

First, I would like to clarify for the hon. member that the report in question is in fact not a study of federalism per se, nor is it, as he suggested in his argument earlier, a list of 485 intrusions into Quebec's jurisdiction. It is, in fact, an analysis of some 500 federal government activities relating to Quebec over that ten-year period. The study focuses on the management of federal-provincial relations during that decade. It concluded—and this is the part of the document, the hon. member will note, which has been made public—that there is indeed room for improvement, for more consultation, and for more sensibility toward the aspirations of the Quebec people and their elected governments.

I wish to stress that the previous government was very courageous in its decision to launch this enquiry. It shows that federalists in Canada, whatever their political affiliation, have the ability to criticize themselves, and the sincerity to seek ways of improving federal-provincial relations.

● (2220)

The summary document which has been made public contains a number of recommendations for action which accord entirely with the kinds of changes that we had determined were necessary, from our opposition benches, without the benefit of the report because we, too, were concerned with adapting our federal system to the changing needs and values of Canadian society. Hon. members opposite, possessed, we hope of some objectivity, will see that this new government is moving along the lines suggested as being necessary.

There are two questions in our minds about the propriety of releasing the full report at this time. First, the report was never fully completed, and, second, when it was undertaken, assurances of confidentiality were given to participating departments, agencies and individuals. Surely hon. members will appreciate that even as the full document is now being reviewed, we must recognize that to make public an incomplete report, which was based on assurances of confidentiality, is not a decision to be taken lightly.

The summary document which we released did not give rise to these concerns because it was written at a level of generality which permitted its publication without violating the assurances given—in fact along the lines of what I believe hon. members refer to, if you like, as the expurgated version of the report.

[Translation]

NATIONAL UNITY—QUEBEC REFERENDUM—REQUEST FOR EXPLANATION OF STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF SUPPLY AND SERVICES

Hon. Jeanne Sauvé (Laval-des-Rapides): Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight because I was unable to obtain a satisfactory answer to the issue of the government involvement in federalist forces that will be grouped under the “no” umbrella in the referendum.

First, Mr. Speaker, I might say that I have no doubt that this government intends to defend the Canadian federalism. It

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seems obvious to me, but still they have a curious way of defending federalism when they hesitate between yes and no as we saw from the answers given by the Prime Minister (Mr. Clark) to various questions put to him. He hesitates between yes and no and refuses to show the leadership we have the right to expect from the Prime Minister of Canada by taking a stand for Canadian federalism. What is really happening? During a press conference, his Minister of Supply and Services (Mr. La Salle) said specifically:

The Conservative party should avoid militating with pro-federalist forces as our objectives are different from those of Mr. Ryan.

Those are extremely ambiguous words from a representative of the federal government. So, following this statement, I wanted to know if the Prime Minister was endorsing the remarks of his Minister of Supply and Services. First, I wanted to know if it was true that his objectives were not the same as those of Mr. Ryan and, second, if he intended to join pro-federalist forces in the referendum campaign. But, to my surprise, the Prime Minister of Canada endorsed the statement of his minister in the answer he gave me, and I quote *Hansard* of October 31:

There are diverging opinions between the Liberal party at the provincial level in Quebec and the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada. I suppose there are some as well between the Liberal party of Quebec and the Liberal Party of Canada.

● (2225)

He projects on us, federal Liberals, the same kind of reluctance shown by the Minister of Supply and Services. This I cannot accept, because although there may be disagreements of a minor nature between provincial and federal Liberals on objectives, we are in total agreement with provincial Liberals on preserving our Canadian federation, even with changes. Essentially we want to keep our Canadian federalism and in addition we do not think that by emphasizing this we hurt the feelings of Quebecers, because we know there are Quebec federalists, and we even know they are a majority in the province of Quebec. But the government, for reasons I might explain later, are apparently very shy when it comes to expressing federalist feelings, as if they were inhibited by some covert if not shameful political interest. What keeps them indeed from stating unequivocally their solidarity with federalist forces in Quebec? Because this is all I was asking from him, that he express his solidarity with federalist forces in Quebec. I had no satisfactory answer on this.

I have been wondering whether some of these ministers, especially in Quebec, have election debts to repay, in the circumstances, because we all know that during the election campaign the Parti Québécois gave the order that in large centres support should go to Progressive Conservatives, and in rural centres to Social Credit candidates. It may therefore be to pay his debt that this minister has made such ambiguous statements. We all know that during the election campaign the worst enemy was the Liberal, it was Pierre Elliott Trudeau,