

problem is clearly apparent to people with disabilities themselves, and is part of the reason that their frustration is increasingly tinged with bitterness and scepticism about motives:

COPOH would like to remind the Government that disability is not a trendy issue that can be shelved after its UN year has finished. Disabled people will not allow our issues to be downgraded. (Issue 27, Appendix "HUDI-15" p. 26)

It is tempting, at least initially, to respond to the transience of public and political attention to disability issues with moral indignation and appeals to conscience. These indeed may be appropriate, but in our view will not result in significant progress. Feelings of guilt which sermonizing might bring about are likely, themselves, to be temporary. At most, we might anticipate another cycle of promises and plans.

More productively, we should ask ourselves why the political will to act on disability issues has traditionally been transitory, given the genuine concern which clearly prevails? The blunt answer, we suspect, is that the political will to act on disability issues has been weakened by the fact that, in the past, there has often been little political payback from action. As we have argued in preceding sections of this report, the results from initiatives taken thus far have tended to produce ascending levels of frustration and criticism in the community of persons with disabilities, rather than the positive responses which might encourage further action and effort. Even in the absence of negative responses from client groups, the results provide negative feedback on their own. We are concerned that political actors may be led to conclude that their efforts are largely futile, and that political time and energy would be better invested elsewhere.

At first sight this conclusion suggests a dilemma: action is needed if results are to be achieved yet results, or at least their realistic prospect, are necessary if the will required for action is to be created. We do not believe, however, that the dilemma is intractable. Indeed, it provides useful guidance. It tells us that the fostering of political will has to be recognized as part of the challenge facing those who seek action on disability issues. It suggests, as well, that exhortation and a reliance upon miracles of repentance and conversion may not, alone, meet this challenge.

A clear demonstration of the reasons why existing initiatives directed to persons with disabilities have failed to deliver anticipated results, accompanied by a recommended measures which are convincingly demonstrated to avoid the mistakes of the past, could in our view do much to reinvigorate political will. We plan, in the course of the future hearings and reports outlined in a previous section of this report, to contribute to the development of solutions which work. We hope that this will also contribute to the strengthening of political will.

Our evidence shows that not only Canadians with disabilities, but Canadians in general, are waiting for the comprehensive action which is clearly needed if the economic