

Oral Questions

over manpower training from all stakeholders in Quebec? All stakeholders in Quebec are asking him to withdraw from this area of jurisdiction. If it is so easy and if he is so serious about it, why has nothing been done? Why?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have made several offers to the Government of Quebec. We have offered to simplify the system, as the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs said. We could not offer everything they wanted, but we offered half a loaf.

Since these people want to maintain the status quo, they will not consider accepting anything else. Right now we are signing harmonization agreements with Canada's nine other provinces, except the Government of Quebec that wants to keep the status quo. We are not maintaining the status quo. They are.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, may I remind the Prime Minister that the Quebec Premier who turned down the agreement with the Liberal government was the former Liberal Premier of Quebec, the Prime Minister's partner on the no committee for the Quebec referendum?

Will the Prime Minister admit that this manoeuvring by his Minister of Foreign Affairs was an attempted rerun of the referendum speech by Pierre Elliott Trudeau in 1980?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Quebecers must have liked Mr. Trudeau's speech, because they voted 60 per cent in favour of staying in Canada, and this year, Quebecers will again listen to the people in Quebec who want to stay in Canada. Apparently, on the evening news tonight, we will be told that it is even better than last time. Two or three months away from the referendum, they are at least 15 points behind where they were in February 1980.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what has stuck in the mind of Quebecers about Pierre Elliot Trudeau's 1980 speech is that promises were not kept.

An hon. member: And unilateral patriation.

Mr. Duceppe: In his speech, the Minister of Foreign Affairs announced that, from now on, the federal government would concentrate on areas of federal jurisdiction, recognizing implicitly that duplication and overlap had become common practice in Ottawa, when he said: "We will review this matter and focus on areas of federal jurisdiction."

My question is for the Prime Minister. Now that his Minister of Foreign Affairs has announced that the federal government will no longer encroach on areas of provincial responsibility, will the Prime Minister indicate from which areas Ottawa plans to withdraw?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have offered on several occasions to withdraw from forestry agreements for example, but Bloc members would rise in this House and ask that we go on providing funds for Quebec forests. Questions were put to us on this subject.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chrétien (Saint-Maurice): It is always the same thing. They want us to withdraw, but at the same time they want us to continue paying. If we withdraw, we withdraw. The problem is they want to have their cake and eat it too. They want us to collect taxes for Quebec to spend as it pleases. Well, from now on, we will spend our own money and they can spend theirs.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister wants his remarks to be taken seriously, could he clearly identify the areas from which he intends to withdraw, as well as the federal departments and agencies that will be abolished to eliminate the costly duplication referred to by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who is incidentally the minister responsible for Quebec?

Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working day in and day out with the other provinces to try and eliminate duplication. In many areas, there is no duplication. Take income tax for example. In every other province, there is only one level of government collecting.

Duplication comes from Quebec deciding to have its own ministry of revenue collect personal income tax, unlike the other provinces. You know, it does not cost Ontario anything to collect its provincial income tax, because a line was added to our tax form for that purpose, while in Quebec a separate report has to be filed. Hundreds of millions are spent unnecessarily because of this. Duplication often comes from the other side.

* * *

[English]

FINANCE

Mr. Preston Manning (Calgary Southwest, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, just a few hours ago Moody's bond rating service announced it will review Canada's foreign debt rating and also Canada's AAA domestic rating. Moody's is not only sending the government a wake-up call, it is ringing the alarm bell.

Will the Minister of Finance finally acknowledge that the markets are rejecting his deficit reduction targets as inadequate and that Canada's debt and deficit situation is much more serious than he or the Prime Minister has led us to believe?

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Federal Office of Regional Development—Quebec, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Moody's certainly could have waited until the government brought down its budget.