

But that is not the reality with the Mulroney style of parliamentary government. Here is what actually happens, political scientists and others, far from the class rooms, the text books and even the editorial rooms. This is how the government guided, if I can use such a kind word, Bill C-80 through the House of Commons. I am going to deal with second reading debate, closure, committees, report stage and third reading.

First, let's examine the second reading debate. Monday, June 1, 1992, at 3:18 in the afternoon, the government brings Bill C-80 forward for second reading. We wait for the minister to explain what the government is doing in dismantling this 74-year-old sacred trust, but he is not there. Instead of the honourable Benoit Bouchard, the Minister of Health and Welfare, rising to explain how the government is proposing to fundamentally restructure the \$4.5 billion child benefit system, Mr. Pierre H. Vincent rose to his feet.

\$4.5 billion is a major piece of change. That is \$10,000 every day for 1,233 years. It is \$12 million every single day of the year. We use the word "billion" so cavalierly. If someone two thousand years ago, in the time of Jesus, had \$1 billion—sorry. Senator Barootes wants to make a speech.

**Senator Gigantès:** Who is explaining the mathematics to whom? You are to him, or he to you?

**Senator Frith:** Senator Barootes is explaining something to Senator Doyle.

**Senator Gigantès:** It is simple arithmetic.

**Senator Barootes:** You mentioned cavalier. We are not cavalier.

**Senator Gigantès:** You only understand subtraction.

**Senator Barootes:** Look at it again, Royce.

**Senator Frith:** If, 2,000 years ago, someone had had \$1 billion, he could have spent \$1,000 every day for two thousand years—no interest, just the capital—and still have had \$270 million left over. You can check it. It is very easy. \$1,000 a day; 365 days per year; 2000 years. That is \$730 million, with \$270 million left over. And here we are talking about \$4.5 billion.

**Senator Simard:** I am sure Senator Olson will want to take a look at this.

**Senator Frith:** I must say you are not unusually mouthy today, sir. Quite normal.

Now, then, who is Mr. Pierre H. Vincent to explain how this \$4.5 billion was to be spent? Who is Mr. Pierre H. Vincent?

**Senator Murray:** He is an excellent member.

**Senator Frith:** Mr. Vincent is, we hear, an excellent member. But he is not a member of the Cabinet Committee on Human Resources, Social and Legal Affairs. Perhaps a chairman or a member of the Nice Guys Committee, but not of that committee. That committee, in fact, is chaired, I believe, by

[Senator Frith.]

Senator Murray, and is otherwise known as the Cabinet Committee on Family Values. Mr. Vincent is not a member of that cabinet committee. He is not —

**Senator Gigantès:** The Dan Quayle of Canada.

**Senator Frith:** I was hoping that might evoke that analogy. Mr. Vincent is not even a member of the cabinet. It is questionable whether Mr. Vincent has ever attended a cabinet meeting, let alone the meetings that led to the decisions underlying the legislation.

● (1600)

Yet, this parliamentary secretary to the finance minister rose to explain why cabinet, of which he is not a member, had decided to end the 47-year-old Family Allowance Program and the 74-year-old child income tax credit.

This choice of Mr. Pierre Vincent to man the plunger tied to the dynamite caps might be—in fact, is—a good indication of what this government considers important. His decision to expend 10 whole minutes—which will soon be approximately the amount of time that Senator Barootes and others have spent mumbling—to explain and defend the legislation is an even better indication.

Perhaps the best indication is the government's failure twice to maintain quorum during the next two hours of debate on this bill that day. But even two hours of debate was apparently much too long. Here is what happened. Mr. Pierre H. Vincent had explained the government's entire position in 10 succinct minutes, but the opposition went on to squander two valuable hours of house time on this \$4.5 billion piece of legislation, dismantling a system which had taken almost 75 years to build—two whole hours they had spent.

Enter Harvie Andre. What? This abuse of Parliament could not be allowed to continue. The rights of the majority and of the government to govern was being trampled. Andre's nostrils twitched, he sniffed conspiracy. This must be another massive filibuster—visions of the GST. Something had to be done. What to do? Closure, of course.

On June 8, the Honourable Harvie Andre, defender of Parliament, explained that he had been unable to reach an agreement with opposition members with respect to time allocation for second reading of Bill C-80, and that, pursuant to their Standing Orders, he was giving notice that there would be only one more day of debate. The evil threat of real and meaningful debate in the House had been averted—thank God.

I was not in on those discussions between Mr. Andre and his counterparts in the opposition parties, and so we can only speculate as to what was said. It might be worthwhile doing so to determine what his colleague, Senator Lynch-Staunton, might be trying to do—although we hope not—in the Senate.

Perhaps the minister argued that opposition members had already spent more than 10 times as much time debating the bill as had the government. Perhaps, he argued, that seeing how the government could wrap up its entire position in 600 seconds, it was an abuse of process for the opposition, who