

From the Editor...

We were interested to find, when the first volume of the Novia Carter Report arrived on our desk the other week, that it discusses many of the issues with which The Philanthropist has been concerned since its inception in the fall of 1972.

Our initial subscribers will recall in the first issue the study of charitable foundations undertaken by two law students, Victor Peters and Frank Zaid, and the difficulties they encountered in trying to elicit information from foundations concerning the membership of their boards, the source and magnitude of their funds and the type of charitable activities they were prepared to support. Messrs. Peters and Zaid suggested that some degree of public disclosure and financial accountability should be the price of tax-exempt status. Professor Peter Cumming in his article in the third issue on "Corporate Law Reform and Canadian Not-For-Profit Corporations" pointed out that the present federal legislation has very little to say about the form and content of the financial statements of not-for-profit corporations or the extent of the financial disclosure they should make. He suggested that regulations be introduced to prescribe minimum standards in this respect.

The Novia Carter Report endorses these concerns and issues the same warning as our contributors, namely that if requirements of public disclosure and accountability are not instituted, foundations may find their tax privileges eroded by government as happened in the United States in the sixties.

The Report also touches upon another concern that has been expressed in our magazine, namely the proper role of private funding in the welfare state context. It points out that increased government spending on health and social services, for example, may be reducing private initiative in funding and it illustrates this concern by an analysis of giving to United Way Campaigns across the country over the past ten years. It also makes some incisive criticisms of United Way organizations particularly in the area of inadequate representation on boards and inadequate evaluation of existing services and community needs with a view to sounder priority setting. We were interested in the comment that representation on charitable boards has traditionally reflected local prestige and influence rather than a mix of skills but that this is changing. Users of the service provided by the agency or organization are now being put on the boards. We could not help recalling Dr. Morrison's statement in his article in the third issue of *The Philanthropist*:

“Today's world means, with respect to philanthropy, that we love that other man so much that we will value his judgments of his need, and then together with him work out methods of justice and up-building.”

Do not be put off by the awesome title to the first volume of the Novia Carter Report — “Trends in Voluntary Support for Non-Government Social Service Agencies”. Buy a copy. It is full of interesting information and poses many fundamental questions. Moreover, a companion volume devoted to the subject of “Volunteerism” is due shortly and this is an aspect of philanthropy about which we are going to hear more and more in the coming years. Governments are beginning to recognize that time and talent are an important part of giving and that financial support for agencies and organizations with a substantial volunteer component represents the best investment they can make. The Judeo-Christian tradition which our western civilization has inherited displays a history of volunteerism. This is not likely to diminish in the future. The ratio of volunteer to professional will inevitably rise, and more sophisticated forms of training programmes for volunteers will be developed. The insights of the behavioural sciences have provided us with a variety of models through which the professional, the volunteer and recipient of aid can work together in the best interests of all. This subject will be explored more fully in the next issue.

Bertha Wilson.
