



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

FAAE • NUMBER 055 • 1st SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, May 10, 2007

—
Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

Thursday, May 10, 2007

• (0950)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): Order.

This is meeting number 55. We are going to move into committee business.

At the end of the last day we were discussing a motion that was brought forward by Mr. Patry. Has this been amended?

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): No.

The Chair: The motion reads:

That pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development asks that the Department of National Defence provide a fulsome monthly table of the number of prisoners captured during our mission to date, how many have been handed over to Afghan authorities, and any records, if available, of their present status. This reporting is to coincide with the appearance of the Canadian officials and diplomats who wrote the report entitled *Afghanistan 2006: Good Governance, Democratic Development and Human Rights* before the Standing Committee.

When we left off the last day, does our clerk know who was speaking?

The Clerk of the Committee (Mrs. Angela Crandall): I think you were at Mr. Wilfert. No? Mr. Dosanjh.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): Do you mean that this reporting “commences” with the appearance of the Canadian officials?

Mr. Bernard Patry: Yes, to coincide with....

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: No, “commences”, because if it coincides, that means whenever they appear next, and the following time, only then the report is made.... Are you asking for a monthly report?

Mr. Bernard Patry: A monthly report till now.... It's very diplomatic. We're just asking for a number; we're not asking for the name. We just want to see what the people are doing and that's it.

Yes, “coincide”.

The Chair: Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): I just want to ask the committee how our position was stated last time. Has the government's position been recorded?

The Clerk: Nothing is recorded until the motion is voted on, actually. It's moved, debated, and—

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: As part of the debate, I had stated for—

The Clerk: Yes, it's in the transcript.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: So I'm going to just repeat very quickly that due to the operational requirements, taking into account the Access

to Information Act, which states that information may be exempted from release, as it could prove injurious to the conduct of Canada's international affairs.... The release of this information would be very beneficial to the enemy for information, for operations, and for this reason we cannot support this motion. That's the government's position, and it won't change, so I suggest we ask the question and vote on it.

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Ask the question and vote on it.

The Chair: All right. We've had a call for the question on this motion.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Can we have a break now and have coffee?

The Chair: No, listen, we're in committee business here, and I want to deal with one of those things that the chair never wants to deal with.

Mr. Bernard Patry: It's the draft report of the subcommittee.

The Chair: Yes, that's exactly what I want to deal with, and I want to deal with it in public.

Is this the China...?

The Clerk: No, this is the report from the subcommittee on what we suggested...the steering committee report.

The Chair: Okay, so we'll go back to something else, then.

Perhaps you have your steering committee report there. Your steering committee met on Tuesday afternoon and we came forward with these recommendations and this report:

That the Committee refer the Third Report to the Subcommittee on International Human Rights concerning the issue of “comfort women” back to the Subcommittee for further study.

Are we in favour of this? The reason for this is they just did not have the witnesses, so we aren't about to deal with it. We'll send it back to the committee. Is there consensus on that?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: The second one is that the committee invite the Auditor General to appear before the committee.... This is in regard to her report. It probably will not be until the fall, but we'll leave that to the clerk. And this is with the DFAIT officials. Are you agreed?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Chair, if I understand correctly, what we had asked was the other way around. We had asked for the DFAIT officials to come and tell us what steps they had taken to meet the Auditor General's report. That was the—

Mr. Bernard Patry: That's what is written: "to apprise the Committee of any action that has been taken..."

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: So why are you calling the Auditor General?

The Chair: In regard to the Auditor General's new report.

Mr. Bernard Patry: That's fine. I agree.

The Chair: All right. So do we have consensus on that?

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

The Chair: The third one is that the committee invite Carlos Zorrilla to appear before the committee at an informal meeting on May 15, 2007, from 11:00 to 11:30. This is an informal meeting. He is a... I don't want to tell you what he is.

A voice: Environment, from Ecuador.

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

The Chair: The fourth one:

That the committee refer a request for a meeting from Rights and Democracy with Ms. Suciwati and Mr. Hamid, Indonesian human rights defenders, on May 29, 2007, to the Subcommittee on International Human Rights.

We're recommending that they go to the subcommittee. It's human rights, so they can deal with it.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Fifth:

That the committee invite Ernie Regehr and the Honourable Doug Roche to appear before the committee on the issue of disarmament on the same date as the appearance of Paul Meyer, Canada's Ambassador for Disarmament.

Now, we have a little bit more information on that today to share with the committee—don't we, Angela?

The Clerk: Yes. The ambassador has said that he is able to come before the committee on May 31.

The Chair: That timing works out perfectly.

So are we clear there?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Then the sixth one:

That the committee postpone its study of the report by the Subcommittee on International Human Rights on human rights in China until May 31, 2007.

(Motion agreed to)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Do we have time for both?

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ): Do we have a report on that; on human rights in China?

[*English*]

The Chair: Yes.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: I've never seen it.

[*English*]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Now we can have coffee.

The Chair: No, we can't have coffee.

This is the part of committee business, unfortunately, that a chair does not like doing, but again, here is the problem: We have postponed a committee report on China to the 31st, and now it has been leaked, or parts of it have been leaked. It's quoted in *The Globe and Mail* today. They quote one member from the subcommittee.

Again, as I look around this table, most of you have a great deal of parliamentary experience, and you know that when reporters phone you on a report that has not been tabled we have no comment. We don't talk about the recommendations. We don't talk about the direction in which this report is going. We don't talk about what the government's response may be to this report. We don't talk about anything, because it's still not public.

Perhaps I'm not speaking to the group that I should be. Maybe I should be speaking to the subcommittee. But it is not right; it is not ethically right to start leaking these reports. I know people love to talk to reporters and they like to see their name in the paper, but in all fairness, until every individual of the committee has the opportunity to respond to this report, I would ask that you not speak to reporters. All right? So that's on the record.

Mr. Wilfert, then Mr. Goldring.

● (0955)

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.): I would concur, Mr. Chairman, that it's an embargoed report, it's confidential, and there should be no discussion whatsoever. Beyond that, I think we need to be very clear that, at any time, this obviously causes problems for all of us. It has already caused problems, because certain people now want to know more since it's out there.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Goldring, and then we will go to our second hour.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): If it can be determined who... The report really isn't that clear. It mentions one person, and if that one person wants to acknowledge it, that's fine, but the report also says "MPs", plural. If it was plural, then it was more than one.

At what point do you carry this forward? You have rules. You have breach of parliamentary privilege. You have things set in place. There's a reason to have the confidentiality, and this goes to the heart of the other reports we might be asking for, and information on prisoners and other things. If we intend to try to keep confidence in a committee and we don't have the rules and we don't reinforce the rules, then we have nothing.

Is this something that should be brought up as a point of parliamentary privilege to determine?

The Chair: That's a good question.

I guess why I'm trying to chastise each one of us is so that, hopefully, each party will take the message back to their people.

We had a case in subcommittee of an in camera meeting where there was a press release given on the in camera meeting.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Well, clearly, this one person mentioned should be questioned very directly—clearly. But the intimation of plural being more means that there should be more.

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Patry, a final word.

Mr. Bernard Patry: I just want to go back to Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Goldring, when you talk about MPs, with an “s”, it’s the title, and a title is not the text from the person. This is what that person could have said: MPs. That’s why they say MPs with an “s”.

Now, I’ve been on this committee for the past 14 years, and it has never occurred. All the members of this committee, the main

committee of foreign affairs, are great about this. There was no leaking. I trust all my members. Nobody from our committee has done these things.

The Chair: And that’s why I said that hopefully we can take it back to other people.

That report has been around for some time. It’s been with our staffers. It’s been with the subcommittee. Each one of us makes sure that we keep the integrity of this thing going.

We will suspend for one minute, and then we will come back in camera.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

**Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:
Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante :
<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.