

NIDMAR pays tribute to former Honourary Labour Co-Chair Bob White



Bob White

Bob White, former Honourary Labour Co-Chair for NIDMAR from 1992 to 1999, passed away on February 19, 2017, in Kincardine, Ontario, Canada.

A legendary labour leader, Bob White was founding President of the Canadian Autoworkers Union (CAW) and subsequently became President of the Canadian Labour Congress. In 1992, Bob agreed to become Honourary Labour Co-Chair of NIDMAR, a role where he, together with Adam H. Zimmerman, former Honourary Employer Co-Chair and then CEO of Noranda and Chair of MacMillan Bloedel, agreed to combine their personal commitment and institutional influence towards promoting improved return to work outcomes for injured / disabled workers, a struggle which, while progress is being made, still continues today.

As part of his commitment towards better RTW outcomes for injured / disabled workers, Bob also recognized the imperative needs which persons with disabilities generally face and applied his tremendous resource of personal skills and abilities in trying to change this narrative, perhaps best illustrated by his efforts to build "New Coalitions for Change".

"Striving to be the best is a big part of union culture. We are beginning to examine if 'the best' is always appropriate, or if the definition of 'best' can be different for different people. Fighting for employers to support the notion of reasonable accommodation of work functions for those with disabilities not already in the workforce is something we must tackle at the bargaining table." (Entourage: Community Living and the Labour Movement, Volume 7, #4, Winter 1992-93)

"There are some exceptional employers who believe in taking responsibility for workers who are injured or suffer from an occupational disease. These employers make every effort to integrate workers back into the workforce. We have to ask the question: Why are there only a few? Why not a majority, or even 50%?" (NIDMAR 1997, Strategies for Success: Disability Management in the Workplace) http://www.nidmar.ca/products/products_details.asp?id=7

While we have made progress, much more needs to be done before we substantively and consistently change the socio-economic environment facing the majority of persons with disabilities; however, we want to take this moment to extend our sincerest appreciation for Bob's commitment in supporting our efforts, starting some 25 years ago.

The following link is to a video entitled "The Challenge to Lead: The Rewards of Disability Management", developed by NIDMAR in 1996, as a promotional tool documenting the growth of workplace based DM programs and showing the support coming from leaders in Canada's political, business, union and insurance sectors, including the following short clip from Bob White: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=olUslHC7yfo>