

FROM THE EDITOR

When *The Philanthropist* was launched a year ago this fall it was with the intention that a vehicle of some kind was needed for an informed and constructive critique of the charitable and philanthropic scene in Canada. This need has been echoed by our readers; the Committee is most appreciative of the many letters of encouragement and offers of assistance it has received. Naturally there are those who doubt that the curtain of secrecy which veils the activities of charitable institutions in Canada can be penetrated short of some form of government intervention. Indeed, among charitable foundations themselves there are many who are persuaded to conceal even their existence as if on the ancient premise that to have someone know your name is to empower them to call you to account.

There are, however, encouraging signs that a genuine dialogue has begun. The colloquium held at the Guild Inn which is reported on in this issue was a significant exchange of views and information among a variety of people bound by a common concern for the most effective application of charitable funds. The articles in this and succeeding issues reveal a common theme namely the need for legislative reform which, when it comes, will be the more

enlightened if those who are familiar with the field are prepared to influence its development.

The current interest in reviewing the field of charity no doubt stems in part from the new forms of social concern that are manifested in the activities of the modern humane state. Tax dollars are now being funnelled into support of the underprivileged and the helpless on a national scale. Government money is also being made available in a variety of areas of medical and scientific research. The private sector is anxious to avoid duplication and gaps - duplication with each other as well as with government, and gaps because each proceeds on the uninformed assumption that the other is active in a particular sphere. Communication and consultation among charitable institutions and between representatives of charitable institutions and government at various levels might help to provide an answer to some of these problems.

Most of us acknowledge a role for government and a role for private philanthropy but the time is propitious for charitable institutions and those who support them to delineate with greater precision the particular role of private philanthropy. Are there some things that fall within the proper ambit of government responsibility and others that government might better leave alone? What policy considerations are relevant to such a determination? Should government, for example, use tax dollars to support what one panelist at the Conference at the Guild Inn called "the growing edge of knowledge" or is this a role more appropriate to the charitable foundation? Would you be surprised by an allegation that today it is governments which by and large are innovative in the projects they sponsor, and charitable foundations which are conservative and cautious and tied to traditional patterns? It is hoped that we can explore this in greater detail in future issues of *The Philanthropist*.

The emphasis today is on being contemporary and "with it" but sometimes it serves a useful purpose to recall the wisdom of people in other times and other places. With this in mind we have included in this issue the eight degrees of charity from the teachings of Rabbi Moses Ben Maimonides in 1135 A.D. In the realm of human aspiration and motivation there is apparently not much new under the sun. The eighth and highest rung of his hierarchy of brotherly concern could be a quotation from an editorial in today's press. In any age man's best instincts are easily articulated and readily acknowledged; it is in their application that resides the challenge to our ingenuity and it is to this end that we must bend our will.

Bertalan Wilson.
