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—
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Mr. Kevin Sorenson

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• (1720)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.)): Members, we're no longer in camera.

We have a motion. Before we start on Mr. Dewar's motion—it's the first motion—I've had a verbal request from Mr. Obhrai. He wants to remove the last motion, about having the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development. The main estimates will be discussed in the House of Commons, so we don't need to have him here.

Do we all agree?

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Did we not pass a motion to have the minister in front of the committee?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): Yes.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): I am removing the one on the estimates, not that one. That motion is passed now.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Right. So we're going to have him in front of this committee?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): Yes, but we removed the one for the main estimates.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Of course. Yes, I assumed that was the case.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): Monsieur Lebel—

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Chair, I had my hand up first, before we—

Mr. Bernard Patry: About what?

Mr. Paul Dewar: About the first order of business.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): Yes, but I want to see what Monsieur Lebel wants to discuss.

Oui, monsieur Lebel.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Lebel (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): I would like to speak to my motion, Mr. Chairman. I've looked at our proposed agenda for the next few weeks. Obviously, there are a number of very important and timely issues listed, but I also see that time is marching on. I tabled a motion concerning the Summit of La Francophonie in which I requested the following:

That [...] the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, under the framework of a proactive evaluation of the Summit of heads of State and Government of Countries Using French as a Common Language (usually called the Summit of La Francophonie), scheduled for Quebec City on October 17-19, 2008 invite officials to appear before it [...]

That way, the committee would be informed of the preparations under way for the Summit. Canada's image is on the line here. Official languages are a very important consideration for all members of Parliament. I am a member of the Standing Committee on Official Languages and every time the committee meets, I see just how sensitive this issue is.

I've looked at the order in which the motions will be considered. Most of them call for explanations as to why certain decisions were made, or ask that certain facts be acknowledged. However, time is flying by. The OIF is comprised of 55 states and governments. Therefore, we can expect 55 member states and governments and 13 observer nations to descend on Quebec City. Officials are being welcomed here. I want some assurance, as do all MPs, that preparations are set for this summit. I want some assurance that Canada...

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): Sir, the only thing you can do is table a new motion asking that your motion be dealt with before the others, as Mr. Dewar has done. That's your only option.

Mr. Denis Lebel: Mr. Chairman, with my preamble, I was hoping that my motion would move up... Given the chronological order, my motion will come up for debate after the Summit has taken place. Therefore, I'm asking that you move my motion up the list so that we can debate it and ensure that Canada extends a proper welcome to those who will be attending the summit.

[English]

Mr. Paul Dewar: On a point of order, Chair, if I may, I had my hand up immediately.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): Yes, I know. You've got your point of order.

Mr. Paul Dewar: This happened last time, and Mr. Sorenson said he was sorry, he didn't see me.

I said this before we went out of camera; I had my hand up and was recognized. I just want to be clear on this.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): Sure, you're clear.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Okay.

So if you had a point of order, fine, but I was the first one with my hand up.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): You're right. You're right about this. I'll recognize you....

Mr. Obhrai, do you have a point of order or what? No?

Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Thank you.

Mr. Chair, first of all, I want to table the motion I had in front of the committee, that was to bring forward my motion on having the minister in front of us—so relax over there—and wanted to get to my motion that I had in the next order of business, and that was the motion we'd normally be looking at. That would be the following:

That pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development report to the House the following recommendations; that the Government adopt the recommendations put forward in the *Advisory Group Report: National Roundtables on Corporate Social Responsibility and the Canadian Extractive Industry in Developing Countries*, and that the government announces its proposals for the implementation of the Report's recommendations.

I'd like to just move into that motion, as was scheduled.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): He put his motion. Okay, that's his motion. The first one is debatable.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: No, no, that's not fair.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): Go ahead on your point of order.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Lebel raised a point of order, exactly what Mr. Dewar did last time when he brought it before the foreign affairs committee, where he asked that his motion be jumped up to the front. That was defeated by the committee.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): But that's the first one I have on the notice—

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: No, no, no; on a point of order, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Dewar's motion has been on this order paper for a long time, number one. Last time, he jumped; he got his motion up in the front by asking that he be given permission to do that.

Mr. Paul Dewar: That's not a point of order.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Of course it's a point of order. That's what Mr. Lebel asked. Why are you ignoring Mr. Lebel and not doing his motion in the same manner? He asked to be put up in the front because it is time-sensitive. That's the whole issue.

You can't play one game on that side and the other game on this side here.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): I just want to let you know, Mr. Obhrai, that Mr. Dewar was the first one who asked to talk. I was really thinking that Mr. Lebel had something else, which is why I asked him to talk. Mr. Dewar has the floor for the moment.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Chair, I've simply tabled my motion, and it's in sequence with what our business is. I guess debate ensues.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): We are debating the first motion. We've already read it, concerning the round tables on corporate social responsibility and the Canadian extractive industry.

Mr. Obhrai, you wanted to talk on this motion?

• (1725)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Of course. I want to first of all register my protest that you did not see my friend's hand go up.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): You've done it.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: His motion is of importance.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): They're all important.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: No, this is not that important. It's not that time-sensitive. Mr. Lebel's is more time-sensitive. So that is the process. Anyway, now that you've made a decision, we'll have to proceed with the decision you have made.

Mr. Chairman, let's talk on this motion for a minute. The government introduced this round table conference that took place on this, and under the government's initiative—

An hon. member: It started with the previous government.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Good man; you want to give them credit. It started, and we continued with it. This government continued with it because we felt that this was an extremely important subject—corporate social responsibility of Canadian companies—specifically with regard to the issue of the global environment.

I want it put down, in terms of this advisory group and the ones that came out, that Canadian companies have played a very major leading role in corporate social responsibility, and have stood up to some of the stringent expectations of the Canadian public. Where there have been little cracks, the companies have policed themselves very well. Other companies have taken issue with these other companies that have not really stood up to this factor.

Going on that factor, the government welcomes the report of the round table advisory group, which presented a consensus on these recommendations on how to do it.

As I've mentioned, there are many companies down there, and one of them is Talisman. They have done a great job of policing themselves, and the government is pretty happy with the round table and the recommendations that have come out.

Therefore, the government is looking at the response. This response deals with the extractive industry, so therefore it falls under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Trade and the Minister of Natural Resources. At the current time, both the Minister of Trade and the Minister of Natural Resources are studying this and preparing the government's response. Once this report is finalized and approved, it will be tabled.

Given the fact that the government is preparing the response to that round table conference at this time, it becomes very difficult for us to support this motion until the government's report is finalized. Once the report is finalized, the government will honour its commitment to report back to Parliament on the proposed course of action, which is what is required.

Mr. Speaker, for us at this time, it is premature to respond to this motion, considering the fact that the government is in the process of preparing a response.

What I would like to say is that we are going to oppose this motion, not on the basis that we oppose the content of the round table, but on the basis that the response is being finalized, and it has not been completed. Once the report is finalized, it will be presented to Parliament. We believe it's premature.

On that basis, Mr. Speaker, the government cannot support this motion.

Mr. Paul Dewar: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): Yes, but I'm not "Mr. Speaker". We're all speakers here.

• (1730)

Mr. Paul Dewar: On a point of order, the report is done.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): Yes. The report has been done since March 29, 2007.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: We're talking about the government's response here.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Yes, which you've said for a year now is going to be ready soon.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: The government's response—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): The government's response is not there.

Mr. Paul Dewar: We're waiting for Godot here, I guess.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): The round table report was tabled on March 29, 2007. Today Mr. Blaney, one of your members, was speaking outside concerning a government response.

Mr. Goldring, and then we're going to end. We started a couple of minutes late.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): In that vein, if the government is in the process of preparing a response right now, I don't see how this motion can fit into it in asking for the government

to jump from preparing a response to announcing proposals for the implementation. I think the first thing the government would be doing would be preparing the response to it, looking to see what is in the response to it, long before they can start announcing proposals for the implementation of it. Maybe the response is in such a fashion or such an order that they will not be able to initiate proposals for implementation.

How do we know what the position of the government is until we have the response from the government? They're in the process of preparing this response. I don't see how we can jump ahead and ask the government to implement something they haven't even responded to or they haven't thoroughly looked at and gone through, just simply because we're instructed by this committee that we're going to instruct the government to implement something they haven't even looked at yet.

I think everything is all out of order—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): I see it's 5:30; I'm going to close this discussion.

Yes, Mr. Dewar, go ahead.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I want to make sure, when we continue committee business, that this will be continued.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry): This is going to be number one until the House recesses in June.

Thank you. Merci.

The meeting is adjourned.

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