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—
Chair

Mr. Bernard Patry

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Wednesday, October 20, 2004

• (1535)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.)): We were going to begin our committee work. The first business listed on the orders of the day is the first report of the Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure. To start with, there are requests for meeting foreign delegations and dignitaries.

[English]

The first one is That the Committee organize a working lunch for Mr. Aleksii Lakhachev, Deputy, Russian Duma, Thursday, October 21.

[Translation]

That the committee hold a meeting with a parliamentary delegation from Mexico, Monday afternoon, October 25.

[English]

and That the Committee hold a meeting with a Parliamentary Delegation from Germany, Wednesday afternoon, November 3.

Are we agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Next is “Readopting a previous report”. We discussed the following in the steering committee and we proposed

That, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Committee consider Canada's relations with the countries of the Muslim World;

That the 1st Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade in the 3rd Session of the 37th Parliament entitled *Exploring Canada's Relations with Countries of the Muslim World*, adopted by the Committee on March 25, 2004, and presented to the House on March 31, 2004, be amended by deleting Footnote No. 51;

That the report as amended be adopted as a report of the Committee in the present session;

That the Chair or his designate present the report to the House and

That, pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Committee request that the Government table a comprehensive response to the report.

Are there any questions? Are we agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

With regard to study proposals and request to appear it is proposed That the committee consider main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005 and that the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and International Cooperation be invited to appear.

[English]

Are we agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

It is proposed

That for the study of Disarmament (See Minutes of Proceedings of October 14, 2004), the Clerk be authorized to arrange an appearance of the Ambassador for Disarmament via videoconference from Geneva if necessary.

Are we agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

• (1540)

It is proposed That the request to appear of Mining Watch Canada on Canadian Mining Company activities in the Philippines be referred to the Subcommittee on Human Rights and International Development.

Are we agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

It is proposed That the request to appear of Canadian Coalition for Democracies be noted for the Committee's study on foreign policy.

Are we agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

It is proposed That the request of the Halifax Initiative Group to appear on the subject of Export Development Canada and its Environmental Policy be referred to the Subcommittee on Trade, Trade Disputes and Investment.

Are we agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Monsieur Paquette.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): With regard to the matter concerning Export Development Canada, the Auditor General—

The Chair: There is no interpretation therefore I shall translate what you are saying. Please go ahead.

Mr. Pierre Paquette: The Auditor General is going to table a report on Export Development Canada on October 25 or 26. I would like to know whether this report will be submitted to the committee, to the subcommittee or only to the Public Accounts Committee.

[English]

The Chair: Monsieur Paquette's question is whether the Auditor General, through the Commissioner for the Environment, will table a document here regarding CIDA and the environment. We discussed it in the steering committee, and I really feel it should be discussed in the environment committee and not in our committee.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): You mean CIDA won't be discussed here?

The Chair: No, not CIDA. There is a report coming from CIDA regarding the work of CIDA on sustainable development in some countries with respect to the environment. We discussed the matter yesterday, and it was said it would go to the environment committee, but there's nothing stopping us from asking questions of the CIDA minister when she appears for the main estimates.

Ms. Beth Phinney (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.): So that has nothing to do with what's going on here.

The Chair: No, not at all. It was another question.

Are we agreed?

Ms. Beth Phinney: What are we agreeing to? Are we agreeing to the Halifax one?

The Chair: Exactly. Are we agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: It is proposed

That the Committee, in view of the Government's intention of carrying out a review of international policy, undertake, pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), following its consideration of the Main Estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005, a preparatory study of foreign policy issues with particular emphasis on: the implications of Missile Defence; United Nations reform; humanitarian crises, for example the Sudan and Haiti; and the situation in the Middle East; and that a work plan be prepared for public hearings to be organized for the period leading to the December adjournment of the House.

Ms. Beth Phinney: That shouldn't take more than a year or two.

The Chair: We're requesting that the clerk and research staff prepare an agenda regarding the priorities. We can't discuss or do everything on this yet.

Are there any questions? Madame McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We've just had this wording in the last few minutes, and I'm concerned. I want to make sure it is clearly the intention expressed through the committee that the public hearings that will be held in the context of the foreign policy review will be held before there is any decision in Parliament, before there is any vote that takes place in Parliament, on the issue of Canada's participation in national missile defence. I would like to propose an amendment to what we have before us here that makes that clear. I'm certainly prepared to provide the exact wording, if that amendment is in order, so it's clear that the public hearings to be organized for the period leading to the December adjournment of the House will take place and that it is the recommendation of this committee that no vote take place in the House until those public hearings have been held.

• (1545)

The Chair: I don't think we can do this, for one reason. The committee doesn't decide when a vote will take place in the House of Commons. It's irrelevant in a certain sense. We decided to do the estimates first and to get to disarmament. You requested disarmament and to have the ambassador for disarmament appear before the committee; we fully agreed on this. That means we'll be holding some hearings here until the recess at a minimum and maybe the first week after. I have no clue as to when the government will come to the House of Commons and ask for a vote regarding missile defence. We cannot as a committee go along and request the government to postpone the vote; I don't think it's feasible.

Madame Lalonde.

[Translation]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): In the context of the preparatory discussions held yesterday—there is still no interpretation. This makes no sense. We must be able to discuss these matters. Are we going to take a break until translation is available again?

The Chair: Ms. Lalonde, you are entitled to request a break.

[English]

I cannot stop you from asking for a pause; it's your right. If you want to say a few words and it's not too long, I'll try to translate it.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: I'm working on my French, but I'm still at the “Je m'appelle Kevin Sorenson” stage.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[Translation]

The Chair: It is a good start.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Chairman, you may be able to translate a question, but when it comes to a speech, this cannot be done.

The Chair: We are not getting the translation from French to English but simply the reverse.

[English]

Can we postpone this, Madame Lalonde, for a few minutes and go on to some other items? We're going to come back to Ms. McDonough's item and your comments about this.

Do we have anything else?

[Translation]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: My comments are intended for everybody in the room.

[English]

The Chair: Okay, it's coming back. Good.

[Translation]

Go ahead, Ms. Lalonde.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: The debate on the missile defence shield is part of the debate on a review of foreign policy. Between you and me, it is obvious that if the agreement with the Americans is signed before we have voted on the review of foreign policy, we will be in an entirely different situation. Quite a few among us, as a group, have covered the missions dedicated to relations between Canada with countries of the Muslim world. We know that Canada—as well as the position taken by our country regarding Iraq, has been well received by almost all the countries we have visited. An association with—

[English]

Ms. Alexa McDonough: I have a point of order. I can hardly hear the translation.

The Chair: Can you switch to the other one?

A voice: They're all the same.

A voice: It's not satisfactory.

The Chair: We're going to wait for a few minutes.

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: The debate on the missile defence shield is closely linked to the one dealing with the review of foreign policy. Should Canada, unfortunately, participate to the missile defence shield before we have reviewed our foreign policy, we would be in a position, it seems to me, to tell the government that we are in no way in the same situation with regard to assessing Canada's ability to influence some countries with whom we have tried over the years to share knowledge, if not gestures of friendship, and to develop conditions that might influence them.

We have made several studies and the latest one in particular required a lot of our energy. It had to do with the relations of Canada with countries of the Muslim world. Such a study opened the door to an opportunity to influence these countries with regard to a matter that everyone considers extremely important, namely terrorism. If Canada had already entered into an agreement regarding the missile defence shield, it would be no longer in the same situation to assess the policies. In my opinion, this argument could influence as well our conservative colleagues who, with regard to the missile defence shield have said they wanted to know what was happening, how efficient it was, what were its costs and what other impact it might have on foreign policy. All this to say that I think the amendment that Ms. McDonough has proposed, although it can not commit the government, could read as follows: "It is the opinion of this committee that it would not be in the same situation to make a decision on the review of our foreign policy if the government had already signed the agreement."

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm going to ask for the debate. Are there any other questions or comments about this?

The review of foreign affairs, I would say, is much larger than just missile defence; defence and development are also included. It's going to take us months and months to do. I don't think we can do it in a few weeks or even in a few months. In 1995 it took us close to a year to do it.

Mr. Sorenson.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: There are two things. First of all, I'm wondering if Ms. McDonough would give us that amendment one more time, please, and then I want to speak after she does.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: I'm happy to do that. I propose an amendment that would read at the end, following "that a work plan be prepared for public hearings to be organized for the period leading to the December adjournment of the House", and further that the Committee urge the Government of Canada not to sign any memorandum of understanding or treaty that entrenches Canada's formal participation in the United States Ballistic Missile Defence plan nor schedule a vote on Canadian participation in U.S. NMD until cross-country public hearings on the matter are concluded and a report with recommendations is presented by the Committee to the House.

The Chair: Are there any comments? Mr. Sorenson.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: First of all, I think any time we have public consultations, that's good. We need to be speaking to as many people as we can. This was one of the issues that was front and centre

throughout the election, so there has been lots of discussion in regard to the missile defence program.

We have some major questions we want answered, first of all about the probability of a risk. What is the threat? What is the risk assessment for our continent, and why is this important or why isn't this important? We want to understand the feasibility of the technology. We want to be sure that the science, the technology we've been told is there, is adequate and that it is indeed not a Star Wars program but something that is a defensive program. We want to understand the responsibility of Canada in continental security. Before we sign on to anything, we want to understand what is expected of us, what is required of our country, and what the implications are, the implications of signing on to a missile defence system and the implications of not signing on.

I am not certain that public consultations are going to answer those questions.

Now, I'll tell you this. I did not appreciate coming into my office this morning and finding hundreds of e-mails asking us to do public consultations and a travelling show before we do anything else. It's like when we did one of the other very controversial issues in the justice committee; you come in and 300 people e-mail you to say how important this is and how they want you to get into it. I'm not certain this is the place for the kinds of answers we want before we decide what we're going to do with this missile defence system.

I think we have talked in the past about round-table discussions here in Ottawa, where we bring in people who can answer the questions. I'm not sure we could support an amendment like this, tying anyone's hands, until.... How many miles are logged? How many meetings are held? It seems like it's more something on a political agenda than an effort to really get to the bottom of the questions we want answered.

• (1555)

The Chair: Merci, Monsieur Sorenson.

I just want to point out to Madame Lalonde and Ms. McDonough that it's my understanding also that when there is a vote in the House of Commons, it won't really be on a memorandum of understanding with the United States. I think it will really be to launch some negotiations to see where they're going to go after. We don't even know what the format of the vote is going to be or what we're going to vote on. We don't even know that for the moment.

Mr. McTeague.

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.): I appreciate what Ms. McDonough has said, but I certainly wouldn't want to have the committee assume that it, an arm or branch of the House of Commons, could somehow set a deadline that would preempt the House of Commons as to what the House of Commons would determine as far as its agenda and its timetable are concerned.

In the extreme, I'm sure there would be people on the other side of this issue who could perhaps raise this as a point of privilege, to say we have a committee that is really a function of the House of Commons now determining when we cannot proceed with a vote. I think it's entirely up to the House leader and the House of Commons itself.

Perhaps, Ms. McDonough, you could consult your House leader on this, because I know other House leaders would not want to see this used as a precedent. I've never seen the House of Commons hog-tied by a decision of a committee.

That does not prevent us from beginning and engaging in the process, whether it's through the estimates or bringing in experts and others who can bring us up to speed, but I think we should allow the House of Commons as much freedom as it needs to make those decisions. We know full well the consultations will be virtually impossible, given the nature and the makeup of the minority government in this Parliament. We're not going to be able to get out on the road, and that means only a certain number of people will be able to come here to Ottawa to make presentations. I'm very fearful that Canadians' voices on either side of this issue may not have proper access to this place.

We don't have to deal with Madame Lalonde's comments, because I think they would suggest we have a five- or ten-year basic review of foreign policy before we come to a decision. I think the matter is far more important. As Mr. Sorenson has pointed out, it was an issue in the campaign. Madame Lalonde and Madame McDonough have pointed this out before.

My attitude is yes, let's have the experts and witnesses here, but I don't think your motion is very helpful, Ms. McDonough, and I won't be supporting it.

The Chair: Now we'll have very short comments. Madam McDonough, give a very short one because we want to keep going. We'll vote on your amendment.

•(1600)

Ms. Alexa McDonough: I just want to say in response to the remarks made by the parliamentary secretary that this is not designed to overstep the committee's boundaries. We as a committee have a responsibility to make recommendations to Parliament. We do that on many occasions, and we do that in many instances when it's perfectly clear the government makes government policy. But I think it's entirely in order for us to consider the wisdom of making our views known. We think Canadians do need to be heard, and we think it's consistent with two previous decisions made by this committee, which were that we would have such hearings on missile defence and that the urgency to hold such hearings was greater today than it has ever been. So it's entirely within the purview of this committee to make such recommendations to Parliament. Whether Parliament accepts our recommendations or not remains, of course, within the control of Parliament.

I would urge members to support this in order for our work to actually be of some value in influencing the direction of international affairs and Canada's role in them.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Ms. Lalonde, go ahead please.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: I do not have with me the amendment moved by the Conservatives which was passed in the House and which refers to public information.

Mr. McTeague seems to imply that the shield would come under the purview of National Defence. I want to strongly emphasize that, even if it is obvious that we have to review items related to defence,

as long as the decision hasn't been taken, this matter comes under the purview of Foreign Affairs.

Of course, defence is involved in this matter, however security and the impact on the international policy of Canada are also involved. This has always been our understanding of the situation. When NAFTA was being reviewed, evidence was given here on the missile defence shield. I contend that this matter affects first and foremost Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Chair, we all know that this is a very serious matter. You have said that you have no idea what would be the motion should the government ask us to proceed with a quick vote. As far as we are concerned, it is our responsibility to point out the close links between the missile defence shield and foreign policy.

It seems to me that things have changed. Mr. McTeague has no recollection that a similar request had been made. Although I think that we must consult people to allow them to express their opinion—it seems to me that we had already dealt with this in the committee—I think that Ms. McDonough's amendment is too lengthy. I would like to see changes made to it. If we have to request a break, I shall do so.

The Chair: I simply want to say to you, Ms. Lalonde, that the committee, in the last resolution it passed, stated we wanted the review to emphasize the implications of the missile defence.

The committee agrees that meetings be held in order to discuss this matter. The purpose of Ms. McDonough's amendment, which I accept and on which Parliament and members of the committee will be requested to vote, is to ask the government not to sign any agreement, treaty or protocol which would formally commit the government to participate in the missile defence plan.

I cannot tell you if this is a motion concerning negotiations. You are entitled to propose an amendment. If members of the committee are ready to vote on this proposal, I too am ready to do so.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: I am not certain I can support this amendment. I understand the intent to have public consultation, but I think it is imperative that we sit here at committee and understand what missile defence is before we go running across the country, and that we—

•(1605)

Ms. Alexa McDonough: It's in the amendment.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: But it's not, because that could then basically postpone any debate in Parliament until we're done, and that may be next summer. I know how public consultations can be set up.

I think it's important that we talk about what missile defence is—the feasibility of the program, the risk, the trade implications on both sides, all those things—and then have our public consultation. But this amendment basically says the government isn't going to do anything until we've had this cross-country tour, and that would almost mean we would have to start that next to immediately, which would then mean we wouldn't have the opportunity to bring people in here to respond to some of the big concerns we have.

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. Paquette, do you have a comment?

Mr. Pierre Paquette: First, I would like the clerk to read again the proposal. I might have a sub-amendment to offer.

The Chair: I am going to read it to you again: that the committee urges the government of Canada not to sign any memorandum of understanding that entrenches Canada's formal participation in the United States ballistic missile defence plan until cross-country public hearings on the matter are concluded and a report with recommendations is presented by the committee to the House.

[English]

Hon. Dan McTeague: Chair, I think the words are very clear in the motion that was presented here: a preparatory study of foreign policy issues with particular emphasis on the implications of missile defence. And further on it says "that a work plan be prepared for public hearings to be organized for the period leading to the December adjournment of the House".

It would appear we're trying to reinvent the wheel. I think the motion is acceptable and it covers exactly what we want to accomplish, number one being that we bring ourselves up to speed on this. You can't have public consultations on a matter the public doesn't even understand yet. So let's get on with it.

The Chair: I have Monsieur Paquette.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Ms. McDonough's amendment asks on the one hand that the committee urge the government not to make any commitment before the tabling of its report so that the question concerning the missile defence shield be asked in the more general context of foreign policy. On the other hand, the amendment suggests a work plan.

I agree with what one of our Liberal colleagues was saying earlier. The initial proposal states that a work plan must be first presented; then the processes can be discussed. This is why personally I see a distinction between the two. I move a subamendment in order to keep only the part where we emphasize that the committee urges—I don't have the exact wording before me—the government of Canada not to sign any memorandum of understanding nor treaty that would entrench Canada's formal participation in the United States ballistic missile defence plan until a report with recommendations is presented to the House.

With regard to the work plan, it is proposed "that a work plan be prepared for public hearings to be organized for the period leading to the December adjournment of the House".

There will be discussion on that in due time. I suggest that in Ms. McDonough's amendment, we delete anything having to do with the public hearings since this is already mentioned in the proposal before us.

The Chair: I understand you completely, Mr. Paquette. We can always delete a few words or a few lines, however since this is Ms. McDonough's motion, it is up to her to accept or refuse what you are suggesting. However, we can vote on the sub-amendment, then on the amendment and finally on the main motion.

Ms. McDonough.

[English]

Ms. Alexa McDonough: What I would need before I could see it as a friendly amendment is to understand exactly what the subamendment is. I'm not opposed to it if it is in fact a friendly amendment.

But I'm very concerned that what is getting lost, if I've understood, is that there is the possibility that we come up with a work plan, that we plan for public hearings—let's just say for purposes of discussion, and I'm not proposing a timetable, because we need the work plan—for the last three weeks before the House goes down in December, and that somewhere about the second or third week in November the government comes in and holds a vote that commits us to participation in national missile defence.

One of two things will happen. First, we'll make fools of ourselves and go out doing a consultation with Canadians on missile defence after a vote has already been taken to commit us to a course of action, to participate or not. Or second, Liberal members of this committee and whoever else supports what is, in my view, a mistaken plan here will ask what the point is of having the public hearings now that we've already signed on and will say we should cancel them.

I think we need to recognize that Parliament is not the centre of the universe, that Canadians expect and demand to be consulted on this incredibly important decision, and that they expect to be consulted before the vote takes place, not after the vote takes place. Therefore, it's a reasonable amendment to say we should recommend that to the government.

Now, maybe government members will say don't be silly; the government wouldn't do that. Well, if it's so obvious the government wouldn't do that, then look at this as what's called a precautionary measure, to make sure the recommendation has been forwarded. And hopefully the government will take it seriously.

●(1610)

The Chair: Mr. MacAulay.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): I just have one small statement. I find it hard to understand why we would go on a cross-country tour to find out from the public something we don't know ourselves, namely the details. We're going to have public consultations—that's what you're asking for—across the country, and we're asking people across the country to discuss with us something we're not fully informed about ourselves. To me, it doesn't make a whole lot of sense.

The Chair: Ms. McDonough, I just want to answer your first question on what the subamendment from Mr. Paquette was. In your amendment, just after it says "Ballistic Missile Defence plan until", he wants to delete "cross country public hearings on the matter are concluded and". That's what he wants to delete. What will remain is just "participation in the U.S. Ballistic Missile Defence plan until a report with recommendations is presented to the House". That was his subamendment. He wants to delete a little section.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette: I should like to add something. The initial motion points out that a work plan will be prepared. Thus, we might be able to discuss the way to proceed, then the round tables with experts. Then, we could also agree to visit a few cities. There are two ideas in Ms. McDonough's amendment, which creates...

[*English*]

The Chair: Now, Ms. McDonough, do you understand his subamendment?

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Well, I understand what he said, but to me it removes a commitment to cross-country hearings. If that's what it is, of course I wouldn't see it as a friendly amendment.

The Chair: Mr. Sorenson.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: I would almost like to table this until the next meeting. Here are the political implications. I want to check with my House leader on timing. We're in a minority government here. We have a motion now we had never seen before we came to this meeting, one that is going to tie our committee to travelling across the country in the middle of a minority government, and the implications are not the same as they are in a majority government.

I know in our party we had a guy lying there with cancer treatment, and he came back for a vote the other day. I feel very uncomfortable at this time, until I've talked to my House leader, about voting one way or the other here.

I understand that yes, we always want to consult with Canadians and people. That's why next week I'm speaking at a university on this, but I'm hoping to hear from some others before then.

I would almost move that—

The Chair: We cannot move that because—

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: This is future business.

The Chair: —there's already a motion on the floor.

We'll go with the subamendment from Mr. Paquette, unless you move that the question be adjourned.

Madame McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Mr. Chairman, I don't have any difficulty with agreeing, if it's the will of the committee, to delay voting on this until our next meeting if people genuinely want to consult. Let me say, frankly, I'm surprised to hear committee members say we don't know anything about NMD and that we're starting from scratch.

• (1615)

The Chair: We didn't say that, Madame. You said that.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: The argument being made is that we have to begin to do our homework. I'm assuming that every single member of Parliament has been doing their homework on this issue, but if the desire is for further consultation.... I assume that every member went away from the steering committee and consulted their House leaders on this issue late yesterday or early today, because that was a legitimate concern raised. But if others haven't had a chance to do that satisfactorily and want to delay the vote until the next meeting, I have no trouble agreeing to that.

The Chair: Mr. Bevilacqua.

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Vaughan, Lib.): I want to follow up on what Mr. Sorenson said.

The likelihood of this minority government existing for a while is pretty high, so if your concern is that we can't travel because it's a minority government, you should consider that it's not about to change.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: That wasn't my concern. My concern was that to come to a meeting here that is saying we're going to try to force the government to travel across the country in the middle of a minority government.... I would rather talk to my House leader first on the importance of travel in the next—

The Chair: That's why, Mr. Sorenson, Mr. Paquette's subamendment was to delete the travelling all across the country. That was Mr. Paquette's request.

But I understand your point of view. For me, we have everything in the resolution we agreed to and passed yesterday as to what we are going to do. We're going to do some round tables here regarding any implications of missile defence. As far as I'm concerned, I don't want to discuss a motion. Is it a motion that there will just be negotiation and an MOU? It's not going to be a treaty for sure. It's much too soon for that.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: We've already had indication from Ms. McDonough that she is not going to accept that as a friendly amendment.

The Chair: That's it, but we're going to go. She's entitled to do it, and we'll go.

Are you keeping your subamendment, Monsieur Paquette?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Yes.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay, we'll vote on the subamendment.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Can we hear it again?

The Chair: Yes. I'll read it with the subamendment; the subamendment is that we delete something. The resolution will be as follows, as per Monsieur Paquette, if it is accepted: that the Committee urge the Government of Canada not to sign any memorandum of understanding or treaty that entrenches Canada's formal participation in the U.S. Ballistic Missile Defence plan until a report with recommendations is presented to the House.

That's the subamendment; we're deleting "cross country public hearings on the matter are concluded".

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Can I speak on the subamendment, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: We've already discussed the subamendment and now we're taking the vote. We've already discussed it.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: I thought you were asking for further discussion on the subamendment.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Do we need more discussion on this? This idea of a report being written.... We're going to write a report—

Hon. Dan McTeague: It's on the main motion.

The Chair: No, it's just on the subamendment.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Read it one more time.

The Chair: Sure, I'll read it one more time: that the Committee urge the Government of Canada not to sign any memorandum of understanding or treaty that entrenches Canada's formal participation in the U.S. Ballistic Missile Defence plan until a report with recommendations is presented to the House.

(Motion negated)

The Chair: Now we'll go to the amendment of Madame McDonough.

(Motion negated)

The Chair: We'll come back to what we were talking about before on the item ending "leading to the December adjournment of the House".

Madame Lalonde.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: In the last paragraph, what extends to the adjournment of the House, are not the public hearings but the work plan, is it not?

In the last sentence, it says: "and that a work plan be prepared for public hearings to be organized for the period leading to the December adjournment of the House."

Which means that it is not the public hearings but rather the work plan which could not carry on after that date, is it not? We wanted to keep the idea of holding public hearings.

• (1620)

The Chair: Exactly.

[*English*]

She was just asking, with respect to the public hearings, that the work plan by the researchers and the clerk go till the middle of December, when the House recesses for the Christmas holidays, and after that if we need to go further, we'll go further. It's just that we're not going to ask for a work plan for February, March, and April. We're going to go till December and we'll see after that.

Are we agreed on the main motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Now we're on item 2, the budget.

There are two budgets. The first one concerns the study on disarmament and is for video conferencing. We might also have some witnesses here. I request your acceptance of the budget of \$12,450. You will notice that there are no travelling expenses, and I need to present this to the liaison committee.

The second one is an operational budget request of \$37,500. Most of it, \$36,000, is for witnesses' expenses. We always put in \$1,200 per witness, and there's no video conferencing or external meetings. It's just for round tables here in Ottawa.

Madame Lalonde.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Chair, does the information in our possession indicate that the ambassador did not plan to come here or does it mean simply that it is "just in case"?

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes, the expenses are just in case. If you're looking at the first one concerning disarmament, we have \$9,600 there. It's in case the ambassador comes to Ottawa or we get some other witnesses; it's just to be sure we can cover the expenses. If we don't need it, we won't spend the money.

Are we in agreed on both of these budgets?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: For the last one I'll just show you an extract from a meeting. We had a meeting on April 3, 2004. You have noticed that we have many requests from parliamentary delegations coming here to Ottawa to meet with us, and sometimes we have lunch or we have some expenses. Usually the liaison committee authorizes \$1,200 for us. Now, they accepted this resolution in the 37th Parliament; by unanimous consent it was agreed

That the Committee request the authorization of the Budget Sub-Committee of the Liaison Committee for the Committee to charge, if required, official hospitality costs to the Committee's general Operational Budget (\$5,000) when the costs of such hospitality exceed the amount authorized for this activity (\$1,200).

We don't want to come back before the committee each time to request some amount of money for lunch or things like that, because one needs to understand that there is also a subcommittee and we get a lot of requests.

Madame McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Could I just seek clarification to make sure I'm understanding correctly? There is not now budgeted in what we have before us any travel by the committee.

The Chair: No.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Do I understand, then, that this means the intended interpretation of the motion we have passed here is that there will be no travel whatsoever—

• (1625)

The Chair: Yes.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: —and that the only meaning of "public hearings" is that they be public hearings based in Ottawa—

The Chair: No.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: —or that we don't have a budget because we're waiting for the work plan that will in turn suggest what kind of—

The Chair: That's it. We need to get a work plan first, because I'm not going to go before the liaison committee and say I want to travel. They are going say, where do you want to go, to Vancouver, Halifax, and Calgary? If I say I don't know, they're going to say to me, go and do your job and then come back to see us after. That's it.

Now, I don't say we're not going to travel. I see we don't have any budget regarding—

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Thank you for that clarification. I just wanted to be sure that was what we were voting on.

The Chair: Yes, that's it.

Are we agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Madame Lalonde.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: I have another question concerning item 3. Are we there yet?

[*English*]

The Chair: I think Mr. MacAulay had something about other questions.

Mr. MacAulay, you said you wanted to ask other questions.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Yes. I have a request from the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre; they would just like to have some discussion here. Peacekeeping is so important to this country, and they would like to appear before this committee. My understanding is that we should have some discussion on this or some hearings previous to having the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre's board here. To my way of thinking, they play a very important role in foreign affairs as far as this nation is concerned.

So that's a request I have, that we discuss peacekeeping, the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Paquette, any comments?

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Ms. Lalonde should speak before me.

The Chair: Ms. Lalonde.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: I thought that if we had nothing planned for next week, we should use our time to receive the people from CIDA as well as others involved in the Haiti file. They could give us a progress report. Things are really bad over there.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Sorenson.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: It's frustrating, and I really want to hear what Madame Lalonde has to say. We've had meetings about making sure everything is in two languages, and to have a meeting where I can't even understand what Madame Lalonde is saying.... Do we not have technical people who can fix this thing?

The Chair: I fully agree with you. We all agree.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Did you hear my request? Would it be possible?

The Chair: Yes. We have already agreed to the resolutions, where mention is made of the missile defence, on Haiti and the Sudan. Now, we have to check and see if next week, some ministers are available to appear before our committee. If no minister is available, we can ask the people from CIDA to report on some very specific issues.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Exactly, it would be urgent to do so.

The Chair: Mr. Paquette.

Mr. Pierre Paquette: I should like to know when, in your opinion, the Subcommittee on International Trade, Trade Disputes and Investment will be operational.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Stephen Knowles): Mr. Chair, we are now waiting to receive the list of members. Some caucuses and some parties have given us some names, yours in particular, but other groups or parties haven't yet produced their list. In the coming days, once we are in possession of the list, there will be a meeting.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: The same goes for the Subcommittee on Human Rights and International Development?

The Chair: Yes.

Ms. McDonough.

[*English*]

Ms. Alexa McDonough: I don't know whether we're going to discuss the proposal brought forward by Mr. MacAulay, but I think it would be a shame for us not to hear from the Pearson Peacekeeping Training Centre, because it's on life support. It's basically had the rug pulled out from under it by this government at a time we're supposedly committed to beefing up our peacekeeping training. The reason we can't train people properly to help in the Sudanese crisis is because the centre has been so weakened that we don't have the ability to do it, so I would very much support the proposals we hear from the Pearson Peacekeeping Training Centre.

The Chair: Mrs. McDonough, there's no doubt in my mind that it's very important to hear from them. I think it's going to be part of the policy review, there's no doubt, and we'll keep the letter on file for this.

Madame Phinney.

Ms. Beth Phinney: I just find that we're now all of a sudden talking about what we're going to do in the next few meetings and whether we should have this group and that group. Do we already have an agenda at all?

The Chair: We do, yes. The first thing we have requested is to hear from the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and CIDA, concerning the mini-summit, and also—

Ms. Beth Phinney: Is this next Wednesday, when we're having the Mexican delegation?

The Chair: We don't know yet, because we've just passed the motion today, but we've already told the minister that he will need to appear. We don't know today if the minister will be ready for this.

● (1630)

Ms. Beth Phinney: But we have an agenda here that says that on Monday, October 25, we're going to meet with them. It will be at our next meeting that we're meeting with the Mexican delegation. Is that sure?

The Chair: Oh, yes. The Mexican delegation is no problem.

Ms. Beth Phinney: So that might be only half a meeting, and you're looking for some suggestions for the other half, or what—

The Chair: No. On Monday that's going to be it, because Mr. Fox, the President of Mexico, is speaking to the House of Commons and we're going to have the delegation here between 3:30 and 5:30. We're going to have the full committee of both because they're coming with five senators and five MPs from Mexico, and we're going to discuss it Monday. That's fixed for next Monday.

Ms. Beth Phinney: So there's nothing for Wednesday. Are we now discussing the possibilities of Wednesday's meeting? I'm not sure how we got to this free-for-all.

The Chair: No, Ms. Phinney. The fact that we discussed next Wednesday...we'll see if one of the ministers can appear. If one of the ministers or the ambassador who is posted right now in Geneva cannot appear, we're going to try to get someone to come and talk to us regarding Haiti or Sudan. We're focusing on what is accepted today, but for the moment I cannot give you an answer on what we're going to do next Wednesday.

Ms. Beth Phinney: Are we going to make an agenda sometime?

The Chair: Yes.

Ms. Beth Phinney: May I suggest we not talk just about Haiti. There are some other islands down there; we have Grenada, which has 85% of its houses with no roofs. They're in pretty serious condition too, and I think we should talk about that as well as about Haiti.

The Chair: Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): If we're discussing putting Haiti on the agenda for some time next week, I'd like to point out that my understanding is that the ambassador to Haiti has returned to Ottawa in the last two to three months and the new ambassador has not been appointed yet. But if the ambassador who was there two months ago is available now in Ottawa for next week, it would be invaluable for him to provide us with some background information on the situation up to that point.

Ms. Beth Phinney: We need somebody who's been down there since then.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Well, this is the lead-up to it.

The Chair: I must point out we have an ambassador in Haiti right now, Mr. Claude Boucher. I cannot give you the exact date he was named, but I'm sure he's there.

Mr. Peter Goldring: It must have been very recently.

The Chair: But he's there. He was working here in the department with la Francophonie. The former ambassador is no longer there; you're right about that. But we have a new one. I saw him recently with Mr. Pettigrew and Mr. Coderre, and I know he's there. It's Mr. Boucher.

But there's nothing stopping us from having the former ambassador or any other witnesses from the department. He could appear if that's what we want to do next Wednesday. And at the same time, the foreign affairs department is coming. They could also speak, because I have received all your letters, faxes, and everything concerning Grenada and every other country. We can talk about all of them at the same time.

Mr. Peter Goldring: That's along with Grenada, which was mentioned.

The Chair: Yes, along with Grenada; it could be to say what Canada is doing over there.

Mr. Peter Goldring: It would be very helpful for the Canadian high commissioner to Barbados, who is responsible for that island chain, to give us an update on it.

The Chair: Yes, that could be. We'll see what we can do on this, but we're not sure. It depends on who we're going to get next Wednesday, if he can come.

Mr. Sorenson.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: Again, we had a steering committee meeting, and a lot of what we talked about there I see showing up as the main ones we want to deal with. This is the first time I've served on the foreign affairs and international trade committee. I'm not certain about a lot of the topics we've listed here: missile defence, United Nations reform, the humanitarian crises in Sudan and Haiti, and the situation in the Middle East. They all seem to be on the foreign affairs side, and there's not a lot on the international trade side. Is that something only the subcommittee will be dealing with, or can we recognize that we need to perhaps have a little more balance here?

We have a crisis in international trade right now, I know, in the agricultural sector with BSE, hogs, and a lot of other things, and the implications affect us internationally. We have issues being spoken about every day in the national papers about Noranda and Falconbridge and mining and all those things.

Are there ways we can fill in some of these days with more of the trade issues as well?

The Chair: Mr. McTeague.

Hon. Dan McTeague: Mr. Sorenson, it dawned on me that your colleagues on the industry committee have also been very successful in looking at the same issue in terms of the one, Noranda, and the mining industry as well.

It may be helpful for all of us to consult with our own group to find out where our priorities are and where there has been a lead in particular files. I agree with you that we should also be looking at trade, but there are other areas. As an example, which I've just given you, there was the industry committee yesterday.

We're free to do what we want, but again, we're in a position where we would be getting into studies concurrent with what the industry committee is doing. I just want to caution you on that, and perhaps we'll want to talk about that when we come back to meet once again as to the priorities we set that are more trade-oriented.

I don't disagree with what you're saying.

• (1635)

Mr. Kevin Sorenson: We recognize as well that the defence committee is doing missile defence, but that doesn't stop us from doing it. It's mainly a foreign affairs issue.

The Chair: We all agree and I agree too. When we do the review of foreign policy, that will include to a certain extent the trade issue. We cannot do foreign affairs without doing trade to a certain extent.

[Translation]

Ms. Lalonde, would you like to add something?

Ms. Francine Lalonde: It is this particular committee which made a very significant study on NAFTA. [English]

The Chair: And on the World Trade Organization.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: We know that this will certainly be part of the review and that we have some things to say and do in that respect.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll see you next Monday with the parliamentary group from Mexico.

Merci. That's it.

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