

have a particularly serious impact on some regions of the country and on people with lower incomes. We shall certainly want to take account of that unfortunate consequence either in the energy package or in the budget.

Mr. Faour: If it is not government policy, why is the minister making these statements? The minister also said yesterday—I am paraphrasing him—that he had not heard anyone complain about a proposed price increase. Perhaps he is deaf.

I should like to ask him whether he has talked to people in the Atlantic region, particularly to people in his own riding. If he has, or if he has not, I am sure he has heard these things. Why is he misleading the people of Canada by making statements like this?

• (1200)

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I regret that the hon. gentleman was not at the Empire Club yesterday to listen to my address.

An hon. Member: You should have been in the House.

Mr. Fleming: Parliament, or the Empire Club, which comes first?

Mr. Crosbie: It was a 40-minute address enthusiastically applauded by the 1,200 who were there.

Mr. Dawson: They must have been laughing.

Mr. Crosbie: It dealt with the serious economic problems this government is going to overcome. One of the matters dealt with was the effect of the energy situation and the possible effect of that on balance of payments deficits in the 1980s, which is a reason this problem has to be overcome. The people of Atlantic Canada and people in my district know this problem has to be overcome, and they are prepared to do their share. They trust this government which is trying to do something long term and fundamental for the people of Canada.

An hon. Member: What an empty answer.

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NATIONAL UNITY

QUEBEC REFERENDUM DEBATE—EFFECT OF PARTICIPATION BY
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister told this House during the throne speech debate that being a member of Parliament from Alberta would not prevent his being the Prime Minister of all Canadians. He is reported to have said, after his meeting with Mr. Ryan last week, that, not being a citizen of Quebec—I wonder where he got that expression—he would not participate actively in the referendum debate. He is reported this

morning as having said at a press conference that not only would he not participate but, and I quote:

There is a very real danger that the participation of the federal government could be seen as an interference that would be counter-productive to the federal cause.

We have all these assurances that neither the Prime Minister nor the government as such will participate in the debate, I believe a position which was confirmed by the Prime Minister's answers this morning regarding himself personally; but in so far as the government is concerned, he did say that he would stand firmly against the status quo.

Can the Prime Minister say as clearly that he is against sovereignty-association and that his ministers will be for a "No" to the sovereignty-associationists' "Yes"?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Prime Minister): Of course, Mr. Speaker, I can repeat that assurance. I perhaps should suggest to the right hon. member, whose influence in the province of Quebec I respect, that I hope that fairly soon he will begin to turn his attention to dealing directly with the threat that is posed in the sovereignty-association document which has now been published by the government of Quebec, and will stop trying to create doubts in the minds of Quebecers or other Canadians as to the intentions of this government.

The right hon. member and I may differ as to the strategy involved. He followed a course which had a very active interventionist role in defending the type of federalism which he had developed over time. My view is that the very vigour of that defence in many ways caused people who might have become supporters of federalism to be driven away from a status quo which they saw as rigid. So we have removed some of the policies which were followed by the right hon. gentleman when he was Prime Minister because we believe that they were counterproductive to serving the interests of federalism.

We are not going to have an information group in the FPRO which is seen as a propaganda agency. We are not going to threaten Quebecers with a federal referendum in the spirit of menace. We are not going to have, as I believe the right hon. gentleman did not want to have, Crown corporations making contributions which could be construed as an undue interference in the political affairs of Quebec in a way which would have given the separatists an extra weapon.

We want to take initiatives against sovereignty-association, not simply by declaration but by concrete actions of the kind we have taken, and also by removing irritants which can serve the cause of separation if those irritants persist.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I understand the message of the Prime Minister. It was given several times this morning. I think we would have preferred a clear answer to the question. Nobody in this House heard the Prime Minister say that his ministers would campaign for a "No" in this referendum—and that was my question.

The Prime Minister assures us that there are many things he will not do. He gave some examples. He has given two