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Chair

Mr. Gary Schellenberger

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•(1110)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC)): Yes, Mr. Rodriguez.

[Translation]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): I would like to make a motion. The bill will automatically be sent back to the House this week. It is an important bill, and we have spent a lot of time on it. I would just like to move: “That the committee resume its work and proceed to clause-by-clause study without debate”.

[English]

The Chair: I haven't even opened the meeting yet and we've already had a motion.

Okay, Mr. Del Mastro.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC): On a point of order, Mr. Chair, that motion would not be in order, of course. Members on this side are entitled to debate the measures contained in this bill. Mr. Rodriguez would like to skip the process, but unfortunately that's...

The Chair: I'm told the motion is in order.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: As you'll recall, I had a motion on the floor when the last committee ended.

The Chair: You had a motion...?

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: We're debating an amendment right now.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: I did have a subamendment to that amendment when the committee last broke. To table a motion over top of the debate on the subamendment is, in my view, inappropriate.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Winnipeg South, CPC): Could you repeat your motion, Pablo?

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: The committee ended, so I don't think—

The Chair: The subamendment was not in order, Mr. Del Mastro. That particular subamendment was not deemed....

With regard to Mr. Rodriguez's motion....

[Translation]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: I am going to repeat what I said earlier. Given the importance of this bill, which is going to be automatically sent back to the House, and given that the only time we have left is the next two hours, I am making a motion that we move directly to clause-by-clause study.

[English]

The Chair: We are debating clause-by-clause. We're on Liberal amendment 1. So I think the motion is irrelevant.

[Translation]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: What?

[English]

The Chair: I would think that the motion—

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: It's an excellent motion.

The Chair: But isn't that what we're doing now? We're doing clause-by-clause.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: No, but without debate.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: He wants to end debate.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Well, we've been debating for like....

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: You just want a vote on the bill, clause by clause.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Why not? If we decide that's what we want, that's what we decide as a committee.

The Chair: The motion has been—

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: You want to vote on clauses and amendments without debate.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Yes.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Can't do it.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Why not?

The Chair: The motion has been made by Mr. Rodriguez that we go directly to clause-by-clause.

All in favour?

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, can I have some clarification on what the motion is? Are you acknowledging that a motion is in order that proposes to go to clause-by-clause without debate? Is that what you're proposing—no debate to any amendments, no debate to any clauses?

The Chair: That's what....

An hon. member: It's been done in other committees.

The Chair: I'm dealing with Mr. Del Mastro first, and we can—

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: No, that's okay. Call the question.

The Chair: Madam Lavallée.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): I would like to move an amendment to Mr. Rodriguez's motion. It would add: "[...] and finish passing the bill before the end of the session".

[*English*]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: No debate; that's it.

Ms. Carole Lavallée: No debate? No debate.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: I'd like to debate the motion, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Del Mastro.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I appreciate the motion brought forward by my colleague. You'll recall that in the last meeting I brought forward a subamendment. I was asked to go away and bring it back in written form, which I did in good faith. But Mr. Rodriguez's motion seeks to shut down commentary on this bill.

The problem with that, as I have articulated very clearly—and Mr. Pacetti knows this well, because he has read the ACE agreement many times—is this bill seeks to do things that no previous bill has done in the past. In fact, it seeks to do things that were never in the ACE agreement at all. It seeks to do things that the witnesses who came forward.... We heard, for example, Mr. Campione remark when he was here that the most important thing was an apology. But we heard in 2005 his same testimony indicating that it was a grand day for Italian Canadians when the ACE agreement was signed, with absolutely no apology.

The Chair: There is one point of order.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: The comments have to be relevant to the motion. You just said we were going to clause-by-clause without debate. Mr. Del Mastro can talk about all the witnesses he wants, but that is not relevant.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: I'm talking about why—

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Do we want, yes or no—

The Chair: One person at a time, please.

We have a point of order over here. You said it has to be relevant.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: It has to be relevant to the debate. If he speaks for half an hour about all the witnesses, I don't see how that's relevant.

The Chair: Mr. Del Mastro, if you can....

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: It's an interesting argument, but I'm making a case for why we need to continue to debate the bill. Mr. Rodriguez's motion would seek to shut debate down.

It's interesting that members across the way seem to think they should push through a bad bill because they think it has good intentions, but it's a bad bill regardless. As I was referencing, when Mr. Campione was here with a panel he specifically indicated, as did the panel, that what was most important was an apology. But in 2005 the first thing they signed off on was an apology. They said it was not needed. The ACE agreement was made on the principle of no apology and no compensation, and he called that a revolutionary

day, I believe. Mr. Calandra was quoting those comments the other day. He called it an "historic day" for the Italian Canadian community.

Now a bill comes forward that will open up the government to unlimited liability, and we have members across the way who think that's great. It's irresponsible to now say we should just shut down debate and move it forward, that we should just shut the committee down, Mr. Chair. If it's just a sham, then report the bill back to the House exactly the way it is in its current form, and let members stand if they want to be that irresponsible on the issue.

As I indicated many times, there's not a member on this committee, nor did we see a witness who was directly impacted by the actions that occurred in 1940, not one.... The apology, if there is to be one, is not theirs to give. Those who were directly affected by those actions should get the apology, and I don't recall them asking for it. I don't recall anybody who was directly impacted coming in and saying, "I don't accept that this country regrets its actions". This country does regret its actions, and that was indicated by former Prime Minister Mulroney.

•(1115)

The Chair: You have to remember there is a motion on the floor right now. We are debating the motion to go to clause-by-clause. Am I correct?

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Mr. Chairman, of course I'm debating that motion. I could absolutely debate the motion.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Why do opposition members want to shut it down? Why do they want to shut it down? Why do they want to stop members from talking? Why do they want us to stop pulling out these facts? Because they're determined to push through a bad bill regardless. Regardless. I don't know if it's ethno-politics; I don't know what we're seeing here, Mr. Chairman, but we have a very bad bill, and I've talked at length about why it's a bad bill.

There are members on both sides of the House, Mr. Chairman, who are of Italian descent, but this bill did not seek to bring people together. It did not. It was made without consultation. We had an agreement coming forward as a government with the CHRP program, and this bill seeks to go right around it. In fact, it seeks to disregard it. So by shutting down debate on the issue and by suggesting that members on this side shouldn't be able to speak and speak freely on it, well, in my view that's an admission that they have an indefensible bill that should not be passed by this House of Commons, that is not reflective of the broader Italian-Canadian community. Frankly, I believe it never should have gotten to this point for a number of reasons, not the least of which is it incurs cost to the Government of Canada and should have required a royal recommendation.

I don't know if other members on this side of the table want to speak as to why they feel they should have the opportunity to continue to debate this bill, but I think this is a low point.

The Chair: Mr. Bruinooge.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I too will speak to this motion by Mr. Pablo Rodriguez in relation to shutting down one of the most important parts of our democratic process, which is of course being able to enter into a discourse that provides analysis as to why a bill should be considered or not.

We often have the opportunity to debate bills before this House, and I know, as a member of this government, it's been a great privilege to be able to debate bills. To be honest, in all my time as a member, and though I haven't sat as long as some of the people across the way, I've never seen a motion like this to shut down debate over a bill. In light of the fact that there is so much contentious opinion in relation to what this bill would in fact bring about, I think it's essential that we do have continuous debate until such time as we're limited by the rules of the House that govern private members' business and send bills back to the House. I think that's legitimate; I think that's our right as parliamentarians.

I know that when I was the parliamentary secretary in Mr. Del Mastro's seat, on a different committee—the aboriginal affairs committee, back in 2007—we had the opportunity to debate quite a lengthy bill in process in relation to an apology towards first nations, Métis people, and some Inuit, for the residential school system. During that process, which was negotiated over a number of years, there was an associated agreement, which of course this bill doesn't have, but of course there was a piece of legislation, an important piece of legislation, that had been consulted on for many years. The point I would of course like to make is that this bill was never shut down at any stage in relation to debate that surrounded the clauses in that bill. We had considerable time to discuss the many elements of that arrangement. Of course, that arrangement was consulted—

• (1120)

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, maybe you can tell us how much time you need per article. We can amend it—say, five minutes—so in good faith we can finish this this morning.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: The bill will be reported back tomorrow, as you know, Mr. Rodriguez, regardless of what occurs today. If my colleague wants to speak, it's his right as a member of the committee.

[Translation]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Chair, I am going to withdraw my motion because the Conservative members are showing bad faith such as we have rarely seen. They are going to engage in systematic obstruction. They will find a way to obstruct either my motion or the bill. I withdraw my motion. If they are going to systematically obstruct the bill, so be it. They are wasting the valuable time of people whom the Canadian people pay to come to work here.

[English]

The Chair: Madam Lavallée.

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: Mr. Chair, I have not said a single word in the last two meetings; I have listened. I have a point of order. For two entire meetings, four hours, I have listened to what the Conservatives have to say. Sadly, I too am forced to conclude that they are wasting our time. They are wasting the time, not only of committee members, who have other things to do, but also of the

people around the table. I do not even dare to think how much each hour costs the taxpayers of Canada and Quebec.

I find this very unfortunate and very sad.

[English]

The Chair: This is debate.

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: Perhaps you think that it is debate, Mr. Chair. Clearly, when I do it, it is debate, but when others do it, it is a point of order.

I am here in good faith. This morning, we had a quorum and we could have required you to start the meeting, Mr. Chair. We did not do that because we are here in good faith and we were hoping that something on the other side was going to change. But it appears that the good faith is on this side of the table only, and I have had it. That is what I wanted to tell you, so there you go!

[English]

The Chair: We're going on a little further. You've had your debate.

Mr. Bruinooge had the floor.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Point of order, please.

The Chair: Point of order, Mr. Del Mastro.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: No, I want to speak to the point of order that Madam Lavallée was just speaking to.

To begin with, I'd like to note for Madam Lavallée that the Conservatives were not the last ones here this morning. I think you know that. So to suggest that we were holding up the meeting.... You know we weren't the last ones here. That's evident.

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: But we had quorum before you arrived. We had quorum.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: You don't have quorum without any Conservatives here. You have to have representatives of all the parties—

The Chair: There was not quorum at the table?

[Translation]

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Richard Dupuis): No.

[English]

The Chair: There was not quorum at the table. All parties have to be represented for there to be quorum. There only needs to be one opposition, but there has to be a government person here.

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: You were here.

An hon. member: He doesn't count. He's the chair.

The Chair: Okay, then, I'm out of order.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: I will explain that I forgot I wasn't neutral—as I'm supposed to be.

The quorum is seven, and there weren't seven here.

• (1125)

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: You didn't have it.

Now, on the issue that has been raised by Mr. Rodriguez and Madam Lavallée, that we are somehow wasting Canadian taxpayers' money by debating this bill, I implore you to consider the liability you're opening Canadian taxpayers up to with this bill. It's billions of dollars potentially, and you accuse me of wasting time. It's outrageous.

I pass my time back to Mr. Bruinooge.

The Chair: Mr. Bruinooge had the floor.

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Mr. Chair, I did have the floor at this time; however, it was in relation to the motion that was raised by Mr. Rodriguez. So in light of that—in light of the fact that that motion has been withdrawn—I will assume that we're going to let you instruct our committee as to where we are.

The Chair: We're debating the Liberal amendment to clause 3, which was that “The Prime Minister shall, in the House of Commons, offer the apology referred to in subsection (1) on behalf of the Government of Canada and the Canadian people.”

Mr. Del Mastro.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I did go away and work on the subamendment that I brought to the committee. It's tabled in good faith. It does change the impact of the bill, such that I think it reflects the feelings and sentiments of Canadians, while at the same time being responsible to our role as lawmakers. The subamendment would read:

That Bill C-302 in clause 3 be amended by changing the original clause to the following:

The Parliament of Canada hereby acknowledges that the treatment received by persons of Italian origin as a result of their designation as “enemy aliens”, their registration and internment, and other infringements during the Second World War was wrong, but carried out in a legal manner at the time. The government should acknowledge that these actions, while legal, were inappropriate by current standards of justice, despite the context that existed. Furthermore, it falls to all parliamentarians and citizens to protect against and ensure that similar actions must never occur again.

In addition, the following paragraph could be included:

The Prime Minister shall in the House of Commons offer his thoughts on the matter, as referred to in subsection 1 on behalf of the Government of Canada and the Canadian people. These remarks should specifically comment on the wrongs committed against the Italian-Canadian community during the Second World War, and express the regret that is felt by all Canadians.

The Chair: I've been instructed that this is not a subamendment, and it will have to wait until we deal with the amendment that's on the floor right now.

Mr. Calandra.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Are we now speaking to the amendment?

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As mentioned the other day, there were a number of reasons that I was unhappy with the bill and the amendment suggested by the member opposite. When you take steps toward an apology, without doing the work to ensure that the apology is what the community is actually looking for, you run into problems. The parliamentary secretary has demonstrated that this legislation does not ensure that the Canadian government is not open to future liability. Nor does it include the tests that such a piece of legislation should contain.

This type of legislation needs somebody to reach out in advance, to speak to people in caucus and on the opposite benches. This is particularly necessary in a minority Parliament, which generally requires more cooperation. This is an emotional piece of legislation—it affects the feelings of 1.4 million Canadians of Italian descent. When you open up what some might perceive as a wound and what others might perceive as an unremarkable piece of wartime policy, you are going to have a problem. Emotions are going to come to the fore, as we've seen on this committee.

There are differences of opinion on whether an apology is required. There are differences of opinion on whether this apology is the same as apologies that were made to other groups such as first nations or Chinese Canadians. We haven't done any research on how this proposed apology would compare with previous ones. In the past there was consultation with a broad sector of the people who were affected. In previous instances there were survivors of the acts that prompted the apology. I think this is an extraordinarily important difference.

We've talked at length about the importance of making an apology to the people who actually deserve to receive it. My family started coming to Canada in the late 1950s. We came after all of this happened, but the parliamentary secretary's family was affected by this. Our opinions and our thoughts, with respect to Canada and its liability for these actions, are a great deal different from the feelings that the parliamentary secretary's family might have. In our view, we came to a country that owes us no apology. The Calandra family came to a country that offered enormous opportunities. It has provided us with an extraordinary lifestyle. It has given me the opportunity to be in Parliament.

• (1130)

So if you ask the people in the Calandra family or the people we associate with, they will have a very different emotional response to a bill that suggests that Canada needs to apologize yet again to the Italian people, because they don't feel that it's required. Many of them know of the apology that was provided by Prime Minister Mulroney, and I've taken the liberty over the last couple of days to express also that of Prime Minister Martin, although it was not as in-depth as Prime Minister Mulroney. Yes, we mentioned in the last meeting—and if we need to, we could go over the Hansard of the last meeting—all of those essential elements in an apology and the points that make an apology worthy of an apology. And as we were able to show, I think from the last meeting, the Mulroney apology did in fact have all those elements, and it happened at a time when there were still survivors left who could accept the apology.

We talked about how prime minister after prime minister after prime minister ignored any type of apology to the Italian people. We talked about how members of Parliament on the opposition side refused to ever acknowledge any need for the Canadian government to apologize to Italian Canadians. And we have another Canadian parliamentarian who's just walked into the room and is another shining example of how far the community has come in such a short time period. What an extraordinary contribution we have made to Canadian society, and more importantly, that Canada allowed us to make this type of a contribution to it.

Canada opened its doors to 1.4 million Italians so that we could have a better life, so that we could provide our kids with a better life, so that we could contribute to Canadian society. The evidence of that is staggering. In towns and communities across Ontario, Italian Canadians are having an extraordinary impact on our province and on our country.

We will continue to do that, but we won't do it on bended knees. Nobody is telling Italian Canadians that somehow they are not equal to other people, that somehow they don't measure up and they aren't good Canadians. It's just the opposite. We've seized and made the best of those opportunities, and we are extraordinarily appreciative of everything that Canada has done to help us so that we could achieve those opportunities.

When the witnesses were here, one of the questions that for me was the most troubling was when I asked Mr. Campione, I believe it was, if he considered me to be a proud Italian if I didn't support this bill. He refused to answer the question. He then said something to the effect that I had to look in my own heart. I asked him yes or no, am I? He refused to answer the question.

One of the things that I've been saying right from the beginning, Mr. Chair, is that this bill is a divisive bill. It will only fracture the community more. I think part of the responsibility of that has to lie with the person who drafted the bill, in not first reaching out to the opposite side of the House to find if there was some common ground that we could somehow come forward with something that would protect Canadian taxpayers and respect the families of the people who were impacted by this, those relatives of people who were interned. Again, I'm under the impression that there are no remaining survivors of that time period.

• (1135)

To hastily draft a bill and put it forward without consulting with members of the government who are of Italian heritage, without consulting with other members of Parliament who had a hand in helping to bring about other historic apologies.... For example, Mr. Bruinooge, as he mentioned earlier, was a key player in helping bring about an apology to Canada's first nations. He seized the opportunity and seized on the experiences to help bring about an apology that was supported by all sides of the House, Mr. Chair.

• (1140)

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Chair, on a point of order, it's one thing to filibuster, which is fine, but to say non-truths I think is extending it too far.

I presented this bill in good faith. I have presented it since I've been elected. I've consulted with all sides. The bill received support from all members and from all parties.

The point of order is that it is up to you to make sure that the member sticks to the facts—the real facts—and doesn't present invented lies.

Mr. Paul Calandra: On the point of order, granted I'm new here, but I don't recall—I did do some research—the member opposite introducing a bill previously. He may have, and I'd love to see a copy of that if he has done that.

I did look back to see if there were any other bills brought forward during the 13 years of the Liberals' four mandates. I couldn't find it. I also looked back as far as 1945, in the forties, when Liberal Prime Minister King interned the Italians. I didn't see an apology from Mr. King. I then went in-depth, Mr. Chair, and looked at as much as I could find with respect to the Louis St. Laurent administration to see if there was any form of apology or any acknowledgement of an apology for wrongdoing. I couldn't find one. You'll recall that Mr. St. Laurent was a Liberal prime minister.

Then, of course, I looked at Pearson to see if there was anything from Mr. Pearson.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: On the point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Paul Calandra: I'm speaking to the point of order.

The Chair: He's speaking to the point of order. As soon as he's finished, Mr. Pacetti, I'll let you speak.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Granted, I'll say this of Pearson: he was in a minority government situation at the time. So perhaps the reason he didn't bring something forward at that time was because he realized that introducing a bill like that at a time of minority government probably wasn't a good thing. So I'll give him the benefit of the doubt.

But I note that the Liberals won a sweeping majority in 1968, I think, with Mr. Trudeau. And I stand to be corrected if the member opposite can show me otherwise, and I'll apologize to him, but I searched—I went to the library, and I searched some more—and I asked some relatives who were big fans at the time and asked if there was anything that Trudeau had done, and they said no, we don't recall. And the library said no, there was nothing there.

I asked then, were there any members of Parliament from that time period who apologized to Italian Canadians or put forward a bill or who reached out, or maybe there was a motion. I couldn't find it, Mr. Chair, I have to tell you.

I then went forward through the entire Trudeau era and couldn't find it. Ironically enough, I didn't find it during the short Clark administration either. The couple of months Mr. Turner was in office, I didn't find anything there.

It wasn't actually until Brian Mulroney came to office that I was able to source anything with respect to acknowledging how important the Italian-Canadian community was to Canada, and how what was done to the Italian-Canadian community was regrettable. And the Prime Minister at the time, as I mentioned earlier—just to continue on the point of order—gave all of the important elements of an apology, as we discussed in the last meeting.

I then went forward, after Prime Minister Mulroney, into the.... We know, and I read it into the record last time, Mr. Trudeau's vehement opposition to any form of an apology.

But I then went forward into the Chrétien era, because Mr. Chrétien was a very successful prime minister. I think the Liberals, with Chrétien and Martin, had four mandates, and three of them were significant majority governments where a bill like this could have been introduced by a private member, by the government, or through a motion. I still could not find anything. And again, if the member opposite.... I know he was elected since 2000.

An hon. member: Since 2004.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Was it 2004?

I've looked, and the Library of Parliament doesn't have any evidence of a previous bill on this on their research site, so I couldn't find that.

In my research recently I did find some information with respect to Prime Minister Martin, who, in the dying days of a failing campaign, tried to reach out and apologize in the media. But I take him at his word. I'm sure he was an honest prime minister, and I respect the office of the prime minister, so clearly if a prime minister apologizes, I'll accept that.

But then I did find an NDP motion in 2007 by Mr. Marston with respect to an Italian apology.

Having said all of that, Mr. Chair, in 2005.... It wasn't in 2005, but it was in the 38th Parliament in this committee here that there was some discussion on an apology to Italian Canadians, and the minister at the time was Raymond Chan. I can only assume that the member is forgetting what I read into the record the other day, and I'm sure we can provide a copy of Hansard so he can reflect on what Minister Chan said at the time, that he was told that any form of an apology would open the door to legal liability on behalf of the government. That's why they did not bring forward any apology to the Italian Canadians at the time. So that happened in the 38th Parliament and that happened at a number of committee meetings of the heritage committee in the 38th Parliament. I think some of the members were here for that, Mr. Chair.

Just finally to his point of order, he mentioned it was supported by all parties. I made no bones about it when it was introduced in the House. I did not support the bill, and I said in my speech that I thought it was a divisive bill. And I recall actually on the evening of debate while I was saying that I felt it was divisive, some of the members opposite reflected, in very colourful language, on what they felt I was because I didn't support the bill, which was a clear example to me of how divisive the bill was at the time, Mr. Chair.

• (1145)

So I think the honourable member might be incorrect in stating that all of the parties support this bill, because clearly we don't.

I'll finish the thoughts on the point of order and then perhaps I can go back to speaking to that clause and some more of the reasons that I think they are so inappropriate. I think perhaps we need to refresh some of the thoughts I was saying at the last meeting, because we seem to have forgotten some of them. The essential element is an apology. I can do that as well, just to give a refresher of why it's so important.

I'll just end up with this. There was an opportunity, Mr. Chair, to delay this bill by 30 days. We asked. A motion was brought forward by the parliamentary secretary to give us 30 more days to study this. It was turned down. I find it extraordinarily disingenuous now that the opposition is saying there are no amendments coming forward, and we need to.... Now they're trying to bring closure on something that's so important to the Italian people, apparently, that we need to bring closure and not listen to any more thoughts.

So I'll end my thoughts on the point of order, and if you deem so, I'll get back to my....

The Chair: Mr. Pacetti had a point of order. You've explained your point. Mr. Pacetti had a point of order, and after that point of order we'll come back to Mr. Calandra.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: I'll be very brief. I just wanted to correct the record, because in the 38th Parliament, in the first reading version of Bill C-368, which I'm not going to bore the committee with, the introduction is exactly the same as this bill. It reads:

An Act to recognize the injustice that was done to persons of Italian origin through their "enemy alien" designation and internment during the Second World War, and to provide for restitution and promote education on Italian-Canadian history

The first reading was on April 21, 2005, and the sponsor of the bill was Mr. Pacetti. So I'm not sure what kind of research the member opposite did. It's not that difficult. All he has to do is call the Library of Parliament if he doesn't know how to look it up on the search engines that the Library of Parliament provides.

I also subsequently retabled the same bill for the 39th Parliament. The first reading was dated June 19, 2007. The bill, again, is Bill C-461, and it reads:

An Act to recognize the injustice that was done to persons of Italian origin through their "enemy alien" designation and internment during the Second World War, and to provide for restitution and promote education on Italian-Canadian history

So I am waiting for the apology in writing from the member opposite.

I also would like to read into the record that the members for the Conservative Party are, I believe.... I'll have to go through a list, but there was Mr. Goldring, Mr. Mark, and there were at least four or five other Conservatives who voted for the bill at second reading. So I think there's another apology awaiting me for that one.

But I would prefer if we can just go directly to the bill and vote on the clause-by-clause rather than trying to set up a score sheet and seeing who's right and who's wrong.

• (1150)

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Calandra.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Mr. Chair, for sure, I'll speak in depth to those.

If the honourable member brought that forward, then I will certainly get back to the Library of Parliament and ask why I couldn't find any of that.

I guess what's striking to me is, again, the Liberal slap in the face to Italians at the time this honourable member was not able to get his party's support to bring forward this bill and to pass it when they were in government. I think that is what's even now more surprising to me, Mr. Chair. I apologize that I was unable to find that.

I've never doubted the honourable member's sincerity and the work that he does on behalf of his constituents. If my research was a bit lacking, I do apologize for that.

I didn't read that aspect of it because the honourable member, as I mentioned earlier, didn't have the courtesy to send forward anything to the opposite side when he introduced this. I can only assume that bill was as poorly written as this bill, and that's why his government at the time could not allow it to go forward. I can't foresee any other reason that the Liberal government would again continue a strong tradition of over 50 to 60 years of slapping people in the face and ignoring what are perceived to be the wrongs.

I don't know if the honourable member has time to explain why his party didn't support that and help in getting it through quickly. I guess we can find time to do that later. Indeed, Mr. Chair, I think that's one of the important things.

I think we can reference back to his earlier attempts when we get off these points of order. We can reference back to his earlier attempts as to why this particular piece of legislation is such a bad piece of legislation. I wonder if some of the elements that make this so bad were present in that piece of legislation as well. But I guess I can get into that when we get off the point of order and get back to discussing that clause.

The Chair: We're off the point of order right now.

We'll go back to Mr. Calandra to carry on.

Mr. Paul Calandra: I'll end it there, because I know that the parliamentary secretary might have some thoughts.

The Chair: Do you have something on the point of order, Mr. Del Mastro?

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: No. I do believe I'm on the list, though.

The Chair: You're on the list and it's your turn to speak.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Thank you very much.

We're debating an amendment that has been brought to clause 3 of the bill. At length I've indicated, and this morning members snickered when I indicated, that this bill opens the government up to untold liability. That is factually correct. I had several legal opinions. One is from the Department of Justice. I have another from the legal services at Citizenship and Immigration, from a lawyer there as well. These are not political positions. These are bureaucratic positions in government that are providing this particular response to me and providing this information to me.

We cited, and I believe my colleague is going to talk a little bit about, the Apology Act that was brought forward in Ontario and several other jurisdictions where, because of that, you can actually say that you're sorry without—

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: On a point of order, Mr. Chair, I'd like to bring forward a motion to adjourn the meeting. I have a number of arguments that I'd like to continue to make until the end of the meeting. I'm not sure they're going to have any sway with the opposition members. As such, I think this motion might get the requisite support to pass. This is a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Mr. Chair, you can't put a motion on a point of order.

The Chair: No, you cannot.

● (1155)

Mr. Rod Bruinooge: Could I jump in?

The Chair: You're right, Mr. Del Mastro.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Mr. Chair, I would like to cite some legal opinions that I have, but if it is the will of the committee, I would table a motion to adjourn the meeting immediately.

The Chair: Okay, it's moved by Mr. Del Mastro.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: It's quite obvious we're not going anywhere. What's the point?

The Chair: All those in favour of adjourning the meeting?

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: The meeting is adjourned.

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