

## Viewpoint ...

### Collective responsibility

By Nils R. Connor

In the wake of the Star Kist Tuna scandal, in which about 1,000,000 cans of rancid fish were released for sale and subsequently recalled by the minister of Fisheries, certain aspects of the way the government handle itself may have been overlooked in the repugnance of the whole situation. The standard joke these days is that federal cabinet ministers are not accepting calls from New Brunswick for fear of Premier Richard Hatfield involving them in some new scandal. Every time one hears of him calling Ottawa, it seems to precipitate an uproar. That may (or may not) say something about Mr. Hatfield, but we were discussing the Federal Government.

What we saw with the tuna incident was a minister succumbing to political pressure from the fish company and Mr. Hatfield and reversing the decision of trained, expert inspectors. Not surprisingly, this action eventually came to light and then life got rough for minister, John Fraser. Underlying the issue, we also saw what is a serious reflection on the whole Mulroney government. That is we saw the said minister and the Prime Minister contradicting each other in the media.

Hmmm. What about cabinet solidarity?

Indeed. As was mentioned, this incident is a serious reflection on the government; a reflection of a problem which seems to be endemic with the year-old Conservative administration. As the hapless Mr. Clark could attest to, Prime Minister Mulroney has on more than one occasion, allowed himself to make statements not consistent with, and sometimes contradictory to, statements made by his cabinet ministers. This tendency is due, no doubt, to the fact that the Prime Minister has, what some generously call, the "gift of gab". To put it another way, when confronted by a microphone, he seems to give any convenient response and lets the chips fall where they may.

In all fairness, there may be another explanation. Perhaps in these situations, the ministers, who presumably become somewhat expert in their respective portfolios, are simply unaware of either the facts, or the actual government policy on the issue. Perhaps, but I doubt it.

Ethics aside, these kinds of discrepancies within the cabinet are a bad sign for the government. As it becomes more common, one should begin to see a reluctance on the part of ministers to make any statements which could possibly come into question at some later (or earlier) time. To protect themselves it will be necessary for each minister to either defer completely to

the Prime Minister, or to go through a confirmation process so intricate as to make it hardly worthwhile. Not only does this make for cumbersome concentration of responsibility, it also makes it easy for the Opposition to, in fact, decimate the government in Parliament. Merely by sitting back and waiting for the next blunder, the Opposition parties can be assured of a continuing supply of ammunition for Question Period. While last year's resignation of Defence Minister Coates was a fluke event, the tuna scandal, and the collapse of the Canadian Commercial and the Northland Banks were both events which should never have occurred, and would not have had such impact had the entire cabinet acted in accordance with the principles of collective responsibility.

An interesting point that I will leave you to consider is the impact of the seeming willingness on the part of the PM and cabinet to let a beleaguered colleague sink. As an afterthought, one might also wonder at the specifics of Mr. Fraser's resignation. Are his contradictions of Mulroney's statements deliberate sabotage? And, is it like a fifteen year veteran of the House of Commons to invent dubious stories about his leader's information? The answer to this last question is simple — No.

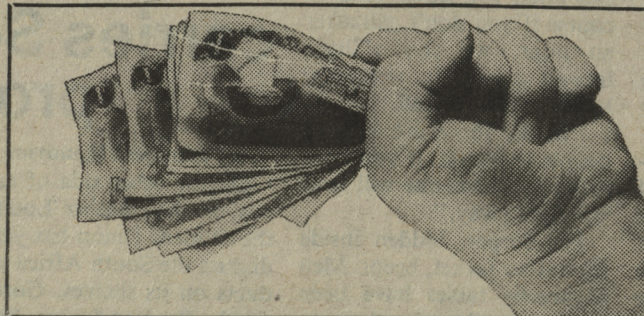
## Fantastic fables

By Jim Lai

Once upon a time there was a viciously greedy miser who used to hide his gold, jewelry, and stock certificates at the foot of a tree in his vast garden. Every week he used to go and dig it up and gloat and laugh maniacally over his gains.

A half-deaf burglar, who had noticed this, went and dug up the gold, jewelry, and stock certificates and left for Rio with it. He was eventually mugged and killed, but that is another story.

Anyway, when the miser next came to gloat and laugh



maniacally over his treasures, he found nothing but an empty hole. He tore his hair and raised such an outcry that all his neighbors within earshot (about 100 kilometers) came around him. He told them how he used to come and visit his gold, his jewelry, and his stock certificates like any good father would. He told them of his poetry. He told them his life story.

"Did you ever take any of the gold, jewelry, or stock certificates out?" one of his neighbours asked.

"Don't be ridiculous! I

came just to look at my beautiful gold, my lovely jewelry, my crisp stock certificates! Oh! This reminds me of a poem I —"

"Ahem!" the sales man interrupted gleefully. "You, sir, should have bought an Acme Security System so you could admire all your wealth at home in safety. Coincidentally, I happen to be a dealer! This is your lucky day!"

**Moral #1:** Money is useless unless you show it off to other people.

**Moral #2:** Acme Security Systems has a full line of products to suit your security needs.

# FRASER CANNED



## Left-handers unite!

Speaking on behalf of the left-handed population, I have concluded that our society has failed in its attempt to treat everyone as equals. We, as southpaws, are forever being forced to go against our natural left-handed tendencies and adapt to society's right-handed mechanics. My particular beef this week is having to write on my lap while in class, because there appears to be no left-handed desks!

Being a southpaw, I have become accustomed to adapting to the right-handed way of life. By this of course, I am referring to any ordinary every-day object that is essentially designed for usage by the right hand, little things that your average every-day Joe needs to survive in this cruel world.

Besides the above-mentioned desk, scissors can be quite annoying. Most are designed with a handle that is comfortably suited for the right hand, so of course, they are rather awkward for a southpaw to use. And what about your common appliances such as TV sets and public vending machines that must be operated from the right side? Binders are also a particular pain because it's nearly impossible for someone lefthanded to write on the right-hand side. And that's not all. You should've been around when I was learning how to drive a standard! It's a pretty funny sight when anyone is first learning how to drive a standard, whether, he is left-handed or not. Believe me, you simply can't drop down into 2nd

with your left hand while the same time steering with your right — especially if you can't steer with your right!

**LEFT-HANDERS UNITED!** We are unique individuals (and we can all complain about the same things that we can't use!) While improvisation may be a basic discipline at least we can brag that something as typical as a corkscrew opener must be customized so that it may be good enough for our use...

Left-handed people are certainly not incompetent. For example, I conquered a problem with the binder by writing in the back of the binder instead of the front. Anything, we must exercise a greater degree of intelligence than righthanders. After all, we have to figure out how to make this right-handed world work for us.