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Thursday, May 27, 2010

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Chair

Mr. Scott Reid

Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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• (1315)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC)): Order. We are in public.

Mr. Dorion, you have to move one motion, obviously. We can't discuss multiple motions at the same time. Just indicate which one you want to move.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Dorion (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): So, the first motion is related to the closing of offices of the Canadian Human Rights Commission. Here is the motion.

That the Subcommittee on International Human Rights denounces the decision to close three of the five regional offices of the Canadian Human Rights Commission, that it recommends to the government to make sure that immigrant complainants will not be penalized, and that it reports this motion to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development for it to report to the House.

I believe the motion is clear enough and that its international dimension is obvious since there are immigration claimants who use the services of the Commission, especially refugee claimants, and so on.

The Chair: Mr. Silva.

[English]

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I had spoken to Mr. Dorion about this earlier, but I just need some clarification.

Usually our motions go to the parent committee, which is the foreign affairs committee. However, does this motion fall within the scope of the work of that committee, or is it more appropriate that this would fall within the scope of the immigration committee, for example?

The Chair: That's not really a question for Monsieur Dorion; it's a question for me.

Mr. Mario Silva: I didn't mean it for Mr. Dorion; I meant it for you.

The Chair: We've dealt with the Human Rights Commission in the past. The basis on which we went forward with that was that the Human Rights Commission does deal, to some degree, with international affairs, and in particular with the universal periodic review process.

So on the basis that there's some relevance to that, if I were asked to make a ruling, I would rule that it's in order, that there is an

international human rights component to this based on our previous allowance of such a thing.

Mr. Marston.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): I just want to say that I support the motion. Once this is turned over to our main committee, they'll make the decision on the approach they use to deliver it to the House.

These particular offices would be under the jurisdiction of the justice committee. They report there. So perhaps the main committee would decide to refer it on to them. But again, being the sub-body to the main committee, our recommendations would go to the committee anyway, and as I say, I certainly support that.

The Chair: I'll just alert members that there is no requirement that motions, as opposed to reports, be submitted to the main committee. They can simply be published by us. There's no requirement that they not be written this way. This is in order as it's written, but I'd just alert you that either way is permissible.

Shall we continue debate?

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Chair, I have a real issue about us, from news of an administrative move of the Canadian Human Rights Commission, simply endorsing a motion without hearing any witnesses about the nature of it, what the concerns were, or anything. In my opinion, if there's going to be support sought from myself—and I believe my colleague—we'd like to have witnesses from the Canadian Human Rights Commission come in and explain what the circumstance is, rather than just make a blanket motion condemning it. There could very well be clear administrative or management reasons behind it. We don't know that.

The Chair: Are you saying we're not sure a decision has been made, or—

Mr. David Sweet: I'm saying I can't support it unless we hear some witnesses who would explain why the decision was made. Just to outright condemn the fact that offices were closed, without hearing exactly what the other commensurate actions were to compensate for the closures, what the reasons for the closures were, etc., I don't think would be prudent on our part.

The Chair: Is there any further debate?

Mr. Marston.

Mr. Wayne Marston: Without getting too far down the road, if the mover of the motion is in agreement with having a day set aside for that.... I don't know what his response would be. But why don't we try to work on consensus to see if there is a way we can deal with this situation? That would be my preference.

•(1320)

The Chair: I should alert the....

Mr. Dorion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Dorion: The government has provided explanations for those closures and there is no need to go back to that issue. The point is whether we are satisfied with those explanations.

In order to make the motion more acceptable around this table, I am willing to replace the word “denounces” by the word “deplores”. With this motion, the committee will recommend to the government that it make sure that immigrant complainants are not penalized. I believe this change of wording would soften the motion somewhat, which would make it more acceptable for everyone.

In summary, we would replace the word “denounces” by the word “deplores”, which would avoid any debate on the explanations provided and any disagreements we might have about those explanations. What is essential is to make sure that immigrant complainants are not penalized.

[*English*]

The Chair: I'm just looking at a procedural consideration right now. We're just trying to figure out whether you need to have unanimous consent to make an amendment to your own motion without debate. We do have the option of having a debate over this, but I'm just going to find that out first. I apologize for the fact that I don't know that off the top of my head.

Let's find out. First of all, is there unanimous consent to allow Mr. Dorion to make the amendment he's proposing to his motion? If there is, we don't have to find the answer to that question. Is it agreed? Are you comfortable with that?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: All right. We have unanimous consent. We'll keep looking that up out of curiosity and for our own benefit, but we are now debating the amended version of the motion.

All right. Let's carry on with that. Are there any further comments on this?

Mr. Silva and then Mr. Hiebert.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Silva: Mr. Chair, I have had the opportunity to talk to Mr. Dorion today to make him aware of my concerns with those different motions.

I might probably support the first one but I have some difficulty with the second and third ones. That being said, I indicated that I would listen to the comments of the members of this committee before finalizing my decision.

However, I have a major concern. During the four years that I have been a member of this committee, we have always tried to find a consensus. Some of the issues dealt with in those motions—I speak on my behalf, not on behalf of my party—are a little outside our jurisdiction. The main mandate of our committee is to look at international issues and to express our concerns relating to human rights issues.

In a way, this motion destroys the consensus existing within the committee. We are not like the other committees which always try attacking the government. We try to work together. I believe that Mr. Sweet also had a proposal suggesting that we set up a meeting with the Canadian Human Rights Commission in order to know why it decided to close three different offices.

We could still keep the motion. We would finalize our decision for or against the motion after hearing the Commission. If it had no reasons, if we still had some concerns and still deplored their decision, we would still be able to vote for your motion, myself included.

However, there was a possibility to reach a consensus. I mean that a suggestion had been made that would perhaps allow us to come to a consensus. Why not accept that suggestion? I find it quite reasonable. At the end of the day, we could all reach the objective of your motion. There was a suggestion, and I believe you did not clearly indicate if you approved it or not. I know that you were suggesting to replace the word “denounces” by the word “deplores”, which is good, but have you thought about moving your motion later, after having heard the Commission? That is the answer we need.

•(1325)

[*English*]

The Chair: We'll have Mr. Hiebert and Mr. Marston, and then we can go back to Mr. Dorion.

Mr. Marston.

Mr. Wayne Marston: There was a direct question asked to the member as to whether he would support that. It would help our discussions if we knew the answer to that question or intervention.

The Chair: Fair enough. If everybody's cool with that, we'll go to Mr. Dorion directly then.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Dorion: On the matter of consensus, it will all depend on what is proposed to the committee. For the time being, as far as the motion we are debating is concerned, we have made a good step forward since there was unanimous consent for me to change the wording. So, there is a spirit of consensus on this. About the other motions, time will tell.

I just want to state that I do not believe we always have to work by consensus. Of course, reaching a consensus is always ideal but it is not always possible since it would mean that all our decisions would only be based on the lowest common denominator. This is a very serious issue, this matter of human rights, and there will be cases when we have disagreements, which would be quite understandable.

As far as this motion is concerned, I believe we are on the right track. So, for the time being, I will limit my comments to this motion.

[*English*]

The Chair: We'll carry on with Mr. Hiebert.

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Thank you.

In response to Mr. Dorion's statement about what he just witnessed, I think that was a demonstration of the kind of consensus that we try to work with on an ongoing basis.

Mr. Silva very eloquently expressed my concerns and my thoughts on this particular motion. I think his suggestion was a good one. If we were to consider this at some future date, after having heard from witnesses—perhaps the Human Rights Commission itself, giving them an opportunity to provide an explanation, and then revisit this motion—I think that would be a fair and reasonable way of approaching the matter. It doesn't force us to take a position right now, but it does provide us an opportunity to investigate the issue. Perhaps after hearing testimony we can come to a consensus on the position.

If forced to make a decision right now, I would not support this motion, despite the fact that I supported amending it. There are very good reasons, and they've been expressed by others, why we would not want to address this issue at this present time.

● (1330)

The Chair: Mr. Marston.

Mr. Wayne Marston: In response to the comments about consensus, within this committee many times we have failed to reach consensus and have gone to a vote on given issues. So to be very clear on that, the committee has worked hard to sustain consensus.

The way I see it, we have a choice of two things. We could further amend the motion by perhaps saying the committee expresses very serious concerns with the closures. I don't know whether that would be in line with the objective the Bloc member has in moving the motion, but if the concern was around the immigrant complainants and that part remained in, that would be one way of considering dealing with it, or the witnesses....

It's very clear to me that this motion is not going to pass at this stage. I support the motion, so I would suggest that we give consideration to one of those two options.

The Chair: Mr. Silva.

Mr. Mario Silva: I would just note that it's true we have not always reached consensus, but I always believe that the spirit of what we try to do is in consensus. That's one of the reasons I had....

When I spoke to Mr. Dorion today, I had some serious concerns that when the motions came forward it would be impossible to even have the spirit of consensus. It seems that everybody is starting off from a point such that I think it would be very difficult to reach consensus.

I think this committee—and I mentioned this as well to Mr. Dorion earlier—is a little bit different from other committees. There

are a lot of things on which we can find consensus and a lot of issues internationally. I think where there is consensus to be reached on those issues, we should strive to deal with it. I don't think we're going to be able to find that on every issue, but I think we've made a good effort.

In the last four years that I've been here, very few motions of this nature have been brought forward. That's why I was trying to ask Mr. Dorion whether things have changed within his party, because generally speaking the motions that come forward are about a specific issue that we want to highlight in a specific country. We have concerns about it and want the government to actually take some action or to look at it.

This is very much a domestic attack on the government, and it seems to break—well, it really is breaking, in my opinion—the spirit of what we're trying to build here as a committee. If we want to be a committee like all of the other committees, then I don't think we'll ever be able to get the witnesses we want to have. Before, we allowed a lot of motions to go through, such as the one I asked for on Afghanistan and motions by other members as well, because we've allowed different members the ability to see what issues they wanted to bring forward.

I'm a little concerned that what we're trying to do here with these motions is to create a conflict where there was none before in our committee.

The Chair: Mr. Sweet.

Sorry, I think Mr. Dorion was actually first. I apologize.

Mr. Dorion, then Mr. Sweet.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Dorion: Mr. Chair, I think I really tried to find a consensus on this motion by replacing the word “denounces” which might have been thought too harsh by the government members. It seems to me that, if we have to wait for the testimony of public servants—if we can get them to come here, if they are willing to appear, since you know that we have problems having public servants appear before committees and subcommittees—it will delay our study of other very important issues such as Venezuela.

So, I repeat my proposal. I am pleased that everyone around me allowed me to change the wording unilaterally. I believe the committee showed a marvellous spirit of fair play in accepting the change I suggested to make it more acceptable, but I maintain my position.

Reaching a consensus cannot be the main and essential objective of our work since it would mean that any issue the least controversial would be set aside, which is certainly not the reason why this committee has been set up. That being said, I am aware that we share some common values and I am ready to cooperate in order not to complicate matters uselessly. By the way, I have just demonstrated my willingness to cooperate. So, I maintain my proposal.

● (1335)

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Sweet and then Mr. Silva.

Mr. David Sweet: First off, I appreciate the comments from Mr. Silva regarding the spirit of this committee. I came in during the 39th Parliament. The subcommittee was already running in the 38th. I was enlisted with the whole notion and told clearly that one of the main components of it was consensus. And I think the main thing is what Mr. Silva pointed out, the veritable volume of human rights issues that we can have common ground on and do something significant about.

There's also the fact that we made a decision a few months ago that we would not only focus on human rights infractions, but we would try to identify those places where we could make a significant difference rather than just do a study. I think the phrase was "do a press release", but we would try to do studies in specific areas where the Government of Canada or the people of Canada had a good relationship—or had some kind of relational gravitas—so that our study would actually make a difference. That whole list consistently is held up when we go to several meetings where we've had motions like this introduced. We basically go through an entire meeting debating this kind of thing, which we don't have any evidence of here.

In fact, I have to say that I've asked a couple of staffers about this as well. Maybe Mr. Dorion knows something the government side doesn't know, but these are Canadian human rights offices. There is an inference here that immigrants are going to be...it's a clear inference that the government is hurting immigrants. I don't know if there are any CHRC offices that are exclusively in the domain of immigrants. I thought they were in the domain of all citizens of Canada and anyone who'd like to approach them. That I have difficulty with as well.

Obviously, Mr. Chair, we can't support this motion. If there is some substance to it, and, as I said earlier, if Mr. Dorion thinks it's important and the entire committee does, then we'll call witnesses and see if there is some substance to it, and we'll do a report and send a message to the government that they need to fix it.

The Chair: Mr. Silva indicated that he wanted to speak.

Mr. Mario Silva: I just want to ask Mr. Sweet whether his suggestion was turned into a motion or if it is just a suggestion that we in fact have this motion deferred until after hearing witnesses from the Canadian Human Rights Commission. Is that a motion, or is it—

Mr. David Sweet: If procedurally that's fine, I would put it out there as a motion.

Mr. Mario Silva: That way, I would probably support it, because it doesn't mean I'm not against the motion; it just means that I want to at least hear the Human Rights Commission at that time and after that meeting pronounce myself either in favour or against the motion.

The Chair: Mr. Sweet was proposing a motion. You can't procedurally make a motion right now. Is that what you were—

Mr. David Sweet: If I remember the procedure book, I can move to defer it.

The Chair: Are you moving to defer Mr. Dorion's motion?

Mr. David Sweet: That is correct. I think that's actually a dilatory motion.

Mr. Mario Silva: I believe he's moving the deferral to "after hearing from". In other words, deferral is dependent upon us also getting a hearing from witnesses from the Canadian Human Rights Commission for our committee.

The Chair: Let's go to Mr. Marston.

Mr. Wayne Marston: Would it not be that you're tabling the motion until such time as we've heard witnesses? By tabling, you can raise it from the table at any time. So the motion would come back in its original form, subject to having seen the witness or heard from the witnesses first.

Mr. David Sweet: I'm going to rely on the clerk for the exact terminology in that.

The Chair: Let's do that. What would you suggest?

First, do we have unanimous consent to withdraw or suspend the motion until such time as we've had a witness or several witnesses? Is it a hearing, a meeting? I'm not sure of the exact thing you're looking for.

• (1340)

Mr. David Sweet: I think at least if we're going to impugn the CHRC, we should have the CHRC here so they can defend their decision.

The Chair: Is it the CHRC's decision, or is it the government's decision to—

Mr. David Sweet: No, the CHRC.

The Chair: It's CHRC's own decision. All right. So then it's to withdraw the motion until such time as we've had the CHRC come as a witness before us. That's what the motion is. I didn't word it very elegantly, but you all know what it is.

Do we have unanimous consent to do that? I'll just go around the room and find out if everybody is in agreement.

Mr. Dorion, you are the key one. Are you agreeable to that?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Dorion: There will not be any unanimous consent. Some explanations have already been provided by the government in the House. As parliamentarians, we are quite aware of those explanations. On the other hand...

[*English*]

The Chair: I was actually just looking for a yes or no. Thank you. We'll now find out what we have to do in the event that we don't have unanimous consent.

One option at this point, then, would be to propose an amendment to the motion calling for a witness. But it actually won't work, because that implies....

All right. We will continue debating the motion. Essentially we're back to debating it, and we'll continue to do so until there are no more people who want to speak to it and someone calls the question.

Mr. Silva.

Mr. Mario Silva: Doesn't a motion of deferral go first, before the motion? Somebody has asked for deferral.

The Chair: But our clerk told us we need unanimous consent for that.

Mr. Mario Silva: For deferral?

Mr. Wayne Marston: You didn't have unanimous consent, so you now have to move to a vote.

Mr. Mario Silva: But the motion of deferral always goes before the main motion.

The Chair: What's the answer to that, Julie?

I'm sorry I don't have these things at the tip of my tongue. However, I want to do it right.

If this were one of the committees where everybody fights all the time, I'd have the answer through experience of these things, but you've all been so nice up until now that I've been able to get away with not being as conversant as I ought to be in such matters.

Mr. Wayne Marston: A motion to table is not debatable unless there are instructions with the motion. If there are instructions with the motion, only the instructions are debatable.

The Chair: Mr. Marston, I don't think anybody has actually made a motion to table.

Mr. Wayne Marston: Well, you see, that's the thing with the way the motion was put by Mr. Sweet. That's why I was asking if it was a motion to table or defer, because if it's a motion to table, it becomes entirely different. If it's a motion to defer....

The Chair: Okay. If he makes a motion to table, we then simply have a vote, with no debate on the—

Mr. Wayne Marston: Unless he has instructions, because if his motion to table has instructions about bringing witnesses, then you get to debate those instructions. So we're into a debate.

The Chair: Right. Okay.

Mr. Wayne Marston: The outcome is what we're after here, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I agree. Let's see if we—

Mr. Wayne Marston: Can I offer one more thing?

The Chair: Yes, you may.

Mr. Wayne Marston: There's another wording that I spoke of a few minutes ago that might be palatable to people, without witnesses—if it's not, that's fine—where you have the word “denounce”. If this committee “expressed its very serious concerns” with the decision to close, without assigning guilt or anything, and if the mover of the motion is amenable to it, that might resolve it.

The Chair: We got rid of the word “denounce” already.

Mr. Wayne Marston: Yes, but “deplore”.... What I'm trying to do is to make the motion acceptable to the government side.

•(1345)

The Chair: So effectively you're suggesting an amendment—

Mr. Wayne Marston: Yes, that would change it from “deplore” to “that the committee express its very serious concern with the decision”.

We're not assigning guilt to anybody in this at that point, but we're expressing those concerns plus the—

The Chair: All right. We can find out whether that's agreeable to Mr. Sweet and Mr. Hiebert.

What do you think of Mr. Marston's suggestion?

Mr. David Sweet: Could you remind me again?

Mr. Wayne Marston: I'll offer it again, just for you.

It is that where you have the word “deplore”, it would say “express our very serious concerns with the decision”. It's not assigning guilt; it's saying that we as a committee have concerns.

The Chair: If Mr. Marston were to make a proposed amendment to that effect, would you be comfortable with the amendment and hence with the motion? If not, the floor goes back to you and to the motion you were trying to move.

We have to establish whether it was to table or to defer. He's trying to provide a helpful way out, but we won't abandon the order in which we were doing things, unless this is agreeable to you.

Mr. David Sweet: Well, no, it's not, and it's because, as I said, Mr. Chair, I have some real concerns with “and the government ensure that immigrant complaints will not be penalized”. There's an inference here that there's some action to penalize a group of people.

The Chair: I'm actually not looking for debate right now. What I'm looking for is a yes or no.

Mr. David Sweet: No.

The Chair: So I got a no from you.

Let me ask the next question, Mr. Sweet. Are you making a motion to table, as Mr. Marston asked, which we can simply vote on without debate, or are you making a motion that involves actually making reference to bringing in a witness? One is debatable and one is not.

Mr. David Sweet: Well, a motion to table just means that we'll be dealing with it again, and we could vaporize another meeting. My concern here, Mr. Chair, is that we have important work to do. I don't want to delay things procedurally. My concerns are for the motion and my concern is getting back to the schedule.

I'll defer to Mr. Silva. Maybe he has a bridge here that we can work on.

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Silva.

Mr. Mario Silva: I have two points.

One is that we haven't heard from Mr. Dorion whether he's in agreement with Mr. Marston's motion, which I could support, with his amendment. If Mr. Dorion is in agreement, maybe there will be much more of a consensus on this side.

The second thing is that Mr. Sweet could also decide that what he wants to do is just a deferral motion, which would be voted upon, and at the same time also give the 48-hour notice for the next meeting about what he wants to do with his motion. It could be a motion to call for witnesses. That's a separate motion, and it could be a motion that could be debated at that time and find more approval at that time as well.

The fact of his having moved for deferral doesn't prevent his moving another, additional motion to call for witnesses—not today, but he could decide to table it tonight, if he wants to.

Mr. David Sweet: Well, in fact, Mr. Chair, if we do it in the fashion Mr. Silva described, because we're debating this motion, I think it's germane to the business at hand and can be moved without notice.

Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Chair, can we hear Mr. Dorion's response as to whether he agrees with my proposal?

The Chair: All right. Let's go back to that.

Mr. Dorion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Dorion: In a spirit of cooperation aimed at reaching a consensus, and considering that the really important objective of this motion is to make sure that immigrant complainants are not penalized, I would be willing to accept Mr. Marton's proposal, that is to say to amend my proposal as he suggested.

The Chair: All right. So, in the English version, we will change the motion as follows:

[*English*]

“that the Subcommittee on International Human Rights expresses”—

Mr. Wayne Marston: —“very serious concerns with”—

The Chair: —“the decision”; then we carry on, and everything else is the same as before.

Mr. Wayne Marston: Everything else remains the same. I'm not trying to change the intent.

The Chair: Okay.

[*Translation*]

There will be similar changes in the French version.

[*English*]

First of all, we once again need unanimous consent to do this. We have the mover's consent. What is the sense of the rest of the room? Is everybody agreeable to making that change? We'd then have to go back to debating the motion, but do we have consent to make that change?

Mr. David Sweet: No.

The Chair: All right; it stays with the word “deplore”.

I think that would be one way of doing it. That's without debate.

We're actually now, if you've made the motion, debating the motion, in which case, you would have the floor as the mover.

• (1350)

Mr. Wayne Marston: First of all, I don't have any more to say on it. If we can't reach consensus, I'd like it to go to a vote.

The Chair: All right. Are there any further speakers?

If not, we'll go to a vote.

Mr. David Sweet: I think we had talked about a way to deal with this, with a motion to defer. We had a vote; we thought it needed unanimous consent. I understand that our understanding now is that it needs a simple majority, so I'd like to go back to that.

The Chair: All right.

I'm not sure. I'm going to find out which takes priority here, and then we'll.... One of those two is of a higher order.

Mr. Wayne Marston: May I offer just one point? My motion can be worked on and passed or not passed, but if it were to pass, then the second motion to defer is still something that can take place. At this point, we're talking about—

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Marston, you're quite right. I apologize, and thank you for catching that.

We're not debating the main motion; we're debating your amendment. If there are no more speakers on it, we can still vote on that one; you're right.

Then we come back to the main motion, which can still be deferred, or we could have a vote on the deferral of the main motion.

Am I seeing that anybody wants to speak on the amendment?

Mr. Dorion, did you want to speak to it? No? In that case....

Mr. Hiebert. I'm sorry.

Mr. Russ Hiebert: I have just a question. I guess it's a point of clarification. Is it required that we have unanimous consent to amend the motion, as we did when Mr. Dorion—

The Chair: We need to have unanimous consent to....

No, you're right; you didn't. It was me getting muddled up here.

Mr. Russ Hiebert: We didn't need that to consider—

The Chair: No, we can do it by majority vote, which is what we'll now move to, if there are no more speakers on the amendment. Let's find out.

(Amendment agreed to on division [*See Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: We're now back to the main motion, and this brings us back to Mr. Sweet, if he chooses to move his motion.

Mr. David Sweet: That is the motion to defer, yes.

May I ask a question?

The Chair: Yes, you may. You should be coming up here and giving me advice.

Mr. Wayne Marston: To defer without instructions?

Mr. David Sweet: I think we're going to take the path of deferring it without instructions, and then I'll move a motion to deal with that motion on witnesses later.

The Chair: All right, we're trying deferring right now. I gather there is no debate on this. Let's see how we go on that one.

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

The Chair: All right. We're deferring it.

Mr. David Sweet: I think we need to be fair, and I may need Mr. Silva's help here. Because that was the premise on which he was supportive, I would also move that at a later date we would call witnesses, if it were germane to that motion.

The Chair: Right.

Before we turn to any other committee business—we have five minutes left—the committee—

Mr. Wayne Marston: Are we going to entertain that particular motion now or wait until the next meeting?

The Chair: Do you want to do it right now?

Mr. Wayne Marston: Why don't we resolve this thing?

Mr. Mario Silva: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair. Thank you for pointing out the time, because I have an SO 31, so I have to leave. I offer my apologies

The Chair: All right.

Mr. David Sweet: Mr. Chair, do you have other administrative work to do?

The Chair: I have a couple of things that I'd like to go through, but if you could be brief about this...

Mr. David Sweet: I think if you want to we can go through some other administrative work and we can get something done, rather than just debate...other things.

The Chair: All right. We have a basic scheduling problem. You've all seen the schedule. The problem is that we had set aside two days for consideration of the draft report on the universal periodic review. One of those days is now gone.

We have one hour to do this. I've never actually heard of a committee that's managed to do a report, go through everything, in a single one-hour meeting, and look at the work the researchers have done on it. I think the reasons for that are obvious.

We're going to have to find a way to deal with it. I'm going to suggest that we find some time on the schedule and add a meeting, because all our meetings are taken until the end of the session. We could find another meeting that's not in our regular schedule, perhaps next week or the week after, to deal with anything in regard to the draft report on the universal periodic review, which can't be completed in the scheduled meetings.

We obviously won't go ahead with any meeting until we can find a suitable time, but I'm putting you on notice that we have to find a time to do it.

• (1355)

Mr. David Sweet: Mr. Chair, can we do that by e-mail and try to get some consensus on it?

The Chair: Yes, on all that stuff and finding a mutually convenient time, but I wanted to get that out.

Julie, is there anything else on the list for today that we need to deal with before we give the floor back to Monsieur Dorion or anyone else?

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Graeme Truelove): No.

The Chair: No, that's it. All right.

Monsieur Dorion, s'il vous plaît.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Dorion: Mr. Chair, it had been agreed that we would deal with my three motions. However, I understand that you may want to move to simpler items since we have so little time left. I would like to make sure that this will not mean that consideration of my motions would be postponed indefinitely. Normally, I believe we should consider both motions at the next meeting.

The Chair: Every member of every committee, this one included, has the right to move any motion at any time, even when witnesses are present. If the committee decides to accept those motions... As a member of the committee, you always have the right to move your motions at any time you find most appropriate.

Mr. Jean Dorion: I understand, Mr. Chair, but I would like to know if those motions would be dealt with soon. It seems to me that we had agreed that...

The Chair: Are you referring to motions relating to the offices of the Canadian Human Rights Commission or to other motions?

Mr. Jean Dorion: I am referring to the two motions I mentioned today. I suggest that we set a reasonable period of time to consider them. I would not want to exaggerate but I think 15 minutes for each would be reasonable.

The Chair: It is not up to the chair to set a time period to deal with motions. Any motion is the responsibility of its mover. You have to choose the best moment and that will be based on...

[English]

The guy who introduces it—what do you call that?

The Clerk: *C'est le motionnaire.*

The Chair: *C'est le motionnaire. Merci.*

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Dorion: Since we have already decided to deal with them, it seems to me, logically, that we should continue to do so. However, in a spirit of cooperation, I am willing to accept that we deal with other simpler matters in the few minutes remaining. I am not a procedural expert but it would seem logical to me that we not use the excuse of lack of time to postpone indefinitely the consideration of motions that the committee had already agreed to deal with.

[English]

The Chair: You can put it on the floor at the next meeting. It's up to you. It's not my call to say when it should be done.

I see Mr. Marston.

Mr. Wayne Marston: I was just going to ask.... I presume these motions were submitted to the clerk with 48 hours' notice. They're open to be moved at the next meeting by the member. Presumably, if we have guest witnesses who are there, have been invited to come, at that point it would be following their testimony. That's been our approach right along.

The Chair: As a practical matter, we rarely have time after witnesses. This is a fundamental problem we have, that it's hard to find time. But the point I'm trying to make is, it's not my call. It's never the chair's call to say when motions should be introduced. If it's the will of the committee—and I'm not going to initiate or inhibit the committee making this decision—the committee could say let's set aside extra time at a specific time, but I won't act; I'll take direction from the committee on that matter.

I've already indicated we're going to have to make some adjustments in order to give time for this matter, because this is what happens. Although everybody is within their rights to move motions, they take time and the time isn't available for other things.

Mr. Sweet, and then we really are out of time, unless someone wants to move a motion to extend our sitting.

• (1400)

Mr. David Sweet: Mr. Chair, certainly I want to make sure that my words are not taken with any disrespect at all, because as you have said, and rightly so, every member has the right to move a motion and to interact with the committee as he or she sees fit. However, I think it is appropriate for us to think about the

diminishment of our capability of getting on with the work on the schedule when we deplete our meetings on contentious issues that take debate.

The Chair: We are basically out of time, so I'm going to assume there's no further business and we are dismissed.

The meeting is adjourned.

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