

strong network. This ultimately became a coalition that successfully came to be involved in the American political process — a non-partisan approach with a strong base within the two political parties formed to defend services for disabled persons from the federal budget-trimming of the early 1980s.

Because of the activism of disabled persons, issues related to disability attracted strong political interest. During the 1986 Congressional campaign, a disabled person tracked every candidate. American legislators came to realize that disabled persons formed a separate political constituency that was 35 million strong. By the 1988 presidential campaign, both candidates had disability committees. The endorsement of a civil rights bill for disabled persons swung a major proportion of the disabled persons vote to the Republican candidate. The support of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights brought political status and media exposure to the legislative proposals. Following the election, the Bush Administration gave its blessing to the idea of an *Americans with Disabilities Act* and worked to prepare a version of the bill for presentation in the Senate.

By entering the political process, the disabled persons organizations in the United States had to confront certain realities and form certain partnerships. They had to re-evaluate their own objectives, and their own priorities in the light of decisions that they made themselves about what specific measures could be realistically achieved. Our Committee was greatly impressed by the balance that they struck and the victories that they won. In order to get the ADA through Congress, the representatives of the organizations of disabled persons negotiated modifications to their original “wish-list” directly with elected officials and bureaucrats as well as the business community. They sat face-to-face with their opponents and presented arguments based on research and on hard facts. It was not by complaining and appealing to a generalized sense of moral outrage that the passage of the *Americans with Disabilities Act* was brought about.

We applaud all those who fought for this magnificent advance in the integration of disabled persons into the life of the United States.

B. THE CANADIAN CIRCUMSTANCE

We must keep in mind that we live in a different country with a different system of political values and institutions. Although similarities abound between Canadian and American societies, we must determine what works for us. Much of what is included in the *Americans with Disabilities Act*, for example, falls outside the powers of a Canadian federal government.

At the same time, progress should be as easily achieved here as in the United States. Not only do we have a unique constitutional commitment to the rights of disabled persons which is embodied in *The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, but we have a greater