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—
Chair

The Honourable Roger Gallaway

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•(0915)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Roger Gallaway (Sarnia—Lambton, Lib.)): We'll quickly come to order.

First, let me say the witnesses are not coming. Last evening at about 5:10 I received a phone call from CN stating that due to the fact that in question period yesterday the Minister of Transport, in response to a question from Mr. Moore, advised that his department is suing CN—and I've brought a copy of it; it's all in French here, but he is suing CN—CN's lawyers then advised the witnesses that because this is a matter now before the courts or a matter of litigation, they ought not to come, and they advised me just shortly after five o'clock last night that they're not coming.

So there are no witnesses, and this is the committee business of the day, to advise you there are no witnesses. We could always ask that they come next Tuesday.

Monsieur Carrier.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ): I'd simply like to make a comment. I was surprised to hear that the Minister wanted to take legal action against CN, when he in fact stated to this very committee that he would prefer to take a different course of action and reach a settlement, because taking legal action would be a protracted process. Suddenly, he's changed his mind.

[English]

Mr. Jim Gouk (British Columbia Southern Interior, CPC): He will when it's election time. He has to be seen to be Minister of Transport.

[Translation]

The Chair: He had a change of heart.

Mr. Robert Carrier: So it would seem.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Hubbard, did you have something to say?

Hon. Charles Hubbard (Miramichi, Lib.): I would serve notice of motion that on Tuesday next I'll be bringing a motion before the committee to have CN come at our earliest convenience.

The Chair: We thank you for that.

Is there any other business?

Mr. Gouk.

Mr. Jim Gouk: This is undoubtedly our last meeting of this particular committee, so I would be prepared to move that we have tonight a working dinner to wrap up all the things that we think we've accomplished, and the goals that we want to leave for the future committee to consider, and that we instruct the clerk to make suitable arrangements for a location for us to get together at. If anyone chooses to imbibe in an alcoholic beverage at this, they pay it themselves.

The Chair: Okay. I don't think I need—

Mr. Raymond Bonin (Nickel Belt, Lib.): And on that we don't need a quorum.

The Chair: All right, are we in agreement with that?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Raymond Bonin: We do it on consensus.

The Chair: That being the case—

Mr. Jim Gouk: My question was just to get some indication of who might be able to attend. We need numbers for the clerk.

The Chair: At 6:30?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Unfortunately, I won't be able to attend. I have a conference call and then I'll be flying out.

The Chair: What time will your conference call end?

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: From 7 o'clock until about 8:15.

The Chair: Ray, you're not here?

Mr. Raymond Bonin: No, I'm leaving.

The Chair: No, you're gone too.

[Translation]

Will you be here, Mr. Carrier?

Mr. Robert Carrier: Yes.

[English]

Mr. Jim Gouk: Mr. Chairman, you've got to come with us once. Party. We hear you're a party animal.

The Chair: There are some other members we want to check with.

Mr. Raymond Bonin: With the steering committee.

The Chair: With the steering committee, okay.

Are there any other matters on this?

[Translation]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Is the Minister footing the bill?

The Chair: No, he is not.

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: A fine bottle of wine from Minister Lapierre.

The Chair: We've locked the door.

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Surely he can suggest a few good wines.

[English]

The Chair: Oh, look at that. Good.

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Okay, time's up.

The Chair: Here are some potential attendees.

Mr. Bonin.

Mr. Raymond Bonin: Were you going to adjourn?

The Chair: Yes, we're going to adjourn. This meeting is about to adjourn.

Mr. Dave Batters (Palliser, CPC): Let's just chat a little bit, Mr. Chair, before we adjourn.

The Chair: What would you like to say?

Mr. Dave Batters: I would just like to say it's been a distinct pleasure serving on this committee with all of you. I apologize for my tardiness. It's been very good working with all you—Charlie, just lately. This has been a great committee and a lot of fun, and I think we've done some important work here. And there's Peter, as well, who newly joined this committee.

Madame St-Hilaire, it's been a distinct pleasure, and Robert.

Anyway, everyone, I'd just like to say it's been a personal pleasure to serve on this committee. I look forward to serving with you all in the next Parliament.

The Chair: Wonderful.

Mr. Gouk.

● (0920)

Mr. Jim Gouk: I would like to add the same sentiments. Over the course of four terms I've served on a number of committees, and I say without hesitation that this is by far the best, in terms of being able to put partisanship aside most of the time. Obviously, we can't all the time, especially when we have people like Jimmy K. here. But in between those times it's been good. There's been a good exchange of ideas; there's been a willingness to accept ideas back from others. But I do not look forward to seeing you all back here, because I will not be here; however, I may be back at that end. I may be back at that end from time to time, so I look forward to cordial treatment when I get there.

The Chair: There would be.

Mr. Bonin.

Mr. Raymond Bonin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to speak specifically of Mr. Gouk. I've had the pleasure of chairing this committee, as well as being a member, and I can say—

and I hope it's on record—that Jim Gouk is a gentleman, and he's a fair player.

It's been a pleasure working with you. We're going to miss you, because, as you say, partisanship sometimes is important, but most of the time it's getting the job done, and because of your attitude and your word—your word is gold. We were able to do a lot of work here, and I really appreciate you.

Mr. Jim Gouk: Thank you, Raymond; I appreciate that.

The Chair: Madame St-Hilaire.

[Translation]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire: Just to follow up on my colleagues' comments, we the members of the Bloc know that we'll be sitting here in the same place and we're proud of that fact.

I want to acknowledge my colleague Jim Gouk who always works diligently and sees things through to the very end. He projects a positive image of politicians, at a time when there are few to be had and we desperately need some.

Thank you and the best of luck. I also want to thank the rest of my colleagues. It's been a pleasure and hopefully, we'll meet here together again.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Scheer.

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): I'll jump in here, if we're all going to do it.

As a rookie MP, this was a good committee for me to be on, because those with lots of experience really helped instruct me and guide me and definitely made me a better member of Parliament. So I thank all of you for that.

I'd like to thank Roger for everything you've done, as chair. I think you've been a great chair. You've been so good, I think we just might elect you our chair when we come back. I had to get that in.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Dave Batters: Mr. Chair, I left out a couple of key people. John and George have done an excellent job on this committee, and your staff, and I'd remiss if I didn't talk about Jim a little bit.

Jim has been a great help to us, as new members of Parliament, in learning our role and learning what this place is about, and what good things can come about at committee, trying to coach us on non-partisanship and moving the business of the country forward. Jim is a fantastic member of Parliament and a great person and a good friend, and he will be missed by the Conservative Party and by all parties in this House.

I look forward to seeing you some day at this committee as a witness, Jim. You will, I'm sure, get some preferential treatment, in terms of when you'll appear before this committee. Keep that on the record.

The Chair: Are you saying he would never be subpoenaed?

Mr. Dave Batters: I could never imagine under any circumstances, with Mr. Gouk's impeccable credentials.

Mr. Raymond Bonin: His word is gold, so he'd come at five o'clock the night before.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Jim, I just have to say that I'm very sad that we only had the opportunity to sit together on this committee for a short time. I was on the Hill for many years before being elected, so I knew of you long before you'd met me. You turned out to be a really nice guy.

The Chair: Anyone else?

Hon. Charles Hubbard: I was waiting for the end because I'm the newest.

The Chair: Go ahead, Charles. You both arrived at about the same time.

Mr. Jim Gouk: That's the old case of where the old becomes the new.

Hon. Charles Hubbard: First of all, on behalf of the minister I'd like to thank all members of the committee for their work during the present Parliament. There are a great number of issues affecting the country, and we know that regardless of what others say, transportation is probably one of the most important factors in the health of our economy. If we don't have good modes of transportation, our farmers in the west or the people in the east or the new gateways we are developing and promoting won't be very successful for the economy of the country.

We know that in Ontario we have a tremendous problem in trying to get transportation back and forth across central Canada and the central United States. Of course, that's an issue I think your committee has dealt with.

As for Jim Gouk, I have to say, Mr. Chair, that if there's anything good or anything wrong with transportation, probably Jim has been able, like me, to participate in many of those changes that occurred between 1994 and the year 2000. I sat with Jim on the committee, and others here, during that period of time.

John Christopher, you know, is the expert in transportation. Whatever I know, probably, would only be a bit of pepper on his potatoes. John, of course, has been with this committee for a long, long time. Committees, for as long as I've been a member and Ray has been a member and Jim has been a member, have appreciated, John, the work you have done and the advice you've given.

Jim, I think there were times—in fact, just last week—when I had to take issue with something you did, I know. But after having served with you so many years, it's probably the only time we have had a few words together.

On behalf of the minister, I want to thank all of you. The challenges are still out there, and they're still great.

We talk about the bridge at Quebec, which the Bloc and the people of Quebec are concerned about. I think members of the committee recognize the significance of that great bridge across the St. Lawrence and the history behind it. I'm not an engineer—I don't know if there are any engineers here—but when you look at the tragedies of that bridge and what the engineering society of Canada said about the bridge during those tragedies, we have some sense of

the important significance of it historically. I know we're not into that issue today with CN. I hope it is resolved.

In any case, there are many issues, and elections may come up in another short time. I wish all of you every success. Like everybody else, I'll be out facing the storms and the people who want to support me—maybe a few who won't, Ray, too.

Anyway, thanks for all your work, and good luck in the election ahead.

• (0925)

The Chair: Thank you to everyone.

Mr. Carrier.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Carrier: To those among you who won't be here this evening, I'd like to thank you for the experience of working with you in committee. It was a first for me. I've learned a great deal over this past year. With the experience I've gained, I'll be much more effective when the next Parliament convenes. I'd also like to commend the work of our analyst, Mr. Christopher, as well as the efforts of our clerk who has worked very diligently on the committee's behalf.

My engineering background and my status as a new MP led me to the Transport Committee. Of all committees, it was the one that interested me the most. I hope to contribute significantly to the committee in the coming years, as I will be standing for re-election. We expect to see our party even better represented. I salute all those who will not be on hand this evening and I hope to see you when the next Parliament convenes.

[*English*]

The Chair: I don't know what he's talking about—the next legislature.

It's been fun. I think we've all gotten along, and that's the important thing. A lot of committees in this Parliament have been embroiled in what I would call procedural wars that have driven a lot of people to stay away. I think it brings a lot of cynicism upon the system itself. We haven't had that, and that's really important.

Committees are about having fun. I remember when I first arrived here I was on the justice committee. We had, shall we say, a very senior parliamentarian, Warren Allmand, as the chair. What I learned from that was that when you travel you have to party. It's important, because it's a time of camaraderie, and I think we've had that here. That's the best you can hope for here, and I think we achieved that.

Until this evening, thank you very much to everyone. Thanks to Georges and John. I call them Parliament Hill's most dangerous clerk and researcher. Thanks to all. I look forward to seeing those who can attend this evening at 6:30.

The committee is adjourned.

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