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Mr. Bernard Patry

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Wednesday, December 15, 2004

• (1535)

[Translation]

The Chair (Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.)): Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are meeting to consider the five-year report of Rights & Democracy.

It is our pleasure to welcome as a witness the President of Rights & Democracy, Mr. Jean-Louis Roy.

[English]

We also have with us, from Rights & Democracy, Mr. Wayne MacKay, interim chairperson of the board of directors; Lydia Hwitsum, member of the board of directors;

[Translation]

Ms. Marie-France Cloutier, Director of Administration and Resources

[English]

Razmik Pannossian, interim director of policy, programs and planning; Iris Almeida, special adviser to the president, policy development and parliamentary relations; and also Mr. Lloyd Lipsett, senior assistant to the president.

Welcome.

[Translation]

Welcome.

I believe that the president,

[English]

Mr. Roy, would like to say something at the beginning, and after that we'll start with Mr. MacKay.

[Translation]

We will start with Mr. Roy.

You have the floor, please. Thank you for coming today.

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy (President, Rights and Democracy): Mr. Chairman, thank you for inviting us. I know that members are nearing the end of this session and we are grateful for your invitation to appear today before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

Mr. Chairman, you just saved me a minute out of the short time I am allowed by identifying each of the members of the delegation who are with me. I would just like to underline the presence of the interim chairperson of our board of directors, Mr. Wayne MacKay,

who is also a former president of Mount Allison University and professor of law at Dalhousie University. I would also like to single out Ms. Lydia Hwitsum of British Columbia, who is a member of our board.

Mr. Chairman, if I may be allowed, I will refer some of the questions you may have to the colleagues who are with me today. The presence today of two members of our board of directors gives me an opportunity to let members of this committee know that we have a board of directors that is representative of all regions of Canada, and I might add of many regions of the world, since we have one member from Asia, one from Latin America and one from Africa.

Mr. Chairman, as you noted, we are here to answer the questions from members of the committee following the tabling of the five-year review report.

[English]

five-year review of Rights & Democracy. As you know, in our law there is a provision that each five years there is an independent review of our activities and our report, and that is sent to the foreign affairs department and minister and then tabled to Parliament and discussed here in this committee.

We have sent to you, I think, three documents: the five-year review itself, the response of Rights & Democracy to the five-year review, and a general presentation under my signature about the actual activities of Rights & Democracy.

[Translation]

We do not have much time—you allow us 10 minutes—and I would like the Chair of our board as well as Ms. Hwitsum to say a few words. I will just make a few brief comments. The mandate that was given our institution by the Parliament of Canada 15 years ago is still, today, extraordinarily relevant and extraordinarily necessary.

As you know, vast human rights movements swept the world after the Second World War. We now have a set of doctrines arising out of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the various conventions and protocols that followed. The huge debate taking place in the Islamic world, in Latin America, in Africa, in Central and Eastern Europe—as well as in Asia, I would add—is about liberties, how to respect concretely the whole set of human rights, the civil and political rights that we know so well here—we are meeting in a Parliament—, but also social, economic and cultural rights.

We were given this mandate 15 years ago. We have developed since that time close linkages with civil societies and governments of a large number of countries around the world. You will see in the reports we have submitted that we are in Afghanistan. We did a tremendous amount of work in Morocco over the last two years. We recently held a seminar in Jordan with some of the most respected representatives of the civil society of eight major countries in this part of the world.

In coming years we want to become, in this Arabic-speaking and Islamic area of the world, a force supporting those who, with great courage and determination, fight for freedom in these parts of the world.

In the present international context, in terms of this vast region of the world which encompasses part of Asia, the Middle East, North Africa, Canada still enjoys a great deal of credibility which allows us to be active in this part of the world. Despite everything that we hear and that is being said, and which is partly true, there are huge debates going on everywhere. We have seen it in Morocco, we see it in Algeria, in Jordan, in Egypt, in Indonesia. Everywhere, there is ongoing debate about liberty, respect of human rights, including obviously respect of the rights of women and of the rights to social and economic development.

The same thing can be said about Africa. Africa is a continent undergoing tremendous change: in 15 years, there will be 1.2 billion Africans; new institutions are being created such as the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, one of the most active human rights commissions in the world, a continental commission that is working presently on creating a human rights court for the African continent, as well as on the adoption of an additional protocol on the rights of women in this part of the world.

We support these new institutions in Africa and we also work with many countries on this continent, in addition to the Middle East and North Africa.

I would like to talk about Asia, this immense region which is of such great importance to the world and to Canada and where we have all sorts of activities. I would like to thank the committee and its sub-committee on human rights and international development which welcomed, 10 or 15 days ago, Prime Minister Sein Win of the government in exile of Burma. We have been working with his government for 10 years.

● (1540)

We have supported this government for 10 years. We were very pleased that Prime Minister Sein Win was invited to appear before the sub-committee and that its members passed a resolution which was endorsed by the standing committee itself. He was able to come to Canada with our assistance. We organized this visit, the media relations, the meetings with Parliamentarians. So I want to thank the sub-committee and this committee.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to tell you that we are presently undertaking a full review of our activities in Asia. I wanted to have with us today Ms. Iris Almeida, which is a senior member of our team and whom I asked in September to take six months, from September to January, to come up with a project, an action program for Asia, in view of the new importance of this area of the world and

the huge changes it undergoes. You know these changes, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Committee: the huge presence today of China, the development underway in India, but also the huge problems that exist there, with trafficking in human beings, trafficking in women, the issues of minorities everywhere and the issues of Aboriginal peoples in almost all large countries of Asia.

Mr. Chairman, I do not have time to go into details. I would have liked to tell you about the work we are doing in the Caribbean, especially in Haiti, but not only there, also in Latin America. I would like to tell you about the work we are doing in Canada.

We have tried, over the last few years, to organize in a more structured, systematic fashion our linkages with Canada, as the mandate of Rights & Democracy allows us to do. We have created a network of 40 delegations for Rights & Democracy in 40 universities in all provinces of Canada, which is an extremely active network. We want to twin Calgary University with a university in Africa or Latin America. We just twinned the University of Moncton with the University of Ouagadougou as part of the Sommet de la Francophonie. We are going to twin Sherbrooke University with a university in Morocco. We are going to twin York with a university in Thailand. We want to create an Internet forum for young Canadians and youth from all over the world around democratic values and the evolution of human rights.

We also established systematically linkages with all of the human rights commissions of Canada, of the territories — including Nunavut, which has a new commission — and also those of the provinces and the federal one. For the first time, two weeks ago, in Toronto, the Assembly of Canadian Human Rights Commissions welcomed the 2004 recipient of the John-Humphrey Award, Ms. Godeliève Mukasarasi.

In the documents we submitted, we present a request for an adjustment to our budget. I believe members of the Committee will easily understand what the freeze of our resources, literally a ten-year freeze with only a very small increase in the last three years, means. We hope that, following the recommendation of the last five-year review, the committee will recommend to Parliament an increase in the parliamentary allocation to Rights & Democracy. I repeat, our resources have literally been frozen for 10 years. We need additional resources in order to maintain our operations at their present level, to increase our presence in Asia, in the Middle East, in the Maghreb and the Arabic world, as I just described, but also to continue with our advocacy role—you have the publications in front of you—in Canada and with the international organizations, including those of the United Nations family of organizations.

•(1545)

I repeat, to conclude, Mr. Chairman, that the mandate that was given us by Parliament joins democratic values and human rights. Many institutions were created around democracy. Many others were created around human rights. But very few in the world have been created around both human rights and democratic values. I believe that today, in the world such as it is evolving, the large debates about liberties cover both of these dimensions of community life, of life in a society: the organization of democracy, of democratic public institutions, but also respect for the full range of human rights.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like Mr. MacKay, and then Ms. Hwitsum, to very briefly speak to other parts of our report to your committee. Thank you.

•(1550)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Roy. I will now give the floor to Mr. MacKay.

[English]

Mr. Wayne MacKay (Interim Chair, Board of Directors, Rights & Democracy): Thank you very much.

I will try to be brief. I know we mainly want to dialogue. Let me first of all say that personally it's been a great privilege to be a member of the Rights & Democracy board, which is quite a unique agency, as our president indicated, including three international representatives. I think it's a very important Canadian agency, and I guess that's what we're here to talk about today.

My own experience has been just for two and a half years, but in my experience, certainly there's been a move to focus and look very strategically at what we should and can do with quite limited resources. You've certainly heard the president comment toward the end about the importance of that. But I do want to assure you, in response to the five-year review, that there has been a real focus, in my observation, and an emphasis on goals and evaluation, which is one of the things they commented on. President Roy, in his report, which is in tab 1, goes through that in quite a lot of detail, so I simply refer you to that.

On the main international development mandate as well, I believe that's very clearly set out in our president's report. I would just emphasize again the importance of strategic interventions, identifying that with limited resources you can't be all things to all people, but looking at places like the Middle East, Africa, and Asia as central places for Canada and the world over the next time.

In the few moments I have, I just want to make a few comments about what one might call the more domestic or inward-focused mandate of Rights & Democracy, which you might describe as fostering a human rights culture within Canada itself. One part of that is increased dialogue and links with various government and parliamentary agencies. I think this is an important development, one that has to be handled carefully since Rights & Democracy is an independent agency created and funded by government, but independent, which is one of the things that I think gives it its credibility in dealing with various places throughout the world. But that does not mean we should not have consultation, dialogue and, where appropriate, cooperation with government agencies on matters

of mutual agreement. There are quite a number of those, so that's a really important development, bearing in mind the independent role.

At page 22—and you don't need to look at this—the annual report talks about some of these kinds of activities, including appearing before committees. I believe over the last year Rights & Democracy has intervened in parliamentary committees on Haiti, on Islam, and on generic drugs. In the relatively near future, I believe January, the committee reviewing the anti-terrorism bill and dealing with issues of public safety and national security will again have the benefit of some input from this agency. So that's one aspect.

Also, as the president rightly indicated, so I'll go through this very quickly, we have been making new links with other human rights agencies in Canada—the Canadian Human Rights Commission, the provincial human rights commissions, and CASHRA, the Canadian Association of Statutory Human Rights Agencies—and we have already seen some positive cooperation on things such as hosting the human rights award winner, Godeliève Mukasarasi, who is a rather amazing and inspiring Rwandan woman, who gave lectures across a good part of Canada dealing with violence against women, as a Rwandan example of that, and the use of violence against women as an instrument of war and genocide. I think the cooperation and co-sponsoring with local human rights agencies worked very effectively there.

Also, just very quickly, another important internal component, the university delegations or the Rights & Democracy network, has been remarkably successful. When I was president of Mount Allison University, Rights & Democracy came and started a student group there, which then held a conference on a whole host of international foreign affairs issues that our president and the then chair attended, and I think it was quite impressive.

The master stroke of our link to universities is that it's being done with students. Rather than starting with administrations or professors or others who may not be quite as innovative or creative, we're actually starting where universities really happen, which is with students. That is then used as way to link back to professors and others. Those have been remarkably successful right across the country. As our president indicated, we now have somewhere in the vicinity of 40 universities where there are small bits of funding and they're basically turned loose to be creative.

•(1555)

In January, a number of universities are having fora on Canada's foreign policy—it might be quite interesting for parliamentarians to hear what they would say about that—and also some, I believe, in February on aboriginal rights. The president has commented on the eventual internationalization of that by linking universities in Canada with others in the developing world.

Finally, let me come to the important question of increased funding. I will not add much to what our president has said, other than to say that when you read through the documents and see the rather impressive work that the centre has done on limited resources that have been frozen over the last decade and a bit, one can only imagine how much more could be done with some increased resources. I think there really is a strong case for that, but I'm sure we'll come to that in questions.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacKay.

We'll pass briefly to Ms. Hwitsum.

Ms. Lydia Hwitsum (Member, Board of Directors, Rights & Democracy): [*Witness speaks in her native language*] Thank you.

[*Witness speaks in her native language*] Thank you all very much for your presence here.

[*Witness speaks in her native language*] It's very good to see you all and have the opportunity to be here.

[*Witness speaks in her native language*] I'm from the Cowichan people on the west coast of British Columbia and I'm pleased to see each and every one of you.

I know we have very little time. I want to touch on two areas: one, with respect to the women's thematic; and two, with respect to the indigenous peoples' thematic. I want to address a couple of quick issues to identify for your benefit some of the work that's actually happening in this area.

I just want to acknowledge all of the members of the board and of the Rights & Democracy that are here today, as well.

First of all, with respect to the indigenous thematic and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, I want to highlight very briefly the good work that Rights & Democracy has done in supporting the Canadian delegation in taking a lead in this area, but further in encouraging indigenous peoples' involvement with respect to the goal of a declaration with respect to the rights of indigenous people. Certainly we all know what the status of the declaration is, but it is important to highlight the role that Rights & Democracy has played and will continue to play with respect to this goal.

Secondly, with respect to the women's thematic, that links as well to some of the country work that Rights & Democracy is involved in, particularly Rights & Democracy's work with women in conflict situations. I'll speak specifically to Afghanistan and the intervention that Rights & Democracy has undertaken and continues to undertake there. Through this intervention with respect to women's rights, Rights & Democracy has supported women's rights in the constitution and peace building within Afghanistan, more generally supporting the struggle of Afghanistan women to assert their fundamental rights and to play an active role in the peace building, as it happens in Afghanistan.

Further, to this end—you'll see a number in the document, but it has increased since then—Rights & Democracy has provided support to over 50 women's NGOs in Afghanistan, continuing the

developing work in that country. Rights & Democracy certainly intends to continue working in that area.

I know time is brief, so this is only some of the valuable work that I can point to that's being done by Rights & Democracy. I respectfully submit this in support of the submissions of Rights & Democracy.

[*Witness speaks in her native language*]

Thank you all and each one of you for your attention.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Before asking any questions from our members, I must remind our witnesses that it's five minutes of questions and answers. That means I would like to have very precise and short questions and to have precise and short answers, please.

We'll start with the opposition.

Mr. Menzies, please.

● (1600)

Mr. Ted Menzies (MacLeod, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our learned witnesses appearing before us today.

I guess I'd start out by suggesting that maybe Calgary University should be twinned with Shanghai or Beijing, or something like that; I think that would be quite appropriate. There are lots of choices, and I think there are some opportunities there.

To go quickly to questions, 15 years is your history. Can you give me a way that you gauge your successes and, of course, your failures? There have to be some places where you feel you haven't been successful. The first one that comes to mind is what's on everybody's mind these days, Ukraine, and especially coming up to December 26. How active have you been in promoting democracy there? I know some other groups have been there. I would suggest we haven't got a great success rate yet. We're hoping for a better outcome the second time around. Can you walk us through that process of how you gauge successes and failures?

I guess one comment I would make—and I'd like some feedback on this—is on the report's mixed reviews of focus. That's one place where I've been critical of CIDA itself, for its lack of focus. The report comments about R and D lacking some focus in areas. Could you just make a comment about that?

And with one specific issue, given that we're talking about democracy, what role are you suggesting we play in Cuba? It's a pretty close-by country, and there are going to be some issues coming up in the next few years in Cuba.

I'll leave it at that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy: Mr. Menzies, I will transmit to our delegation in Calgary

[*English*]

your proposal that they be twinned with Shanghai or Beijing. They will vote on that. I cannot answer for them.

You asked about success and about the difficulty of failure. This is a domain in which sometimes it's quite difficult to measure success, but sometimes it's very clear. In the five-year review you have the story of what we did in Kenya. This country was a one-party system, a dictatorship. We went there with a philosophy that we still believe is a good one, and that is, to work with all the components of civil society—human rights activists, women's groups, lawyers' organizations—and also to try to approach institutions.

In the case of Kenya, I think we can say—and that's in the report that brings us together today—that we were instrumental in the new constitution, number one; and number two, in the rights and democracy we played a role. I was not president at the time and don't take credit for it, but we played a significant role in the capacity of this society to enter into a multi-party system, to have a free election, and then to have a democratic government. This is quite clear in the case of Kenya.

We've just come back from Morocco. Actually, I think the committee went to some Muslim countries; we were told in Morocco that you were there a year ago, or a year and a half. We worked with L'Espace Associatif marocain, a group of more than 75 Moroccan NGOs who have chosen to believe the time has come in this country—a country where human rights were treated with disrespect, to say the least—to take a chance with the promises made by the new head of state, by the new king. They have kept their critical attitude, but they have decided they will support the notion of building a democratic culture and democratic institutions in their country. We've been with them for a year and a half. We have supported nine regional fora in Morocco about democratic culture in all parts of the country. We have fine studies done by the best minds in Morocco, from their university, about democracy, women's rights, and independence of the judiciary, published in Arabic, English, and French. There was a national forum on democracy that we organized jointly with our Moroccan friends.

So I wouldn't like to say that this was our success, but we did contribute in this country something of significance.

We were in Jordan in June, as I mentioned earlier, with representatives of eight countries from this part of the world—from Iran to Egypt, from Lebanon to Syria, from Iraq to Morocco—to talk about diversity and minority rights. I think we have planned something of importance for the future in that part of the world. We want to work in that part of the world to support, as I mentioned, those who fight for freedom there.

In terms of failure, I would like to comment on the difficulty of the new democracies in Latin America and Africa. People in Latin America worked a lot—fought—for democracy in the 1980s. In Africa they did the same, but in the 1990s. Now they're looking at their situation and saying, this new system that was supposed to bring us social progress and economic development has not delivered as much as we thought it would. Some of them are walking away. We have to come back to them and say, don't forget that people were put in jail, don't forget that people disappeared when there were no civil and political rights. That's an ongoing process and a difficult process.

●(1605)

Is it a success for us to have sustained in the last ten years the Burma government in exile? No, it's still in exile, but we were one of the first organizations in the world to support that government. We're still doing it, hoping that at some point those people will gain—or “regain”, because they were elected in 1990—their freedom and their capacity to build democratic institutions, and democratic government.

I'd like to make a comment on Cuba. I am very pleased you mentioned it; I have it in my notes. Personally, I've found that Canadians have been too silent about the violation of human rights in Cuba. I have followed the position of the Europeans and their institutions, and the various governments in Europe, and other governments in Latin America. We have been too silent. When this autocratic government put more than 75 people in jail in the same week, and those people were human rights activists, we should have done something more powerful than just talk about it amongst ourselves.

Canadians have been too weak about the Cuban situation. I know why, I know the reasoning of many of my friends, but personally I have many reservations about the general silence we have observed in our country—and there have been some exceptions—about Cuba. At some point in the future, I think Cuba may look at us and say, where were you in 2002, 2004, 2005, when we were put in jail, tortured, and all of that?

In terms of focus, Mr. Menzies, it's difficult, to be frank with you. We have a mandate that is very huge, with needs all over the place. We work in four fields, and the first is democratic development, which is the basis behind what we do in the world. Democratic development includes, for us, the full respect of human rights.

We also have—and this is very substantial for us—one of the best teams concerning women's rights. We have quite a group of women working in a lot of networks all over the world. We have had offices in Kabul, as Lydia mentioned, for the last two and a half years. I think we have been courageous and we have been innovative concerning women's rights. People are looking at rights and democracy work on this very significant question of the situation of women, and the rights of women, in war situations. And this is not just in Rwanda; it's all over the place where there are conflicts.

So it's difficult to focus, but we want to invest more and more in democratic development. If we have a little more money, we will make more of those studies that I just mentioned in the context of Morocco.

●(1610)

[Translation]

The Chair: Mr. President, I will stop you there.

[English]

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy: Third, we're working on aboriginal rights. We have activities related to the creation of this international platform for discussion, among the youth of the world, about human rights and democracy values.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Roy. We will now go to Ms. Lalonde.

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome to all. I generally want to thank you for the work you do and also for your support of the government in exile of Burma. It is thanks to you that we have been able to have these people here last week. I also want to thank you for the work you do with all political parties.

I essentially have two questions. I would like you to elaborate on something, for the record. People do not necessarily know that your uniqueness is due to the fact that, while being funded almost exclusively by the Canadian government, you are independent.

You have a mandate, but you must carry it out in an independent fashion. This gives you a great deal of freedom but also brings with it a huge responsibility. How do you exercise both this freedom and this responsibility, especially in the context of new states, that you yourself qualified as fragile? You mention this in your brief which, by the way, is very well written in French. This is heartening.

Next, I would like to know for what reason and what purpose you ask for additional funding. My colleagues know that I tabled a motion to grant your request using the proper wording that is required in this committee.

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy: Thank you for your two questions, Madam.

I want to state that we are extremely committed to maintain the independence of our institution as well as to establish balanced and equal relationships with all political parties represented in Canada's Parliament.

Whether it be with the New Democratic Party, the Conservative Party, the Bloc Québécois or the Liberal Party, in other words with all political families that are represented in Parliament, I believe we have been able to establish a relationship of trust. It is a situation that is both rather paradoxical and unique.

For example, last year I had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Stockwell Day. He was accompanied by Mr. MacKay. We discussed in depth what we are trying to do in the world. I met with representatives of the Bloc Québécois, as well as with Ms. McDonough and representatives of the Liberal Party.

We were created by Parliament. There is a sort of urban myth going around about

[English]

about Rights and Democracy. People are referring to us as an NGO. We're not an NGO; we're an institution created by the Canadian Parliament. We have close links with all NGOs in Canada, important NGOs in Canada, and NGOs elsewhere in the world, but we're a Canadian institution, created by the Canadian Parliament, and we receive our budget from Parliament.

The fact that we receive our budget from Parliament has two consequences. First, we have to report to Parliament, and second, we have *le vérificateur général du Canada* in our institution on a yearly basis. That's the rule, that's normal.

What will we do? Well, how do we define or interpret our mandate? We do it in close consultation, as I just mentioned, with

political parties. We also have a relationship with various departments of this government—foreign affairs, CIDA, justice, aboriginal rights, aboriginal affairs, labour. We're in close contact with many Canadian departments and other institutions, federal and provincial or territorial.

As you know, we have been in a very severe situation. What has happened to us in terms of our budget in the last years is equivalent to a cut of 20% to 25% of our very limited resources. We are somewhere at the limit of that. We could not react to what was going on in Haiti when we were asked to do things in that part of the world. With the limited resources we have, we can't react as we'd like to in the Islamic world, or redefine a Canadian presence in Asia, in terms of the debate going on there in terms of human rights and democratic values.

We need to invest. I need to have a discussion with my board, at some point, if we have more money, but we need one or two new agents for Asia. I'm sure of that. We need someone who speaks the Chinese language, and we need to have a full-dimension dialogue with the countries that have Mandarin as an official language.

We also have to rebuild what we had in the past. We were obliged to cut the research team, limited as it was; we do need to have these kinds of people in an institution like ours.

I would say also that if we had more money we would look seriously, very seriously, at developing...and Mr. Menzies asked a question about focus. When you look all over the world at the problems, at the incivility that is growing in Africa, in certain parts of central Asia, in certain parts of Latin America, in and around Colombia, all over the place, and at the minority rights questions, at some point we'll have to look at what we can do. We've had quite an experience in this country with minority rights, and I think maybe we have to try to not export, perhaps, but at least help other people in the world to deal with their minority crisis or minority situation.

I would like very much also to have one or two agents full time on the Middle East. We really need that. Few countries can do in that part of the world what we can do as Canadians. It's difficult for others—for obvious reasons, which you know better than I do—but we still can go there, and we're welcome there, to work with those people who in difficult circumstances are fighting for the establishment of institutions, for the recognition of rights, and for freedom in general.

If we received a little more money, we would spend part of that money on Africa. I would like to tell this committee that in the context of NEPAD, Canada has decided to invest a huge amount of money in Africa—\$500 million, three times. There is not a dollar being spent on human rights, not a dollar on human rights. This is profoundly unacceptable, considering that young people in Africa are fighting for their rights, women are fighting for their rights. The media—the African media, the independent media—are looking at what is going on in their country in a new light, in a new capacity to evaluate their situation.

•(1615)

We will spend part of that money to help the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. We will do more of those country studies that we did in Morocco. We would like to do it in Algeria. We would like to do it in Indonesia. We would like to do it in Argentina. We would like to do it at some point for Haiti also, and other countries.

•(1620)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Roy.

We will now go to Mr. MacAulay.

[*English*]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): Thank you very much, and welcome to all of you.

Just a few questions. I know time is very short.

In your presentation you indicate that you have a phase-out strategy for Rights & Democracy in areas where you plan to phase out your activities. I'd just like you to expand a bit on that. Is it just on dollars only, or are you planning to narrow your focus into different areas, more specific areas around the world, in order to be more efficient or to have more success?

I'd also like you to expand a bit on what you plan to do with universities. You were going to have universities twinned with universities around the world. There is a great interest today.... I don't know if you touch much on the Ukraine or not, but the world is so interested in the Ukraine. Ted mentioned the Ukraine, but I think you could elaborate a bit more on what has taken place and what role could be played in the Ukraine in order to bring about democracy in that area.

In general, perhaps you could just more or less, other than the dollar area, expand on that and on how you plan to change your focus. It looks to me as if there is some change on focus.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy: Thank you for these two or three questions, Mr. MacAulay. Forgive me for having given such a short answer to one of your colleagues who asked about Ukraine. So let me say a few words about it now.

[*English*]

I would not like to talk on budgetary matters all the time.

[*Translation*]

The freeze of our resources over the last 10 years has, among other effects, greatly constrained our ability to act when unforeseen situations arise.

[*English*]

In terms of urgent action, we have very little resources to intervene when urgent action is needed in this part of the world, in that country, in this situation. We want to restore that capacity.

We have a \$4.8 million budget on a yearly basis. We have spaces to rent, we have people to pay, and we have the administrative costs

that you can imagine. We are trying to put more and more money into programs, but there is a limit somewhere.

In the case of Ukraine, to be frank with you, we are not there. We have not been present in the last years in central and eastern Europe. Our mandate is for underdeveloped countries mainly—not exclusively, but mainly. In the case of Ukraine, if we'd had limited but certain resources for urgent action, we could have moved in and tried to help.

So there is quite a severe limitation on our capacity to act in urgent situations. We put some money in Haiti, because it was an urgent situation, but we have around \$200,000 for urgent action. There is a limit somewhere.

You also asked about universities. We've tried in the last few years at Rights and Democracy to find a way to be connected with Canadian society, outside of the NGOs—with the Canadian public, in a way. We had to focus a little bit, because of resources and also because of methodology, if we wanted to have results. We looked at what kind of answer we'd get from university students. We got a tremendous answer, an extraordinary answer. We were able to create, in a short period of time, in a year and a half, almost 40 delegations in Canada.

What do those delegations do, really? Well, they propose to us some projects. We try to help them financially—very limited help, but we help them. I'd like to give you two or three examples of what they did last year.

At a B.C. university, they organized a regional conference. All western provinces were represented there, talking about health as a human right.

•(1625)

[*Translation*]

Students at Laval University decided to transform their campus into a refugee camp in order to get people to feel how it is.

[*English*]

Students from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick together created a publication on international affairs, on democracy and human rights in the world. Last year, students from the Université de Sherbrooke

[*Translation*]

organized a youth debate session about capital punishment. This was related to the Second World Congress against Capital Punishment.

[*English*]

There's a huge diversity of activities. And they are not working together, this delegation from Winnipeg and that delegation from Halifax, or this delegation from Quebec and that delegation from B. C. or Saskatchewan. Now we're starting to twin a Canadian delegation with a delegation from a foreign country so that they can define common projects. This is a new phase. There is only one of those twinnings now. I think you received the details, a map of all the delegations in Canada and a list of the projects we helped with last year.

I'm perhaps obliged to speak too quickly here, but you asked about focus. The time has come—and I think the people working for human rights in the world know this—for implementation. We have the laws, we have the protocols, we have the conventions. We have all that. The time has come to concretely give effect. That is, I would say, the focus of our activity, and our mandate, how to give effect in a given human community—the Democratic Republic of Congo, or Argentina, or Sierra Leone, or, well, Cuba—and how to give effect to what is the common doctrine about human rights.

That's where we are. We believe there are links between human rights and commerce. There are links between human rights and investment. We're on the side of those who say, we're not opposed to investment, we're not opposed to commerce, so can we talk together? There is common ground between human rights, the help for a better life, and commerce, a way to help for a better life.

When Paul Hunt, the special rapporteur for health, asked us if he should go to the WTO to talk to them about health as a human right, our answer was yes, we'll support you, go there. We invited him to Cancun, and he went to Cancun, with Mary Robinson and other people, to explain—there were 400 people in that room—that commerce and human rights have to be seen in a new light.

There is complementarity in development. We have to develop this new dialogue and try to find ways to perhaps work together at some point.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: We will now go to Ms. McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

[*English*]

I want to say at the outset that I feel very frustrated; there are many things I would like to say about the work you're doing.

To start, on the domestic front, I think the work you're doing among youth, the campus work, is incredibly valuable. This is really about creating the global citizens of the world, who go out there and try to ensure that we become the Canada we want to be in the rest of the world. I also think the John Humphrey Freedom Award is brilliant, because it's a case in point that you share with people right across the country. Again, it really makes a difference in terms of people understanding what you do. To not do that is to leave it too much to a level of abstraction that is hard for people to understand.

But I don't want to waste my time saying all those good things. I just wanted to say that in passing.

I have three really quick questions. First, as we all see, China is flexing its economic muscle, really on a dangerous path, I think, in terms of escalation of arms. It's a known human rights abuser in many respects. At this point, it might be too early and too unfair to ask about what Rights & Democracy has in mind, but I'd be interested to hear a little bit more, if we have time, from Iris Almeida about that six-month project.

Second, I'm wondering if there are at this point any proposals or any work under way in the context of building civil society in

Palestine. There is potentially an opportunity opening up, following the death of Arafat, following what is at least a partial withdrawal from a tiny portion of the occupied territories, and hopefully indicative of far more to come. It may be a crucial time to help with the building of a civil society capacity, because of course that is what spawns democratic development. With the economic, social, and political devastation in Palestine, this becomes a critical next step. I'm wondering if you have any plans for that.

Third, I am turning very directly—thank you, by the way, for this extremely comprehensive briefing book—to the correspondence around the critical issue of resources. I personally find it very embarrassing that you have to come to this committee to address this question. The reality is that the minister himself wrote back, as I can see from a letter of May 2004, that he didn't have time to talk about resources, but do go to the foreign affairs committee, because Parliament makes this decision about increased resources on the recommendation of the foreign affairs committee.

Post-9/11, your mission or mandate became more important than it ever was. You were one of the first groups out of the starting gate, sponsoring a symposium that I remember attending. I wasn't then the foreign affairs critic, but the leader. There I think you tried to be the canary in the mine and to say that the protection of human rights is more important than ever. I don't know if this expression came from that symposium, but it is permanently seared on my mind that a nation that sacrifices human rights in the name of security will end up with neither.

I do think that work is more important than ever, and I'm wondering if you can bring us up to date on whether there's been further communication, collaboration, or correspondence with the subsequent foreign affairs minister. The letter from the former foreign affairs minister seems to leave off by suggesting that you should come to this committee to ask for more resources.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy: Thank you very much, Ms. McDonough.

[*English*]

About China, I think we all have to look in a different way at what we think about China, at what we have in our minds about this huge country. That's why I asked Iris to take six months of her life to look at Asia today and to report to us. I very much would like Iris to comment on what she has discovered in the preliminary work she's done since September 1.

First, concerning Palestine, we have had very limited activities there in the last two years. We included in our original meetings in Amman, as I mentioned, representatives of civil society and the universities in Palestine. We support institutions that bring together Jewish women and Palestinian women. So we have had some of those activities, but you're very right in saying that maybe there is a new context, new situation, that could help us build a civil society in this desperate part of the world.

On your last question, there were meetings with Monsieur Pettigrew on the budget. He gave us the answer that Mr. Graham wrote in that letter, that a report has to be submitted to Parliament, so come here; after that, they would decide.

Iris, perhaps you would like to say a few words about what you discovered in Asia, or rediscovered.

• (1635)

Ms. Iris Almeida (Special Advisor to the President, Policy Development and Parliamentary Relations, Rights and Democracy): Thank you.

Très brièvement, I'd just like to say that China is a superpower in the making. Everybody I met on my recent visit to Asia said that the 21st century belongs to Asia. Therefore, there is a need for perhaps countries like Canada to rework and to find again its strategic relations with Asia on the trade front, on the rule of law front, and on just the democracy front.

It seems to me that right now Canadian foreign policy with regard to China is quite naïve. There is a dichotomy and there are silos rather than an interconnection and a comprehensive approach to engagement with this massive making of a superpower.

There is very little critique in Asia about China. They believe you have to engage with China in order to bring it along, or make its influence, from a human rights point of view, felt more.

Canada has had significant bilateral dialogues with China on human rights over the last seven or eight years. None of these are public. They lack transparency and accountability. I think that's very significant.

Talking about China in a critical way with regard to Tibet is not enough today. The Tibetan struggle will not advance without very high-level diplomacy with regard to the peace and the dialogue processes. For example, in April, when we had a visit from the Dalai Lama—we hosted that, as did others—there was some short-term interest. So you might get a flash, but legitimately, there is need for a high level of dialogue with China, focused on the rule of law. It should be focused on the rule of law because even Canadian companies will not be able to do great business in China if structures are not in place to deal with corruption.

On the rule of law angle, it's not just about sending Canadian judges on exchange trips, or Canadian universities having little projects; I think there needs to be a political understanding of how Canada can better benefit from, and dialogue with, China on the basis of trade, human rights, and democracy, all of it centred on the rule of law.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Almeida.

Mr. Goldring.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you very much for your presentation.

First, I'd like to make the statement that obviously there are many problems around the world. For all of the democratic rights and responsibilities to be addressed by any one country would be practically impossible, and physically impossible, due to limitations

on resources. So we have to do what we can with the limited amount of funding we have.

One of the comments you made just a few minutes ago, Mr. Roy, was something to the effect of building a refugee camp in one of the universities, having an impact on students in terms of what a refugee camp is all about. I see here a list of 105 projects for this year. Is that one of the projects? Is there a number here? Or what does something like that cost to put on?

• (1640)

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy: Thank you.

[*Translation*]

I would like to comment on your first statement, Sir.

[*English*]

You said that one country alone is not able to do everything, and you are so right. But we are here at the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, and we have to look at what we believe we do in multilateral institutions. We in this institution are, by nature, for multilateral, but when you learn from the Prime Minister of Haiti, who was in Montreal last Saturday, that this huge *montage multilatéral*, organized by the World Bank months ago, did not deliver one single action in Haiti to date, there is quite a question there that we have to check very carefully. When we put our money into a common basket—and I think we have to do that—what really are the results? One of the actions that a country like ours should take in this is to have, by ourselves, with quite clear Canadian identification, a Canadian presence in this country.

With regard to Laval and the refugee camp, it was a student proposal. Laval University had two proposals. One was to develop a game of some sort about international negotiation. They are now translating it with friends from Alberta. It may become something of interest all over the place. There was another project from the students at Laval University. They wanted to help their fellow students understand the camps, at a cost of \$1,500—

Mr. Peter Goldring: So these 105 projects are made up...and there's a large number of projects like that. One of the difficulties I'm having, and perhaps others are too, is learning to see exactly how and what is being accomplished. One of the questions I was going to ask was that if these projects are being assessed, and we numerically record them at 105 this year, 100 last year, or an average of 100 per year, who is assessing the viability of the projects? Who is following the projects through to see if there is accountability, if there are proven outcomes from them?

Along that train of thought, if we take a country like Haiti, where you have had some projects and undertakings, would you be able to capsulize for us, in a very brief fashion, how many projects you have in Haiti at present? What would be the approximate cost appropriations for each of those projects? In other words, what is your total commitment for projects in Haiti now, and what number of projects do you have? As well, perhaps you could give us some kind of idea of what these projects are.

If we can fix on a particular country, then in our own minds I'm sure we can come up with and see the benefits and results from it over a period of time. Just looking at the totality of projects, it's very difficult to focus.

On Haiti, then, what would the specifics be?

Mr. Wayne MacKay: I'll answer at the broader level and perhaps leave it to the president to comment on the details with regard to Haiti. I think you raise an important question that really was addressed in the five-year review, and that's the question of focus and results delivery.

To answer your first question, of who is evaluating, that's very significantly the role of the board. My experience, from my time at the board, is that the board certainly does not simply rubber-stamp what is brought forward by our president and staff. Although they're excellent staff who do very well, this very much involves the board.

One of the things we've done over the last two or three years is to insist on setting clear goals and on developing evaluation indicators. In fact, for the next five-year plan, as I understand it, there are going to be specific evaluation indicators, to some extent at both ends. One of the important questions is, of this mass of possible world projects, which projects do you select, and why? I think that's an important one right off the bat. What comparative advantage can Canada, and Rights and Democracy as an institution, bring to this particular challenge? There are a lot of worthy challenges, but which one should we do?

There has been a clear message from the board, responded to by the president and staff, to be more focused, to pick some key areas where we can intervene and have an impact, and not have small bits of impact spread too broadly. That's a board direction and also built into the plan going forward.

• (1645)

Mr. Peter Goldring: I think a good example would be the brochure you included in the package. I'm sure this doesn't denote all of the work your organization does, but if somebody were to review this, as I have, they would see this brochure here as being 90% more directed towards women's issues. And I'm sure that's not your overall mandate, in the projects that you conduct overall.

I suppose this is where I come back to the clarity that is greatly needed here. Let's go back to Haiti and focus on the specific projects, on the dollar value. I'm sure there are women's issues and projects being worked on in Haiti too, but are they relevant to the funding levels you have? What other projects have you been working on over there, and over what period of time? What kinds of results have you had? Can you tell us some good news about some of those projects?

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy: *Monsieur le député*, I think the *Libertas* issue you have was produced in the context of the John Humphrey for 2004. That's why it looks like, in a way, a special issue on women's rights. Normally in *Libertas* a variety of topics are covered. This was a special issue for this special event, the John Humphrey prize that was given to this woman from Rwanda.

Concerning Haiti, I will make just a brief comment and then ask Razmik Pannossian, the director of policy, to answer your question.

I think ours was one of the first Canadian organizations to send people to Haiti in 2003 to look at what was going on there. We made a public report about the danger of the situation, the degradation of the situation. We had discussions here and elsewhere about the situation. After that, we decided, on very limited funds, to return to

Haiti around some programs. We're still in the process of trying to get some help from CIDA to develop those programs.

Perhaps Mr. Pannossian can give more details.

Mr. Razmik Pannossian (Interim Director of Policy, Programmes and Planning, Rights and Democracy): Thank you.

First of all, just to get back to the 105 projects, the way it works is that the student network is one of those 105 projects. So the Laval thing, or any other student network-related thing, is one of those projects. The other 104 are not just small things like that; the 104 are substantial interventions into various other countries in terms of specific projects.

For example, on the visit by the Burmese government Prime Minister in exile, Dr. Sein Win, that would be one specific project. We would allocate x number of funds, \$10,000 or whatever—that's just a number off the top of my head—towards that project.

Mr. Peter Goldring: For his visit?

Mr. Razmik Pannossian: For all of our activity related to supporting the Burmese government in exile, not just one visit.

Another example would be our Morocco democratic development study. That's a substantial project for which we have allocated some funding. That's one of the 105.

In terms of your other point, accountability, each of these projects has one of our regional officers looking after them. The partner through which we're working is accountable to the regional officer, the regional officer is accountable to the management, and the management is accountable to the board. So there are three different levels of accountability built into the organization.

• (1650)

Mr. Peter Goldring: Do you get a report back that's accountable?

Mr. Razmik Pannossian: Yes, for each project. If the project is for three years, every year we will get an assessment report. Once the project is closed, we will get a report from that project. You cannot close a project unless there is a report from the partner, which is then assessed internally with us. If we're not satisfied with it, we'll get back to the partner and tell them we're not satisfied with it. If we're satisfied with it, we'll close the project.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Pannossian.

We will now go to Ms. Bourgeois.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome. I am very happy to meet you and to finally be able to put a face on those names I read very often. Indeed, I always read the documents that you sent to parliamentarians.

I want to let Mr. Roy know that there is a CEGEP in my riding and if he wants to continue his pedagogical work I am quite willing to open doors for him. I believe it is very important that young people in higher education are made aware of what happens both within Canada and internationally.

When I read your annual report 2003-04, I was somewhat surprised to see that some issues were not discussed, in particular the impunity in Mexico, regarding the American Convention on Human Rights. We know that Canada has not yet signed this convention. I would like to know what you are doing in this regard.

Next, Ms. Hwitsum talked about aboriginal rights. If there is one place that should have an impeccable record in terms of aboriginal rights and aboriginal women's rights, it is Canada. However, we know that aboriginal women in Canada have been struggling since 1974 for recognition of their rights, in particular in relation to the Divorce Act.

I was also surprised to see no mention in this report of any action regarding violence against women in Darfour. We know that this is part of the genocide occurring there. Ms. Almeida, as for China, could we talk about members of Falun Gong whose rights are being trampled? I know that you have a limited budget and I know that you are constrained, but I wonder what we could do about these issues.

Finally, I would like Mr. Roy to outline the nature and the scope of the Canadian contribution in the area of human rights and democracy in the world in the next couple of years.

[English]

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy: Mr. Chair, that's a good illustration of the problem we have with the focus. When we do focus, people ask us, why are you not there and there and there? I mean, they're right, asking those questions, but at the same time, we cannot be everywhere.

Since the question was directed to Madam Hwitsum, I'd like Lydia to answer part of the question.

Ms. Lydia Hwitsum: Thank you for the question. I'll speak to the issues raised with respect to aboriginal peoples and the rights of aboriginal peoples. In my role as an indigenous Canadian woman on the board, I have had the honour to bring forward that perspective.

To speak to the work and involvement of indigenous women in Canada, we've had certainly the opportunity to be involved with the Indigenous Women's Network, with linking up Canadian indigenous women with other indigenous women on a whole range of things, from understanding documents to capacity building potential.

Further, Rights and Democracy has done some work in terms of partnering with the Assembly of First Nations here in Canada. Again, some of the focus is on building on the internship programs to get more indigenous Canadian youth involved and participating in a number of not only Rights & Democracy internships but also international internships. This is to foster more involvement, because there is limited involvement by our indigenous youth in a number of those internships.

I'm not sure what else to add in terms of the work that's being done. There has been further support of indigenous women, particularly with respect to culture and in terms of the protection of intellectual property rights for artisans. This involves design and different elements in that area, not focusing particularly on how we change the law with respect to intellectual property but on how we use the tools that are there and get recognition that these patterns and designs, which indigenous women are generating livings out of, are worthy of protection in terms of intellectual property.

Those are a few comments I can make in that area. I'll leave the balance to Mr. Roy.

• (1655)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy: Thank you.

I would like to say a few words, Ms. Bourgeois, on the question you raised about the American Convention on Human Rights. It is surprising, to say the least, that Canada has not yet ratified the American Convention on Human Rights, but we know why. Some articles of this convention, in particular regarding women's rights, are problematic. We have organized I do not know how many tables on this issue, under the Chatham House rule and otherwise. I believe Canada could ratify the American Convention on Human Rights with a reservation about one or two articles which are problematic. In the context of a Free-trade Area of the Americas, it would be a minimum for us to sign on to those instruments that protect human rights.

Madam, you asked what would be the nature and scope of Canada's role regarding democratic values and human rights in the future. Let me simply repeat what I said at the beginning. I believe there are few countries in the world today who have, in these very sensitive and difficult matters, the maneuvering room—limited but nevertheless real—that a country like ours can have if we really decide to intervene in this area. Indeed, we do act and have acted in relation to some issues that you know. I do not have time to provide a detailed answer to the vast question you are asking. We can only hope that the political will be there in Canada. Iris Almeida made an essential statement earlier when she said that one does not set up a judicial system in China for foreign investors, but that once there is a judicial system in China for Chinese citizens, this will benefit later foreign investors. Part of our country's action in the world is related to the rule of law, the respect for human rights and the independence of the judiciary. Canada, in doing this work abroad, works also for itself.

The Chair: Thank you, Madam Bourgeois.

We will now go to Mr. Scheer.

[English]

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Thanks.

I have a couple of quick questions.

First, to Iris, given your comments on China and what you discovered there, are you finding that there's a problem with the current relationship that Canada and other countries have with China, that we're not being effective enough in very forcefully encouraging China to adopt more human rights-friendly policies?

Ms. Iris Almeida: All I'm saying at this point in time is that I think we need to refine our relationship with China. We need to seize opportunities. We need to understand China more, I think. By that I mean, concretely, what does this involve? I think we need to understand the internal situation in China with regard to its rule of law. Political prisoners, torture, corruption—they need to be understood in greater depth than is happening right now.

Second, we need to look at the opportunities for Canada. Canada-China relations are potentially very strategic for the future, and some of that homework is not yet done. We can superficially have relations for the day, or for the year, with one trade mission and another, but I think the long-term basis for joint mutual relationships needs to be strengthened. For example, the Chinese immigrant community in Canada, which is a significant community, needs to be much more involved in the development of this policy.

It's in that context that I say there's compartmentalization of Canadian foreign policy with regard to China. It's in silos: if we deal with trade, we deal with trade, and if we deal with rights, we deal with rights; or else we deal with exchanges between judicial officials, including judges and lawyers, or exchanges between universities. I think there is a need for an interconnected, holistic policy. China is much more sophisticated than the way in which we're dealing with it at this time.

• (1700)

Mr. Andrew Scheer: Linking trade with human rights abuses, is that what you're talking about?

Ms. Iris Almeida: That's exactly it—trade, human rights, and rule of law as the fundamentals of a good system of democratic transformation. It's very hard today to say that China is not democratic. I think there are a lot of elements of what we could call a democratic system there.

Mr. Andrew Scheer: Elections, for example, or transparent government processes?

Ms. Iris Almeida: Yes. I think there are systems of...and even civil society is beginning to emerge in China.

So we need to look at China more from the 21st century perspective than from the 1960s perspective. We need to engage by knowing, by understanding, by working inside the country, not just by criticizing from the outside or seeking to engage with so much enthusiasm that we're not putting in benchmarks or conditions.

Mr. Andrew Scheer: Conditions such as, if you stop putting Falun Gong practitioners in jail, then maybe we'll open up trade files?

Ms. Iris Almeida: Yes, basically to negotiate. I would say that the degree of negotiation in the Canada-China relationship needs to become much more sophisticated.

Mr. Andrew Scheer: Okay.

You were mentioning earlier, and I think Mr. MacKay was talking about, the assessment process. Are there any external reviews of the assessment of your programs and projects?

Mr. Peter MacKay: The five-year review itself of course is built into the statute, and that's an external review. My understanding, and perhaps the president can add to this, is that we do have review within communities. For example, the aboriginal project would certainly take input from the aboriginal communities, those kinds of things.

Mr. Andrew Scheer: The five-year review looked at only five projects.

Mr. Wayne MacKay: Yes, that's correct.

Mr. Andrew Scheer: Is there any other sort of review? You mentioned 100 or 105 projects. Is there an external mechanism for each one of those projects, or is it just done by your own board?

Mr. Wayne MacKay: Perhaps Razmik can answer that more directly.

Mr. Razmik Pannossian: As I've mentioned, after each project there is an evaluation process. It starts off with the partner filling out the evaluation form, and us assessing that. If we have any hint of a problem with this evaluation, then the management as a whole discusses it and tries to address that issue.

Mr. Andrew Scheer: But always within your own organization.

Mr. Razmik Pannossian: Always within the organization; however, we have also, on occasion, asked an external reviewer to evaluate one of the thematics or something of that sort.

Mr. Wayne MacKay: Perhaps I could add as well that at the board level, it tends to be not so much necessarily project by project, although we might look at that, but more the broad assessment on a particular area or combination of projects. And for that there is very direct accountability at the board level.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy: Sir, I would like to add a word on evaluation.

[English]

We're planning to have less projects in 2005 and in 2010. Since I've been there, we've decreased the number of projects, and this will decrease in the future as well.

For the most significant projects, there will be, as we did for the aboriginal program and for the Kabul, or Afghanistan, program, external evaluators. This should become the rule for the most significant programs.

Mr. Andrew Scheer: Are you subject to any external audits of your financial operations to ensure transparency and accountability, that type of thing?

Mr. Jean-Louis Roy: We have *le vérificateur général du Canada* in on a yearly basis, for weeks, looking at every piece of paper, every program, and reporting.

Mr. Andrew Scheer: Great, thank you.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Roy. This puts an end to our first session. We would like to thank you, as well as your colleagues.

[English]

I know that Mr. MacKay has a plane to catch at 6:30 p.m., and it's already past 5 o'clock.

Thank you very much, all of you.

We'll recess for a few minutes, after which we'll deal with the motion by Mrs. Lalonde.

Thank you.

•(1705) _____ (Pause) _____

•(1709)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: We will resume our meeting. We have a motion from Ms. Lalonde.

Before dealing with it, I would just like to say to my colleagues that Rights & Democracy is a Canadian institution that was created following a recommendation of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs in the 1980s, under a Conservative government, and that the suggestion of

•(1710)

[*English*]

past Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Graham, they should request to appear in front of us if they want an increase in the budget. This comes from the current Minister of Foreign Affairs as well, that it needs to go through our committee.

I understand, Madam Lalonde, you have a modification to your motion. Do you want to tell us about your modification?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: First of all, Mr. Chairman, I would like to point out a minor error in my motion. The present budget is not 4 million dollars, but 4.8 million dollars. This is important. Please take note, dear colleagues.

I want to explain why I drafted the motion like this. You have in front of you the recommendation made by Rights & Democracy.

The Chair: Yes, okay. Go ahead, Ms. Lalonde.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: I based myself on their report. The report says that since 1993-94 there has been no adjustment for inflation. The budget remained at 5 million, or rather 4.8 million dollars. It even went lower than that.

Their recommendation is first of all to index to the cost of living the core funding they have. I do not think anyone could object to this cost of living adjustment. I also ask for a 25% increase in view of new needs. We can talk about what is happening in Ukraine; we can talk, as we have during this very interesting hearing, about what is happening in Palestine. Our committee has been able to see, when we visited countries in the Islamic world, that an institution that does not represent a government carries in the present situation much more weight than government representatives. This is always true. But this institution was created by the Canadian Parliament, which gave it a mandate. It is important to not forget that this is not an NGO.

In view of this, I would like this motion to be passed unanimously, precisely because it is an institution of the Canadian Parliament that works very well. I know that some would prefer not to put in any specific amount.

Before putting forward an amendment, I would like to hear what members think about the motion as is.

[*English*]

The Chair: Any other comments from any members?

Mr. Menzies.

Mr. Ted Menzies: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have some difficulties with the process, first, and then the timeline on this. And it's unfortunate that our regular attendees at this committee are not here today—not taking anything away from the people who are with us.

We received this 24 hours and 13 minutes ago, so we didn't have a lot of time to actually assess this. I'm certainly uncomfortable with putting a dollar figure on it when we just received the presentation today. Pick a number: we could put any number on it. I'm very uncomfortable with putting a ceiling on this. I realize the constraints, with this government having to put a budget together before all of the legwork will be done, before we're ever back.

One of the other questions I have is that we have another player on the scene right now, and that's Canada Corps. They have a \$15-million budget for the next two years. How do these two overlap? Are they not going to be doing somewhat the same thing?

There are a number of questions here, which is why I'm a little uncomfortable with supporting this motion. I have no problem with our suggesting that we should consider increasing the budget, but I'm very uncomfortable with putting \$7.5 million as the target on it.

•(1715)

The Chair: Monsieur Boudria.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): I have two points to make. One is along the same lines as Mr. Menzies comment, for a reason he did not raise but which is equally important.

Firstly, budget-making is not a legislative function, but an executive function. Even if it were, it would not be first come, first served. When we do not have all the requests in front of us, we cannot take some dollar figure and say that these people requested it and we are giving it to them. If we were to proceed in such a fashion, we would be out of money very quickly and many more people would be left out without support.

Therefore, this is not a good principle. We should rather say that we recognize, as Mr. Menzies or maybe Ms. Lalonde stated, that they did not get the indexation and that government should take this into account in order to do a catch-up and provide an additional increase, but without mentioning a dollar figure.

My second criticism is about the language of the motion. It says “contrary to other organizations' budget like the Parliamentary Centre”. We should not take aim at any organization. There might be others which got funding. There might be others which got more than the Parliamentary Centre. I do not know if the Parliamentary Centre signed some contracts or did other things to reach this amount. I would prefer this mention to be struck.

[*English*]

The Chair: I just want to point out, Monsieur Boudria, that in the back, it's not the motion; it's just explanatory notes. It has nothing to do with the motion.

Madame Bourgeois, s'il vous plaît.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Mr. Chairman, somebody mentioned the Canadian Corps. I believe the Canadian Corps has a very different mandate or mission from that of Rights & Democracy. That is the first thing. Secondly, the Canadian Corps was given 15 million dollars before having any mandate at all. Nothing has been defined yet about the Canadian Corps. Officials are wondering what they are going to do with this money and they ask us, parliamentarians, to tell them what they should do.

Should we not build on the security that is being provided by Rights & Democracy and encourage the government to increase its funding? I went to Kenya and I saw the work Rights & Democracy did there. I went there on the issue of anti-personnel mines two weeks ago. Truly, Rights & Democracy is doing excellent work.

I would ask you to encourage democracy and the work that these people are doing.

[*English*]

The Chair: Ms. McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: First, I want to say that I support the motion. I think we've had ample background information supplied by Rights & Democracy at prior meetings, in a very extensive briefing book, in a review process that was actually completed—if I'm correct, and I want to make sure I am correct—almost two years ago, with very specific recommendations about the need for increased resources.

I heard both the Liberal spokesperson's and the Conservative spokesperson's objections to the process and the timelines we're faced with. But let's remind ourselves that the process was actually mandated and reinforced by the letter from the previous Minister of Foreign Affairs. If the three Liberals sitting opposite had been here for the earlier part of the meeting, they would have heard this. The previous Minister of Foreign Affairs made it very clear that he was looking for a recommendation from this committee, and it was mandated that it be so. In fact, the parliamentary budget would be constructed on the basis of a recommendation from this committee.

I think we ought to be getting on with dealing with this. I appreciate the fact that Monsieur Roy clarified that the now Minister of Foreign Affairs indicated that the very same process was in order and was anticipated by the government. I think that's why we're here today, addressing this.

A decision of the committee was made, and we should remind ourselves of this, that we would meet today even if Parliament went down—I don't know that any other committees are meeting—precisely because this is an urgent matter that needs to be dealt with. If there is to be any role of the committee at all, then it's a role that needs to be discharged today.

Let me say also that in Madam Lalonde's motion before us, it doesn't presume to say finally and specifically what the budgetary figure should be. It says "should consider", not "shall be". A rationale has been provided, and I want to add to that the extensive comments I made earlier. Again, I think it's regrettable that we're having to go back to square one to talk about the rationale for the recommendations.

The world instantly became a less secure place after 9/11. One of the reasons it became a more dangerous place is that we started to see the quashing of human rights and civil liberties in the name of security. As it has been said in many different ways, probably no more eloquently than by Rights & Democracy itself in its many public symposia and meetings and involvements around this issue, in many instances human rights are being sacrificed in the name of security, which results in neither. We know that's a concern.

We also heard earlier testimony from our witnesses about the extremely important work that is already underway and that they are recommending in a number of other areas that concern Canada greatly. This is a centre that is mandated, its mission is parliamentary, determined by Parliament, an all-party process is set in place for the appointment of its head, and an all-party process is deemed, through this committee, to deal with such recommendations.

I would strongly urge that we support Madam Lalonde's motion.

• (1720)

The Chair: Fine.

We're going to need to accelerate, if you don't mind. It's already 5:20, and I still have Mr. McGuinty and then Mr. Goldring. After that, Monsieur Boudria would like to make an amendment, if we all agree.

Mr. McGuinty, please.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I'm sorry to have missed the presentation by Rights & Democracy, but I've worked with, or around, them for over a decade; I spent about a decade in developing countries. They're a terrific organization, a wonderful creature of the state, with an important role to play. But I'm troubled by the notion of pegging funding levels to the CPI.

I've just left a career of running an equivalent organization, the Prime Minister's National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy. In my nine years there, there was never any discussion of pegging your funding level to CPI. In fact, it's not a practice and not customary in federal government funding, and this is a governmental organization, not an NGO. I would point that out for committee members.

Second of all, I am troubled by the notion of raising a figure. I mean, \$7,788,000.... Why not \$15 million? In terms of global reach, it's still a very small sum of money. It doesn't tell me as a member anything about what we're spending out of CIDA on human rights work and democratic development. We have dozens of universities in the field in developing countries. We have hundreds of NGOs doing work. This doesn't tell me about what we're spending in our Canada Trust funds at the World Bank and five or six other regional development banks, where we have hundreds of Canadian suppliers of goods and services doing work, for example, on human rights, good governance, and democratic development.

So it's a wonderful notion, and I don't dispute the notion that we should be looking to increase the funding, but as for how we come up with the figure that's been presented, that's very difficult, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Allow me to answer on the figure. It was in a binder that all members received. The figure comes from the increase in the cost of living plus 25%.

The other thing is that all of the members, the regular members of the committee, have been provided with all of the figures concerning CIDA and the other organizations.

Mr. David McGuinty: So we have global figures?

The Chair: Yes, we have global figures, although not today; this has already been done. The CIDA minister has already appeared in front of the committee.

I'll go now to Mr. Goldring, and then I'll get the amendment from Mr. Boudria.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I suppose my concerns are along the same vein, but they have to do more with the specifics, with each individual project. If we're looking at countries like Haiti, for instance, I would think we could have some specific reporting on it, some reviewing of it, through this report. I find very few specifics detailed on some of the major projects, and I think it would help us if we did. We could see exactly what's been happening over the years in a particular country, and see any duplications from other areas. We would know, ourselves, are we duplicating here? Are we helping? Are we improving the outcomes in the area?

In other words, I'd like some specific outcomes.

• (1725)

The Chair: I just want to tell you, Mr. Goldring, that on the table there is a binder concerning Haiti, outlining the work they've done in Haiti.

Mr. McTeague.

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.): We've had consultation with many of the parties here—Ms. McDonough would be the exception, because I think there was a question she was asking at the time—and we do know that there will be a budget consideration for February. If we were to wait much longer, there certainly wouldn't be ample time for recognition of a motion that I think we can find to be faithful to Madam Lalonde's concern about unanimity.

We think we have something here, and I'd propose that Mr. Boudria provide the wording, at least the wording to this point. It's a friendly amendment.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Boudria.

Hon. Don Boudria: I am not saying mine is good.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Boudria.

[*English*]

Hon. Don Boudria: Perhaps we could say that, in the opinion of the committee, the government should recognize that the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development has not received a budgetary increase, or a cost of living increase, for a decade, and that, in further recognition of its excellent work, we recommend that its budget be increased substantially.

In other words, it mentions both cost of living and substantial increase.

Hon. Dan McTeague: We're not tied down. It talks about a direction.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Ms. Lalonde, quickly.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Boudria, would you agree to add the words “considering the request from Rights & Democracy”?

[*English*]

The Chair: Do you agree?

Hon. Don Boudria: Fine.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Dan McTeague: Absolutely, “taking into account”: this is what I said.

[*English*]

The Chair: Do we all agree with this?

[*Translation*]

“Taking into account the request from Rights & Democracy”.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: After this.

The Chair: You are making the motion. This is an amendment from Mr. Boudria.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: The word “substantially”... Would you repeat, please?

The Chair: Mr. Boudria, could you repeat, please?

[*English*]

Hon. Don Boudria: Okay, but I'm trying to add some words....

Let me try again:

That, in the opinion of the Committee, the Government should recognize that the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development has not received a budgetary increase or a cost of living increase

—am I correct in both those assertions?—

for a decade

—or I guess I can say “more than a decade”, since it's close to 11 years, and “more than” would be even stronger—

and that in further recognition of the excellent work of this organization

—I'm getting another suggestion here—

and in further recognition, again, of the request by the organization, our committee recommends that the budget be increased substantially.

The Chair: Okay.

Madam Lalonde, I'm going to ask you to withdraw your motion, because technically this is a totally new motion. I'm sure my colleagues will unanimously give it to you, and then you can propose this new one.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Don Boudria: It is your idea, so move the motion.

The Chair: Ms. Lalonde moves what Mr. Boudria just read.

Hon. Don Boudria: So I will second.

Ms. Francine Lalonde: We agree, but...

[*English*]

The Chair: Do you agree to withdraw your motion?

(Motion withdrawn)

[*Translation*]

You agree to withdraw your motion and to move the second motion together with Mr. Boudria.

Mr. Menzies.

[*English*]

Mr. Ted Menzies: Do we need the word “substantially”?

The Chair: I think so.

Hon. Don Boudria: If you don't, then you're restricted to cost of living. It adds substance.

Hon. Dan McTeague: I don't want the \$7.5 million, because it doesn't...but “substantially” says, you know, not 5¢, or not 1%. And “should consider” is the fallback.

The Chair: Just remember, it's an expression of opinion. We're not allowed to put figures for the government.

Hon. Dan McTeague: It's Christmas, guys; come on.

The Chair: Are we all agreed?

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

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: How do you say in English “*mettre de l'eau dans son vin*”?

The Chair: Go to the Christmas party of the Liberals. Thank you.

The meeting stands adjourned.

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