

Mr. Speaker, I say this openly, I am not ashamed to state it because all my constituents in the riding of Lotbinière give unanimous support to me on that; I ask for an increase in the budget of riding offices in order to prevent all those who want to work in their riding from being deprived of means because of members of parliament who do not understand their duties. That is a very important point.

I am quite sure my representations will be considered as another gimmick to get another salary increase, but it is not true. Those who will dare write or say that could come in my riding, I don't worry for one minute, because my people are very sensible, Mr. Speaker. Those who object to the salary increase do not know about the reactions of their own constituents, and maybe this is because they do not give the services they could render.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude my comments this way: We had a fantastic opportunity to prove to Canadians that Parliament is a supreme institution, that members have been elected to represent something and someone—

An hon. Member: Authority!

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Speaker, we have the fantastic opportunity to prove something to Canadians, to those who believe in democracy, in the role of the member of Parliament, no matter the salary. If we give \$5,000 to an individual, he is going to produce for \$5,000. If you give someone else \$10,000, he will produce for \$10,000. If you give \$15,000 to yet another, he will produce for \$15,000. Give \$20,000 to some NDP members, they will produce for \$5,000.

Mr. Speaker, I say that if we ask hon. members to justify their salaries, I am not worried. But if we ask some reporters to justify their salaries, then I would worry.

Nobody speaks about that in this House. Let us read *Hansard* for this week. Yesterday, an answer was given to a question on the order paper concerning a man named Michael Pitfield. Let us consider the career of that man. He started at about \$4,000 or \$5,000 a year. That was reported in *Hansard* yesterday. He now earns \$54,000 a year as a deputy minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. This week, I gave figures concerning civil servants who do not have to be elected, who are responsible to no one except a minister, in short, who enjoy unlimited security of employment. The Liberal candidate who was running against me in the last election, Mr. Normand Bégin—write that down you up there, how many are you now? Two, five! The Liberal candidate running against me, Normand Bégin, stop laughing you, Liberals, the said minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand) hired him the very next day as a special assistant here in Ottawa. These are examples. It is easy to be a candidate in such conditions.

And, Mr. Speaker, those are examples which contribute to discredit public people in the eyes of the people. Let us make an effort, let us stand together, let us forget our political parties and let us make the people of this country, Canada, proud of their parliament, of their country and of their laws. Let us legislate for the benefit of people who need it, instead of always legislating for the benefit of great corporations and banks, let us make Canada a place where life can be enjoyed by really deserving the salary

which we earn through taxes and owe to the sweat of taxpayers. And when we ask for a rise, there will be no outcry of indignation, because newspapermen would not dare criticize members of parliament then, for they would make a laugh of themselves.

[English]

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Earlier today while this bill was under discussion an amendment was moved to the motion for second reading, and it was indicated that the time that the subject would be discussed when the hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Fortin) had finished his speech. That moment having arrived, I have to say that the terms of the amendment proposing—

That Bill C-44 be not now read a second time, but that it be resolved that in the opinion of this House the subject of salaries and allowances of members of parliament and cabinet ministers should be referred by the government to an independent commission

—caused concern to the Chair on two counts, at least. I would therefore propose, before deciding officially what to do about it, to hear hon. members who may wish to contribute to discussion of the procedural aspect since, as I say, I have some doubt as to whether it is a proper amendment.

I understand there is a desire among hon. members to dispose of the matter this evening, so whatever ruling I make would be made today, if possible.

Mr. G. W. Baldwin (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I would have thought that the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) would have endeavoured to sustain the onus of proof by establishing that this is a useful and valid amendment. I have been under the impression that he knows there are grave doubts about its validity and that it has been put forward as something of a red herring—I underline the word “red”.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, is this honourable House discussing the procedural aspect or the substance of the motion?

Mr. Baldwin: I am discussing the procedural aspects. I would have thought the hon. member would have attempted to justify the amendment. But insofar as it can be taken as a reasoned amendment, for five and a half years, as Your Honour may be aware, I struggled without avail to secure approval for a reasoned amendment, but your predecessor did not see fit to accept my proposals, even though I advanced what I considered to be valid arguments at the time. To my recollection only one reasoned amendment has been accepted in the House over the last few years. This in itself, of course, is not sufficient to lead Your Honour to reject the amendment we are now discussing, but I say that the Standing Orders and the precedents are clear—according to the rule, this is not the kind of amendment which can be accepted.