

Points of Order

Last week the Prime Minister announced in China his support for the Three Gorges dam and the sale of Candu reactors to China. In view of the strong opposition by this minister and other Liberals to Canadian involvement in Three Gorges, described as an economic, social and environmental disaster, and in view of China's continued nuclear testing and dumping of waste in Tibet, how can the secretary of state justify this massive betrayal of the Liberal government's earlier promises on Three Gorges and Candu reactor sales?

Hon. Christine Stewart (Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our Prime Minister was in China and did speak of the Three Gorges dam project with the president of China. China has decided to go ahead with the development of the Three Gorges dam project despite what any of our views were with regard to environmental and human rights issues. We will remain concerned about those issues whether they are in China or anywhere else we are involved.

However, the Chinese government is asking for Canadian co-operation in the development and we hope that in providing our management and technical expertise we can have an influence on those potential negative impacts.

I think it is also important to recognize that the Yangtze River is a very important resource to China and it poses both a threat and an opportunity. The river has caused thousands of deaths but there is great potential in that river for electrical energy formation and the possibility of navigating, allowing ships to get to interior cities, which is important.

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[Translation]

POINT OF ORDER

REVIEW OF CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this point of order follows the tabling in the House yesterday of two documents by one of the co-chairmen of the Special Joint Committee reviewing Canada's foreign policy, the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier.

The first document includes the report of the committee and is signed by the two co-chairmen. The second document includes the dissenting opinions and the appendices to the report. For several reasons, we feel that to include dissenting opinions in a document separate from the report signed by the co-chairmen of the committee goes against the parliamentary rules governing the committee and this House.

First, we want to point out that Standing Order 108.1(a) allows committees to report on issues submitted to them. That provision, which is on page 63 of the Standing Orders of the House of Commons, also authorizes committees, and I quote:

—to print a brief appendix to any report, after the signature of the Chairman, containing such opinions or recommendations, dissenting from the report or supplementary to it, as may be proposed by committee members.

The decision to annex such a statement must be made by way of a motion concurred in by committee members. As confirmed in the minutes of the committee included in the second document tabled yesterday, such a motion was agreed to at the hearing which took place on the evening of November 2, 1994.

• (1505)

The text of the motion, which is found on page 102 of the second document, reads as follows: "On motion of Bill Graham, it was agreed,— That the Bloc Québécois, the Reform Party and other members of the Committee, be authorized to append to the report their dissenting or supplementary opinions or recommendations, such opinions or recommendations shall be in the discretion of the dissenting members themselves relevant and proportionate to the length of the report".

Mr. Speaker, we respectfully submit that the documents tabled yesterday do not comply with the terms of Standing Order 108(1)(a), since the dissenting opinions are not presented after the signatures of the joint chairs, which are found at the end of the report in the first document. On the contrary, this statement is in the second document, separate from the first, which contains the report of the committee signed by the joint chairs.

The dissenting opinions are in no case appended to the report as required by Standing Order 108(1)(a) and the motion adopted by the committee on November 2, 1994. Some might be inclined to say that the dissenting opinions follow the joint chairs' signatures in the second document, which is part of the committee's report.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot support such a claim because we think that such a procedure is contrary to the spirit, if not the letter, of Standing Order 108(1)(a). Indeed, what is the point of appending the dissenting opinions of certain members to the committee report, if not to let readers of the report judge the validity of the opinions and recommendations that it contains by comparing them with those of the dissenting members?

The most basic logic requires that these dissenting opinions follow in the same document. At no time should someone be able to refer to this report without immediately having the recommendations of the minority report included therein. That is why Standing Order 108(1)(a) requires appending the dissenting opinions to the report, following the signature of the two joint chairs; otherwise such a statement is quite useless.

Economic or practical reasons cannot be invoked to justify tabling two separate documents in the House, since this was not founded on a committee decision. The committee must adopt a motion consistent with parliamentary rules for the committee