

Privilege

What I was pointing out as your Speaker is that, as the question was framed, to my mind it was out of order. There are other ways to ask a question on the same subject matter. I have to interpret the rules. I was not saying that the minister could not answer it. I said that, as asked, I think it was out of order.

If the minister wants to answer it, that is up to the minister. If the House wants to revert to questions and the minister wishes to rise, then of course the Speaker is in the hands of the House.

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology): If the House would allow me to answer the question put by the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean, I think that would help clarify the situation.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Unanimous consent is required to ask the question again but none is required to provide a reply.

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Industry, Science and Technology): With your leave, Mr. Speaker, I would like to clarify the resolution that was approved on the weekend, and I hope this will help—

An hon. member: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order!

Mr. Bouchard (Roberval): You gave me permission to answer the question put by the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean. I would appreciate it if the hon. member from British Columbia—

Mr. Speaker: Excuse me. One moment, please!

Mr. Bouchard (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, I am already on my feet!

[*English*]

Mr. Barrett: Are we still in Question Period, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps I could explain to hon. members what has occurred. A point of order has been raised by the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean concerning a question which he put in the Chamber. At that time I felt that the way the question was put did not accord with the rules. The hon. minister had every right to answer if he had wished to. I was not precluding him from answering.

Having listened carefully to the point of order that has been raised, I want to make it very clear that I did not preclude, nor would I ever presume to preclude, a minister answering a question if he wished.

The minister has indicated that he wishes to give a response to the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean. All I need is the consent of the House to revert back to questions, which is a procedural thing. I thought I had that consent and on that basis I represented the hon. minister. The hon. minister.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bouchard (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, I think my explanation regarding the resolution passed Saturday at Mont-Sainte-Anne will satisfy hon. members. The resolution proposed by representatives of the riding of Louis-Hébert recognized Quebec's right to self-determination.

Mr. Speaker, I think the Quebec Conservatives approved this resolution to the extent that it is already part of the United Nations Charter of which Canada is a signatory. This does not, and I am thinking particularly of the debate that is starting on the future of Canada and Quebec, in any way anticipate the decisions that will be made.

The convention in Quebec felt that one could hardly vote down this kind of resolution, just as the United Nations, were not thinking particularly of Quebec or Canada at the time they accepted theirs, did not anticipate the decisions or solutions Canada and Quebec will make or choose. We approved the resolution in a spirit of openness, and I think the question is a valid one and the answer remains valid, insofar as we are talking about self-determination which, once again, was approved by the UN Charter and applies to all peoples.

That being said, I think the question was in order, and we accepted it, but, I repeat, we did so considering the fact that at a time when Canada and Quebec are about to get involved in fundamental discussions on each other's future, we felt it was a valid question.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, we are talking about a decision made by the Quebec wing of the Progressive Conservative Party. That being said, I think the decision made in Quebec was an excellent one, and I want to congratulate my Conservative colleagues in Quebec for making that decision, Mr. Speaker.