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Chair

Mr. Lee Richardson

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• (1540)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC)): We're about ready to begin. Just before we start, there's some housekeeping stuff to take care of.

First of all, let me introduce Dan Shaw, who's with the research group. Dan was apparently on one of the trips last year and handled the Southeast Asia side, so if we happen to have questions as we deal with that report later, Dan is here for that purpose.

In addition, there are others here from the Library of Parliament. They're observing the committee and may sometimes be alternates at this committee. If and when we go in camera today, I would ask for the consensus of the committee that we allow those members of the Library of Parliament to remain with us during that period.

Do I just generally have concurrence that the Library of Parliament people sitting over here could stay with us during the in camera session?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Thank you.

In addition to that, there are a couple of housekeeping items. One is, as you may be aware, Bill S-2, an act to amend the Canada-United States Tax Convention Act 1984, was read for the second time and referred to this committee on Monday. So we have that coming. I just wanted to make sure that the committee was aware of that. It's a Senate bill that's been referred to this committee. My understanding is that it passed unanimously in the Senate, and that it's not particularly controversial in any way.

It is our obligation at this committee to deal with it, so I just want to have it in your heads. We could deal with it quickly, if you want, or we can schedule it at the beginning of a subsequent meeting. Maybe we'll give people a day or two to look at the thing and see if there's any reason we want to have an extended debate on it. My sense is that the Senate would like to get this thing through the committee and back for third reading.

The other thing is the clerk has presented me with a proposed budget for the proposed study on the Canada-Korea free trade agreement. This, again, is routine stuff to cover witness expenses and that sort of thing. I think we're all aware that if it's under \$40,000 it doesn't have to go for approval of the Liaison Committee. The clerk has proposed the budget, and coincidentally it comes to \$39,550. I don't imagine we'll spend anywhere near that amount, but we have

that flexibility, depending on how long we go and how many witnesses we call.

If I might ask someone to move that motion, we could dispense with it right now.

Mr. Dhaliwal moves that the proposed operational budget for the study of the proposed Canada-Korea free trade agreement in the amount of \$39,550 for the period of 2007-08 be adopted.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Mr. Cannan.

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Chair, just looking around the room and thinking about how we're going on to the orders of the day, and talking about the extra staff we have, and how long it's taken to debate the other motions, and I know how much time the analysts have put into the report, I was wondering if we could just deal with the report first, and then deal with the motion from Mr. Julian.

The Chair: I'm sorry, you wanted to continue—

Mr. Ron Cannan: Finish off the report.

The Chair: The report on Southeast Asia that we're dealing with.

Mr. Ron Cannan: Yes. I just felt we rushed through it last meeting.

The Chair: I don't think it's going to take very long to get through.

Does he need a motion to do that, or is that just a suggestion? Is there a need for it? What's the preference of the committee here?

Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Chairman, I'm not sure the motion will take long. It's a very common-sense motion. I agree with you, certainly, that the committee report won't take long. In fact, last meeting we actually got through about three-quarters of the report. I don't believe Mr. Cannan's motion is really necessary.

The Chair: Does anybody else want to comment?

Mr. Pallister.

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Other members have more experience with Mr. Julian's motions than I, but I know that at the last meeting we allocated 15 minutes and it took an hour and a half to deal with his motion.

I'm speaking in support of the suggestion that we finish the report. I'm in agreement with Mr. Julian on that point, at least. I don't think it will take long. Then we would have an abundance of time to deal with whatever measures Mr. Julian might suggest later.

The Chair: Before we continue, there are two things we're dealing with today. We're discussing the order, just so we're clear.

Mr. Miller.

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): My only comment is that I had to leave the other day to catch a plane, but it sounds like it went very quickly, and it sounds like it could be wrapped up. Why keep staff sitting here for the full meeting when I'm sure they have things they'd like to do.

Let's get the report done and get it out of the way and deal with the motion.

The Chair: Mr. Julian, again.

Mr. Peter Julian: This portion of the meeting is open to the public. Mr. Cannan is proposing that we make this a closed meeting and ask folks who are here for the public portion of the meeting to come back in an hour, or an hour and a half. I don't think that's reasonable, Mr. Chair. We have a schedule. It was publicly posted. There are folks who are here to see the discussion of the motion.

I spoke for all of three minutes on a motion last week. Mr. Pallister took considerably longer. So if he refines his comments, I'm sure we'll get through the motion rather quickly.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

• (1545)

The Chair: Mr. Julian is quite correct that we would have to move in camera to consider the report.

Do we need to prolong this? We have a speakers list here. Please get the attention of the clerk if you want to speak.

I see we have Mr. Allison, Mr. Pallister, and Mr. Cardin on the list.

Mr. Allison.

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Chair, I want to offer a suggestion to Mr. Julian. We would not necessarily need to go in camera to finish off the report. It could remain open, could it not?

The Chair: No, the report is still confidential. We remain in camera until it gets approved by the committee. Mr. Julian is quite correct.

Mr. Pallister.

Mr. Brian Pallister: I wouldn't want the record to show yet another misstatement by Mr. Julian on the issue of the amount of time he spoke. I think any elementary perusal of the records of our discussion would certainly confirm that he was amply rewarded and very verbose in terms of his opportunities to discuss his motion. I wouldn't want anyone to think he was deprived of an opportunity to speak or that he didn't avail himself of such an opportunity. He certainly did.

The Chair: Mr. André.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): I think we should stick to the agenda that was agreed upon, if we want to make some headway. People are here and the second part of the meeting will be in camera. Those in attendance want to hear the committee speak to Mr. Julian's motion. Let's move along and vote, because otherwise, we will waste time discussing the motion and we will not get around to examining the report. Is there anyone, I ask, who does not want to examine the report? We need to move forward and stick to the agenda.

[English]

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. Cardin, I think you were to speak next.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): My colleague covered just about everything I had to say. I thought that by now, Mr. Julian's motion would have been adopted and that we would have turned our attention to the report. Let's get on with this as quickly as possible, Mr. Chairman, out of respect for the people here in the room who surely came because of Mr. Julian's notice of motion.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Bains.

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Mississauga—Brampton South, Lib.): I want to reiterate that this seems to be a very important motion and we should respect the orders of the day. With good will, I feel we should be able to deal with this motion in a timely fashion. I suggest that we move on with it.

The Chair: That is the general consensus. I don't think we need to get a motion to resolve that. It was just a suggestion.

Let's carry on. The first item on the agenda is a notice of motion from Mr. Julian.

Mr. Julian, would you like to propose the motion?

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I move the motion that's before you. And for anyone who is tempted to act as Mr. Scissorhands, the motion comes forward as a comprehensive whole.

I would like to start by saying that this motion has been circulated in civil society among dozens of organizations that are concerned about the situation in Colombia.

There are basically three segments, first that the committee report to the House recommending to the Government of Canada.

As we know, Mr. Chair, we've heard from the Colombian Minister of Trade, Mr. Plata, that the expectations are that this round—

The Chair: I'll just interrupt you. I wonder whether you'd want to dispense with the motion, then, and start the debate. Is that your notion?

I was going to have you read the motion.

Mr. Peter Julian: Certainly.

• (1550)

The Chair: You don't have to, as I think everybody has seen it, but you seem to be getting into debate already.

Mr. Peter Julian: That's appropriate procedure, Mr. Chair. Thank you for reminding me of that. The motion is:

That the committee report to the House recommending to the Government of Canada that current Canada-Colombia bilateral trade negotiations and eventual ratification be halted in light of the ongoing abuse of human rights by Colombia's government; and that Canada develop a framework for a human rights impact assessment for future bilateral trade negotiations with Colombia; and furthermore, that the committee conduct hearings to assess how a human rights and environmental impact assessment framework can be incorporated into future Canada-Colombia bilateral trade negotiations.

That's the motion I move, Mr. Chair, and I'd like to speak to it, with your permission.

The Chair: Very good; carry on.

Mr. Peter Julian: As I've mentioned, we had trade minister Plata indicate this week that this round may well be the last.

So we have negotiations that are going on this very week, and concerns have been raised this very week. I think it's fair to say, Mr. Chair, that we have seen in past agreements, such as the softwood lumber agreement, that those agreements have been reached late in the week. In the case of the softwood lumber agreement, it was a Saturday evening when the agreement was announced.

I think there are legitimate concerns that this agreement may be finalized this week. That is why the committee's reporting to the House is an important component: it allows this committee to raise concerns directly in the House to inform other members of the House of Commons that we have those concerns. And yes, Mr. Chair, if there is a concurrence motion moved, it gives the opportunity for the House of Commons to actually have a kind of discussion that they have not been involved with to date.

Secondly, the halting of current negotiations in light of the ongoing abuse of human rights by Colombia's government is something around which I can cite a number of reports and recent news items. The first is from November 7, Mr. Chair—this month. "Twenty-six trade unionists...have been killed in Colombia" up to this point this year, and *Human Rights News* for November 7 indicated that two other trade union leaders had been killed: "The killers have not been caught. Their motives are unknown." It's important to note that this news item indicated that 98% of these killings of trade unionists, including 26 this year and 2,500 since 1986, have never been solved.

Second, Mr. Chair, we had concern about extrajudicial executions by the Colombian military raised last month by Amnesty International in the United States and by Human Rights Watch.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has also reported that the extrajudicial executions are not isolated events, but rather were occurring "in various units over a large area of the country" and were becoming "increasingly common". The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has demanded far-reaching measures.

The U.S. Congress has put a hold on release of funds to the Colombian military as a result of that. Extrajudicial executions are thought to be in the hundreds annually, and concerns have been raised in the U.S. Congress.

Third, around the issue of current President Uribe, Human Rights Watch has noted that President Uribe has a disturbing record of

making aggressive statements against courts and media outlets that are investigating his administration and political cronies. The headline of that human rights report is that the president's interference with ongoing investigations threatens the rule of law.

Very clearly, Mr. Chair, there are widely cited available reports, including one from Amnesty International this year that cites collusion between paramilitaries and state officials; trade unionists, human rights defenders, and other activists are under attack; there are kidnappings and violence against women.

So a wide variety of human rights concerns has been raised. That is why we have the second portion of this motion, which indicates that we should be calling a halt to these trade negotiations and eventual ratification.

What is the solution? If this committee stands with what I believe to be the opinion of most of the Canadian public—concern about these human rights issues that have been raised—it would be for Canada to develop a framework for a human rights impact assessment. We've already had some discussion around this table about the committee conducting hearings around Canada-Colombia. This would provide force for the committee to conduct hearings to assess how a human rights and environmental impact assessment framework could be incorporated into future Canada-Colombia bilateral trade agreements or negotiations.

Mr. Chair, what we're essentially saying is that this gives the opportunity for the committee to report to the House, given the indications by the Colombian trade minister that the end of these negotiations is pending, and that is an important part of the motion; It calls on the government to call a halt to these bilateral trade negotiations, given what is very clear—ongoing human rights violations in Colombia—and it allows us as a committee to work on a human rights impact assessment that is part of any future Canada-Colombia bilateral trade negotiations.

●(1555)

I'll mention in conclusion, Mr. Chair, that we had a round table on corporate responsibility that came out in the spring. All parties supported the actions and recommendations of that round table on social responsibility. For the government that essentially endorsed that round table, this gives it an opportunity to say, as well, that they are not going to wade into the murky waters of an area where there are clearly human rights problems and issues at stake. By taking a step back to evaluate, we can do the work to put a human rights impact assessment in place, and then negotiations could proceed in a more balanced way that is much more appropriate to Canadian traditions.

So for all those reasons, Mr. Chair, I move this motion. And I hope to get support from all members of this committee.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Julian. That was very clear. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

Mr. Bains is next on the list.

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Thank you very much, Chair.

I agree with the comments made by Mr. Julian. This is an important issue. This issue does speak to the core of the matter, which is human rights violations and concerns in Colombia and the fact that Canada is currently engaged in negotiations for a free trade agreement with Colombia.

However, as a committee, I feel we have a responsibility to make informed recommendations so we show the public that when we examine an issue it is based on solid foundations of information that we have gathered through witnesses.

I'm going to request a friendly amendment to this motion. I feel the first bullet comes to a conclusion, which might be the case, but I think we need to call in at least a key witness.

My staff will pass around the amendment, and I'll read it out, as well. When I say "amendment", there's no add-on to this. It's a whole new motion on the same issue:

That the Minister of International Trade be called to testify before the committee on how human rights concerns are being addressed in current bilateral trade negotiations, with particular reference to the Canada-Colombia bilateral negotiations.

It has been done to come to a position where I think we can get all parties' support. It shows that we're not going to jump to any conclusion, that we want to get witnesses. In light of the fact that this current negotiation is being undertaken, we need to get the key witness, the minister in charge and responsible for international trade, Minister Emerson, to come before the committee and talk about some of the legitimate concerns by many people, civil liberties groups, organizations, and Canadians on this matter.

I would request that this friendly amendment be taken into consideration and that the minister be called to testify before the committee to address some of the concerns that have been highlighted.

The Chair: Mr. Allison, then Mr. Cardin, and then Mr. Julian.

Do you have a point of order?

Mr. Dean Allison: I have a point of clarification, not order.

Navdeep, is that motion supposed to replace this motion? Is that what you're suggesting?

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Yes.

The Chair: Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, Mr. Bains does have the right to move another motion without advance notice because it's directly related to committee business. He's certainly in order to move this motion. But it is not an amendment. It can't be considered as such. It's a new motion.

Essentially, I would expect that debate would have to continue on the current motion. If that current motion is defeated, or even if it's adopted, then Mr. Bains could move his motion. But it's not an amendment; it's a whole new motion.

The Chair: I think Mr. Bains phrased it as a friendly amendment. Clearly it's not a friendly amendment unless it's accepted by the mover of the original motion.

I have consulted with the clerk, who tells me that if Mr. Bains wants to make an amendment to your motion, this motion would be in order.

● (1600)

Hon. Navdeep Bains: I would like to very quickly clarify, Chair, if you don't mind. The choice of words I guess was inaccurate on my part. It's not a friendly amendment. I would like my motion to replace the motion that's being currently debated.

The Chair: Yes. That's my understanding.

In fact, to do that, Mr. Julian is again correct, we would have to deal with the two motions quite independently and quite separately. We would deal with Mr. Julian's motion and vote on that. Should it fail, we would deal with Mr. Bains' motion.

Mr. Miller.

Mr. Larry Miller: I'm still not clear, Navdeep.

Are you suggesting that when we vote on this motion that Peter's motion is no longer on the table?

The Chair: Mr. Miller, I just tried to explain that.

We would have to deal with Mr. Julian's motion first. Having dealt with that motion, if it fails, then we'll move to Mr. Bains' motion as a separate motion.

Monsieur Cardin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin: In Mr. Bains' presentation, what we are now calling a motion looked to me like an amendment to clarify the attendance of the Minister of International Trade at possible future hearings.

[*English*]

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Cardin.

I just want to make it clear that we are in fact debating Mr. Julian's motion. As it is, Mr. Bains' motion is out of order at this time until we deal with Mr. Julian's motion. If you want to speak at this time, the motion on the floor is Mr. Julian's motion. When we have dealt with Mr. Julian's motion, we will then proceed to Mr. Bains' motion.

Just for clarity—I don't mean to interrupt you—the motion on the floor is in fact Mr. Julian's motion. We have to deal with that first before we get to Mr. Bains' motion.

Carry on.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin: I was only on my introduction. I am getting to Mr. Julian's motion. Overall, it substantially addresses my concerns. It is almost impossible to imagine that Canada would continue its negotiations in light of the violent acts committed being committed in Colombia.

Perhaps I missed a portion of Mr. Julian's presentation, but one issue was not broached, namely the fact that the US Congress apparently refused to sign an agreement with Colombia in light of information it had received about conditions and violent abuses of human rights.

We must break off our negotiations with Colombia until we hear from some knowledgeable people, from witnesses, who can shed some light on the situation for us. We need to take a step back and find out what is really going on in that country.

The Conservative government has introduced a series of law and order bills and is intent on fighting crime. It so happens that crime is a rather serious problem in Colombia. We are being asked to do business with a country, with paramilitary and other organizations actively involved in criminal activity, on the pretence that they are doing some good things—the document that was distributed to us in fact lists a good number of positive things.

It behooves me that the government is even thinking about negotiating measures to promote economic action or business profitability while turning its back on human rights abuses and environmental problems, such as we have seen with the mining companies operating in Colombia. We need to shed some light on this matter before the government signs any kind of agreement.

• (1605)

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Pallister, do you want to comment further on Mr. Julian's order?

Mr. Brian Pallister: I'd like to propose an amendment that we delete the first bullet. Then I'd like to speak to that amendment, if I could.

The Chair: Mr. Pallister has moved that the motion be amended by deleting the first point or bullet, “that current Canada-Colombia bilateral trade negotiations and eventual ratification be halted in light of the ongoing abuse of human rights by Colombia's government”.

That's the amendment he proposed.

Mr. Pallister.

Mr. Brian Pallister: I just have a couple of points on this amendment.

First of all, it's dangerous in a couple of ways. The first one is the assertion, in the motion, of human rights abuses by the Colombia's government specifically.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Excuse me, Chair, but is he speaking to the amendment or the motion?

Mr. Brian Pallister: I'm speaking to my amendment.

Mr. Julian, in his comments in respect of this motion, didn't offer proof. He offered quotes from Amnesty International and other very reputable organizations—I don't dispute that—but he made allegations and he didn't offer proof.

I'm not sure it's the role of this committee to reach the conclusion in a motion that there are ongoing—the word “ongoing” is in this motion—abuses of human rights by Colombia's government. I think that's a dangerous assumption to make in the preamble to a motion or as part of a motion.

Secondly, there's the assertion in this motion and again in the preamble by Mr. Julian assuming, as he did at the other meeting, that these negotiations are going to be resolved tomorrow or this week—

as he did also with another debate on another motion, which was about Korea—which is not the case, but nonetheless does speak to a sense of urgency about the importance of addressing human rights, and for that I applaud him. However, to suggest that one should, on the assumption of ongoing abuses of human rights by a government, halt negotiations.... I guess those two things make sense together, but they make little sense in the context of what Mr. Julian has offered us as evidence.

Thirdly, they work on a presupposition, which is this: they work on the assumption that we can advance the cause of human rights in Colombia by withdrawing from negotiations with the Government of Colombia. They work on a false assumption that negotiating a trade agreement is not an opportunity for us to advance the cause of human rights, when in fact it is.

In the context of the discussions we are having as a country with Colombia right now, I'm told the negotiations are very much dealing with considerations of human rights; that the negotiations are in fact dealing also, as Mr. Cardin alluded to, with environmental impacts. The negotiators are pushing very hard for the proposed agreement to include provisions specifically on labour rights, on assuring commitments to democracy and human rights as outlined in the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights .

Should you support this motion, you are supporting the withdrawal of the very effort that I believe we need to advance. You are presupposing that negotiators should walk away from a table where they are doing their best on behalf on our country to advance human rights. You are suggesting they should pull away from that effort while we debate this here and debate it in the House of Commons.

Again Mr. Julian includes, of course—as he's owned up to this time—that the committee should report to the House these recommendations, and so on. We debated the other day as well whether it was wise or necessary for us to report to the House our intentions for the work of this committee in advance of doing it.

I believe we have an opportunity here to advance the cause of human rights, but not if we halt negotiations, because the negotiations themselves present us with that very opportunity. They present us with the opportunity to push for human rights. That is what our negotiators are doing. It is in consideration of this that I'm proposing the amendment. I believe that these two things are not mutually exclusive.

I'm not even getting into the economic aspects of this, because we are focusing, as this motion tries to, on the human rights side. But to walk away from a negotiation on the basis of allegations of wrongdoing by a government is on those two counts and on many others wrong. So I would urge support for this amendment.

• (1610)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Chair, could you read that one more time? Is it a deletion?

The Chair: The motion would read: “That the committee report to the House recommending to the Government of Canada that Canada develop a framework for a human rights impact assessment”, etc.

Would that be the motion? Yes? All right.

Have you concluded your remarks? Okay.

Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to compliment Mr. Pallister for his generally well-balanced remarks, although I can't agree with him on them.

I would like to respond to the issue around Canada-Korea, because we had that discussion last Thursday. It was clear from the very beginning that we'd recommended reporting to the House. It was very clear in the motion for folks who follow House procedure. It was, I think, evident to all members of the committee. What we found out after we discussed the motion was that all of the folks from DFAIT who could have come before this committee today to testify on Canada-Korea were in Korea, so that proves the point that I'm making about Canada-Colombia. Given that news reports have indicated that this may well be the final round this week, it is quite likely that we will be seeing this week some sort of agreement on Friday afternoon, I would suppose, that would come out, and as a result of that, as a committee, we need to be equipped to make an opinion on it.

I do want to quote in addition to the many reports. I could spend hours referring to committee members all of the human rights reports that have come out on Colombia, but in every case I'm citing other individuals who know the Colombian situation much better than I do. I don't presume to know what's going on in Colombia. I do presume to know that if folks who are reputable, experienced, and understand human rights issues are raising concerns about this agreement, those are opinions that we, as a committee, need to take into consideration.

I will cite another of those noted individuals: Hollman Morris, who is a contributor to the BBC, host of a national current affairs program. He was named human rights defender of the year by Human Rights Watch International for his work on exposing abuses in the Colombian conflict. He is quoted as follows:

"I don't think they told (Prime Minister Stephen Harper) that more trade unionists are killed in Colombia than in any other country in the world", said Morris, who was to meet with officials at the Foreign Affairs Department later Friday.

This is a news item from November 10.

"What this shows is a blind support. ... I'm not sure whether the Canadian public would accept this from Prime Minister Harper, or whether the Parliament would accept his memory loss." Morris' visit comes just as Canada enters a fourth—and possibly last—round of negotiations with Colombia and Peru on a free-trade agreement, with the firm backing of Harper.

The article from the Canadian Press also notes that the U.S. Congress has shelved a similar deal. There is no doubt. Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and members of the Colombian clergy who were in Ottawa last week have all expressed the same concerns. The concerns that have been raised about this deal are widespread. So for us, as members of the committee, to take a step back to simply pretend there isn't a problem, when out in civil society, out in cities across this country, there is real concern about this agreement, with dozens of civil society organizations having expressed support for this particular motion, I think would be blind.

This committee has a responsibility. We know of the concerns that have been raised, and I believe the amendment should be defeated and we should be bringing this motion to the House, where it

properly belongs, to inform other members of the House that we have some real concerns, that we share the concerns that have been expressed by so many of the human rights activists around this issue.

• (1615)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Julian.

Mr. Dhaliwal.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm really confused now. I'm a new member on this committee. On one side we have Mr. Julian talking about all these human rights situations. A human rights situation to me is very important, whether it's on Canadian land or whether it is across this universe. On the other hand, Mr. Pallister made a good call there that the committee that's negotiating on behalf of Canadians is taking care of those human rights situations.

The person who can answer this question is the minister responsible for international trade, and what I would suggest is when it comes to an amendment or even the motion, we should bring the minister here first so that we can hear what he is doing to take care of the human rights situation in Colombia before we can make any motion. I would like to hear from him.

The thing is that it's one person's word against the other. It is the minister who will have the lead input into the situation.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Miller.

Mr. Larry Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

There may or may not be human rights abuses in Colombia. Over time there probably has been abuse, but I think it's pointed out in this motion that they're committed by the government, and that is the part I strongly disagree with. I think we know of the human rights abuses that we hear have happened through the drug trade, that kind of thing. To say it's the actual government, I think we need a bit more on that than what we've heard at this point.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Cannan.

Mr. Ron Cannan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I've heard the speakers, and I appreciate Mr. Dhaliwal's point as well.

I support the amendment, but further on it talks about Canada developing a framework for a human rights impact assessment—HRIA is the acronym. Correct me if I'm wrong, Mr. Chair, but in my research, and I've been doing some reading on this, it is my understanding that if it's brought into a bilateral trade negotiation it would actually be the bureaucrats who would decide on the subjectivity of human rights, rather than parliamentarians. I think we're abrogating a responsibility. Maybe that could be clarified.

I think we're all concerned about human rights and making sure there's free and fair trade. We want to make sure everybody is treated with the dignity and respect they deserve, both as an employer and as an employee. But I believe that we should take the onus, as elected officials, rather than delegate the subjectivity of human rights to the bureaucrats. Developing this framework would create a lot of restriction; it would be very stringent as far as the terms of addressing specific countries' circumstances.

I would like to make a subamendment that the second bullet be removed.

The Chair: Okay. For clarity, you really can't make a subamendment of that nature to this amendment, because if you drop the second paragraph, there are no paragraphs, so there is no motion.

You would have to amend the previous motion, which would be another amendment to the motion, as opposed to a subamendment to the amendment, if you follow what I'm saying.

• (1620)

Mr. Ron Cannan: So if I could ask the clerk then to read the amendment that's being proposed right now, I'll make—

The Chair: Well, the amendment that is being proposed right now would leave Mr. Julian's motion to read: "That the committee report to the House recommending to the Government of Canada that Canada develop a framework for human rights...".

That would be Mr. Pallister's amendment, simply to drop the first bullet. If you were to drop the second bullet, there would be no bullets.

Mr. Ron Cannan: I'll leave it for later and we'll deal with the amendment right now.

The Chair: We'll have to deal with it subsequent to dealing with this amendment.

Thank you.

We have Monsieur Cardin on Mr. Pallister's amendment.

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cardin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Strike point one of the motion and keep the second part. If we claim to be concerned and to want to know about the situation and how human rights and the environment are affected, exactly what objective are we pursuing? Negotiations are currently under way and I cannot see ourselves making a monumental error by doing business with a country where serious human rights abuses are occurring.

If we strike point one, it would mean that while the committee conducts an impact study to uncover the truth—the second component—the government can continue to negotiate and move toward ratification. If we want to have time to do an impact study and shed light on the actual situation, and then decide, in view of our findings, to go ahead with this, there needs to be a break of sorts. I can understand that the first part of the motion recommending an end to the trade negotiations—a reference that Mr. Pallister wants to delete—provides an out of sorts. It is not calling for an end to the negotiations per se, but to a suspension of the talks to prevent things from moving ahead too quickly and from going wrong before an

impact study is done. I do not see the point of striking this critical part of the motion which, to all intents and purposes, authorizes us to go forward with the second part of the motion.

There is no way that I can support Mr. Pallister's amendment.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, just briefly, I want to respond to Mr. Pallister's comment about human rights potentially being on the agenda.

The *Latin America News Digest* reported this week that during the fourth round to take place in Lima, Colombia, Peru, and Canada will discuss issues such as origin rules, telecommunications, environmental cooperation, and public purchases. There's no reference, Mr. Chair, whatsoever to human rights, human rights being discussed, human rights being on the table—nothing at all, Mr. Chair. So I think it's important to put that one to bed. It's not on the agenda, certainly from what's been reported publicly, and I think we can surmise from that that it's not part of the negotiations that are frantically taking place this week.

The Chair: Mr. Pallister.

Mr. Brian Pallister: Is it my turn, Mr. Chair? I don't want to cut anybody off.

• (1625)

The Chair: I wouldn't let you.

Mr. Brian Pallister: Well, that's just ludicrous, what Mr. Julian... I think part of the problem here, Mr. Chair, is that this country was asleep at the switch for a decade on negotiating these agreements, so we don't know how to act when they come up. The fact is that Mr. Julian's assertion, just made, is that unless it's in the public domain, it isn't happening. In other words, a trade negotiation can only occur if the public is at the table, sitting at the table, and knows exactly what is going on in respect of both sides negotiating that deal, and that's never how a free trade agreement has been negotiated, ever. So to make that assertion is just simply specious. I mean, it doesn't bear consideration.

On the other legitimate concerns, though, to which a couple of my colleagues made reference, I would like to offer them some response, because they deserve a response.

The first is that we need to take opinions into consideration. That's very true, certainly true. In fact we had a very, I thought, fulsome discussion at our first meeting about what our priorities were. We identified two things as priorities. Those were Korea and the Colombia-Peru negotiations. As a committee we identified them as priorities and we established that as committee members we felt they were very important and we wanted to deal with them. The question is how do we deal with them intelligently. Surely that should be the question. And to suggest that we're going to now adopt a resolution to halt trade negotiations that have been ongoing for some time is counterproductive. It doesn't help advance the cause of human rights. It helps perhaps to a degree to self-aggrandize some of our members, but it doesn't help us as a country to advance the agenda of human rights, not in any way, shape, or form. It's a mistake.

It would be a fair assertion, as Mr. Cardin has made, that we should halt negotiations if there were no other avenue for discussion, but of course there is, at this committee, where, since we've already identified it as a priority, I expect we're going to be hearing witnesses and pursuing investigation of the issues and the concerns around this trade negotiation in the very near future. So we have every opportunity to hear and address those concerns.

Secondly, if, as the member asserts again, as he did the other day, the trade negotiations have just concluded or will be concluding in the next 24 hours, then the fact remains we have the opportunity of course to debate these issues in the House of Commons, because the House of Commons does have the opportunity to ratify or to not ratify these agreements when they are concluded and when they are brought forward. And ultimately in a minority Parliament, the trump card rests in the hands of Parliament because there is no assurance that the government and the government negotiators, having negotiated a tentative arrangement with Colombia and Peru, would be able to proceed with such an agreement in any case, because the fact remains that Parliament would have the say.

So given that and given all the opportunities we have to deal with this to come to the point of making constructive suggestions and recommendations and to participate in debate both here and in the House of Commons, for us to suggest that we should insert ourselves into a negotiation of a free trade agreement where in fact human rights is on the agenda and human rights are being advanced in an intelligent and thoughtful way, very ambitiously, by Canadian negotiators on behalf of the Canadian people; that we should somehow halt the negotiations and insert ourselves into that process, thereby delaying what has been ongoing for some time, which is stated as a concern, as an agreement, that frankly members of other parties have said publicly should be advanced in the best interest of the Canadian people; that we should halt those negotiations and assert as well in this bullet, which I speak to, specifically that the Government of Colombia is engaged in ongoing human rights abuse, I again implore you that is not only wrongheaded and misguided, it's a real abrogation of our own responsibilities as members of the House of Commons, frankly.

I strongly urge you not to do anything but to support this amendment and delete this bullet from the preamble.

The Chair: Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: I'd like to pay the parliamentary secretary a compliment. He speaks very smoothly, and it's not until afterwards that you think, hold on, what he just said contradicts what the government has actually done.

On the human rights issue, it's the government itself that put out the key areas they were negotiating. It's not something the journalists made up. This is what the government has been spinning. What they've been spinning is that human rights aren't on the list. What is on the list is origin of rules, telecommunications, and public purchases. So for them to say it is, it's just not part of what we're publicly rolling out, even though many Canadians have expressed concerns about it.... It just doesn't make sense.

Mr. Chair, as you know, we're still waiting on FTAA, which is supposedly something that was going to be brought promptly back to the House and to this committee. There are real contradictions

between what the government has actually done and what the parliamentary secretary is telling us. I think members of the committee need to be very clear on that.

I do want to come back to the human rights issues. I could read into the record page after page after page of testimony. I assume, Mr. Chair, that every member of the committee has prepared adequately for this committee hearing. As a result, they've read the human rights reports from Human Rights Watch, from Amnesty International, from the bishops who have come to Canada to speak on this issue, and from the labour movement, which has raised real concerns. I would expect that members of this committee have read those reports. If they have read those reports, there is no doubt that there is a substantial problem in Colombia.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. André.

Mr. Guy André: My comments are along the same lines as those of my colleague Mr. Cardin. Obviously we have some serious reservations. Is the government involved in these human rights violations? One thing is clear, namely that it is not doing anything at this time to restore order in Colombia.

Our government is saying that it wants to have economic relations with another regime when it does not really know how that country is being governed and or when it appears that our own values and environmental standards are not being respected. All of the impact studies that have been done show that the current situation in Colombia is not particularly good. Any free trade negotiations must be viewed from that perspective.

If I had a business relationship with a company and did not know if the CEO of the company treated his employees well, I am sure that I would question this relationship. I would not want to do business with a company that could make things difficult for me. It makes sense for Canada to suspend its bilateral negotiations with Colombia until we get a clearer picture of the actual situation in that country and until the human rights issue is brought to the forefront.

In a business relationship, it is critical to know the party with whom we are doing business. I fail to understand why some people are hesitant about stepping in. Canadians who will be investing in Colombia must be protected as well. The government is negotiating a bilateral agreement without knowing all of the problems that could potentially arise. The important thing here is to get a clearer overall picture of the situation.

We cannot accept anything less than this motion.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Cannan.

Mr. Ron Cannan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I sit here and listen with great interest. I don't think anybody in this room isn't concerned about human rights. It's a consensus. If you look at our country, our country is a trade-based nation. We've had great success with free trade agreements. One party specifically in the room doesn't support free trade agreements. If we want to truly make a difference in helping human rights in countries, how can we help if we're not at the table looking at the economic growth developing in other countries and giving opportunities to other individuals in these developing nations? And I believe we have a responsibility as a government and as parliamentarians, if we really care about the social welfare of other people, to stay on the sidelines and let these guys fight it out.

Our government has agreed with the Government of Colombia, has committed to extend the mandate of the UN Commission on Human Rights office in Colombia to the duration of the president's term. We recognize there is a problem with human rights. We want to work with the Colombian government to come up with an agreement. I said it's free and fair trade, and if we're not involved in the negotiations, how can you give any hope to these people for the respect and human rights and dignity they deserve. I don't get Mr. Julian's perspective at all. It's totally illogical from my perspective.

• (1635)

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur Cardin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Can Mr. Pallister and the other members of the Conservative Party prove to us that in its negotiations with Colombia, Canada has broached the issue of human rights and is scoring some points?

If you can formally prove to us that it has, then we will tell you to go ahead with the negotiations and to improve the situation. However, before the agreement is actually signed, conditions to be met will need to be listed. It will be quite another matter, however, if you cannot prove to us that in the negotiations currently under way, both human rights and environmental concerns have been equally addressed, with the aim being, clearly, to improve the situation in a trade context. We are prepared to adopt a conciliatory attitude about some things.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cardin.

Mr. Pallister.

Mr. Brian Pallister: I don't think there's any disputing there are human rights violations in Colombia. That's not the issue. The issue is the allegation that the government is responsible and that is what's contained in this bullet. As I said earlier, that's what I'm alluding to as a dangerous assertion to make. We're making an allegation here of human rights abuses by Colombia's government specifically in a preamble where we are also proposing we cease negotiating with that government.

I understand Mr. Julian's intention in respect of the motion. I don't agree with it, but I understand it.

The Chair: I have no further speakers on the amendment, and without further speakers, we will call the question on Mr. Pallister's amendment.

(Amendment negated)

The Chair: The amendment fails, and we resume debate on the original motion by Mr. Julian, who has the floor.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to propose the following amendment: that we add to the motion a third bullet:

That the Minister of International Trade be called to testify before the committee on how human rights concerns are being addressed in current bilateral trade negotiations, with particular reference to the Canada-Colombia bilateral negotiations.

I'd like to speak to that.

The Chair: So you're proposing to add an amendment to your motion?

Mr. Peter Julian: Yes, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Bains was quite correct. He moved a brilliant motion as a friendly amendment, and I just want to make sure procedurally now it was on the floor, because it certainly does add to the motion we have before us.

Mr. Larry Miller: May I speak on a point of order, Mr. Chairman? Mr. Bains did not declare it a friendly amendment; it was explained that it was a separate motion altogether. So I just want that on the record.

• (1640)

The Chair: Mr. Bains.

Hon. Navdeep Bains: It already was on the record. I just want to make that very clear. It was not a friendly amendment. My choice of words at the beginning was not appropriate, and I made that clear before, so I want to go on the record that this is a separate motion that I had presented at the beginning of the meeting.

The Chair: Thank you. I think we dealt with that. What we're dealing with is something new—just coincidentally the same wording—and this is—

Mr. Peter Julian: It's such a terrific motion.

The Chair: Mr. Pallister, do you have a comment on the same point of order?

Mr. Brian Pallister: I just want to be clear that motions out of order from anyone else are okay if the introducer of the motion is the one who makes the amendment at the meeting. It's the same motion Mr. Bains made. I just want to be clear on that. Is the motion that was out of order earlier now in order because it's Mr. Julian making it? Is that...?

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: You can't do that.

Mr. Brian Pallister: I just want to put it on the record.

The Chair: Thank you, I think it's a good point. If you would, give me a moment to consult with the clerk who gave us the advice in the first instance.

Mr. Brian Pallister: He was out of order a minute ago.

The Chair: I'll just consult with the clerk for a moment.

Mr. Pallister and others, for clarity, then, the reason the original proposal—whether it was an amendment or a motion by Mr. Bains—was out of order in that case and could not be accepted as an amendment is because in addition he had suggested it as an amendment by deleting all the other words of the motion. That was why it was out of order, because it was so changing the original motion as to be out of order.

Mr. Julian is not changing the previous motion, as I take it. He is simply adding an additional point to it. So that is the reason why.

Okay, we have a speaker.

Mr. Peter Julian: If I may just comment, on a point of order, Mr. Chair, you're absolutely right in your ruling. Mr. Pallister would have been right if notice of motion had been provided by Mr. Bains on this and it had been distributed to committee; then it would have been his purview to move the motion. But as it is submitted as part of the committee function itself, it is very much in order for me to move it as an amendment.

The Chair: Okay, we have an amendment on the floor, and that is to add to the original motion: "That the Minister of International Trade be called to testify before the committee on how human rights concerns are being addressed in the current bilateral negotiations, with particular reference to the Canada-Colombia bilateral negotiations." That is now added to the original motion.

Go ahead, Mr. Pallister.

Mr. Brian Pallister: I'd like that motion read again, just to be clear on the wording, if I could.

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Julian, I will read the motion and I'd ask you to follow and see if it is in fact how you proposed it.

The motion would now, as I understand it, read: "That the committee report to the House recommending to the Government of Canada that the current Canada-Colombia bilateral trade negotiations and eventual ratification"—

Mr. Brian Pallister: That's not what I asked. I was not concerned about the whole motion. It was just Peter's amendment.

The Chair: Well, that is what you asked.

Mr. Brian Pallister: The amendment was all I was wanting to know, what the wording was.

The Chair: Okay, I'm sorry; you said motion.

The motion would then be, as I take it, adding a third point to the original motion. So it would be:

That the Minister of International Trade be called to testify before the committee on how human rights concerns are being addressed in current bilateral trade negotiations, with particular reference to the Canada-Colombia bilateral negotiations.

Is that correct, Mr. Julian?

Mr. Peter Julian: Yes.

The Chair: Is that clear now, Mr. Pallister?

Mr. Brian Pallister: Yes.

The Chair: Thank you.

You have the floor, Mr. Pallister.

Mr. Brian Pallister: Thank you.

I'll just speak against that, because I'd already given assurance to the members, and we had discussed this, that we as a committee wanted to have the minister appear. I had already previously given assurances to the members of the committee that I'd endeavour to make sure that happened. So the minister could well be available, as we wish. I'm hopeful he will be available as early as next week.

So I see this motion as rather redundant, because we have already expressed our concerns and our priorities as a committee, and what this motion will do is specifically say that we're calling him on this specific issue, when I anticipate there will be a number of other issues that committee members would want to raise. Frankly, I just see it as redundant. The minister has already said that he's going to appear if we want him. He's available.

• (1645)

The Chair: Mr. Cannan is next.

Mr. Ron Cannan: Can a mover amend his own motion?

The Chair: He just did.

Mr. Ron Cannan: I know. I just wanted to clarify.

The Chair: I have no further speakers to the motion.

Go ahead, Mr. Maloney.

Mr. John Maloney (Welland, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I think that Mr. Julian's original motion at this time may be somewhat mature. I think Mr. Bains' suggestion, which was adopted as point three of Mr. Julian's motion, would be more appropriate to consider. Perhaps in a subsequent meeting, after we've heard from the minister, we may want to consider Mr. Julian's motion again.

As a consequence, I would move to delete from the motion as amended the original motion by Mr. Peter Julian and retain the third point of Mr. Julian's motion, since we can't deal with Mr. Bains' motion at this time because notice has not been given.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to have to take a minute here to consult with the clerk on this about-turn. I'm going to let you speak, Mr. Julian, but I want to consult with the clerk first. Thank you.

Gentlemen, I think it might just save some time if we're all clear and on the same wavelength. Here's what would happen in this case.

First of all, we can't make a subamendment to the amendment that would delete something that's not part of the amendment. That is to say that a subamendment could only in this case relate to the amendment, which is the third point. It cannot relate to the first two because they're not part of the amendment. They're part of the original motion, which is where we were in the first place. For further clarity, if you want to achieve what I take it you're wishing to achieve this morning, we would have to revert back to the original. We could do it in two ways. Hypothetically, if you passed the motion as amended, adding the third one, then you have a motion that includes that third part. You could then move an amendment to that motion, once passed, to delete the first two. That is one way to accomplish it rather circuitously, if everybody follows that bouncing ball.

The other way you could do it would be to defeat the amendment, defeat the motion, and move a separate amendment. As Mr. Julian was about to raise or had in fact raised, the only question is whether or not that is in order because notice was not given of Mr. Bains' proposed motion. I think I would be prepared to rule that because it is on a very similar topic and directly related to the matter of discussion, it would in fact be in order. I think we have suitable references to make that point so that we could go back to another motion of Mr. Bains, presuming that Mr. Julian's motion was defeated.

Again, let me just offer, if I could, for clarity the options that are now before us. We have Mr. Maloney moving a subamendment that would delete the first two bullets of the original motion. That in fact would be out of order at this time because the amendment does not include those two points. For Mr. Maloney to proceed with his intent, we would have to do one of two things. That would be to pass the motion as amended by Mr. Julian, which would include Mr. Bains' point, and then having passed the amendment, we would resume debate on the original motion and then you would have to propose another amendment to amend the original motion to delete the first two. That seems rather circuitous, let me suggest, but it is an option. The other way to do it would simply be to defeat the amendment, defeat Mr. Julian's motion, and reintroduce another motion by Mr. Bains, as he originally had proposed.

I'm really just stating this for clarity and not offering an opinion. I'm just letting you people know where we are. Is there any question as to what we've done?

Clerk, am I correct in my interpretation of the rules?

Okay.

We have a speakers list; it is Mr. Pallister and Mr. Julian on a point of order. I think we have Mr. Pallister first on a point of order.

Mr. Brian Pallister: No.

•(1650)

The Chair: Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

That clarifies things. However, we've already had the decision on the first bullet point, and this committee has upheld that amendment, so that's something else that committee members have to consider.

I would certainly hope we would just move to adopt this motion as amended. I hope members of the committee will support that as well.

The Chair: The motion on the floor is an amendment to include a third bullet stating that the Minister of International Trade be called to testify. This is Mr. Julian's amendment to add the third point, which was originally Mr. Bains' point, to the motion.

That is the amendment that is now on the floor. I have no more names on the list. Do we wish to have the question on the amendment?

Mr. Julian, on your amendment.

Mr. Peter Julian: No, that's fine. I think we can proceed.

The Chair: Okay, if there is no further debate on Mr. Julian's amendment to add the third point, I will call the question on the

amendment only. The amendment is to add the third point to Mr. Julian's original motion. Are we clear?

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

The Chair: We now have a motion that includes Mr. Bains' wording. Now we return to debate on the original motion, and the original motion now includes the third point.

Mr. Julian has the floor.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, we've had debate on most of this motion. We've had decisions on most of this motion. The only thing we haven't debated or tried to see cut or mixed is the section on the human rights indicator, which the Conservatives said they're in support of. So I would move that we vote on the motion as amended and would hope that the—

The Chair: We have a motion on the floor to move it.

Mr. Larry Miller: I'd like to move an amendment to the motion, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Sorry, we have a speakers list, Mr. Miller, and Mr. Pallister is next.

Mr. Larry Miller: I wasn't going to speak to anything, I was going to move an amendment.

The Chair: Well, you have to get the floor before you can do anything.

Mr. Pallister.

Mr. Brian Pallister: Yes, I'll move the amendment to delete the first two bullets from the motion.

The Chair: Okay, we have a motion from Mr. Pallister.

•(1655)

Mr. Brian Pallister: I'll withdraw my amendment.

The Chair: Mr. Miller, you have the floor.

Mr. Larry Miller: I'm okay.

The Chair: I have no more names on the list.

We're now about to vote on the original motion as amended by Mr. Julian. I think everybody's clear on what it says.

(Motion as amended negatived) [See *Minutes of Proceedings*]

The Chair: Okay, now we can continue with new business.

Mr. Bains.

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Yes, I'd like to now introduce the motion I discussed earlier, which is relevant to the topic we have been discussing. I'd like to read the motion:

That the Minister of International Trade and other appropriate witnesses be called forthwith to testify before the committee on how environmental impacts and human rights concerns are being addressed in current bilateral trade negotiations, with particular reference to the Canada-Colombia bilateral negotiations.

The Chair: Okay, we're just going to take a minute for the clerk to get that down. It's slightly different. It just expands it a little bit.

Is everybody clear on the motion? Is there debate?

Mr. Julian.

Mr. Peter Julian: I'm not clear about this, Mr. Chairman.

“Forthwith” would mean next Thursday, I assume. Normally when we have committee motion language like that it means the next committee meeting.

Hon. Navdeep Bains: It's to the discretion of the committee, and we can have that debate once we adopt the motion. It will be as soon as possible, when the minister is available, and when we want him—the sooner the better; hence the word “forthwith”. So it could be next Thursday or later than that. It depends. The point is we want him to come as soon as possible.

The Chair: Mr. Julian, do you wish to speak again to the same motion?

Mr. Peter Julian: I'd like to put my name back on the list of speakers.

The Chair: You're the only one on the list.

Mr. Peter Julian: I'd like to amend the motion by saying the Minister of International Trade be called to testify this Thursday, November 29, before the committee.

The Chair: We have an amendment on the floor. If anyone would like to debate it we can put your name on the list.

Mr. Miller, do you want to speak to that?

Mr. Larry Miller: Yes.

The minister has indicated that he will come, and Mr. Pallister said earlier today that it looks like he may be able to come some time next week. If you put that into a motion and the minister can't come, what the hell will that accomplish? I think the request can go in for him to be here on Thursday, but what if he can't? I don't know what his schedule is. Let's not play games with it.

The Chair: Mr. Cardin, do you want to speak to the amendment?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin: I would like to propose another amendment.

[*English*]

The Chair: We have an amendment on the floor at this time. Is there any further debate on the amendment?

With no further debate on the amendment, I'm going to call the question on Mr. Julian's amendment that the minister be asked to attend Thursday, two days hence.

(Amendment negated)

● (1700)

The Chair: We're now resuming debate on Mr. Bains' motion as submitted.

Do you want to propose another amendment, Mr. Cardin?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin: The amendment would consist of adding the following, at the start of the motion: That no ratification of the bilateral agreement between Canada and Colombia be signed until [...]

And the motion would go on to read:

That the Minister of International Trade be called to testify before the Committee on how human rights concerns are being addressed in current bilateral trade negotiations with particular reference to the Canada-Colombia bilateral negotiations.

[*English*]

The Chair: We have another amendment to Mr. Bains' motion. I think it's going to be a minute until we get that one written out.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cardin: I have overlooked a few minor details. Instead of beginning with the words “That no”, the amendment would read as follows: “That the Committee recommends that no ratification [...]” This is a more polite way of putting things.

[*English*]

The Chair: Do we have that in writing?

It's quite rambling, so if you don't mind we'll take a minute to sort out exactly what the intent of the amendment is. We're getting some clarification on the amendment.

I think the clerk has the sense of the possible amendment. I'll ask him to read it out.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Chad Mariage): My translation of this could be refined, but the intention of what I heard from Mr. Cardin is that the committee recommend that no ratification agreement between Canada and Colombia be signed until.... Then we continue with the motion as moved by Mr. Bains.

Is there an ending as well?

● (1705)

The Chair: We simply have to go in camera, that's all, and we could probably get it done in ten minutes.

I'm going to ask the clerk to read this out and read it slowly. I think we'll have him read it as presented by Mr. Cardin, in French. So if everyone could read this, I'd like to proceed on debate of the amendment immediately.

I would ask the clerk to read out Mr. Cardin's motion.

Mr. Cardin, I would ask you to listen carefully to see if this is the correct intent of what you wanted to say.

[*Translation*]

The Clerk: Mr. Chairman, the motion would read as follows:

That the Committee recommends that no ratification of the bilateral trade agreement between Canada and Colombia be signed until the Minister of International Trade is called to testify before the Committee on how human rights concerns are being addressed in current bilateral trade negotiations with particular reference to the Canada-Colombia bilateral negotiations, and that, if the Minister is unable to demonstrate that human rights are being protected, the government end negotiations with Colombia.

● (1710)

[*English*]

The Chair: Is there any debate on the motion?

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Can you read that again?

The Clerk: All right, I'll try to read it in English:

That the committee recommend that no ratification agreement between Canada and Colombia be signed without the Minister of International Trade and appropriate witnesses being called forthwith to testify before the committee on how environmental impact and human rights concerns are being addressed in current bilateral trade negotiations, with particular reference to the Canada-Colombia bilateral negotiations, and that if the minister is incapable of demonstrating that he is protecting human rights that negotiations be put to an end with Colombia.

The Chair: Okay, I think we now have the motion.

Is there any debate?

We have a list: Mr. Pallister, Mr. Miller, Mr. Julian.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Brian Pallister: Regrettably, Mr. Chairman, I think I need to boost my colleagues' trust in the government's negotiators where human rights are concerned.

[*English*]

Yes, the negotiators are pushing for provisions on labour rights and human rights. This is entirely in keeping with the agenda of this government, and I could give you many examples to show that, but I will give you just a couple.

Through CIDA, between 2005 and 2007, Canada gave \$23 million to Colombia to assist and respond to the needs of vulnerable people and their population, including internally displaced people.

There are numerous examples. Through DFAIT in that same period, there was \$3.6 million and there has been a further \$5 million this year to support justice, human rights, and stabilization initiatives. There are numerous other examples I could give the member to provide him, I hope, with some confidence that this is entirely in keeping with the government's agenda, not only in the negotiations but in many other aspects of its programming and spending, as I believe he's aware.

So I would have to speak against his amendment because of that. I think it's unnecessary, and for the other reasons I have stated in the past, I don't believe it is appropriate for us to adopt this. I believe he presents it in good faith, but I would speak against it for those reasons.

The Chair: Mr. Miller.

Mr. Larry Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll be very brief.

Obviously I don't believe we have any authority to give the direction that's in this amendment. For the life of me, I can't figure out why the Bloc and the NDP are so totally against trade talks. I simply cannot support this amendment, which is trying to imply that this committee can end them, as well as saying some other stuff. I will support the original motion proposed by Mr. Bains, but I cannot support this.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Julian.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chairman, this amendment makes a good deal of sense. It is exactly what the Conservatives have been saying since the start of the meeting, namely that the government is addressing all human rights concerns in its negotiations. We are not in the process of finalizing the trade agreement.

Nothing in this amendment contradicts what the Conservatives have been saying since 3:30 this afternoon. Consequently, since the amendment of my colleague Mr. Cardin is in line with the Conservative's position, I think it is entirely in order, and even desirable.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur André.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy André: As far as the Bloc Québécois amendment goes, I think it takes into account that consensus that has been achieved since the committee first began looking at Mr. Julian's motion.

Moreover, Mr. Pallister mentioned that he had no problem with it whatsoever since the government is already addressing these concerns in the negotiating process. Indeed, I understood Mr. Pallister to say that the government is currently working to ensure that human rights are respected within the framework of this agreement. So then, the motion calls for the minister, the Hon. David Emerson, to testify before the committee to demonstrate to us that the government is committed to action on the human rights front, as Mr. Pallister implied. Therefore, I see no reason why this motion would not receive the unanimous endorsement of the committee.

If the minister can demonstrate to us, as Mr. Pallister and yourself sincerely believe he can, that human rights concerns are being addressed, then this motion would simply provide him with an opportunity to come here and testify, and to prove beyond a doubt that he is working hard on this front. If the minister can prove that he is, then the negotiations will continue. If he cannot prove this beyond a reasonable doubt, then we will ask him to halt the negotiations until a different approach can be taken.

I do not see why this motion would not be adopted unanimously.

• (1715)

[*English*]

The Chair: I'll call the question on the amendment.

(Amendment negated)

The Chair: We are continuing the debate on Mr. Bains' motion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Julian: What is the final tally, Mr. Chairman?

[*English*]

The Chair: The vote was seven to three.

We are now resuming debate on Mr. Bains' motion. There being no discussion, I will call the question.

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

Hon. Navdeep Bains: Can we get that on the record?

The Chair: I'm not sure.

Did you vote, Monsieur André? Were you voting or abstaining?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy André: We voted against the motion, Mr. Chairman, but we are prepared nevertheless to consider it.

[*English*]

The Chair: Mr. Bains has asked for a recorded vote.

The Clerk: The question is on the main motion. Can I dispense with reading it?

Some hon. members: Yes.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 3)

The Chair: The motion is carried.

Mr. Larry Miller: Mr. Chairman, as it's twenty after five. Can I move that we adjourn but move directly into the committee report, which should take not much more than 15 minutes at the next meeting?

The Chair: We don't have to adjourn. We're going in camera. I think that's what your intent was.

We'll go in camera. I'll give you 30 seconds.

[Proceedings continue in camera]

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