

Oral Questions

powers the federal government has appropriated during the war in 1942 and has always kept since?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Prime Minister): No, Mr. Speaker.

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THE CANADIAN CONSTITUTION

REQUEST FOR RESTORATION OF TELLIER TASK FORCE TO
PREPARE ANSWER TO WHITE PAPER ON
SOVEREIGNTY-ASSOCIATION

Hon. Francis Fox (Blainville-Deux-Montagnes): Mr. Speaker, my question was for the Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations, but in his absence I will direct it to the right hon. Prime Minister. Following the publication of the white paper on sovereignty-association by the government of the Parti Québécois, and also following the dismantling by the right hon. Prime Minister of a unit within the Federal-Provincial Relations Office known as the Tellier group, could the right hon. Prime Minister tell the House if he now intends to restore that unit and publish a refutation of the white paper which gives out more propaganda than information, which treats confederation as a failure, which gives many misinterpretations of Canadian history and which, surely, should not remain without answer?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, it is not my government's intention to publish an answer to the white paper. In the months to come the federal government will take steps and make proposals which will continue to show Quebecers that there is now in Ottawa a government ready to consider changes.

As for misinterpretations of Canadian history in the Quebec white paper, I do not feel it is essential for the federal government to stress them by its own publication.

[*English*]

Mr. Fox: Since the Prime Minister indicated to the House on Friday, and once again today in his answer to me, that attitudes and concrete steps are more important than rhetoric, and that these are to be the hallmark of his government in constitutional reform, and since the Prime Minister has rejected the approach of holding a federal-provincial conference of first ministers to discuss the immediate, anyhow, proposals for constitutional reform, could the Prime Minister indicate to the House what these concrete steps are that they have in mind, and how they are to be brought to the attention of provincial first ministers, to the House of Commons and to the Canadian public in general?

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, we are in the process, now, of discussing important changes with various provincial governments. In many cases they are changes in administrative arrangements which would have, nonetheless, an impact on the way the federal and provincial levels of government work together. In some cases they are changes that would affect

[Mr. Roy (Beauce).]

relations between the central government and all of the provinces; in other cases they are changes which would affect relations between the central government and some of the provinces.

I do not think we are at a stage of agreement yet where any of those could usefully be brought before the House of Commons. I would hope that it might be possible for us to reach agreement on some of those matters at the first ministers' meeting. Certainly, I can give the hon. member and the House the undertaking that when we are at a stage where we think we have changes that can significantly advance co-operation between the federal government and provincial governments, we will make them known in this House and elsewhere.

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● (1430)

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL UNITY

REQUEST CANADIANS BE INFORMED ON CONSTITUTIONAL
CRISIS BROUGHT ABOUT BY QUEBEC PROPOSALS

Hon. Jeanne Sauvé (Laval-des-Rapides): Mr. Speaker, as we question the government, their position gets clearer. We now know that this government has no intention of conducting an intensive campaign for the "No" option in the Quebec referendum. I would now put my question to the Prime Minister. If he feels missionary work is not useful in the province of Quebec, will he encourage his ministers to travel across the rest of Canada to inform other Canadians of the constitutional crisis implied by the proposal for separating Quebec from Canada, since the white paper urges other provinces to ask for direct participation in new Quebec-Canada bodies?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, it is this government's intention to go on travelling across Canada, and this includes Quebec of course, to point out the advantages of federalism and the disadvantages in the proposal put forward by the Quebec government.

REQUEST GOVERNMENT EXPLAIN CLEARLY POSITION ON
QUEBEC PROPOSALS

Hon. Jeanne Sauvé (Laval-des-Rapides): Since Quebec is not isolated in this constitutional crisis, since it is not isolated either in its requests to the Canadian government for changes in the relationships between the federal government and the provinces, does the right hon. Prime Minister not think, despite all his suggestions and the confirmation he only wants to change the attitudes, to show his government will be flexible—on this we agree, because we also are for flexibility—