

Giving Something Back:

Business, volunteering and healthy communities

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FOREWORD

MONICA OWEN

BUPA has a long tradition of community involvement amongst its employees, and we welcome the opportunity to support the SMF's programme of work looking at volunteering. BUPA is a provident association, which means all surpluses are reinvested in new facilities, services and equipment to benefit our customers. As a health and care company, those who work at BUPA are often closely linked with the lives of our customers, and our facilities, which include hospitals, nurseries and care homes, are at the very heart of over 300 communities in the UK.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is not unique to BUPA, however. Many companies lay claim to being good corporate citizens. Even so, it is rare for a company to answer credibly the question 'why should companies be good citizens?' Many companies think that corporate responsibility begins and ends with writing a cheque to a favoured charity. It doesn't. Corporate responsibility is about companies having a positive impact on their local communities, their people and themselves.

At BUPA, our CSR programme is a direct reflection of our core value: 'taking care of the lives in our hands'. It is an intrinsic part of what we do and who we are. Specifically, through employee volunteering and team fundraising, BUPA works with community partners such as local authorities, charities and the NHS to contribute to the longer-term growth and sustainability of communities.

We encourage and support employee volunteering in particular because our employees tell us that they like to get involved in their communities; that volunteering has a positive impact on how they feel towards BUPA; that it leads to personal and professional development and has the greatest impact on their local environment. We firmly believe that employer-led volunteering raises morale and motivation and can be a factor in employee retention: for example, research shows that increasingly graduates are keen to work for organisations

that reflect their values, and an important part of this is seeing companies putting something back into their community.

Whilst volunteering is an important part of our social fabric, however, pressures of balancing work and home life often mean that adults feel they have little time left to give to their community. Unless there is a 'habit' of volunteering formed at a young age it becomes increasingly unlikely that, as time goes on, a person will suddenly start volunteering. Therefore, it is important that young people are encouraged to volunteer.

At present, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) is working on a pilot gap year programme where school leavers who would not otherwise be able to afford a year out between school and university are sponsored by the Government to spend a year volunteering in their local community.

Government programmes such as these offer opportunities for young people to volunteer and for other organisations to get involved and support the agenda.

Changes in society, such as an increase in the amount of women working, longer hours and increased stress levels for all those who do work, have also led to a decline in the proportion of people who would otherwise naturally take to volunteering.

These changes can be seen first-hand when you look at the membership of organisations that traditionally have encouraged participation in volunteering activities. For example, The Rotary Club's membership is approximately 4000 below its peak of 63,000 recorded more than a decade ago, Lions Club membership has fallen from 30,000 to 20,000 in the last decade, and the Round Table has seen its membership decline from 30,000 members to 13,000 over the same period.¹

All this leads to a simple conclusion: companies have both commercial *and* civic responsibilities and need to play a larger role in encouraging community activity.

Funding charities, whilst important, is not enough because without volunteers to develop, plan and deliver activities none of the money will get to a charity's beneficiaries. Therefore, companies who see the value of being good corporate citizens should concentrate on supporting their staff's participation in voluntary activities.

Critics suggest that there is no causal link between being a good corporate citizen and short-term profitability. There is, however, good evidence to suggest that being a good corporate citizen does help a company attract high quality

recruits, increases staff morale, improves both retention and a company's reputation amongst its customers and stakeholders. All of which will, in the long term, contribute to the success of the company.

This book explores some of the most important debates currently surrounding corporate volunteering. It examines in detail why businesses should engage in CSR and why this is good for the community. Case studies also show examples of corporate community engagement programmes and the value of volunteers to charities. Each of the leading political parties contributes their view of where policy can encourage volunteering. It is, therefore, an important collection of essays that promote an understanding of the value of volunteering – and one that BUPA is proud to support and contribute to.

Monica Owen

Head of Community Affairs
BUPA

¹ *The Times*, 5 July 2004.

INTRODUCTION

MOUSSA HADDAD

This collection of essays is in itself a recognition of the growing importance of volunteering – in the sphere of corporate social responsibility (CSR), as a tool of civil renewal, and to individuals. Employee volunteering is a win-win – and win again – situation. Business benefits, society benefits, and the individual volunteer benefits.

The contributions offer a discussion of its future, setting out its benefits, and placing it in the context of active citizenship. All contributors are supportive of employee volunteering, and there is a common belief that it will continue to increase. The contributors differ, however, in how they see the role of government in supporting corporate volunteering.

The growth of employee volunteering

The National Centre for Volunteering defines volunteering as being '*any activity which involves spending time, unpaid, doing something which aims to benefit someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives, or to benefit the environment*'. Voluntary activity plays a major role in a healthy community, and is seen by the Government as one of the key pillars in its civic renewal edifice. In total, 16.5 million people – or 39% of the adult population – volunteered formally in the UK in 2001, giving an average of 110 hours each.²

Employee volunteering refers to programmes through which employers will assist their employees in volunteering, whether during work hours or in their own time.³ According to Business in the Community (BITC), encouraging employee volunteering is currently the fastest growing form of community investment. Today, most organisations prefer Employee Community Involvement (ECI) to simply giving money. It ties employees' skills and time and the donation of resources to defined business goals and desired benefits. In 2001, 18% of the workforce worked for employers who supported schemes for volunteering. Of those, 39%, or some 1.5 million people in England and Wales, took up the opportunity.⁴

The society case for volunteering

In purely monetary terms, the contribution of volunteering to society is substantial. A recent audit of public sector support for volunteering by the Institute for Volunteering Research found that in 1999 there was a notional economic return on volunteer output of £12 billion. Given the £400 million of public sector support for volunteering, the Government benefits from an investment ratio of 1:30.⁵ But volunteering is so much more than free labour. Volunteering and active citizenship are essential aspects of modern societies. The richness of democratic life lies in the thousands of institutions, associations, voluntary groups and community organisations that shape and inform civic society.

As Bernard Crick argues in his chapter, however, while volunteering is important, more important is active citizenship – which he defines as ‘acting together for a common purpose’. Volunteering does not automatically lead to active citizenship: for it to do so, volunteering must be linked to an understanding of the political and social framework which affects the volunteering environment. Volunteering is good for society, but active citizenship – in which volunteering must play a major part – has the potential to build on that by leading volunteers to think a step further and change society for the better.

The potential for businesses to contribute to the growth of volunteering is clear. The 2001 Home Office Citizenship Survey found that 4% of people take part in voluntary activity supported by their employers, but that where employers have a scheme actively encouraging employee volunteering, 21% take part. Given that the most commonly cited barriers to volunteering are time, work or educational commitments,⁶ an employer who actively encourages and facilitates volunteering will clearly help to remove some of these impediments.

The business case for volunteering

While the benefits to society of volunteering are evident, it is less immediately obvious why businesses should be interested in supporting it. Yet the evidence of the benefits of volunteering to a business is clear, as Peter Truesdale and Michelle Dow argue in their contribution. Volunteering can serve in two particular areas of a business. The first is linked to the growing importance of employees to businesses – people costs constitute up to 65% of company costs, according to the DTI.⁷ Where the activities selected are relevant and appropriate, employee volunteering can be used to develop skills, and function as a team

building and morale boosting exercise. Second are the growing attempts of companies to rediscover a sense of purpose, expressed in corporate mission and value statements. ECI can help to build a company's image within its local community, potentially expanding the market for its products: 84% of the public think that knowing about a company's activities in society and the community is important in forming an opinion of that company.⁸

The increasing importance in today's labour market of personal and teamworking skills has meant that volunteering exercises that develop these facets can contribute to human resources goals, while simultaneously making both employees and the wider community feel more positive about the company in question. Increasingly, companies are coming to see offering the time of their employees to be as valuable as more traditional forms of community involvement. By involving their workers directly in its community involvement programmes, a company can not only achieve human resources goals and provide real and lasting benefits to the society in which it operates, but it can also promote its employees' morale and productivity through the skills and experiences attained while volunteering.

The Government's approach to volunteering

This Government is clearly committed to the goal of involving citizens in playing a more active part in the everyday life of their communities. As Fiona Mactaggart MP, the Minister with responsibility for community policy and civil renewal, put it in a June 2004 Home Office report on the voluntary sector, 'voluntary and community activity is a crucial part of public life – connecting people and helping them to shape their communities.'⁹ In the years since it came to power, there have been many steps taken – and words expended – by the Government to encourage the British people to become more active citizens, and in particular to tackle the disparities in participation which the positive overall totals of volunteers mask. For example, volunteers are drawn disproportionately from higher socio-economic groups, and there is a worryingly low level of formal volunteering amongst groups such as the unemployed and young people.

Initially, the Government took a hands-on approach to the promotion of volunteering. The Millennium Volunteers programme, launched in 1997 after a comprehensive consultation and targeted explicitly at improving the levels of participation among young people, was run by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). In 1998, a Compact between government and the voluntary

and community sectors was launched,¹⁰ establishing four principles fundamental to volunteering, detailed in the Volunteering Code of Practice: choice, diversity, reciprocity, and recognition. The hands-on approach became discredited, however. According to the Treasury's own study, voluntary and community sector leaders estimated that Millennium Volunteers spent £48 million ineffectively.¹¹

The focus of the 1999 report of the Working Group on the Active Community, *Giving Time, Getting Involved*,¹² was on setting out a framework for raising awareness of volunteering and building on the work of the existing voluntary and community sectors. As Fiona Mactaggart says in her contribution, the Government's strategy today is to move away from funding small, local projects and to concentrate instead on building capacity and developing the support infrastructure, building demand and removing barriers.

The Cares partnerships,¹³ 23 of which were established as of December 2003, are an example of the positive, but hands-off, Government approach to volunteering. They provide details of volunteering opportunities, enabling employees to undertake a wide range of community volunteering activity at times that suit a working person. Despite being launched only in 1999, Cares has already achieved a great deal: there are over 350 businesses active; 50,000 people have volunteered through Cares in the past two years; over 100,000 hours have been given to the community in the past twelve months; more than 700 community organisations have participated; and perhaps most significantly, 54% of Cares volunteers are volunteering for the first time. It is worth noting that Cares, unlike Millennium Volunteers, was not run directly from government, but through BITC.

Barriers to volunteering

As already discussed, the most commonly cited barriers to volunteering are those involving time, work and family commitments. Meanwhile, the fact that greater information provision is a constructive role for government to play is emphasised by Home Office evidence showing that what would encourage people most to volunteer is a direct request for time.¹⁴ Perhaps the major criticism that can be levied at this Government is that too little has come of its encouraging words and the large numbers of speeches given since 1997 by senior figures in Government. For example, for all the success of the Cares partnerships, they exist on a small scale, while the national 'rough guide' – a kind of yellow pages for voluntary work – mooted by Tony Blair for every home in

Britain in his speech to the National Council for Voluntary Organisations in 1999 has come to nothing.

Where the dissemination of information and good practice about volunteering is concerned, there are a number of constructive suggestions from each of the contributors. Fiona Mactaggart sees government as having an overseeing role, and points to initiatives such as the Corporate Challenge that seek to facilitate the spreading of knowledge and good practice on volunteering among companies. John Baron MP, Shadow Minister for Public Services, Health and Education, focuses on ensuring that the commercial and voluntary sectors are given the freedom to seek out their own partnerships, and advocates rolling back the regulatory burden on charities. Meanwhile, the Liberal Democrat spokesperson Alistair Carmichael MP sees a role for government in raising the status of volunteering, using advertising and the Honours system to encourage a wider spectrum of people to volunteer.

There is indeed much to suggest that raising knowledge about, and the profile of, volunteering will help it to grow. Yet another significant barrier to active citizenship is the 'time poverty' of many who we might wish to encourage to be active. Given that the UK has one of the highest working hours cultures among industrialised countries, this is perhaps not surprising. Various types of individual might be excluded from volunteering by the nature of work. There is the time poverty of skilled employees – the cash-rich, but time poor professionals who would gain job satisfaction from volunteering. There is the time poverty of low-skilled and low-paid workers who must work longer hours to boost income, and who have little time or incentive for community engagement. And there are the family commitments which, where there is a paucity of childcare cover, prevent many parents from engaging in volunteering or public service.

Employee volunteering schemes can help to tackle both sets of barriers to volunteering – lack of information about how to get involved, and time pressures caused by work commitments. Yet, just as the parties all acknowledge that there is a role for government in providing information about volunteering, so it can play a role in easing time pressures on volunteering. In the same way that the Government is currently reviewing charitable status, it could also review the concept of volunteering, by differentiating between traditional volunteering and public service work (e.g. school governor, foundation board trustee, local councillor), opening up the possibility of reforming time-off for public duties. The statutory five days off per year available for public duties does

not necessarily reflect the time and type of commitment that should go into doing public service work. A possible supplement to the flexibility engendered by employee volunteering schemes might be for the Government to consider reforming time off for public duties along the lines of the 'right to request' (and have that request seriously considered) flexible working regulations available for parents with young children.

The future of volunteering

The consensus throughout this publication is that volunteering carries a positive social benefit, and that employee volunteering will become an increasingly important mechanism for encouraging active citizenship. A balance must be struck between providing incentives for volunteering and stifling it with over-regulation. And the Government should go further to connect individuals and organisations with the information they need to unlock the potential of employee volunteering, and to help bring down the barriers that prevent us from unlocking the social capital that volunteering can offer.

² Attwood, C. et al, *2001 Home Office Citizenship Survey: people, families and communities*, Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate.

³ Volunteering England's definition.

⁴ Attwood, C. et al, *2001 Home Office Citizenship Survey: people, families and communities*, Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate.

⁵ Available at <http://www.ivr.org.uk/audit.htm>.

⁶ In the *2001 Home Office Citizenship Survey: people, families and communities (ibid)*, more than two thirds of people identified the main barriers to formal volunteering as being lack of time (33%), work commitments (20%), or caring or family responsibilities (15%).

⁷ Department of Trade and Industry, (2003) *Accounting for People*, Report of the DTI Task Force on Human Capital Management.

⁸ MORI 1999.

⁹ Home Office (2004) *Change Up: Capacity Building and Infrastructure Framework for the Voluntary and Community Sector*, Home Office Communication Directorate: Active Community Unit.

¹⁰ Cm 4100. (1998) *Compact on Relations between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in England*, presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

¹¹ HM Treasury & The Home Office (2002) *Next Steps on Volunteering and Giving in the UK: A Discussion Document*.

¹² Home Office (1999), *Giving time, getting involved*, Home Office Communication Directorate: Active Community Unit.

¹³ The website for Cares is http://www.bitc.org.uk/programmes/programme_directory/cares/.

¹⁴ Attwood, C. et al, *2001 Home Office Citizenship Survey: people, families and communities*, Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate.

GOOD COMPANIES, BETTER EMPLOYEES

PETER TRUESDALE AND MICHELLE DOW

Introduction

Over the last two decades, the pace of change within companies has grown ever faster, and global competitive pressures have become ever more acute. Two trends stand out:

- companies repeatedly say 'employees are our greatest asset', shorthand for a series of initiatives around skills, motivation, involvement and empowerment
- companies have tried to rediscover a sense of purpose, expressed in statements of corporate mission and values – an effort to focus on the 'corporate glue' at a time when they are hollowing out and reengineering themselves, often through dramatic and disruptive reorganisations.

Within companies, those charged with managing both these aspects are grappling with these apparently contradictory trends. In parallel, the last two decades have seen a significant growth in employee volunteering in the United Kingdom.

Growth in employee volunteering

In the UK in 2001, 21% of people whose employers offered schemes for volunteering chose to participate.¹⁵ The growth in employee volunteering can be seen to be the result of a number of factors, both from within workforces and from communities outside the workplace.

Workplace factors

- *Changing nature of the workforce*
In recent decades the economy has shed low-skill, high-cost manufacturing jobs, and seen a growth in higher skill and service sector jobs. Effective teamwork and good customer service have become key to organisational and workforce effectiveness.

- *Employee trust*
Competition for securing, and retaining, flexible, skilled workers is getting sharper. Meanwhile, evidence suggests that confidence in the employer is falling. The idea of a job for life was undermined by the economic shakeout in the 1980s; now the collapse of final salary pension funds has further undermined employee trust.
- *Building skills*
Any voluntary activity that builds personal skills, flexibility and initiative in the workforce brings a benefit to the employer. This is particularly the case if it builds morale and is more cost effective than outside, off-the-job training.
- *Building reputation*
Direct engagement through employee volunteering can enhance a firm's external reputation. While rarely measured, such impacts are felt particularly when volunteering is associated with a closely defined geographical area or a particular local cause.

Community factors

- *Volunteering can equal cash*
Employee volunteering can generate funds or value, such as when activities are directed to raising money for a selected charity of the year. This brings both cash and publicity for the charity to a wider audience.
- *Time is money*
In some cases, offering employees' time is as valuable as giving money. This could be city solicitors volunteering in a reading scheme with a local primary school, or a corporate team challenge to decorate a community centre. More hands means both saved resources, and more time for the task.
- *Scarce skills*
Access to highly trained, highly skilled employee volunteers allows community and charitable organisations access to a resource they would not otherwise be able to afford. This might be an accountant acting as treasurer of the PTA, through to designers giving a day's free consultancy to boost a charity re-launch.

What business benefits can be achieved from employee volunteering?

Corporate Community Involvement (CCI) programmes can play a significant role

in addressing the key challenges faced by human resources managers, leading to direct benefits to a company's bottom line.

When it comes to their views of an employer, it is important to note that a company's contribution to society is not the uppermost issue in existing or potential employees' minds. Various academic theories of motivation¹⁶ suggest that employees will be more concerned about the primary reasons why they work, such as pay and other benefits, opportunities to achieve, and camaraderie.

Once these are satisfied, though, some employees particularly value the fact that their employer appears to share their values too, in part expressed through opportunities to engage in community activity. A survey of employees carried out in 2003 finds that more than one in five employees involved in corporate community involvement say that it makes them feel much more positive about their company as a place to work.¹⁷ Such heightened organisational commitment can lead to changes in behaviour, resulting in such benefits to the business as reduced absenteeism, lower staff turnover, greater willingness to recommend the organisation, and higher productivity.

By carefully selecting relevant and appropriate activities, CCI can influence HR goals. Examples include:

- supporting employees' own concerns through matched funding schemes **both rewards initiative and values each individual**
- team events such as fundraising and 'challenge' type practical projects **build internal cohesion and break down barriers**
- involvement in community activity with company support can help **develop skills**
- job applicants may be attracted to firms with positive social performance (**recruitment**), and employees who participate in volunteering programmes are more likely to stay with their employer (**retention**).

Managing for results

The challenge then is how to manage CCI more strategically. If CCI managers are to make a real contribution to the business, and to succeed in measuring it better, they have to start by understanding the strategic HR goals of their organisations. What are the problems that are really affecting the business, such as high staff turnover, absenteeism or poor productivity? Which groups are most affected: young new recruits, shop floor workers, or part-timers? Once they are clear on these questions, CCI managers can devise programmes that focus on those challenges and priorities, and so better contribute to achieving the

strategic goals of the organisation.

Until now, in the search for the 'business case' for community investment, CCI managers have tended to take their existing range of activities and seek to show the HR impact they can have. Such benefits can be described as 'accidental' rather than planned.

If CCI is to be viewed as a 'profit centre' not a cost overhead, managers should reverse the process, starting with the strategic HR objectives and designing community programmes that help to achieve them, while still making a vital contribution to the community.

Case study

Participation by a British Gas call centre in a local employee community involvement programme had a direct and quantifiable benefit to the business, as well as providing significant gains to the local community.

The British Gas National Sales Centre in Cardiff, South Wales, employs more than 2,500 people and faces a range of human resource management challenges typical in large call centres, such as staff motivation, competition for experienced workers from the growing call centre sector, and employee retention.

In an effort to respond to these challenges, British Gas supported an employee community involvement programme, as a means of creating a degree of differentiation. The chosen scheme was *Cardiff Cares* – a business-led initiative, supported by more than 20 employers, that aims to provide links between voluntary organisations that need volunteer support and corporate organisations that want to get involved in the community.

From the outset, British Gas made a commitment to track results and measure impact wherever possible.

Results, impacts and business benefits:

- *Increased employee satisfaction* – a 60% increase in the number of employees placing the company above average compared to other companies as one of the best places to work
- *Improved employee retention* – retention rate reached 99.6% for employees participating in the initiative

- *Increased advocacy rates* – 54% (57% among participants) said they would speak highly of BG as an employer, compared to 49% previously
 - *Positive reputation* – significantly higher rating for BG as a company helping the local area (50% saying very or fairly good, compared to 45% previously).
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How can companies measure the benefits of employee volunteering?

Measurement of the actual benefit of CCI activities is rarely carried out due to the challenges involved. Some attempt at measurement of impacts is important, however, if the potential contribution to the business of community investment activities is to be recognised.

Steps in the measurement process

When considering the contribution of community involvement and wider corporate citizenship, there are seven broad steps for a company to think through in evaluating employee morale, motivation, commitment and performance, and in tracking the benefits to the business bottom-line in terms of productivity or other gains.

1. Identify the actual contribution made by the community activity.
2. Identify whether the individual knows about the company's activities in this area.
3. Assess their views – positive or negative – about current community activity.
4. Identify the impact this knowledge and opinion has on the employee. Where behaviour changes, measures can include:
 - staff turnover and wastage
 - absenteeism or lateness
 - recruitment statistics
 - productivity levels
 - quality of service.
5. Consider what constitutes good performance.
6. Consider a cost comparison, looking at the expense incurred in achieving these benefits.
7. Finally, consider the cost/benefit analysis – do the long term benefits outweigh the one-off costs?

In measuring benefits, the distinction can be made between the impact of **one-off projects** (for example on individual skills) and the **longer-term effects** of the wider programme, which is likely to have a broader impact, such as on customer reputation.

Finally, there is real benefit in thinking about evaluation in **project planning** of CCI activities, even if it is not possible to measure final outcomes due to practical difficulties or cost constraints. Projects are more likely to achieve their goals if they have been clearly defined at the start, if the project managers have asked themselves 'how will we know if we are succeeding?', and if the project is run with a clear focus on attaining those goals.

Such planning and measurement paid off in the case of British Gas' involvement in the *Cardiff Cares Initiative* (see case study). British Gas achieved a 5% rise in job satisfaction levels among volunteers, who were equipped with new skills to apply in their everyday work, and for whom retention rates reached 99.6% – nearly 20% above target. Even for non-participants, job satisfaction rose by 2%. As Janet Reed, national manager for British Gas in Wales, explains: 'it has proven extremely beneficial both to our employees and to us as a business'

¹⁵ Attwood, C. et al, *2001 Home Office Citizenship Survey: people, families and communities*, Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate.

¹⁶ Such as Maslow, A.H. (1970) *Motivation and Personality* (2nd ed.) Harper and Row: New York; and Herzberg, F., Mausner, B., & Synderman, B.B. (1959) *The Motivation to Work* (2nd ed.) John Wiley & Sons: New York.

¹⁷ MORI research: Tuffrey, M. (2003) *Good Companies, Better Employees* The Corporate Citizenship Company.

EMPLOYER SUPPORTED VOLUNTEERING

FIONA MACTAGGART MP

Introduction

Voluntary and community activity is one of the cornerstones of public life – it helps to connect people, and to shape the communities in which they live. Some people still have an outdated notion of what volunteering is about, but the fact that more people in this country volunteer than not – whether informally helping neighbours or formally helping in schools or charities – demonstrates that we still live in a generous society.

One of the Government's aims is to get people in their communities to be more 'active', and as the Home Office minister responsible for community policy, I am responsible for our target to 'increase voluntary and community sector activity, including increasing community participation, by 5% by 2006'¹⁸. This may not seem very ambitious, but it amounts to a million extra volunteers. Virtually everybody agrees that volunteering is a good thing, and should be promoted, supported and facilitated in every way. It helps people in need, delivers a range of high quality services, promotes social inclusion, and contributes to the personal development of the volunteers themselves. For me, a particularly important feature of volunteering is the way it helps to develop a sense of community. It is the active denial of that old Thatcher maxim 'there is no such thing as society'.¹⁹

This Government is investing an unprecedented amount in helping volunteer-involving organisations to develop, to innovate and to grow. Our strategy is to move away from funding small, local projects, to avoid spreading our resources too thinly. Instead, we are concentrating on building capacity, developing the support infrastructure, building demand and removing barriers.

Why is employee supported volunteering a good thing?

Of course, government is in the business of building a better society, so we have a vested interest in promoting volunteering to our nation's employees. The work

of the 30,000 magistrates, school governors and volunteers in schools directly supports key Government aims.

But sometimes the emphasis on how society benefits conceals the benefits to individual volunteers, including new experiences that help to develop new and existing skills, confidence and self worth.

Employers benefit hugely from employees' enhanced skills and increased morale, and from an enhanced company profile – over 40% of graduates see working for a socially responsible company as very important. In my Slough constituency, it has become common for companies to use a volunteering project as part of a management or team building exercise – more challenging than paintball, it also creates permanent results, like the around-the-world garden created in a local primary school by employees at Heathrow.

The Home Office itself offers an 'Out of Office Experience' to give all employees the opportunity to meet and work alongside people who work in our frontline services, which sits alongside the Home Office's five day special leave policy for employees who want to volunteer. This is a powerful way of enabling employees to see first-hand the effect their work has on individuals and society. The Home Office recognises that the experience gained contributes to staff development, and ultimately to the work of the Department.

Room for improvement

Our research²⁰ shows that around two thirds of all people think the key barriers to volunteering are time commitments, work or educational commitments, or lack of awareness about how to get involved. It also shows that 4% of people take part in voluntary activity supported by their employers, but that where employers have a scheme actively to encourage employee volunteering this dramatically rises to 21%.

The statistics also show that there is plenty of scope for growth in employee volunteering. As more employers understand the value of corporate community involvement, they will understand that staff win, communities win, and the company itself wins.

Future of employer supported volunteering

The Government is encouraging more companies to get involved in their communities through the Corporate Challenge.²¹ This is a Government initiative that seeks to increase corporate community involvement through employee volunteering, payroll giving and corporate donations.

This initiative relies on companies who are already engaged in this agenda to share their knowledge and best practice with companies who are not – after all, companies are as much a part of society as individuals, and can make a significant contribution. By encouraging employees to undertake voluntary work, employers demonstrate an interest and concern for their local community, gain awareness of local issues from employee volunteers, and can take action to resolve or address those issues. This has positive results for their reputation, their staff retention, and their ability to find new products and markets.

Government understands that the corporate sector already does a lot in this area and that the public sector needs encouragement to raise its own game. But there are some free riders, who get a lot of praise for a little action. Perhaps if the corporate sector were to establish agreed national benchmarks of good practice backed up by a code of practice, we could make the best the norm in all big enterprises. I'd certainly be prepared to do the same within the public sector.

Conclusion

As more people from business, the public sector and the voluntary sector form partnerships to work together, we will make the communities in which we work and live better, more vibrant places, where people fully participate as active citizens.

¹⁸ Home Office Public Service Agreement 2003–2006, Objective VI, Performance Target 8.

¹⁹ Thatcher, M (09/1987), in an interview for *Woman's Own Magazine*.

²⁰ *2001 Home Office Citizenship Survey: people, families and communities*, Chris Attwood, Gurchand Singh, Duncan Prime, Rebecca Creasey and others, Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate, September 2003.

²¹ Her Majesty's Treasury (2003) *Corporate Challenge: Strengthening community involvement*.

CASE STUDY 1: BUPA

This case study highlights the three strands of BUPA's employee volunteering programme: team challenges, employee volunteering, and team fundraising. Building on our experiences in these areas, it will suggest ideas on how other companies can engage more fully with their local communities.

Employee volunteering

Employee volunteering is an essential part of our culture and reflects the company's values, and our ethos of 'taking care of the lives in our hands'. It is promoted in BUPA, as it is a fun and motivational way for our staff to contribute to their community and wider society. Two years ago, after researching the voluntary activity undertaken by employees, BUPA established the Community Connections team to coordinate, recognise and support volunteers, and provide them with advice in sourcing community partners, establishing projects or organising events. In addition, it fund-matches any team fundraising.

Last year over 2,000 employees took part in our health and education focused volunteering programme, in total donating more than 114,000 hours of their time to their local communities.

BUPA also has several volunteering programmes, where employees on a regular basis donate their time to a cause that interests them, during work time.

We have a regular reading programme called Book Buddies, which runs nationally and provides volunteer readers for local primary schools. Each BUPA Book Buddy volunteer spends an hour a week helping children with their reading. The aim is to improve the reading age of each child and to develop a love of reading. The scheme is also designed to increase pupil confidence and self-esteem, and to give the children a real sense of achievement. Anecdotal evidence from teachers suggests that this makes a real difference to the child's ability, and in several cases the reading age of participants has increased by more than 18 months.

Team challenges

Team challenges are a regular feature of our volunteering programme. Some continue over a period of weeks and months, while others may just last an

afternoon. A cross section of our employees may organise a team challenge through Community Connections to develop new skills or build relationships.

Our Sensory Gardens project is a team challenge that has benefited around 150 BUPA care homes. The idea behind the project, run by staff and community partners, was to transform the grounds of as many care homes as possible into sensory gardens, by adapting an existing area or creating a new garden that appeals to all the senses through the use of colours, smells, textures and sounds. The popularity of these gardens has been overwhelming, and they have provided a beautiful and stimulating environment for residents and their relatives. At the same time, the project provided the volunteers with the opportunity for personal development – in project management, team leading and budgeting.

City challenges to renovate local community facilities feature regularly on our volunteering programme.

The first was the renovation of the interior and gardens of St George's Crypt in Leeds, which provides support for disadvantaged people through care centres, medical advice, residential homes and other services. By using volunteers rather than hiring contractors, St George's Crypt was able to save approximately £30,000, allowing them to spend the money on the people who use it – and illustrating just how much of a difference volunteers can make to the local community by providing their time, energy and skills for free.

Employee fundraising

BUPA also supports employee fundraising – when a group of employees decide to donate their time and energy to raise money for a good cause – by fund-matching pound for pound all the money raised.

One of our largest employee fundraising initiatives is the BUPA Great Run Series. As well as sponsoring the events and fund-matching all the money raised by participating BUPA employees, BUPA provides health information, and advice on training, nutrition and motivation for all runners. The aim is to encourage everyone to take an active interest in their own health and well-being – and to raise money for charity.

Encouraging volunteering

Research commissioned by BUPA, and conducted by Populus Limited, shows that one of the key ways to encourage people to volunteer is to give them the opportunity to be formally recognised for the work that they do. BUPA believes that the best way to do this is by organising an award or qualification – for

example an NVQ – in volunteering that recognises the skills volunteers gain from their activities.

Larger companies could help smaller companies facilitate any training required for their employees by such a scheme. In addition, a nationally recognised training scheme would provide volunteers with the skills to enhance their social contribution and careers.

Encouraging SME Volunteering

It is not just big companies like BUPA who need to play their part. Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) employ 54% of the UK workforce and so it is vital that SMEs also play a part. Our research shows that there is significant potential for volunteers from SMEs to play a much bigger role in local communities. Currently there is a big difference between the level of interest from both employers and employees and the actual levels of participation. Meeting this demand is a key challenge for all stakeholders because there is great potential for increasing participation among SMEs – which could bring huge benefits.

At BUPA we believe that corporate companies play an important role as catalysts for encouraging other companies to engage more fully with local communities, and in offering advice and assistance to smaller companies looking to establish employee-volunteering programmes. As a company we would be happy to advise any business that requires help with their employee volunteer programme.

CORPORATE VOLUNTEERING: THE CONSERVATIVE POSITION

JOHN BARON MP

It is probably fair to say that almost everybody in this country has at some point benefited from the work undertaken by the voluntary sector even if they do not know it. For example, many people have benefited from research undertaken by charities, or had a better start in life through an initiative that seeks to alleviate the effects of poverty. Much of this work is often unseen.

As a society, it is important we do all we can to help the voluntary sector in its work, and government certainly has a role to play in this endeavour.

Last year, I helped to organise the Conservative Party's Volunteers' Summit, which was a general consultation with the sector aimed at exploring how government can better help the voluntary sector realise its full potential. Nearly 100 organisations and charities attended, and there was excellent discussion and feedback. There have been a number of working group meetings since that summit which have discussed and carried forward the recommendations.

The working group meetings are open to any organisation that was present at the original summit. The agenda decided at the summit set the tone for the meetings. Subjects discussed included the appointment of a cabinet minister who would be a champion for the sector, the need for more long term capital funding to ensure wasteful reinvention of schemes is minimised and that successful projects are allowed to continue, and the importance of raising awareness of volunteering among the young.

Another theme discussed by many attending our consultations has been that charities, particularly small and local ones, struggle under the weight of regulation. Indeed, there was general agreement that regulations are increasingly seen as the major barrier to volunteering and act as a burden to the voluntary sector. There are too many blanket regulations which stifle the sector.

One of the organisations that has contributed to the consultation process is Business in the Community (BITC).²² Established in 1982, BITC inspires,

challenges, engages and supports business in continually improving its positive impact on society. Part of this is generating business interest in supporting and working with the voluntary sector locally. It champions the idea of allowing businesses to take the initiative in working with the voluntary sector, and sees itself as having the 'tool kit' to facilitate cooperation between the business community and the voluntary sector: it sees its function as 'enabling' rather than 'doing'. A successful example of its work is an in-depth research study on the business case for Cause Related Marketing, and inspiring companies to develop more programmes such as the highly successful Tesco 'Computers for Schools' initiative.

One of the proposals being considered is that the Government can certainly do more to help Business in the Community raise its own profile in order to assist it in its excellent work.

Charities tell us that when employers assist their staff in volunteering, it is a win win situation both for the business that lends staff and the charity they help. Employers benefit not only from the extra skills their staff acquire, but also from the greater involvement in the community itself and the goodwill this generates. Charities gain, quite obviously, from the extra time people are able to give and the good work that can be done.

Rigid legislation in this area, however, would be counterproductive: as BITC shows, the best way to help both the commercial and voluntary sector is to allow versatility and freedom, which will generate the most productive partnerships. Only when the two are given the freedom to co-operate on their own terms and not the state's will the full potential of both sectors working together be realised.

²² The website of Business in the Community is www.bitc.org.uk.

CASE STUDY 2: GIRLGUIDING UK

Girlguiding UK is the largest voluntary organisation for girls and young women in the UK, with around 600,000 members. In 2003, the organisation counted, for the first time, the number of girls waiting to join. The results showed that, if a further 8,000 volunteers could be found, the membership of the organisation could increase by 50,000.

The decline in new volunteers to Girlguiding UK over the last twenty to thirty years has coincided with the growth in the number of women in full-time employment, and increased working hours.

Businesses benefit from encouraging volunteering with Girlguiding UK and other organisations

Volunteers often receive a wide range of practical experiences, experience that isn't always available in the workplace. For example, most volunteers within Girlguiding UK will get the opportunity to:

- plan and run meetings with a diverse group of girls each week
- organise events
- balance accounts
- chair meetings attended by other adult volunteers.

At the same time as gaining practical experience in directly relevant areas, guiding members across the UK gain skills that can be transferred to the workplace, including:

- team involvement – both as team leaders and team members
- interpersonal and communication skills
- financial understanding / awareness
- coaching and motivating
- time management
- project management
- problem solving.

Most volunteers react positively to the responsibility that is conferred on them; for example, volunteers have to be reliable – and with possibly 24 girls waiting to be let into their meeting place, they need to be punctual.

Name: Linda Urquhart

Job title: Chief Executive

Organisation: Morton Fraser (Solicitors), Edinburgh

Current role in guiding: Unit Helper with an Edinburgh Guide Unit (i.e. girls aged 10 – 14).

My business does not have a formal policy of encouraging volunteering. We recruit and promote around a competency framework, though, and many of the competencies can be practised and developed through volunteering with Girlguiding UK. We look favourably on job applicants who can demonstrate competencies through their volunteering experience. In our profession, communication skills are key to our success with clients. Volunteers will often have experience of situations where their skills in this area have been tested and developed in ways which would be difficult to replicate in a training environment.

As someone who has been involved over many years in volunteering with Girlguiding UK in a number of different roles, I have acquired skills which have helped me perform my role as the Chief Executive of a major Scottish law firm, Morton Fraser, which employs just under 250 people. Some of the most important skills that I learned as a volunteer include:

- team working – not just working with others to achieve results, but in a leadership role, motivating others to achieve objectives – a key skill in my current job
 - time management – juggling my early professional life with running a Guide unit taught me essential time management skills and helped me prioritise
 - public speaking – I spend a lot of my time addressing large groups, whether within the office or at conferences. Standing up regularly in front of 30 critical teenagers, you soon develop good presentation and communication skills.
-

Employees benefit too

Volunteers can get as much out of volunteering as they put in. They gain the aforementioned skills and experiences, and have better career prospects as a result – around 75% of Girlguiding UK's volunteers work towards, and gain, the organisation's Leadership Qualification, and members have the opportunity to

gain further internal and external accredited qualifications. These skills are gained in a relaxed environment, while they have fun themselves; and many of Girlguiding UK's volunteers report that their self-confidence increases as a result of volunteering.

Many volunteer organisations, including Girlguiding UK, are community-based. Belonging to one of these organisations opens the local community to the volunteers and allows them to develop a further sense of responsibility for it, and belonging to it. In companies which require their staff to be geographically mobile, being involved with a national or international organisation such as Girlguiding UK and the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) will give employees a circle of contacts and potential friends wherever they go.

What employers could do to help Girlguiding UK

Corporate volunteering policies are welcome, but can sometimes be too inflexible, or irrelevant to the particular needs of a charitable organisation such as Girlguiding UK. Employers could further help Girlguiding UK through:

- recognising that some of their staff may already be volunteers. As current volunteers, they volunteer for reasons other than recognition within their workplace. This group of people would be useful as a source of information about volunteering and could be key to the implementation and success of a social responsibility policy. They could also help employers appreciate the many other ways in which companies can help organisations such as Girlguiding UK
- encouraging the current volunteers, and allowing them the time and resources to recruit more volunteers from the workplace
- offering a more flexible approach to providing time for volunteering, in recognition of the variety of forms and structures that volunteering might take. Some volunteers might look to their employers for flexibility in their hours of work, others for an hour each week for volunteering, and others for a larger block of time in the year
- offering employees access to resources to cut the costs of running a unit, such as photocopying costs or a meeting room, or donating obsolete equipment which might still be of use to a charitable organisation.

Name: Anonymous

Job Title: Office Co-ordinator

Role in guiding: Rainbow Unit Leader (i.e. girls aged 5 – 7) and Public Relations Adviser for local Girlguiding organisation

While my colleagues are good at ensuring that I can leave on time on the night I run Rainbows, my company has not helped me substantially with my volunteering. As Public Relations Adviser for the area, I have been offered the opportunity to attend a number of Open Days at local Colleges and the local University. As they take place during the working day, however, I have been unable to attend. There are also further PR / Recruitment activities that we would like to undertake in local Secondary Schools which I am unable to do because I am at work. If I had had the opportunity to undertake these activities, I could have not only developed my Public Relations skills and public speaking abilities, but we could have recruited more leaders for the area, which would increase the number of places available for girls wanting to join.

Having talked to senior management in my company about recognising volunteering, I feel they don't appreciate the benefits that volunteers bring to a company. As well as the chance to take time off occasionally for volunteering during the day, I would welcome some regular time set aside each week when I could do some of the administrative tasks which can often only be carried out during the day.

Name: Wendy Graham

Job Title: Human Resources Systems Development Consultant

Organisation: Royal & SunAlliance

Current role in guiding: Chief Commissioner, North West England

As Chief Commissioner, I am responsible for guiding within North West England, an area which has around 60,000 members aged 5 – 25 and a further 8,000 volunteers. My role also means that I am a member of Girlguiding UK's Council, the governing body for the organisation.

Royal & SunAlliance have allowed me to take on such a role and help

Girlguiding UK at this level through:

- the company's flexi-time policy, which has been of benefit throughout my last 25 years with the company, and in all my different guiding roles
- granting an extra 10 days holiday per year in recognition of the extra responsibilities of the role of Chief Commissioner
- allowing me to be a First Aider at work. This has meant that the first aid training I needed for guiding was undertaken in company time and at their expense
- granting Community Project Awards for projects in which I have been involved.

The managers at Royal & SunAlliance have been interested in, and supportive of, my volunteering, and feeling that they care about what I'm doing has been immensely valuable to me.

Name: Pat Tiley

Job Title: Director

Organisation: London Financial Group

Current role in guiding: Brownie Unit Leader (i.e. girls aged 7 – 10) and Chairman of the Guiding Development Committee

As Chairman of the Guiding Development Committee, I am responsible for the delivery and continuing improvement of guiding for the whole of the UK, while my role as a Brownie Leader involves providing girls with the opportunity to grow in self-esteem.

My company has helped me in my guiding role by allowing me to take time off for meetings through unpaid leave, and understanding the need to take non-business calls during working hours. It would have been extremely helpful to have had my volunteering recognised through an increased paid holiday allowance. Throughout my more than twenty years with the company, my holiday entitlement has remained the same at 20 days per year. This has meant that I have occasionally had to decline attendance at meetings and events. At the same time, the confidence and experience I have gained through the various roles I have held in guiding have helped me, and my company, in many ways.

An increase in the number and flexibility of corporate volunteering

schemes will go a long way towards alleviating the challenges that organisations such as Girlguiding UK face with finding volunteers who have time to give.

CORPORATE VOLUNTEERING: THE LIBERAL DEMOCRAT POSITION

ALISTAIR CARMICHAEL MP

Companies are increasingly recognising the benefits of providing volunteering schemes for their employees. It is now widely accepted that businesses themselves benefit from enabling their staff to take time off to carry out voluntary work. Skills gained during voluntary work can be brought back to companies and the added variety and sense of fulfilment can reinvigorate previously disillusioned workers. As Anita Roddick, founder of The Body Shop, has said, 'there are few motivational forces so potent than giving staff an opportunity to exercise their idealism'.²³ Over in the US, the head of salesforce.com, Marc Benioff, wrote recently that businesses which provide volunteering opportunities for their staff will retain better people and will work more productively.²⁴

Unfortunately, that sort of understanding amongst business leaders is not reflected in the thinking of our political leaders. As with so many other areas of policy, the Labour Government has sought to control volunteers from the top down, setting narrow targets for achievements at a grassroots level. The current Government has an obsession with one kind of volunteering at the expense of others. They recognise the kind of activity where trained, measured, semi-professional volunteers are 'parachuted' into disadvantaged communities – or where particularly imaginative 'social entrepreneurs' are singled out for small grants. If the huge potential benefits from corporate volunteering are to be realised, the Government must slacken its iron control, reform the benefits system so that it makes people genuinely independent, and invest in systems that encourage more people to volunteer.

The Conservatives by contrast remain trapped in a Thatcherite mindset that society is made up of 'people-sized' organisations that are best left to manage their own affairs. They appear to see no role for a wider concept of volunteering, or a broader infrastructure that can help local organisations to manage their own affairs better.

Liberal Democrats, by contrast, have a long-standing belief in volunteering, and in the vital importance of civil society. Schemes for encouraging volunteering should be run at the lowest appropriate level, and we reject the idea of volunteering as a form of social control. We believe that volunteering should be about people and neighbourhoods being set free to tackle local problems in an innovative and human way.

I have little doubt that, with or without government help, corporate volunteering will grow in the coming years. It fits nicely with the desire of many firms to be seen as socially responsible. The critical question is: what is the role of government in this development? Can governments encourage more corporate volunteering and, if they can, should they?

The first thing to point out is that creating a climate where corporate volunteering is more likely is not only about providing financial incentives. Government also has a crucial role in raising the status and morale of volunteering. For example, government departments could take on volunteers across the country to carry out certain tasks. Advertising campaigns could be used, not only to stress the importance of volunteering, but also to change the perception of volunteering as being a predominately middle class activity. A little imagination could be used to change the Honours system in a way that would give greater status to volunteering. Though around half of all awards in recent Honours Lists have been given for voluntary work, this is misleading, since the most prestigious awards were dominated by industrialists, and almost all volunteers were near the bottom of the list with MBEs.

We are constantly being told that our Civil Service needs to 'modernise'. This often entails becoming more business-like in its approach and more in touch with the 'real world'. This begs the question: if corporate volunteering is good for workers at the Body Shop and the Co-op Bank, why is the Government not sending our Sir Humphreys out into communities for one day a month? There may be an element of public protection involved here, but I think that, just as people in business benefit from sharing their expertise with local groups, civil servants could learn a great deal out of their offices and in community projects. Think of the advantages that could flow from having staff from the Benefits Office helping out from time to time at their local Citizens Advice Bureau.

It is sometimes argued that rewarding voluntary work financially, or in other ways, destroys the act of volunteering. It is wrong, however, if individuals or organisations lose out as a result of voluntary work. Providing extra funding to support volunteers should be seen as an investment by the Government.

Enabling more people to become involved in volunteering through financial support will bring rewards in years to come. If people are engaging in interesting and enjoyable voluntary schemes, they are more likely to be socially aware and engaged citizens. The social benefits of more volunteering far outweigh the costs of providing employers with incentives to carry out voluntary work.

The Liberal Democrats are not proposing a massive injection of government spending into volunteering. We do, however, believe that it is in society's best interests if volunteers and companies are not left financially worse off because they undertake tasks which benefit communities.

The Liberal Democrats' approach to corporate volunteering is quite straightforward. We do not believe that businesses should be forced to undertake such activities, and we do not want volunteering to be part of the increased regulatory burden placed on businesses. That is why the Government's target driven and centralised approach is wrong. At the same time, however, the Conservatives' *laissez-faire* attitude is also unsatisfactory, and would fail to capitalise on the opportunities volunteering affords. Corporate volunteering offers great potential benefits for communities and businesses alike. To realise that potential, however, requires a significant measure of change – not least from the Government itself.

²³ Liberal Democrat Party (2003) Volunteering, *Policy Paper*.

²⁴ 'Two-faced Capitalism', (24 January 2004) *The Economist*.

CITIZENSHIP AND VOLUNTEERING

BERNARD CRICK

Volunteering is a good thing. All active citizenship depends on individual volunteering. But not all volunteering is active citizenship. Volunteering may be good for an individual – morally good and often educative in what the volunteer learns, observes and experiences. And volunteering may simply be an individual act, directed by some organisation but with the volunteer working alone. Certainly that volunteer, by the very fact of freely offering their services to another or others, can be called a 'good citizen'.

Since, however, this would be as true in an autocratic state as in a reasonable democratic state, I will be using 'citizen' in the special sense from which modern democracies derive. In the Greek city states and the Roman Republic, citizen meant a free man who had the right to participate in public affairs – in the *res publica*, the things that were public. And in both cultures it was strongly believed that a man who had civic rights had a moral duty to exercise them for the common good, acting together with fellow citizens. So the idea of active citizenship is that of citizens acting together for some common public purpose.

Although this cultural ideal in the Western World was originally limited to a male governing class of the educated and property owners, who were always a minority of the inhabitants of a state, this did not invalidate the ideal or prevent it spreading. In the modern world the distinctive institutions of these ancient states – voting, public assemblies, public debate and freedom of speech (for citizens), knowledge of how decisions are made – have become more democratic with the emancipation of women and slaves, and with the idea that every legal inhabitant of a state over a certain age has the right to vote and be elected to public office.

This point is worth labouring, because valuable though volunteering can be – to the personal development of the volunteer, to those who are helped, and perhaps as an economy to the state, or the avoidance of excessive state intervention in private lives – volunteering is not necessarily active citizenship.

To bring the two together, certain other conditions are needed. Volunteers can simply be told what to do, and perhaps do it willingly. And in some circumstances, they will and should accept benevolent command. The volunteer hospital drivers, for instance, usually know what they are letting themselves in for, and would not expect to exercise any right to pick and choose what kind of out-patients to ferry back and forth. The young person volunteering to do a paint job for the infirm and elderly or to help with their shopping, etc. similarly should not, and normally would not, pick and choose. There are many, many volunteering activities of an individual kind. Sometimes, but not necessarily, such activities could be done better by professionals – though this is usually a hypothetical question, since help of all kinds, professional or amateur, is in short supply. In either case, the positive advantage to the personality and character of an individual who volunteers is important in itself, sometimes even at the cost of a little efficiency. Kindness to strangers is good both for the individual and for society as a whole.

But even in such individual acts of volunteering, some small aspect of interactive citizenship should be present. The organisations who use volunteers should, quite obviously (but not always in practice), explain the wider context of what they are asking a volunteer to do, and should also provide an opportunity for the volunteer to comment on whether the task could be done better or – sometimes – whether it was worth doing at all. These two points – call them interactive briefing and lively post-mortem – need a third added if groups of volunteers are involved: they should, when the object is defined and agreed, be given as much responsibility as possible to decide among themselves *how* to achieve the objective. This is particularly important with young people: nowadays they like to have a say. Some of our oldest charitable voluntary bodies are not used to this. They assume that the famed worthiness of their objectives needs no further discussion, and that volunteers should be thanked warmly, of course, but there is no need for regular feedback. The risk these bodies run, and often seem oblivious to, is that the young novice volunteers may not come back if not taken seriously – as young citizens.

In working for and on the new national curriculum on Citizenship for schools in England, I have had some run-ins with ministers or civil servants (no names, no pack-drill) who have got caught in the numbers game of reaching targets for various kinds of volunteering sponsored by government departments. Sometimes I have been tactless enough to say that volunteers should not be treated as cannon fodder but as young citizens whose views and experiences

should be consulted, and whose experience of volunteering should not be seen as something apart from citizenship learning. The Millennium Volunteers, for instance, had no requirement for recipient organisations to build in any training for citizenship skills. Young people, however, may in future be more demanding as volunteers as well as in demand, perhaps partly because the school curriculum specifically enjoins participation in both the community and in the school, as well as discussion of issues, problems and events. The future volunteer may be more demanding, but also more effective and prepared. Some of our big voluntary organisations could do with more internal democracy too, but that is another question.

The aim of citizenship was stated thus in the report that led to the order:

*We aim at no less than a change in the political culture of this country both nationally and locally: for people to think of themselves as active citizens, willing, able and equipped to have an influence in public life and with the critical capacities to weigh evidence before speaking and acting; to build on and to extend radically to young people the best in existing traditions of community involvement and to make them individually confident in finding new forms of involvement and action among themselves.*²⁵

Obviously, before there can be citizens there must be volunteers. But let me give an actual example of how the two concepts can be decoupled. There are pilot programmes for active citizenship in 16–19 education being undertaken by the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) funded by DfES (similar to the new Home Office pilot 'hubs' for citizenship training for community groups). An OSTED inspector found one enthusiastic group of youngsters who had themselves come up with a project – which they had volunteered for and carried out – to organise a party for the old people in a nearby residential home. They negotiated with the matron, obtained local sponsorship for provisions, and had even ascertained what kind of music the old folks would enjoy. A fine time was had by all. At first glance, this was both volunteering and 'good citizenship'.

But I shared the inspector's doubts that this was not 'citizenship', though the feel-good factor among the students and their class teacher was high. The party could well have been a fitting culmination or celebration of a more complete citizenship learning process – which did not take place – of setting out to discover something at least of the complicated relations and policies of the personal social services, local authorities, the NHS, government departments and the voluntary sector. Why were some of the old people there at all, and not able to be cared for at home? Had the students been prepared or even debriefed

properly to explain what they had seen and taken for granted, then they could have formed some view on how well the arrangements work, on public policy, and perhaps how they could be improved. They might even have made a representation to one or more of the relevant authorities. Good will and volunteering are not enough. Some knowledge base was needed before the real situation could be understood, and skills of presentation and advocacy were needed if representations were to be made on what they found out about what they saw.

So, to repeat, all active citizenship must involve, at some stage, volunteering, but not all volunteering involves citizenship. Cleaning up a field after a rave, or a blitz to clean up a local park or young children's playground, is admirable, as is giving a party for the old and infirm, but it is not citizenship without a knowledge base (how can such despoliation or neglect be allowed to happen at all?), without a process that enhances skills of discovery and advocacy, or without any attempts to influence local authorities, councillors or the police – whatever, whoever is relevant.

Volunteering becomes citizenship when the volunteers are well-briefed on the whole context, given responsibility about how to organise their actions, and debriefed afterwards in the classroom or listened to in a formal meeting about whether they think it could have been done better. Volunteers are free citizens acting together; they should never be canon fodder, however worthy the organisation they work for, however time-tested (or rigid) its procedures. In a sentence, citizenship has meant, since the time of the Greeks and the Romans, people *acting together* effectively to achieve a reasonably important common purpose.

