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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

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• (1640)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): Good afternoon, everyone.

This is the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. It is meeting 12, Thursday, February 7, 2008, and we are meeting here this afternoon to discuss committee business.

I'll tell you right now my intentions are that this committee will be stopped at 5:30. There are planes to catch and places to be.

Does anyone have a problem with that? We're okay that at 5:30 or before we will adjourn?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: All right. That would be wonderful.

The first order of business is to ratify the report that came out of the steering committee prior to this meeting. Your steering committee met and made two points. First of all, it recommended that the list of witnesses on Afghanistan from the previous session be resubmitted to the committee and agreed to, that new names be added, and that the meetings on Afghanistan be held next week, which would include the February 12 and February 14 meetings. The second point in the steering committee report recommended that the committee hear from the department, as well as other witnesses, dealing with Sudan, on February 26.

Are we all in favour of accepting that report as read?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): What do you mean by "other witnesses"?

The Chair: People may want to submit some witnesses. There have been a couple already. We're uncertain as to the timelines, but we'll hear from the department and in the second hour we'll hear from witnesses. I know we have STAND, some of those students, and we have others who want to attend.

Is that carried?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: All right. The report is adopted.

I'm going to ask you to look at item 2 on the agenda. This is what we were discussing when your committee last met, that following the tabling and release of the government's response to the advisory group on the national round tables on corporate social responsibility in the Canadian extractive industry in developing countries, tabled

on March 29, 2007, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development invite the Minister of Foreign Affairs to appear before the committee to explain the government's response.

We did make an amendment to that, which stated that we would invite the relevant ministers, and as I recall, at the last meeting it was with regard to the time of the invitation to go out to these ministers.

We'll go Mr. Obhrai and then Mr. Wrzesnewskyj. I believe Mr. Obhrai was speaking when we left the other day.

Go ahead, Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Chair, upon reading the main that motion Madame Barbot put forward, which is "that, following the tabling and release of the Government's response" and changing the motion to say "all relevant ministers who are responsible for the file", I think the government would have no objection to this motion on the basis that the government is committed to giving a response, number one, and the government has no problem responding to the issue.

So if this motion remains as is, with the change to "the relevant ministers" from the "Minister of Foreign Affairs"—as I indicated, the Minister of Foreign Affairs is not responsible for this file; it is better to have the relevant ministers who are responsible for this file. That is fine. The government would have no difficulty supporting this motion.

The Chair: Now that the clerk reminds me, I'm not certain we even did have an amendment that came forward, other than what we talked about. Does that reflect what the amendment was, in the opinion of members of the committee?

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ): Mr. Wrzesnewskyj had also moved an amendment.

[English]

The Chair: Is it to that point, though, Borys, on the amendment?

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Yes. An amendment was accepted as a friendly amendment, and I believe the clerk may have noted the exact wording of that. If not, I can repeat it.

Does the clerk have the wording?

The Clerk of the Committee (Mrs. Angela Crandall): I don't have it.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: The amendment was as follows. It began with the sentence, "As ten months have passed since the roundtable—"

The Chair: Now that you read it, I remember it. You're right. Continue.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: So the insertion was:

As ten months have passed since the Advisory Group on the National Roundtables on Corporate Social Responsibility in the Canadian Extractive Industry in Developing Countries and the government has not tabled a response, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs...

And it continues thereafter.

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I disagree with, and cannot accept at all, that motion. When he put that motion, the time was up, but I can tell you that the government would absolutely have—

• (1645)

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: On a point of order, the time was not up. At the time the amendment was made, it was accepted as being friendly, and we were already getting into a bit of a discussion about it, and that's when time ran out.

The Chair: I guess we are hearing that there is a disagreement. It may be accepted as a friendly amendment. We were very close there for a moment to having a unanimous motion passed, and with it I think probably the urgency expressed to the minister to appear...

An hon. member: It does say when it was tabled.

The Chair: It does already mention the tabling date. It seems like a double whammy there.

Are we going to debate this?

This can go on endlessly. There is no record from the clerk that the friendly amendment was there.

The Clerk: I would like to clarify that the friendly amendment does not exist in committee; it's an amendment or it isn't an amendment. If it's an amendment, then the committee debates it and votes on it, procedurally.

I wrote it down, but as far as I was concerned, a decision had not been made at the end of the meeting.

The Chair: And it hadn't.

We have an amendment, and we can debate this endlessly—what's the right word for this? Forever?

An hon. member: Interminably.

The Chair: It's the first part of that motion that I think is causing grief to the government. If we want to debate this, then we'll go into debate.

Mr. Patry.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[English]

I don't even know why we're discussing it.

Following the tabling and release of the government's response, there's no tabling and there's no correspondence. We've been waiting

for 10 months. It could be after the next election, and nobody knows when it's going to be.

I would just prefer to have the minister here, or to ask our distinguished colleague when the government intends to give a response. That report is not a report by the committee. For a report by a committee, they need to give a response within three to six months. Whether it takes a year or two years, it looks like they don't intend to respond, because we already have a response.

You can pass all the motions you want, but after the tabling, as we say in French, *aux calendes grecques*, or forever.

The Chair: Madame Barbot.

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Ms. Lalonde received a letter from the government—unfortunately I do not have it here with me—advising her that a response was being drafted. I don't know when that was exactly, but it was quite some time ago. This motion is very clear: it calls on the government to provide a response, and nothing more. Therefore, I cannot see why anyone would object. A response is already in the works and all we want is some assurance that we will get one some day, for the sake of future business.

[English]

The Chair: I'm going to ask that we keep our debate to the amendment and not debate the motion. The amendment is what is before the committee at this point, and the amendment to the motion is the first part of it. We don't yet have an amended motion.

Who was up next here?

Mr. Khan.

Mr. Wajid Khan (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): It was very encouraging to see that the motion was put forward and the government supported it as is. As in the past, there has been a lot of cooperation and a lot of work has been done. The government went through all the objections.

In my view, it's absolutely appropriate that rather than creating more amendments, arguing and debating, and then leaving at 5:30 for our flights, in the interest of achieving something on this committee, we go back to the original motion.

The position has been indicated by the parliamentary secretary. I'm sure the member who tabled this motion will be pleased that the motion is supported, accepted, and so on. So why do we have to bring about unnecessary and unrequired changes to the motion and go backwards rather than going forward?

I hope Madame Barbot agrees with that and we can accomplish something here.

• (1650)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Khan.

Mr. Lebel.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Lebel (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): From the outset, we have been hearing about the Advisory Report on Roundtables. And now, we are going to set this aside and talk about the letter. I simply want to understand what is going on here.

[English]

The Chair: We aren't talking about the letter; we're talking about the amendment Mr. Wrzesnewskyj moved. That's the point here.

As soon as an amendment is moved, we go into debate on that amendment. According to the table, I'm instructed to try to keep debate to the amendment. Then we will debate the motion as amended if it carries.

Borys.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: My intention in making this amendment was to provide additional clarity. There was some debate as to what was actually transpiring and when the minister would table something.

The motion calls for the minister to appear following the tabling and release of the government's response, but there wasn't clarity as to the timeline. It's been 10 months, so if the government can clarify whether it's a week or two away, it won't be necessary to draw attention to 10 months of inaction on this. It can stay as is, as long as there is a commitment.

Perhaps they would even like to make an amendment committing that the minister will table a response within the next short timeframe. Then I'd be more than happy to remove an amendment that perhaps some on the opposite side see as embarrassing because there has been no action in the last 10 months.

The Chair: You moved an amendment, so it's on the table now.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: We're debating the whole issue of that. A number of members have said, "Well, 5:30 will roll around". I'm providing a method for the government to arrive at something concrete that might satisfy Madame Barbot at the same time. It provides the government with an opportunity to do the right thing without having something that references this embarrassing fact of the 10 months it has taken so far.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Wrzesnewskyj.

Madame Barbot.

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Mr. Chairman, since the motion clearly says that the report was tabled on March 29, 2007, which means that a considerable amount of time has passed since then, I would like to ask my colleague Borys to withdraw his amendment so that we can vote on the motion.

[English]

The Chair: All right.

(Amendment withdrawn)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Are we talking about the main motion?

The Chair: Yes. Now we will go to the main motion and debate.

Madame Barbot, I'll give you the opportunity again to go through your motion.

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: I believe we did that last time, Mr. Chairman. It is very clear. I would even ask that you call the vote on the motion.

[English]

The Chair: Unfortunately, I can't when we do these motions, as you know.

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I will talk on two points, Mr. Chair.

First, to my friend Borys, there is nothing embarrassing about this 10 months. It may be embarrassing to him, but the point of the matter remains that it was a round table conference. It was a very comprehensive conference. There were a lot of stakeholders who came in there. There were a lot of good recommendations made at the round table conference.

When you have such an extensive study, with all these things on the round table conference, it covers a lot of areas of law as well as other things, as you know, being in the government. It does take time to make a response, because this will have a major impact down the road.

Therefore, the government is, as it said, committed to provide a response to this. We have stated that and we will provide a response. It is not a question of when, but rather when we have finished and are able to do the right work with the right legislation at the right time and not do it on the basis of what you, as the opposition, are pushing us to do. It doesn't work that way.

Secondly, you must listen to my friend Bernard Patry, who happened to be the vice-chair before Mr. Wilfert came, and he had a lot of knowledge. It being an outside report, you cannot force a government to come out with timelines. This was not a report that was tabled in the House.

Angela, am I right?

•(1655)

The Clerk: There are no Standing Orders.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: There are no Standing Orders that can compel the committee to say you must come down at this time. But in the spirit of what was done at the round table conference, where the government made a commitment to all the stakeholders that the government would be responding, I am saying that if Madame Barbot's only amendment is to say, instead of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the relevant minister, we have absolutely no problem in supporting this amendment.

The Chair: Mr. Obhrai, thank you. That sounds very positive.

We do have one more speaker.

Mr. Bernard Patry: I think I will withdraw and not speak. If he agrees, we'll go right to it, in case he changes his mind.

The Chair: If there's no more on this—

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I just want to say, with "the relevant minister". I want it very clear.

The Chair: Yes, that part was done.

All those in favour of Madame Barbot's motion as amended?

(Motion as amended agreed to)

The Chair: That was agreed unanimously.

We're going to move to the top of the order paper. The next motion is another motion by Madame Barbot, pursuant to Standing Order 108.

Did you want this brought forward at this time, Madame Barbot?
[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: No, I think we will let it go for now.
[English]

The Chair: Moving to the next one, Mr. Obhrai has his motion:

Pursuant to Standing Order 108 (2)...undertake a study investigating the effectiveness and quality of Canada's food aid policy and whether current methods of delivery meet the objectives established under the Food Aid Convention.

Did you want to bring that one forward at this time?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Yes, absolutely. It is critically important.

• (1700)

The Chair: Would you like to speak to the motion?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Absolutely, sir, and I hope this time Paul is listening to the motion.

Mr. Chair, in seriousness, food security has become very important. With almost 800 million people in the world living with hunger, food security is becoming a very critical aspect of global peace and stability.

CIDA has been assisting with some aspects of food security around the world. The Foodgrains program is one of the best examples, wherein Canada has been very successful in working with other countries to provide food security.

What we want is to have a comprehensive study, to see what kinds of barriers and situations exist for food security and to ensure that Canada takes a leading role. We want the foreign affairs committee to take a leading role and do a comprehensive report to say what hurdles and barriers there are at this time. It would form an overall strategy for what our food aid program would be.

We had people come here from Kenya a month or so ago, in the last session, who talked about a food security program in Kenya as well as in another African country. Kenya was there, but there was one from west Africa. I think it was Ghana, if I'm not mistaken.

Were they from Ghana?

Mr. Gerald Schmitz (Committee Researcher): I'd have to go back to check.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I know it was Kenya, because I talked with them.

They talked about climate change and the effect climate change is having on the food security program. They were highly concerned about climate change.

They came with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, didn't they?

Most of them zeroed in on the fact that climate change was also having a major impact upon farming in those countries and on the inability of those countries to mount an effective campaign to work towards food security. They brought that up and appealed to Canada for assistance.

Within that context, this study on food aid would be a comprehensive study, looking at all of these issues to create an overall strategy for the Government of Canada—and for CIDA as well, since CIDA would be and is involved in food aid security—to give them direction from us. The most important aspect of this is giving direction as to what....

What did you say?

An hon. member: Just keep going, Mr. Obhrai. We're hanging on every word here.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I am not going to do a filibuster for six and a half hours.

Here we go again. These friendly amendments of Borys—

The Chair: Continue, Mr. Obhrai. You'll have the first chance to speak to any amendments.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: No. I will highlight what we heard in the committee. I'm bringing this up so that we understand that it's not as if the witnesses who came in front of the committee just walked away; we listened to them. That's why it's coming up here, and that's why I'm putting this on the record.

You may want me to cut the debate short, but I'm also putting on the record who came, what came, and why we are doing this, so that it's on the record and when they listen to it they can say that at least their journey to Canada and to the committee was successful, that it was not in vain.

In light of that, you can use closure here, but I'm putting it on the record. This is for the record and for the Hansard.

Having done that, I think I'm going to go on, Mr. Chair.

Also, there has been a lot of demand on CIDA's involvement in this thing. This would also be a good way to see what CIDA is doing—CIDA's involvement, CIDA's money—by calling CIDA officials. I can say my government is as concerned as any Canadian about the effective use of CIDA dollars. This would give them this thing.

We want to see what recommendations we can make so that we can have a really targeted approach to work towards reduction of poverty and food security.

Having said that, I think my colleagues will not find it very difficult to support it, but they're all welcome to speak on it. I'm open to debate.

The Chair: All right.

Borys.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Call the question.

That's a little friendly surprise there for you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Obhrai.

We still have some debate here.

Madame Barbot.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: I do not have a problem with the entire motion as such. However, I do object to doing a study. We could invite several witnesses from CIDA to address the committee on this matter and we could put some questions to them. However, I fail to see the need to do a comprehensive study on this particular subject at this point in time.

If we examine CIDA's overall activities, we could, for instance, look at food aid. However, perhaps one meeting to hear from witnesses on the subject of food aid policy would suffice.

• (1705)

[*English*]

The Chair: Which would be defined as a study.

All right, thank you.

Is that all?

If we're done, because it's Mr. Obhrai's motion, I'll let him sum up. Unless there's anyone else, he has the option to put the final remarks, shorter—

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Mr. Chair, I think once there's been a call—

An hon. member: You can't call the question in committee, sorry.

The Chair: I see Mr. Dewar on here, too, so I'm going to let Paul go first, and then we'll come back to Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Chair, I just noticed that we do have another motion coming up on CIDA, and I'm wondering if there's any way to incorporate the two.

Mr. Obhrai has mentioned that he's worried about climate change and food supply in Africa, and that's good. I'm glad. But the motion coming up also talks about CIDA and effectiveness of delivery of aid. I'm wondering if that is something we can incorporate, by amendment, into his motion.

That's a question, through you to Mr. Obhrai, whether or not we can incorporate the motion coming up on the study on CIDA with his motion.

The Chair: Where is that?

Mr. Paul Dewar: It's the last motion on our notice.

The Chair: Oh, it's over here. Okay.

Mr. Martin isn't here. It won't work.

I know what you're saying. It's a close enough study. Right now, at this point, without Mr. Martin here, I can't say we'll just fold your motion into it. Unless Mr. Obhrai is willing to say it, I can....

Yes.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: No, no, no.

In reference to Madame Barbot and Mr. Dewar, CIDA is one component of food aid security, and I do not want to change the focus. Mr. Martin's focus on CIDA is not on food aid, but on other issues at this time.

The Chair: It would not be in order. I wouldn't allow it anyway.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Number two, in response to Madame Barbot, I want a comprehensive study. I don't want three or four witnesses. I've already had that in this committee. We've already had witnesses come from Foodgrains and this sort of thing, but it does not give us a comprehensive picture. So I would rather that this be a study and not just a couple of meetings.

The Chair: Okay, thank you, Mr. Obhrai.

The question has been called. Are we all in favour of Mr. Obhrai's—

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: I wish to move an amendment, Mr. Chairman.

[*English*]

The Chair: Madame Barbot.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: I will read the motion in its entirety:

That the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade undertake a study investigating the effectiveness and quality of Canada's food aid policy [...]

I propose that the following words be added to the motion: "whether the local productive capacity of developing countries is sufficient to feed the populations and export agricultural products". The motion would then continue with:

[...] and whether current methods of delivery meet the objectives established under the Food Aid Convention.

[*English*]

The Chair: We have an amendment.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Chair, I do understand the spirit and where it is coming from. I would not have any difficulty with these witnesses they call and the line of questions that she has just posed or put forward. It would form part of the overall study. But I want to leave it in the broader context of what it is. By trying to put more and more, we start going narrower and narrower. I say leave the motion as is. Whatever she has proposed, I just think it's going to form the bigger part of the study by witnesses that she would like to call. During her questioning and all these things, we can proceed on what her concern is on that. But I would rather leave it in the broader context that it is. I don't want to break it down.

The Chair: There still has been an amendment moved, so unless Madame Barbot withdraws that amendment, the amendment has been moved. It sounds as though Madame Barbot wants to keep it there.

In English, we have something fairly close.

Madame Barbot, listen carefully. Hopefully this has been translated closely enough:

That pursuant to Standing Order 108, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development undertake a study investigating the effectiveness and quality of Canada's food aid policy and to take a look at the capacity of local production of developing countries, considering their ability to feed themselves, and to export agricultural products and whether current methods of delivery meet the objectives established under the Food Aid Convention.

•(1710)

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: I would like to make a small change, Mr. Chairman. I think the motion should say “taking into account” instead. I don’t quite know...

[English]

I would put “taking into account” instead of—

The Clerk: You mean “taking into account” instead of “look at”?

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Yes.

The Chair: All right. I’ll just go from:

...International Development undertake a study investigating the effectiveness and quality of Canada’s food aid policy, taking into account the capacity of local production of developing countries considering their ability to feed themselves and in exporting agricultural products...

And then we get into the methods of delivery to meet the objectives.

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: It is difficult for us to agree to that. We would be changing the scope of the study to go into something that is not what my intention was in the first place, which was Canada’s food aid program—what Canada is going to do, and all the things I mentioned.

My question is, if I don’t accept this motion, which we’re going to vote on—which means I have to vote against my own motion, considering the fact that these guys are going to.... Does this mean I have the option of withdrawing this motion?

You’re not laughing now?

The Chair: You may, with unanimous consent.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: We’d be happy to consent to that.

The Chair: There is no question as to the Bloc’s ability to amend any motion. That is without question. When we talk about how things work at committee, this is part of what we’re working with. You have an ability to bring a motion, and the opposition can change every motion you bring. That is the way this Parliament works.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Let’s go for debate.

The Chair: All right. We will continue the debate on the amendment then.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Khan will debate, Mr. Lebel will debate, and then I will debate.

The Chair: And we’re leaving at 5:30.

Mr. Wilfert.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.): I just wanted to say, Mr. Chairman, that I think the amendment is in order. If I heard Mr. Obhrai correctly, it was something they wouldn’t have a difficulty with in terms of the study. I think it’s simply providing some focus, as part of the study, to flag that this is something we’d like to see. It doesn’t preclude, of course, other elements in the study, but I would say it’s in order and that we’d support it.

The Chair: Mr. Khan.

Mr. Wajid Khan: Mr. Chair, I understand the intent of our colleague from the Bloc, but once again we are opening another can of worms, acknowledging another area for study that could consume a whole lot of time and take attention away from CIDA’s policy framework, recognizing the importance of food security to allow people to protect and sustain their broader livelihoods. Just as poverty is a major cause of food insecurity, food insecurity can also reinforce poverty.

This is a very broad study. I think it is very important in this crucial study to focus on the real issues rather than go into the production of these countries. As Mr. Obhrai said, we can focus here and then expand into those areas, rather than take the focus away from this very important, crucial study.

If you keep a focus on food distribution, the security of food supply, the caloric intake of those people, and what the needs are and how CIDA itself is investigating whether and how processes work, whether they are effective, and how they can be improved....

I think it’s a good motion. It has very good intentions. I’m sure our colleagues across would agree to that. If they want to do this, perhaps they can bring another motion, or expand this while the witnesses are here. But I think the key focus here is to concentrate on poverty, the distribution of CIDA aid, and how to improve it: is it working or is it not working?

I have no problem with what Madame Barbot is saying, but at the same time, bringing a change into this motion would, I feel, take away from it. It will take away the focus; we’ll go into several different areas and not accomplish what we intend to accomplish on food distribution processes, health, and poverty alleviation. I think those are very crucial. I’m sure our colleagues have no question about how important it is to focus on poverty alleviation.

Therefore, I request our colleagues to please leave this the way it is. Let us concentrate on the work at hand so that we can achieve some results and assist those who need it the most.

•(1715)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Khan.

Madame Barbot.

[Translation]

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: Mr. Chairman, I understand what my colleague opposite is asking, except I would simply point out that the proposed wording is taken directly from the Food Aid Convention. The motion truly takes up the spirit of the convention. Therefore, we are not at all off base by proposing this wording. On the contrary, we are putting the focus right where it should be, because of the reference to the convention.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Lebel.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Lebel: If we’re going to take this out of context, we need to know how it is going to be interpreted. This is part of the convention, not the whole convention.

Mrs. Vivian Barbot: It reflects the spirit of the convention.

Mr. Denis Lebel: All right. All I meant to say, Mr. Chairman, is that we are often criticized for being too inward-looking and for not sharing. We must not limit the scope of our study or appear reluctant to obtain information.

I understand that this is not the objective here. All I mean is that if we are going to undertake a study, we need it to be as broad as possible in order for us to achieve our initial objective, which is to get a clear idea of where we are going, in terms of our aid efforts and so forth. I do not want the scope of our study to be limited.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Yes, it may be part of the food convention, but if you look at this motion, the intent of our motion was to study Canada's food delivery system, Canada's food policy.

Madame Barbot would like to put forward another motion to do what she has just proposed. That's her motion, but I want to restrict this motion to Canada's food policy and whether the current methods of delivery meet the objectives.

In all fairness, when you start going into the local production capacity of a third world country, the developing countries, you are going into something that, by itself, is a huge study that would require a tremendous number of witnesses coming from overseas. I don't want just one or two witnesses showing up here and saying, "This is what is happening in the third world countries." I have already stated quite clearly that the witnesses who have come over here have stated that climate change has become a very big problem, and the capacity of those countries is diminishing.

But we have to look at it from the aspect of what we are doing here ourselves, within our food aid programs, what the Foodgrains Bank said Canada can do.

Now you're going into the convention issue, and of course the convention is a very broad one. Why don't we just take the whole notion of the convention and say, let's go for the convention, if you want to pick this one here and that one there?

Let me just say, when you start talking in reference to production delivery of developing countries, if you go down to the Chiapas State of Mexico, where there are small-scale farmers, what you see is the impact of NAFTA that is happening there. These small-scale farmers find it extremely difficult to make a living, and in Mexico they don't have the cooperative factors.

I can go back to the time I left Tanzania. There was a policy of the Government of Tanzania, under President Nyerere, called the Ujamaa policy, where he moved people, where they were having this food aid, to try to bring a centralized delivery system—what she was talking about, giving the delivery thing.

And you know what was the result of that? A country that was exporting food. The whole system collapsed.

• (1720)

The Chair: Let's have order. Mr. Obhrai has the floor.

Just so we know how this works—

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Look, as I told my colleague before, I grew up in that country. I saw first-hand the effects.

The Chair: Mr. Obhrai, just one moment.

Just so we're all aware of exactly how this is going, we're going to continue the debate on the amendment, then we will vote on the amendment, and then we will reopen the debate on the motion. At 5:30, that motion will be the order of business for every committee business that we have from now until we solve it.

Continue, Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Thank you.

I would like to advise—

Mr. Paul Dewar: As a point of order on that, Mr. Chair, just to clarify, we had adopted our schedule for committee business. So we won't—

The Chair: It won't change the meetings. When we come back to committee business, we will resume where we left off.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I just wanted to clarify that point, because we wouldn't want to have that affect the other business.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Obhrai.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I am going to talk about socialism, because I grew up in that country and saw what happened in that country. I saw what she wants to talk about, a delivery system, and how a country that put the whole thing.... And for her to laugh at what has been my own experience in having seen this shows how they don't understand the international...or what happened. Now they want to make jokes of a country that has actually collapsed due to its social policy of bringing the small-scale farmer and delivery system....

They can laugh as much as they want, but this is a serious matter. I lived and grew up in that country, where at one time you had food available and then, within five years, you had no food available in the market. People were starving, and yet that country was rich, and it's all because of exactly what they want to....

An hon. member: That's exactly what we're talking about.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: No, it's not. This is a bigger, stronger study. It's not a joke; it's a study. This here is talking about Canada's food aid program to help them, not this.... We can bring country after country after country as examples of how.... Zimbabwe is an example. Let's talk about Zimbabwe for a minute here. Zimbabwe was a country that was exporting food, and today people are starving there. Why? Because of this thing.

Are you going to do a study? Let's go in and do a study. Put all your motions out there.

But this motion, Mr. Chair, deals with Canada's food aid. It doesn't deal with how delivery systems in other countries fail.

Let's talk for a minute about Afghanistan and how its whole agricultural system has collapsed.

Now when you want to bring such an important international study—we're talking about the delivery system of developing countries—then you start talking about bigger issues of where and how government policies fail, where there were no cooperatives out there, where issues like this.... It is not a small issue, and it will take attention away from this motion that we brought forward.

The problem I have is that this is a political aspect from there to go onto that. If they want such a thing, they should put forward their own motion to do this comprehensive study. But I am not willing to have six people sit over there and talk to us for about an hour on this whole issue and say, now, we know about international third world development over there and why their food security is falling down. It is a comprehensive issue as to why in the developing countries their food aid is falling down. It is a bigger issue, and you can take country by country to see why it is going down. For example, there is the effect of NAFTA on Mexico and southern Mexican states, because NAFTA now allows corn to be exported. So it's breaking down.

So why are we going to change the focus of this? I said I have no problem if she wants to do it. You said very rightly that the Bloc has the right to put forward a motion. If they want to amend this motion, I'm not going to accept it. But they can put forward their own motion and we can debate the motion and say what witnesses we want on this thing. But it will deviate from what is out here, Mr. Chairman, what we are trying to do and what I am trying to do.

So for that reason, Mr. Chairman, I can't accept that.

Now, let me talk about, for a change, what is happening in Kenya today. This tribalism taking place in Kenya, this thing, has already had an impact on agriculture and the delivery process out there. So are we going to study Kenya? I remember when I was in Kenya, they used to have a cooperative called KCC, Kenya Cooperative Creameries, where they went to small-scale milk people out there—

An hon. member: And they kicked out a lot of countries.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: They joined together to create a cooperative. Today that cooperative is not able to provide the kind of management needed, so it's gradually falling down. Is that a study you want to do?

Which countries do you want to study? I only talked about Kenya. Now I'll talk about Tanzania. Let's talk about Uganda for a minute out here.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: We want to talk about the international system. Let's talk about the international system.

Of course, Madame Barbot is not listening. Why?

• (1725)

Let's talk about the international systems of delivery and the capacity building. I'm talking to you about the international system of what is happening in each and every country. Do you see this group? They're all unelected. Why? And that's why I think we are—

An hon. member: We don't need a study.

Some hon. members: [*Inaudible—Editor*]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: I'm not trying to kill time. You asked for an international study and I'm giving you country by country by country of what has happened over there. How many international studies do you want? We know what happened in Haiti. We did a Haiti report here, on the deforestation that has taken place in Haiti and everything. Let's talk about Congo. Let's talk about Congo-Brazzaville. Let's talk about what is happening in Chad. These are all countries that have delivery problems, and your amendment of this motion is calling for an international delivery system. So I am—

The Chair: I am going to adjourn.

Thank you very much, Mr. Obhrai.

Have a good weekend, folks. The meeting is adjourned.

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