or national endeavours which are sponsored by private organizations rather than by governments, and which involve the use of volunteers or the participation of ordinary citizens.

We hear so much these days about government privatization, or "privateering" as we call it on this side of the House, or at least those of us in this corner, that we should perhaps clarify that this, indeed, is not what will be the concern of this committee. I assume this committee will not concern itself with the great debates on free enterprise versus public ownership, but will concentrate instead on human services that are primarily for the benefit of humanity, and are not concerned with profits in the material sense.

My next question then is, why do we need another committee to study the many aspects of voluntarism? I hope most members are aware that there was a lengthy report put out by the national advisory council on voluntary action called "People in Action", commissioned by the past Liberal government. It was published in September, 1977, after a three-year period of study that involved many groups across Canada.

This extensive analysis posed many valuable recommendations for government action. Why do we need another study committee? There are a few things the report left unanswered, including a clear definition and a listing of voluntary organizations that were involved. However, surely we do not need a repeat performance. We do not need another study on the need for action which would only serve to delay further action.

I can only assume that the present government is suspicious of studies done by the previous government, and perhaps we should share their suspicion, even though the "People in Action" report appears to be fairly objective and even critical of the role of government in relation to voluntary activities. I appreciate, hopefully as a means of promoting action, that there has been a short time span designated for this special committee. I sincerely hope this means that action is intended in the very near future.

● (1510)

Whether or not this special committee can adequately study the scope of activities carried out by the private sector, the problems faced by voluntary groups, the extent, nature and impact of current government support, and report its conclusions, as has been suggested within this proposal, within six months remains to be seen. I know that there are certain organizations of poor people, such as the federation of anti-poverty groups in British Columbia, which cannot wait this long to receive funds for such things as stamps, telephones, an office and a newsletter. I would ask the Prime Minister (Mr. Clark) to see that such priority requests are dealt with immediately.