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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

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•(1645)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Good afternoon.

We are very delighted this afternoon to have in the second hour of our meeting our friends from the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia. There is also a delegation from the House of Representatives of Indonesia.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1953, Canada and Indonesia have maintained a very strong and friendly partnership. We continue to work together on many different issues, including human rights, governance, and pluralism. We work together very closely with Indonesia on counter-terrorism as well.

So we're delighted today in our foreign affairs committee to welcome this delegation. We look forward to some comments you may have.

I would hope that today, in the spirit of what we're trying to do here, you would even be willing to perhaps field a couple of questions that we may have about your country and on the different issues I've mentioned, and maybe others.

Welcome.

I'll pass it over to you for any comments you may have.

Dr. Bomer Pasaribu (Head of Delegation, House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia): Thank you, Mr. Sorenson.

I am Dr. Bomer Pasaribu.

First of all, on behalf of the members of the Canada-Indonesia Interparliamentary Friendship Group, I would like to express our sincere gratitude for the warm welcome to our delegation here. On this visit, I am the chairperson of the Interparliamentary Friendship Group of Indonesia from the Golkar Party. My party was the winner of the last elections, in 2004, but in this past election, last month, my party lost, coming in second. The Democratic Party of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono now is the winner. Next July there will be a presidential election. The conclusion of the presidential election will be in September.

The membership of the friendship group in Indonesia comprises ten MPs, but only six have come here to Canada. The House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia has 550 members, ten factions, and eleven commissions. It has three main functions, like your Parliament here; namely, the legislative function, the oversight function, and the budgeting function. Apart from the eleven

commissions, it has supporting bodies, including the Steering Committee, Committee for Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation, the Legislation Council, the Household Committee, the Conduct Council, and the Budget Committee. The Canada-Indonesia Interparliamentary Friendship Group is under the Committee for Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation in Indonesia.

As chairperson, it is a pleasure to be here in Canada. We come to this country with the purpose, first, of maintaining close relations between Canada and Indonesia's parliaments. As you might know, the diplomatic relationship between Indonesia and Canada formally began on October 9, 1952, 57 years ago, marked by the opening of the representative offices of the respective countries. Second, we are here to exchange information; third, for institutional capacity-building; and fourth, to follow up on the formation of the Canada-Indonesia Interparliamentary Friendship Group.

I would like to take this opportunity as chairperson to deliver our thanks for all of the support given by the Canadian government and the Canadian Parliament to Indonesia, especially for the large amount of attention given to the tsunami disaster in Aceh and North Sumatra, by forming a task force not only at the national level, led by the Prime Minister's deputy, but also at the interdepartmental level, led by Bill Graham, Minister of Defence of Canada at the time.

Second, we thank you for Canada's direct investments in Indonesia, in the mining sector, oil and gas, financial services, the environment, and also in the agrifood sector. Canada has also put its sole mining investment in Asia in Indonesia, in a mining company named PT Inco. PT Inco is located in South Sulawesi, with an investment value of more than \$4 billion. According to Canadian statistics, the accumulated value of Canadian direct investment in Indonesia until 2003 was \$6 billion, while total Canadian investment in Indonesia until the beginning of 2004 reached more than \$7 billion. Besides that, Canadian companies have also engaged thousands of Indonesian people.

Mr. Chairperson, I'd like to introduce my colleagues from the Interparliamentary Friendship Group of Indonesia.

Please introduce yourself, Mr. Tampubolon.

•(1650)

Mr. Taufan Tampubolon (Member, House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia): Good afternoon.

My name is Taufan Tampubolon. I am a member of Parliament of Indonesia. My area of work is health and labour. I am from the PDIP Party.

Thanks for having us.

The Chair: Thank you for being here.

Mr. Abdul Hakim (Member, House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia): My name is Abdul Hakim, from the Prosperous Justice Party, PKS. I am from the committee of the public sector, the transport commission.

Thank you.

Mr. H. Faisal (Member, House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia): Good evening.

My name is Faisal. I am a member of Parliament and the PBR Party, and a member of the health committee.

Thank you.

Mr. Tomy Susanto (Secretary, House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia): My name is Tomy Susanto, from the Reform Star Party.

Thank you.

Mr. Fasrudin Arief Budiman (Secretary, House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia): My name is Budiman. I am secretary of staff. This is my first time in Canada. It's nice to meet you all.

Thank you.

The Chair: While you're continuing, you've used a couple of party initials. We have the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle, and the Indonesian....

What do these parties stand for, and which parties are in power? You may want to share which one is the new governing party.

Mr. Taufan Tampubolon: Excuse me, could you repeat the question, please?

The Chair: Is your political party now the governing party of Indonesia?

Mr. Taufan Tampubolon: No.

Dr. Bomer Pasaribu: I can explain about that.

Taufan is the vice-chairperson of this group and he is from the PDI Perjuangan, which means the Democratic Party of Indonesia—Struggle, formerly the party of Megawati Sukarnoputri, the former president.

• (1655)

The Chair: Okay, I see.

Dr. Bomer Pasaribu: He was the president, but now the PDI Perjuangan is the opposition party. And the second one, PKS, is the Justice Party. But may I call it the Muslim party?

A voice: Yes.

Dr. Bomer Pasaribu: Yes, it's the Muslim party. And they received 8% of the popular vote in the last election. In the election of 2004, they received only 7%.

PBR is a very nice name for a party, and there is the Reform Star Party. But I am very sad to tell you that in this election—because we have a parliamentary threshold of 2.5% of the popular vote—I am afraid that maybe that party has not passed the parliamentary threshold.

The Chair: It's not the governing party.

Mr. Azwar Chesputra (Member, House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia): My name is Azwar Chesputra of the Golkar Party, the same as Bomer Pasaribu.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Junisab Akbar (Member, House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia): My name is Junisab Akbar of the Reform Star Party.

Mr. Saut Siringoringo (Minister-Counsellor, Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia): My name is Saut Siringoringo. I am minister counsellor of the Indonesian embassy here in Ottawa.

Thank you.

The Chair: All right, thank you. That clears that up.

Dr. Bomer Pasaribu: Mr. Sorenson, we would like to discuss something that is very important to us: the public policy of your country and your Parliament and how to handle the global financial crisis. There is also the global food crisis, global warming, human rights issues; there are many issues. We'd like to discuss how you can help developing countries like Indonesia with investment. We know the impact of the global economic crisis in Indonesia. Our target for economic growth was 7.3%, but now it's only maybe 3%—still positive, but our exports now have negative growth. We have to discuss how to handle the global financial crisis.

We would like your opinion about regulating the financial sector. According to many experts, financial stability is a public good. If financial stability is a public good, I think it is our duty as members of Parliament—not only the government, but the executive branch and the legislative branch also.... There are many discussions about that in Indonesia, as in many countries.

There are also discussions about the Kyoto Protocol, about global warming, and the conference in Copenhagen next December. What is your opinion about that, and also about the green legislation program? In Indonesia, with forestry regulations, if you have a bill or an act, it's very important for Indonesia, because we are going to proceed with what they call the anti-illegal-logging bill that's still in Parliament now. There's also the land and water conservation bill. There are many bills in Parliament. We call it the green legislation bill in Parliament. There are so many issues.

My colleague can speak about this also, and I can translate it.

The Chair: All right.

Those are all very good questions. I'm not sure if we can get into comprehensive answers here today, but I certainly know that we've talked already about how Canada has a very active trading relationship with Indonesia. We import so much from your manufacturing sector. I know we've all been hit very hard by the recession. You sell into so many markets that are consumer markets, like the United States, Great Britain, and Canada, so I would assume that there has been a big hit on your exporting at this point in time.

Mr. Obhrai is wanting to answer some of those questions. I think he probably had a question of his own. I'll throw it over to him. Mr. Rae and Mr. Crête were on the list too. I know everyone wants to answer those questions.

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

On behalf of the government, we all welcome you here to Canada, specifically to sort out this Indonesia-Canada Interparliamentary Friendship Group. Friendship groups that have been set up in Canada are an exchange between Canadian parliamentarians and the parliamentarians in the host country, in this case with Indonesia.

I had the honour of visiting Indonesia. Currently you are the best people I have, because my grandson and grand-daughter are in Jakarta. That follows the oil investment in Indonesia. The largest company, Talisman, is out there, and my son-in-law works for Talisman.

I would like to come from a different perspective here. You asked for certain areas of expertise you are interested in, like Kyoto and other things. But I just want to go to a different level. The committee meeting that we attended...

You were with me, were you not, for the Muslim study?

• (1700)

The Chair: Actually, no, you were alone.

In 2003 a delegation from our committee travelled to Indonesia in preparation for a report on the Muslim world, exploring Canada's relations with countries in the Muslim world.

I think you were the only one, Mr. Obhrai....

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Of those here currently, yes.

We chose Indonesia because of the progressive nature of Indonesia's Muslim community and the outlook that Indonesia had. Of course, you've had your share, with the Bali bombings and so on.

The committee had extensive discussion with your academics and your politicians. We came out with a good impression of Indonesia—that Indonesia was actually working and had strong democratic values, that the kind of Muslim society Indonesia had was quite different from all the others. The committee felt that we could actually very much engage with Indonesia on that level. You're the largest Muslim country in the world. If I'm not mistaken, McGill University has a very strong program in Jakarta, where we visited.

I want to take this opportunity to say that we indeed came out with an excellent impression, including of how you handled the crisis of the Bali bombings and the crisis with Abubakar and so on. I think Canadians feel quite comfortable today with the direction in which Indonesians have gone, including you as members of Parliament.

So I want to take this opportunity to commend all of you—your elections went very well, after the dictatorship you had—for the direction Indonesia is going in. We are pretty comfortable with it, and I want to congratulate all of you for working toward the democratic idea and making Indonesia one of the strong places to

which Canada is looking for a strong, cooperative relationship going forward.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Rae.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Chairman, thank you on behalf of the Liberal Party.

There are four parties represented here today on our side. The governing party over there, that's the Conservatives. Mr. Dewar represents the social democratic party, the New Democratic Party. The Bloc Québécois represents the party that stands for a different constitutional future for Quebec. And we're the members of the Liberal Party, who are about to make a big comeback—

An hon. member: Hear, hear!

An hon. member: I don't think so.

Hon. Bob Rae: We have to be able to dream, right?

You asked a couple of questions. I'll maybe just answer a couple of them and engage with you on them.

In terms of the financial crisis, Canada has been affected not because the crisis, in a sense, started in Canada, but because we live next door to the United States and we obviously have a very close trading relationship. Our financial institutions have been pretty strong, whereas in Europe many financial institutions have been very seriously affected. In Canada our financial institutions have remained very strong, but our economy has been affected.

If you stay for a while, you'll read news every day. One of our large companies just had a big reduction in its manufacturing across North America. And our car companies are being very badly affected, which is having a major impact. The economists tell us that unemployment could go up to 10% across the country, which for us is very high, that we will have larger public sector deficits than we've had for 15 years, and that we will have a slow rate of growth. We anticipate this year we will have negative growth for the first time in several years.

We all argue about the causes of it and what to do, but we all agree this is a serious problem for us. We also understand it's a serious problem for you and for all the other Asian economies.

On the climate change issue, I think we're all looking forward to a very serious discussion in Copenhagen. I think we all recognize that there's a need for a new agreement that includes everyone—not just a few companies, not just the developing countries, but that includes everyone. I certainly think that with President Obama there will be a very interesting political discussion in the United States as to whether their Congress can agree to his particular proposals.

This committee was in Washington last week, and one of the subjects we discussed very actively with the Americans was this question of climate change and how that would be able to go forward. So that's something that I know we'd want to hear from you.

I'm very interested in learning about your constitutional arrangements. Before I was re-elected to Parliament, I worked for many years in founding a small NGO called the Forum of Federations, which looks at potential federal structures around the world. We were peripherally involved with the Aceh discussions. One of our experts was hired by the United Nations to advise the discussions about Aceh.

In the course of that discussion we had many interesting discussions about the future governance of Indonesia. As an outsider, when you look at the map of Indonesia, you see this very, very big and diverse country, all the different islands, different communities, different languages, different ethnic groups, and we wonder how you can govern that from the centre. It's hard.

Canada is also a very big country, but we have a small population. We're spread along a rather thin ground. And you have a very large country. Your population now is over 100 million, right?

• (1705)

Dr. Bomer Pasaribu: It's 242 million, and 17,000 islands.

Hon. Bob Rae: So how do you govern a country of 242 million? With great difficulty, I would imagine.

Dr. Bomer Pasaribu: Yes.

Hon. Bob Rae: But is that a live debate in Indonesia or not?

You're nodding your head, Mr. Laksmana. Do you agree?

Mr. Andy Laksmana (Third Secretary, Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia): I fully agree with that.

Hon. Bob Rae: It's an interesting question for us, because we are very interested, as Canadians, in questions of governance and how to reduce conflict, prevent conflict and resolve conflict. Before you were here we were debating the situation in Sri Lanka, which is a country that, like yours, was very much affected by the tsunami.

We welcome you. We need to have stronger ties and associations with your country. We're delighted to have you here.

The Chair: I'm going to ask Mr. Crête to pose his question or comment and then we'll have basically concluding statements. Unfortunately, we have to end this meeting at about 5:20, but I think that will still give us enough time.

Mr. Crête.

• (1710)

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): I just have a quick comment.

Mr. Pasaribu, you explained quite clearly how problems such as climate change, the financial crisis and the economic slowdown are fundamentally global problems at this point in time.

In my view, this state of affairs is the result of the failure on the part of the leaders of a number of countries to face up to these crises. What's more, parliamentarians are responsible for not ensuring that an adequate number of international structures were in place. We have parliamentary associations and friendship groups, such as the Canada-Indonesia friendship group.

Would you be in favour of inviting a group of about twenty parliamentarians from Indonesia to take part in an Internet exchange of views on these issues? This is the type of discussions that people around the world are engaging in these days.

Furthermore, would you care to venture an opinion on the resurgence of the importance of the State? People have come to realize that neo-liberalism doesn't amount to anything, that more adequate safeguards and controls need to be re-introduced and that much work needs to be done to come up with effective international safeguards.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Crête.

Perhaps, Mr. Bomer Pasaribu, you may want to comment on that, or Mr. Andy Laksmana.

Dr. Bomer Pasaribu: Regarding climate change and global warming, as a member of Parliament I think there is a need to discuss that. Not only the government executive branch but also the legislative branch in every country informs the public policy involved in the legislative process.

Many things have to be discussed about problems of climate change and global warming. With the global financial crisis, we have to discuss the bailout, credit, and many other things. So we'd like to know about your legislative process here and how to handle so many issues.

Indonesia, China, and India still have positive growth now, but next year it could be negative growth. This means the unemployment rate will increase, along with poverty. The problem of what they call millennium development goals now is very difficult to realize in Indonesia, because there are so many problems with the impact of the crisis.

The Indonesian position about global warming is to fully support.... At the Bali conference last year, the Indonesian government and also the legislative branch fully supported....

In Parliament, I, as a member of the international legislators forum and the commissioner of the land use and ecosystem commission, from time to time took initiatives to promote a green legislation program in the parliamentary legislative program and priorities. We have taken initiatives to produce what they call the anti-illegal-logging bill. It is still being discussed in Parliament. We're still discussing an agriculture bill. We're also discussing the conservation of land and water. It's very important for us.

According to many, the degradation of Indonesia is occurring very, very fast. On the other hand, rehabilitation is very slow. We have a big problem with illegal logging in Indonesia and also illegal fishing.

If it is only the task of the executive branch of government, it is very difficult. We have more than 17,000 islands. You put the map of Indonesia with Europe and other countries, it will go maybe from Moscow to London. We would like to ask you how to handle democracy in such a big country.

It was very difficult in our last election, where we had a big logistical problem. From one island to another island, it's very difficult to know the decision of every voter on so many small islands. There are many languages as well. We hope that after the presidential election next year the climate will be better.

That is why I ask you to discuss human rights and anti-terrorism. We have ratified all international conventions on anti-terrorism.

• (1715)

The Chair: I don't think we're going to be able to discuss it here today.

I like Monsieur Crête's idea that maybe we need to look at ways parliamentarians can sit together and have exchanges. My understanding is that you aren't part of the G-20. Sometimes Canada meets in other forums, and we meet with parliamentarians continuously, so we have networks with our NATO countries, with the G-20, with the G-8, and all these other organizations, so I think it's probably a very important discussion and one we need to be exchanging more ideas on. I think we all look forward to that.

As a committee, we appreciate the work of your local embassy and we appreciate being able to access information when we need it.

I would also like to say that I know personnel and resources change at embassies, but Mr. Obhrai has made reference to the report that was entitled "Exploring Canada's Relations with the Countries of the Muslim World". They went to Indonesia and they were impressed by some of the things that Indonesia had. I would encourage your embassy to pick up a copy of that report. It's an older report now; it goes back to 2003—and it is on the Internet as well.

I think with that we're probably going to have to conclude. You brought up a lot of very good topics and topics we are looking at in different capacities as we explore the key elements of our foreign policy.

We'll just suspend here, and thank you very much for being here in Canada. We look forward to further meetings with your parliamentarians.

Dr. Bomer Pasaribu: Thank you, Mr. Sorenson.

To conclude this very nice session, of course, followed up by our embassy here—and your Mr. Holmes is a very good ambassador in Jakarta—we'd like to give you some mementoes.

The Chair: Oh, we need a picture taken here. Come over here right in front of our flag.

Thank you very much. We appreciate this. I don't have a gift to exchange, but we're going to have to get one for you.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

• (1720)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to move into our committee business now.

We have a listing of motions under the notice of motions. Mr. Dewar, your motion appears first here on the order paper.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I think that motion was dealt with before, wasn't it?

The Chair: Mr. Dewar, do you want to bring forward your—

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Chair, I actually want to move to consider the following motion. I want consideration from the committee to allow the following motion to be considered. I'm asking that a motion that is presently with the committee be brought to the committee right now.

The motion is that pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), Mr. Abdelrazik be asked to appear before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

What I need to do first, Chair, is ask that it be considered. It is the last motion. I ask that it be done first, and ask the committee to allow for that first, and then we could discuss the motion.

The Chair: Okay, but you're not moving forward your motion?

Mr. Paul Dewar: I am, but the way.... The clerk will help us here. I can ask for permission for it to be considered, because it's not in the right order.

That's my motion, to move that motion to the top of the list to be considered.

The Chair: That's a debatable motion.

Mr. Obhrai, please.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Chair, I don't think that the point of order is debatable. First you have to seek approval to bring it forward before it can be debated, am I right?

A voice: That's what he's doing.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I have a question for you, Mr. Dewar. This motion of yours, before we can respond, has a lot of security implications. My recommendation to you is that tomorrow morning we have the steering committee, which is in camera, and we can then be freely able to discuss this motion in camera tomorrow in the steering committee.

I think that would be the most appropriate thing to do before we move forward on this. That is what I would say to you right now. If you feel that you want to continue, we're going to discuss it tomorrow morning anyway, at nine o'clock, but in camera.

• (1725)

Mr. Paul Dewar: I appreciate that.

All we're doing here is putting forward a motion. If we want to talk about how that goes forward, then we can do that at the steering committee.

This has been brought up before. I have been working with this for over a year. I'm simply asking that we have Mr. Abdelrazik come to committee and to hear from him about the situation in the embassy. As you know, he'll be here tomorrow; he will be in the embassy.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: That's not the issue. The issue is that there are a lot of other legal implications over this issue. It would be best to discuss it tomorrow in camera. That would be my recommendation. If you feel that you do not want to move it to the steering committee, as you are there, Paul is there, Bernard is there, and I am there.... The four of us can discuss this question in camera.

If you say no, that you want to discuss it here, then I would have to say that I cannot agree to that at this stage.

Mr. Paul Dewar: You can vote against it.

The Chair: That's right. If Mr. Dewar were to say that we won't discuss this today and that he will bring it tomorrow morning to the steering committee, then what?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Then we will discuss it over there. I would put forward my argument among the other members that at the given time we'll make the decision to bring it back over here, whether they want to do it or not.

The Chair: Would we able to have this discussion on Wednesday?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: We'll decide tomorrow at the steering committee.

The Chair: Okay.

A voice: It needs to come back to the committee.

The Chair: Well, that could come back on Wednesday.

Mr. Crête.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête: I think we can draw a distinction between adopting the motion today and deciding what steps to take to get him here.

I'm in favour of adopting the motion as it now stands, to extending an invitation to him to appear before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade and to getting the steering committee tomorrow to look into how we are going to proceed.

As for the substance of the matter, I'm prepared to vote immediately in favour of the motion.

[*English*]

The Chair: We're still on debate of this motion.

Mr. Abbott.

Hon. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Let's see whether I understand this procedure correctly. Mr. Dewar, because this is the last motion in the sequence, is asking us to move the motion forward, to deal with it at this time. My understanding from Mr. Obhrai's comments is that—we are not in camera at this point—there are things he would like to discuss with the committee members so that the steering committee can be clear on what all of the considerations are that he is not at liberty to speak about here when we are not in camera, and he suggests that a good-quality decision could be made at that time.

I think the difference between having a vote on this now and later is two days. The situation has gone on, I'm sure Mr. Dewar would say, for far too long. That's fine; that's his perspective. But the point is that in order to make a quality decision, the steering committee needs to be able to have a candid discussion. It's that simple. To be agreeing to move forward with making this decision in the absence of good information does not, I think, serve the committee at all well.

The Chair: Mr. Lunney.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We gather, Paul, you're keen to put this thing forward, but we're talking about two days here. Given that you're going to discuss it tomorrow morning, a few hours from now, and that there are issues that are better discussed in camera, it seems to me a very reasonable request. I would hope members would look at it as a reasonable thing to hear all of the issues that are not convenient—or appropriate, perhaps—to discuss at this table today, before bringing it forward on Wednesday.

It's regrettably been a long time that this issue has been on the table, but perhaps it's not unreasonable to ask you to hold off until tomorrow morning to get all the information, before you pursue it in this venue.

• (1730)

The Chair: Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Chair, I'm trying to sort out the proposal from the government. Perhaps we could address it this way: by having the motion in front of us. In other words, the first proposition is to have it in front of us. What the government is saying is hold on; wait until tomorrow and we can discuss it further. Perhaps the compromise would be simply to vote to have this motion in front of us. We can discuss it, as they have suggested, at the steering committee tomorrow, which allows us to still have the motion there, which is clearly what I was hoping.

It's a compromise. In other words, we would have the motion in front of us; we could discuss the details at the steering committee; we would be able to go forward after that. Otherwise we're in a situation in which you're basically saying “we'll have the motion, but not necessarily”.

Having dealt with this for more than a year, I ask when enough is enough. Many of these issues could have been brought to me before right now. The issue has been known for more than a couple of days; it's been brought up extensively. I've had two foreign ministers deal with it; this is the third. I think it's reasonable for me to ask that it be at least adopted as a motion, and in the spirit of compromise, which is what the government I think is asking for, that we not vote on the main motion but have the motion left at committee, to then discuss it at the steering committee.

Otherwise, I don't see the point of acquiescing, because all you're basically saying is, take it off the table and we'll discuss it later. Well, we've taken it off the table, and it's been a year. I think what we need, if we're going to do this, is to see the motion adopted; we then go to steering, and then it's able to come back.

The Chair: This is the first time this specific motion has.... Obviously, you've just tabled the motion, haven't you?

Mr. Paul Dewar: Yes—not the issue, but the motion.

The Chair: Yes, the issue has been here, but the motion to all of a sudden invite him to our standing committee is a fairly substantive motion. It's not something we've discussed, to invite him to our committee. This is different; that's why we're having this discussion.

I have Mr. Obhrai, and then Mr. Rae.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Chair, the steering committee has all these motions that we've put forward to study that are of more importance. We have the Arctic motion, and we have the Sri Lankan one. We have all these things that we've brought forward.

All of a sudden, at the last minute, because it is politically expedient, you have put forward a motion, and you want to jump ahead of all the others. Saying that we are pulling something is not a matter of fact.

Let me just say, Mr. Chair, that in his motion, Paul wants to call the director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. When that motion comes forward among all the other motions that have been brought forward, only then can he bring forward this motion to be part of the discussion.

I do not see any argument at all that today we have to drop everything else and go to his motion because it's his expedient matter, an issue that he has been fighting in the House of Commons. I do not see why the foreign affairs committee should suddenly drop everything. Why would I agree now to bring a motion forward that is at the bottom?

Yesterday I offered him a compromise, and I'm offering him compromise now: that tomorrow we can discuss this, and then on Wednesday we will decide what has been discussed at the steering committee and has come through, before we put it on the committee agenda. But there is no way I am going to agree to a motion being brought forward that is at the bottom and is a matter of political expediency and move everything else, including his own study of Mr. Judd, on which he wants to talk about the issue of Abdelrazik. Ideally, this motion should be included in that study, when it comes before the committee.

So it is not possible for us to agree to this. I'm going to turn that back to you. We can discuss this tomorrow in camera and then proceed from there.

• (1735)

The Chair: Mr. Rae.

Hon. Bob Rae: As I understand it, we are being asked to vote on a proposal from Paul that the motion, which is at the end, should be brought up at the beginning. This is a two-step procedure, isn't it? We're not being asked today to vote on the substance of the motion; we're being asked to vote today on a procedural motion that says that because of what's happened....

I just want to be clear as to what we're actually debating. Am I right?

The Chair: That's correct.

Hon. Bob Rae: So if we vote for this motion today, it doesn't mean that the substantive motion passes. It just means that it will be the next motion to be considered.

I would be in favour of that.

The Chair: Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): I have concern about this as, first of all, jumping the queue. But also, if this is a sensitive issue, and if there are considerations to be discussed that it's necessary or desirable to discuss in camera, and if it's simply holding

this motion up for another day or two to discuss it properly, I think it would be not appropriate to pass judgment on this motion at this time, for a number of reasons. Clearly, if there's an indication of concern about its nature, we should have a discussion in camera—in confidence—first, and the steering committee meeting is only a day or two days away.

I don't see why we wouldn't take that appropriate step: take it to the steering committee, where you can have the discussion in camera on how confidential or how sensitive it might be. Quite frankly, I have no idea upon whom this might impact, whether this person or other people, or what the nature of the confidentiality is that it is sought to discuss. I think it should be taken to the steering committee to have that confidential discussion, if it's to be.

The Chair: We have two options. The first option is a motion to adjourn, which would have to pass our committee. The second option is a vote on this motion, on which debate is still open. We have those options right now.

Hon. Jim Abbott: Please explain the second option.

The Chair: The first option is a motion to adjourn, which has to pass. And let me just say that if we adjourn, the intention, then, is that this goes to steering committee tomorrow at nine o'clock in the morning. All right?

The other option is that we move towards a vote on Mr. Dewar's motion, on which debate can be endless.

So summing this thing up, we have a motion to adjourn, with this going to steering committee, or, putting it quite frankly, the option of a filibuster—the option to continue debate on it—or a third option, the option to have the vote. But you can't have the vote without unlimited debate.

An hon. member: Does that mean we'd still go to the vote?

The Chair: Yes, that means we would go to the vote. You'd have to shut down for the vote.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Chair, if I may, Mr. Obhrai asked that we bring this to steering committee. Fine. I'm just asking that the vote, as Mr. Rae pointed out, be on just the consideration of this motion at committee. It's simple. I'm not talking about adopting the motion.

If we can just vote on that, we don't have to get into the scenario, which you were kind of leading us to, of people perhaps running clocks, and so on.

The Chair: Except I don't think that's an option.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Well, we don't know until we ask. So I'm asking that we call the question to be voted on.

The Chair: No, I'm not ready to call the question, because there's still a speakers list here. That's the point. That is the option we have.

I haven't heard a motion to adjourn.

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): I'll make the motion.

The Chair: Okay, so I have a motion to adjourn by Ms. Brown.

• (1740)

Hon. Jim Abbott: I will second it.

The Chair: Are we all in favour of a motion to adjourn and bring this to steering committee tomorrow?

(Motion negatived)

The Chair: Now we'll go back to debate of the motion to bring this forward to first on priority.

Go ahead, Ms. Brown.

Ms. Lois Brown: It's a matter of process for me, Mr. Chair. I'm new to the committee. I didn't realize that anybody could bring a motion forward at any time, and I'm really asking what's going on. I thought we had something of a list of topics we were going to be discussing. My understanding was that the Arctic was an issue we were very concerned about.

I sit on the committee for transport and infrastructure. We have just gone through clause-by-clause debate of the legislation to extend the Arctic waters. There has been considerable discussion in the House today, with representations from all parties, on issues related to infrastructure in the north. It would seem to me that this is an area of focus for us. I'm wondering how it is that we can move so easily off our agenda on to another issue that really hasn't been put forward before and that I would think should be part of a larger discussion.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Brown.

Just to clarify a couple of things, you're correct. When motions are brought forward, they are brought forward in an order, but we do allow the movement of motions forward. The reason for that is that there may be motions put in place that are time-sensitive, and the mover doesn't want to discuss them right at this moment. There is a problem with that. We're seeing that here. Once someone gets the number one spot, it always has to go through them. So there's never any movement to get out of that spot once you're there. That can be a real problem. However, the part about bringing motions forward is that it takes not a unanimous vote but a vote of the majority to bring that forward. I think that's fair. Otherwise, it could sit on the bottom of the pile forever.

So that is an option, and Mr. Dewar is employing it now, and it's in order.

We have Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Mr. Chairman, I suppose my concern is along the same vein. We do have a considerable number of other motions, and I would think and hope there would be very well established reasons why there is absolute urgency to be jumping the queue on motions, but it seems to happen from time to time. I don't see how this has been established in this particular case. It certainly hasn't been verbalized as to the absolute urgency and importance of jumping the queue in this particular instance.

Secondary to that, I still have a great concern for the possible sensitivity of this and what the implication of it might be in jumping the queue when, after all, all we're talking about is an offer here to take it to the steering committee and to have those sensitive discussions made behind closed doors and in camera. Once again, I have no concept as to what that can actually impact, either the person named in the motion or possibly impacting others, but certainly I think that if there's a concern about the sensitivity of it and a consideration to having it done behind closed doors, it should be

taken there first. To deal with it here as a motion ahead of that is kind of putting the cart before the horse, if you like, and I have concerns—

The Chair: A point of order?

Mr. Paul Dewar: Point of order.

Mr. Goldring is saying he would prefer it go to steering so he could hear the information there. I'm not sure that he's on the steering committee, so I wanted to clarify—

Mr. Peter Goldring: No, it's not for me to hear, it's for the members to hear.

I fully understand, and I fully expect the people in the steering committee.... That's what it's formed for, and that's why I hope they'll have it in confidence behind closed doors. I would certainly take their considerations, whatever they might be. However, if they decided among themselves that it was a sensitive issue, too sensitive to be brought forward or brought forward in this fashion, certainly that recommendation would be made and adhered to.

So because of the nature of it, because of the possible sensitivity of it and looking at the national security service and intelligence agency mentioned in this motion here, I would have concerns.

I repeat once again that my overall concern is that when we're jumping the queue in this fashion, without fully substantiating the importance and reason for jumping the queue, then I have concerns with it on several levels.

• (1745)

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Chair, I want to clarify what motion, because Mr. Goldring mentioned national security. The motion in front of us.... In fact I'm only asking for a procedural change, to ask that the motion be put forward in front of us. But to be clear, it's the last one. It says that Mr. Abdelrazik be asked to appear before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Peter Goldring: But there is a contention by the parliamentary secretary that there are possible sensitivities to it.

Mr. Paul Dewar: But I'm clarifying that it's not in the motion.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Pardon?

Mr. Paul Dewar: It's not in the motion. I thought you were reading it in the motion—

Mr. Peter Goldring: No, but if there are possible sensitivities to it, that would be clarified by the steering—

Mr. Paul Dewar: That's his opinion. We're not debating that.

The Chair: We're debating bringing it forward.

In debate of this motion, there's a fair bit of latitude here on what the motion is and why it should and why it shouldn't be brought forward.

All right. Were you finished, Mr. Goldring?

Mr. Peter Goldring: Yes.

The Chair: I have on my list Ms. Brown, then Mr. Abbott and then Mr. Obhrai.

Ms. Lois Brown: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My understanding is that this case, in particular, is a consulate case, which I would expect is very complex. There are a lot of issues surrounding it, and I question whether we know enough about this or how this motion might circumvent international law. Do we need some guidance on that before we can even discuss the motion?

The Chair: We're discussing bringing this motion forward.

Ms. Lois Brown: That's the same thing.

The Chair: Yes, there's really nothing.... All that information could come out when the motion gets debated. That's the argument.

Mr. Paul Dewar: That's got nothing to do with it. We're on procedure right now, not the motion.

I respectfully want to remind people that when we're debating, I understand what the government might want to be doing here, but let's at least talk about the procedure. It's the procedure we're talking about here, that we actually have the motion put in front of us. If that's voted on and accepted, then we debate the motion.

The Chair: He's right. However, in the debate on whether we should bring it forward, this doesn't mean that the topic or the substance of the motion can't be brought out. You can talk about every other motion that's laid out here on the order paper and why it should or should not go before the motion that we're discussing.

Mr. Abbott.

Hon. Jim Abbott: Thank you, Chair.

One thing that concerns me about this is that I do have to make mention of the motion that the member is trying to bring forward. Let's take a look at the reason why he's trying to bring it forward, and let's be clear.

Mr. Dewar basically wants to create a situation that will force the government to make sure that this gentleman is available to the committee. That's what his motion is about—nothing else, just that. So in terms of the timing of this motion, we know from his own admission earlier that he has been working on this issue for well over a year. The government of the day has made the decisions that they have made, and he has disagreed with those decisions. But the difference between working on them for well over a year and then not being prepared to take counsel in camera tomorrow, in less than 24 hours, doesn't really compute.

If we were to take a look at motions, as the chair has suggested, if I take a look at the motion of my colleague Mr. Goldring, where he is talking about how the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development should conduct a study of Canada's diplomatic and trade relationships with the former Soviet Bloc countries of eastern Europe, central Asia, and the Transcaucasus, including, but not limited to, Ukraine, Georgia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan, there is probably some more urgency to bringing that motion forward than the motion that he is trying to elevate at this particular time. This is particularly so because, as I say, although by his own admission he has been working on this for a full year, there's the fact that he can become involved in the discussion to determine the advisability of bringing the motion forward in the first place, which can occur in an in-camera situation, and he's not prepared to wait less than 24 hours when he's been working on it for a year.

In the case of these countries that we're talking about here in the motion by Mr. Goldring, it has a very direct impact on our troops in Afghanistan and particularly on the situation with respect to Pakistan. Those of us who took the time to go to Washington and stayed for the full duration to take in the full three days of information became aware of the fact that the whole issue about Afghanistan is indeed a regional issue.

In addition to that, Mr. Rae, Mr. Obhrai, myself, and others had the opportunity on Thursday last week, in Washington, D.C., to take a look at the impact of the region and the regional countries with respect to the situation in which we find ourselves as a nation in support of the people of Afghanistan. One of the interesting things was that I had the opportunity to bring together ambassadors to Canada who are resident in Washington, D.C. They don't normally come to Canada. They represent their countries. They have presented their credentials to our Governor General, and they are recognized by our country.

I had a very interesting intervention by the ambassador from Kyrgyzstan, and it was followed up by another intervention, in concert with her, by the ambassador from Uzbekistan. They were pointing out that the countries in central Asia, the former satellite countries of the U.S.S.R., probably had an awful lot to bring to us. In that case, in bringing these ideas, bringing their perspectives to us in helping us understand what we're up against in Afghanistan, within that region of the world, and particularly considering the nuclear fragility that we presently have in that part of the world, it suddenly puts Mr. Goldring's motion—although it was made I don't know how many weeks ago—into a place of real priority certainly by comparison with what is a transparent attempt on the part of Mr. Dewar to try to create a situation of getting this gentleman to Canada.

● (1750)

It must be remembered that this gentleman happens to be on the UN no-fly list, which in and of itself creates some very interesting challenges. The difficulty would be quite profound, but it might be worth while if we knew enough about the advisability of moving forward with Mr. Dewar's motion. There is no question in my mind of the importance of Mr. Goldring's motion, with the way things are continuing to unfold in Pakistan.

One of the interesting things that came out of those casual discussions I had with congressmen at an event in Virginia is that only now in the U.S. are they starting to wake up to the fact that the situation they are suddenly jumping into in Afghanistan is not a simple one. As a matter of fact, it's an exceptionally complex situation.

When the ambassador of Kyrgyzstan was with us at the Canadian embassy on Friday, backed up by the ambassador from Uzbekistan, I thought she was very keen and urgent. She wanted to be able to contribute to the amount of information we really should have, in continuing our very diligent work in Afghanistan.

If you take a look at Mr. Obhrai's motions, one of his clauses says that pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development undertake a study researching new models of aid delivery through a comparative analysis of international—

•(1755)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Rae is calling for a motion of adjournment.

Hon. Bob Rae: I want to make a couple of suggestions.

My first suggestion is to ask if it would be all right with my friends on the other side if we agreed informally that any member of the committee who was interested in attending the steering committee tomorrow morning could attend and hear the full explanation from the government as to why this poses a problem.

If the government members are prepared to simply nod their heads and say that's okay, then I will proceed with another motion.

The Chair: Our steering committee is in camera. We have guidelines as to who attends the steering committee. Are you asking for a motion to contravene those guidelines?

The Clerk of the Committee (Ms. Angela Crandall): Any member of the committee can go to the meeting, but they can't vote if they're not a member of the steering committee.

Hon. Bob Rae: There will be no vote at the steering committee. You can just turn up. Anybody can attend as an observer, but you can't vote.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: What's the procedure?

The Chair: You can attend.

Hon. Bob Rae: If that's okay, I move adjournment.

The Chair: All in favour?

Okay, we're adjourned.

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