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Chair

Mr. Rick Casson

Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan

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• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC)): We'll call the meeting to order. This is a meeting of the Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan. This is our 13th meeting.

Today we're dealing with committee business, and it's a continuation of last week's meeting.

Yes, sir?

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): I have a point of order. Committee business is normally discussed in camera. I propose that we move the meeting in camera.

The Chair: Okay. We have a motion to move in camera.

All those in favour please signify.

All opposed please signify.

The vote is tied.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: I thought this was going to be an easier meeting than the last one, which started off well.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair.

I want to refer to the fact that when we were last discussing the motion that is in front of us, we were actually in public. I'm not sure that it would make sense, for continuity purposes, to go from being in public discussing the motion to being in camera. One thing that was mentioned at the last meeting—I certainly mentioned it—is that it is important for us to be doing our business in public. I don't see any reason why something such as a motion we're discussing on committee business would go in camera. In fact, I'm not sure of the rationale for it.

In terms of continuity and making sure we are following the continuity from last meeting, and since I don't know of any rule that says we are to go in camera when discussing committee business, I suggest we stay in public.

The Chair: We've had the vote, so—

Mr. Paul Dewar: We have a vote. Maybe we could have the vote over, because I see that—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Paul Dewar: To the chair, we were public when we were discussing committee business last meeting, so I don't see the rationale or the precedent for this.

The Chair: Well, it has fallen in my lap. We had a vote, and it was tied, and I have to break the tie. It was in your absence.

An hon. member: [Inaudible—Editor]

The Chair: Well, I asked your folks, and they were fine to go ahead.

It puts me in an awkward position.

Mr. Paul Dewar: If we have a motion to have the vote again, you won't be in that awkward position, Chair.

Could I pose the motion to vote again?

The Chair: No. We've already had the motion.

Following tradition, Mr. Dewar, given the fact that we have always dealt with committee business in camera and at that last meeting we made, I think, an exception to that, I am going to follow what is traditionally done. I'm going to vote in support of the motion to go in camera.

Mr. Paul Dewar: On a point of order, Chair, what tradition are we talking about?

The Chair: This committee has always dealt with future committee business in camera.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I'd like some reference to that at some point, because I'm not aware of that.

• (1540)

The Chair: We've dealt with that.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I'm going to challenge you on your decision, Chair.

I'm challenging the fact that you're saying there is a precedent for going in camera. There's no writing here that says that. You're just talking about interpretation of how business is conducted. We could have had a vote easily go the other way; it was simply that the numbers weren't present. Just to say that normally we do it this way and therefore I'm voting this way doesn't...

There's no rule written here, and I'm challenging that premise. You're saying that's how we normally do things, and I'm challenging on the basis of asking, based on what?

The Chair: In my memory, that's how it has been at this committee and others.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Well, my memory is that at the last meeting we were in public and were discussing a motion that was committee business, and we all agreed to that.

The Chair: That was done on a motion.

Mr. Paul Dewar: If I'm challenging the Chair, it's not debatable. Isn't that right?

Mr. Laurie Hawn: The vote has been taken.

The Chair: Yes, it has.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I can challenge the decision of the chair.

The Chair: You have challenged my decision to vote no.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Let's move on. I just don't see the rationale there. I've made my point.

The Chair: Well, I thought I made clear what I was doing.

Okay, we will suspend while we move in camera.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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