

Address to Canterbury Volunteer Centre AGM, 12pm, Tuesday, 17 July, 2001

Campbell Centre, Presbyterian Support, 44 Bealey Avenue

Good afternoon and thank you for inviting me to your AGM. I bring apologies from Social Services Minister Steve Maharey, and a warm welcome from my Christchurch colleagues Lianne Dalziel, Tim Barnett, Clayton Cosgrove and Mahara Okeroa.

I am especially pleased to be here today because 2001 is your year - International Year of Volunteers - a year to officially recognise the importance and achievements of volunteers, and encourage more people to become involved in volunteer activities.

Of course, that's what you do every year - promoting and supporting volunteers and voluntary work; matching volunteers with organisations which need them and vice versa; and providing training and resources to ensure best practice in volunteer recruitment and management.

I know your task has not been an easy one. For years, you have been upholding the importance of voluntary work "done of one's own free will, unpaid, and for the common good" in the face of a market model preaching individual success and individual responsibility.

Thank you for not losing sight of the fact that all activity cannot be reduced to dollar terms. Thank you for holding firmly to the idea that healthy individuals and strong families depend on cohesive communities, and that volunteers are the backbone of those communities. Your efforts have undoubtedly made Christchurch a safer, more caring, more vibrant place to live in.

You are not alone in finding the last decade difficult. The Community and Voluntary Sector Working Party we set up last year to consider the sector's relationship with government, found deep levels of frustration, mistrust, cynicism, anger and burnout at all levels.

This comes as little surprise to any of us. It will take time to rebuild the damaged relationships. But it is time to move on, and I can assure you that the Labour-Alliance Coalition is committed to a new partnership based on mutual trust and respect.

The working party's report, *Potential for Partnership*, outlines a way forward. Steve Maharey has welcomed the report and our formal response is only a few weeks away.

In the meantime, we have earmarked almost \$1 million in this year's Budget to begin implementing the report's recommendations and to carry out a study of the sector's viability.

The Budget also gave specific recognition to volunteering - allocating \$2.19 million funding over the next four years to support the work of volunteer centres around the country, including funding for your newly established national body, Volunteering New Zealand.

A Ministerial Reference Group - which includes Auckland Volunteer Centre regional manager Cheryl Martin - is overseeing the celebrations and local funding for International Year of Volunteers. Among other things, I'm looking forward to seeing your video, *Volunteers are Vital*, which I understand is being launched next month and will screen on NOW TV,

The Ministry of Social Policy is also undertaking a policy project on *Volunteers and Volunteering*, to review how government legislation, policy and practice impacts on volunteering.

On the wider front, we have begun a regular reporting programme on the social health of the nation, to sit alongside the economic targets and indicators that governments have traditionally used to assess their performance.

The *Social Report 2001*, published earlier this month for the first time, tells us about:

- the quality of life of New Zealanders;
- how different groups within the community fare;
- how New Zealand compares with some other OECD countries; and
- our progress over time to a better society.

The report covers a wide range of areas from living standards and employment, through health and skills, human rights, the physical environment, and the social and civic connections that bind society.

This type of social reporting is increasingly common internationally. It's promoted by people like Sir Tony Atkinson, one of Europe's leading social policy thinkers and government advisers, who met with our Cabinet when he was in New Zealand recently.

Future of work

Work is one of the key determinants of our personal and collective well-being - both economic and social - and your president Katherine Peet has asked me to outline the government's 'Future of Work' programme today.

The programme is in its very early stages, and has emerged in response to the dramatic changes occurring in New Zealand society over the last two decades.

- For many of us, the notion of a five-day, 40-hour working week no longer fits the available work opportunities nor our own life choices. Less than one-third of those in paid work usually work 40 hours a week. Some are working longer, while others are not working at all. There is an increasing divide between those who are 'job rich' and these who are 'job poor'.
- The idea of a 'job for life' has become a quaint historical concept. Young and not-so-young alike are being urged to prepare for multiple jobs and career changes, and for job portfolios which may include a mix of paid and unpaid work.
- The regional location of work, how work is done, who does paid or unpaid work, and where people choose to live are all changing.
- Greater flexibility in work organisation and hours has created both choice (24-hour supermarkets) and risks (workers' health and safety, family life, and community participation).
- Maori, Pacific peoples and people from other countries are an increasing proportion of the population. Their influence is affecting our tastes and preferences, the types of goods we buy and sell, the skills available and our ways of doing things.
- There has been a marked change in family structure, greater diversity in living arrangements, and a steadily ageing population,

Overall, New Zealanders are being presented with an increasing degree of choice. We are part of the global economy and a small island nation. Both these factors - and the decisions we make to address them - will shape the future of work in this country.

This is the rationale behind the government's Future of Work project. Funding of \$2.09 million over the next four years will cover research into future work trends and their implications for the workplace, the workforce, and employment opportunities.

The initial discussion document for the project is called *Workforce 2010*. Copies can be accessed on the Department of Labour website, or from the department, and I have a few hard copies with me today.

The document aims to identify the challenges New Zealanders will face in work in the 21st century. Its definition of work is broad and includes:

- waged work;
- unwaged productive work (such as family members contributing their labour to the wellbeing of the family);
- domestic labour (work that maintains the home and family);
- emotional labour (such as caring for the sick or elderly); and
- voluntary work.

I note that one of the centre's objectives is to "promote a wider definition of work", as this document does. It makes sense.

There are roughly 3.8 million people living in New Zealand. About 1.75 million of us are in paid jobs. A further 120,000 are actively looking for a job.

This leaves around one million working age people who are not in paid employment or actively seeking paid employment. They may be doing voluntary work, domestic labour, caring for children, the sick and older people, or engaged in training and education.

To leave these people out of the definition of 'work' would be to ignore their contribution to our economy and communities, as well as their needs and rights.

In the *Work Force 2010* document, the Department of Labour has established a framework for analysing the labour market, called the Human Capability Framework. It has three key components - opportunities, capacity and matching.

Once you decode the jargon, the aim of the exercise is deceptively simple - to match people's skills and abilities with the opportunities to use them. These opportunities, the document notes, include parenting, leisure activities and voluntary work, as well as paid work.

Also highlighted under 'opportunities' is the third sector's increasing impact as a source of employment opportunities, both paid and unpaid.

This is not surprising, given the 60,000 voluntary organisations in this country which employ more than 80,000 paid staff and unknown thousands of volunteers.

In fact, we know from the last census and from the 1999 Time Use Survey that New Zealanders are a nation of volunteers. In the four weeks before the census, 1.1 million New Zealanders did some sort of unpaid work outside the household - 49 per cent of women aged over 16, and around 42 per cent of men. (A little aside - the greatest gender difference was that almost twice as many women as men were caring for children outside the household, while unpaid work for men was most likely to involve administration and policy work.)

People volunteer for all sorts of reasons. One of them is as a stepping stone into paid work, a way to build up work skills and experience while meeting people and contributing to the community.

The government's new benefit rules acknowledge this. Voluntary work that helps towards the goal of finding paid work is now recognised as meeting part of beneficiaries' work tests. This is in direct contrast to the previous government's work-for-dole scheme, which not only locked the 'voluntary' out of voluntary work, but refused to validate voluntary work as part of its work testing regime.

Conclusion

It is envisaged that the Future of Work project will:

- generate policy advice to the Government about the challenges facing the New Zealand labour market of the future;
- have an ongoing research and information gathering programme; and
- widely disseminate information and research results so other sectors can prepare for the future. Information provided will be used to stimulate debate about the future of work in New Zealand that we hope many New Zealanders will become involved in.

As I have already said, the project is still in its infancy. The first year will concentrate on consolidating our knowledge of the labour market and the challenges that face it.

We will also be trying to build consensus around the key issues facing New Zealanders at work in the future. Although details have not yet been finalised, stakeholders - including community and voluntary sector organisations like yourselves - will be involved.

The *Workforce 2010* document has already identified some specific questions about the third sector, including:

- What will the future role of the third sector be?
- How can we fully value and recognise the role of the third sector and the skills that people gain in the third sector?
- How can we ensure that people work the combination of paid and unpaid hours they want to?

I'm sure you have lots of other questions and ideas, and I would now like to open up the floor for a general discussion about the challenges facing us in the changing world of work. Thank you.