

Summer Recess

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Order, please. The Chair is in great need of assistance on the point of order.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): I was about to come to that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): I think I can establish the point of order or what the considerations are.

The first consideration is whether or not an hon. member rose to speak before the question was put. In that regard, my impression is the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona rose only after I began to read the question.

The second question that is germane is whether or not, once having begun to read the question, the Chair ought to allow any hon. member to interrupt, whether by point of order, by way of discussion or by way of debate, or whether the question having been started makes it impossible procedurally for hon. members to intervene.

If the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton would address himself to either one of those two subjects, I would be most appreciative. I did indicate that the intervention of two or three members would be adequate to meet the point. Time is passing. At a certain point I will have to either come to a conclusion or ask the House to give me adequate time to consult. It is one or the other. I will recognize the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker) and possibly two or three other members. But I would ask that hon. members be brief and address themselves to one of two questions. First, the facts. I think I am accurate in saying that I believe the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona arrived after I had put the question. The second issue procedurally is whether or not once I have begun to put the question, it is feasible for hon. members to interrupt and continue the debate.

● (2020)

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): As I understand the situation, Mr. Speaker, after you began to put the question, the hon. member rose in the midst of your putting the question—that is the first point—before there was any question then in the sense that the Chair would deal with it before the House of Commons, the complete question. If that is the case on the first point, I respectfully suggest that the Chair has indicated that the Chair was aware of an hon. member standing. With respect to continuing the debate, the Chair had an obligation to recognize the member standing. That is the first matter I want to put.

As to the merits, what is the obligation of the Chair? I do not think under any interpretation of the rules of this House, that it is the obligation of the Chair to take any action that would cut off the right of a member who wishes to speak. That is the fundamental question, that the Chair has now acknowledged in the House that the Chair knew that at least somewhere in the midst of putting the question an hon. member was trying to speak. If that is the case, it is incumbent upon the Chair to allow that member to speak.

One of the fundamental duties of the Chair is to protect the right of members to speak. It is a duty of the Chair, and that

duty is covered in many ways. One is with respect to a tie vote in the House of Commons. Normally the Chair operates in respect of a tie vote to maintain the continuance of the institution. Part of that institution is the right of the member to speak.

I recall in my experience here—and I say with respect it is as long as yours—that under Mr. Speaker Lamoureux, under Mr. Speaker Jerome and under Madam Speaker Sauvé, the Speakers have been very careful, even when they were on their feet. If a member rises for some reason or other, whether it is a point of order, a question of privilege or to intervene in the debate or in any other way, the Speaker is never legalistic and never turns his or her back on a member who wants to speak. In fact, that member is given the full right to speak.

If I have not moved you with respect to that, Mr. Speaker, then I think from the point of view of the preservation of the institution of the Speakership, there ought to be time taken by the Chair to consider this very carefully and to consult with Madam Speaker and the other officers at the Table, which is done regularly, to see that there is a resolution to this.

This, just as important, does not just end the debate. This effectively ends this part of this session of Parliament. That makes it fundamentally important.

I have a great respect for the Chair. It is out of that respect for the Speakership, the Chair, the institution of the Chair, that I respectfully suggest that you, sir, that you reflect upon the enormity of the decision which you may make one way or the other and take whatever time you may need in order to consult with the officials at the table and your colleagues in the chair, particularly the Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): The hon. member for Nepean-Carleton has put the point very well. In the first instance, while his statement does not apply to any other member of the House, he does appear to agree with the Chair that the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona did in fact intervene after the question had begun to be read. As far as I know, there should not be any dispute in that regard. In any event, I do not think it is terribly important.

The more important issue seems to be, first, the one that was raised by the hon. member for Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe who pointed out that it is the responsibility of the Chair to protect the minority. That is an obligation that I understand and accept. I do not want to go into a long dissertation on the Irish question, but we understand that the minority can become a tyranny at some point. That, too, is a question that has to be looked at.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): If hon. members disagree with my observation of history, they can form their observations of the basis of a study of British parliamentary history and the thing that is called the Irish question. I do not want to go any further on that.

What I thought was an excellent suggestion by the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton was that the Chair take some