

*Private Members' Business*

progress has been made. However, we seem to back off every once in a while too.

The year 1981 was a great one. Some of my colleagues who were in the House will remember the International Year of the Disabled. Everybody's hopes, I suppose, were elevated to some degree. In 1988 the government introduced National Access Awareness Week. It is a positive development and usually happens in the spring. It has been in place for four or five years.

I was really disappointed when the government backed off on the Court Challenges Program. If the discussion there is not finished yet, and I hope it is not, I really think it is an indication that we are not too sincere about it. The Court Challenges Program provided a way in which the disabled could challenge some of the legal provisions that are there and not being addressed. That was a bit of a disappointment for me.

• (1920 )

The biggest offender in many cases is the federal government itself. Some of the studies that have been done have left us looking pretty miserable as policy-makers if we are not prepared to carry out those same policies to which we seem to think others should adhere.

A commission found that 32 federal government offices that they visited randomly did not meet the national standards for building access, for example. They were missing basic things, structural things, ramps and the like.

Out of 48 government agencies reviewed, 28 agencies did not offer even one publication in any alternate form other than regular print. There were no cassettes, which are not expensive, no Braille, no large print.

The government itself should examine its own motives. It is okay to make laws and determine what you think the practice should be, but surely the first one to abide by that should be the government itself. I do not think you can expect too much positive reaction from private enterprise or private industry if the government is one of the worst offenders. They are pretty discouraging statistics.

If the only thing the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is going to do is to be an outlet for somebody who has a complaint, and if all it does is address complaints, we will make even slower progress than we are making now

because that body will not be in the position to address all the complaints.

Disabled people whom I have been associated with have told me they do get shuffled around. They get moved from office to office to office and sometimes they think that all we are trying to do is waste their time and everybody else's time because we do not know what to do with them. It seems to me some kind of a national clearing house would solve a lot of the problems if we really wanted to address those problems because they do get shuffled around and they know that.

There are a couple of things happening in Canada which I think would be in keeping with my colleague's motion. We had an opportunity to examine the Premiers' Council in two provinces, Alberta and New Brunswick. I think the Alberta one was based on the New Brunswick one; I think it was in that order.

This is a very positive thing but there is nothing comparable to it at the federal level. The Premiers' Council brought people with disabilities on track when there was new legislation being planned. The legislation would to some extent be tested by disabled people themselves. They would improve on it, add to it, or delete from it.

In this country right now there are about 550,000 visually impaired Canadians. These are people who would have to wear extraordinarily strong glasses all the time. They cannot read ordinary print. Of that number, 46,000 people would be declared legally blind, for whom glasses or print would not be enough and they would have to move to Braille.

This is interesting and a fascinating statistic: 45 per cent of Canadians with disabilities have grade eight or eight years of formal schooling or less, whereas in the general population in Canada it is about 17 per cent.

The disability someone has reflects on their whole way of life. They do not get the opportunity to go to school because schools are not equipped to accommodate them, and the thing sort of feeds on itself.

There are 195,000 hearing impaired people in this country living in poverty. There are 134,000 visually impaired people living in poverty. There are 493,000 who are mobility impaired, cannot move freely and live in poverty.