

to compromise that principle in parliamentary tradition and precedent. Therefore, I do not intend to support the motion.

**Some Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Eymard Corbin:** Honourable senators, it has been a long time since I rose in this chamber to speak at this late hour. However, I will start my speech this evening and possibly continue tomorrow.

Much has been said about—

**Senator Flynn:** You can talk all night if you want to.

**Senator Corbin:** Honourable senators, am I going to be obstructed from the word go in this debate?

Honourable senators, during my maiden speech in this Chamber, Senator Roblin attempted to stifle my freedom of speech, and I will certainly not take any of this from Senator Flynn. You have had your turn, honourable senators, and it is now our turn. If you are tired, you can leave, the door is open, and just go to bed.

**Senator Flynn:** I feel fine.

**Senator Guay:** He feels fine.

**Senator Corbin:** Honourable senators, a lot was said about a three party agreement allegedly in effect in the House of Commons while Bill C-11 was being considered. However, if we look at *Hansard* for the House of Commons, there was no mention anywhere of any actual or possible participation by the Senate or by honourable senators, either in drafting or discussing the compromise arrived at by the members. Therefore, what was said in the course of this debate by, for instance, Senator Phillips and others, both here and elsewhere, is pure fiction on the part of government members who are desperately trying to get out of the mess into which they got themselves in the first place. They are doing this to confuse public opinion and to make the public hostile to this institution by putting it in the worst possible light, and I regret to say that they have partially succeeded. However, we shall all have to bear the consequences.

This kind of manoeuvring is partisan and political, and shows no respect for our parliamentary traditions. Furthermore, the government and the press generally have failed to consider the circumstances in which a compromise was reached in the House of Commons.

What were those circumstances and do they apply to the present situation in the Senate today? I say they do not. The circumstances are entirely different. In fact, the situation has changed completely.

In the House of Commons it was just before Christmas. Honourable senators will recall that the opposition parties in the Commons had been after the government for days and weeks to define its policies on the universality of social programs, an issue that was causing considerable concern among all Canadian taxpayers and especially among the elderly. It was therefore on the last sitting day before Christmas. The Liberal opposition and the New Democratic Party had been

unable to obtain any concessions from the government on a day of debate on the principle of universality. In its supreme arrogance, the government refused to give in until the opposition made a minor concession on Bill C-11. However, the opposition parties did not compromise on the principle of Bill C-11. They did reach a compromise on the scheduling of the debate in the House of Commons.

**Senator Flynn:** It was adopted unanimously.

● (2150)

[*English*]

**Senator Corbin:** They got their pound of flesh. The bill was adopted without a recorded vote. But, let me tell you, reread the speeches of the Honourable Donald Johnston and Mr. Riis and you will find that in line after line they affirm the ancient principle that there will be no borrowing authority granted until the government tables its estimates.

I will not review those arguments. They were presented in very brilliant fashion today by a number of speakers, in terms that a child could understand, in terms that journalists should understand, if only they would put their minds to work once in a while instead of running after gossip and hearsay.

[*Translation*]

The government, therefore, would not allow a debate on universality, which was the main concern of the Canadian people at the time. Without jeopardizing this principle, the House went along with what the government was asking. That is what happened and the vote was never recorded. God knows what would have been the result of that vote. We can guess, judging from the vote on the NDP amendment. The governing party crushed the joint opposition in the House of Commons. Should these parties have kept up their fight? That was their decision, and I respect it.

[*English*]

But here, in the Senate, it is a new ball game as far as I am concerned, and I will not buy the argument that I am not a representative member of Parliament.

**Some Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear.

**Senator Corbin:** I do not buy that. As far as I am concerned, my service to my constituents and to my country, as a new member of the Senate, continues—

**Some Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear.

**Senator Corbin:** —and it will be as unflinching as it was when I was a member of the other house.

**Some Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear.

**Senator Corbin:** And I will respect my oath.

**Senator Flynn:** Compliment yourself.

[*Translation*]

**Senator Corbin:** So the basic principle of denying the government borrowing authority so long as its estimates have not been tabled has been maintained.

[*English*]

That principle may have gone through the meat grinder, but it survives, and it will survive session after session, Parliament