

*Employment Equity Act* which came into force in 1986 required all federally-regulated businesses with over 100 employees to file annual reports beginning in June 1988 regarding their employment of disabled persons, as one of four target groups. The Act focussed attention on the employment practices of the corporations affected by this legislation and they too modified their workplaces and hiring practices. Naturally enough, many corporations covered by the Act feel that they have made considerable efforts to accommodate the concerns of persons with disabilities.

During our recent hearings, it has become plain to us that disabled persons on their side and governments and business for their part, sincerely believe that each has not given sufficient weight to the legitimate claims or achievements of the other. Mr. Adrian Battcock of the Treasury Board Advisory Committee on Employment eloquently stated one side of the case when he said:

...this world is far from a perfect place and we have a long way to go in terms of removing systemic discrimination. Despite the best efforts, the best opportunities of government departments, of government programs, of government policies and particularly, in the area of government-regulated industries, our biggest fundamental flaw is to try to convince people...to understand the whole concept of systemic discrimination. [Due to] the artificial barriers that because of previous policies, previous programs, bureaucratic obstacles built into every type of process... the disabled person...has one difficult time getting past the front door. (Issue 29, p. 10)

Mr. Gérard Veilleux, the President of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, put the other side of the question when he told us:

...we are confident that, in large measure, we are taking the right road. We intend to continue making the necessary adjustment and intensification of our efforts to achieve our goal, your goals. (Issue 25, p. 7)

The battle will be well and truly joined in the near future and the battleground will be the review of the *Employment Equity Act*. The call to arms will be legislated "Quotas" and "No quotas" in the employment of disadvantaged groups. The issues of enforceability and accountability will likely pit federal department against department, business against business and disadvantaged group against disadvantaged group.

Parliamentary committees, such as this one, feel caught in the middle. Our own great frustration is not that anybody says the wrong thing but nobody does the right thing. This is particularly true of government departments, agencies and private corporations which have appeared before us. As Members of this Committee, we try to carry out some monitoring of the actions of government and non-government operations as well as to understand the evolving priorities of persons with disabilities. There are limits on our capacity to enforce the accountability of governments. The bounds are set not only in terms of the time, energy and resources which we can devote to calling to task those with lagging feet, but also there are limits to our powers. We cannot force the government to accept our recommendations,