

*Proceedings on Adjournment Motion*

Liberal. I think there are 25 or 26 constituencies, but they are all Liberal. Someone is telling me about satiation. Yes indeed, we are satiated. I beg your pardon, he says they are seated, which is not the same thing. It is true that they are seated. The authorities of *La Presse* from Montreal are also complaining about the new legislation and the minister comes from that area. The minister has taken advantage of the free publicity and now in acknowledgment, the newspapers are subjected to a tax levy which will increase the cost of newspapers for consumers or Canadian readers. Newspapers cannot live on their subscriptions, they live on their advertisements. The price of advertisements will have to be increased. Even though the cost of advertisements can be deducted from the income tax, they still are part of the price and they will result in an increase of prices to consumers. Finally, it is not the newspapers which will pay, it is not the rich who will pay but the common people, those who subscribe, those who pay for ads in the paper, those who buy in the stores which advertise; they will all pay the increase and in the present system, Mr. Speaker, I know it cannot be helped. I also know that nothing is done to beat the system. There are palavers on either side of the house. We know that the bill will be adopted and this allows us at least to vent our feelings. Some have such and such an opinion. Conservatives, who are on your left, Mr. Speaker, would have quite another opinion if they were on your right. And they say they are sincere.

Mr. Speaker, may I say that it is ten o'clock?

[*English*]

**PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT  
MOTION**

A motion to adjourn the house under provisional standing order 39A deemed to have been moved.

**CONSUMER AFFAIRS—REPORT RESPECTING  
GROCERY PRICES ON PRAIRIES**

**Mrs. Grace MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway):** Mr. Speaker, on October 16 I tried, rather clumsily I admit, to question the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs about the recent decision of the Director of

Investigation and Research under the Combines Investigation Act that the Batten report "contains no convincing evidence that grocery prices on the prairies are excessive". For this reason, said the director, no prosecution is warranted.

Having again gone over the evidence contained in the Batten report, I am at a loss to understand the director's decision, Mr. Speaker. I am equally at a loss to understand the minister's apparent acquiescence in this decision. The Batten report table 10-26, for example, presenting impeccable data, including bureau of statistics data, makes a comparison between all of Canada, and the five main prairie cities. This comparison shows that for unincorporated grocery stores in those five prairie cities the operating profits are 21 per cent above the Canadian average, and for corporations and co-operatives—which sell at the regular trade prices—the profits are 57.5 per cent above the Canadian average.

How excessive does "excessive" have to be before it becomes excessive, Mr. Speaker? That is what I should like to know. Profits on the prairies having been found to be 21 per cent above the Canadian average in unincorporated grocery stores, and 57.5 per cent above the Canadian average in corporations and co-operatives, no wonder the Batten report found and proved that prices charged for groceries were excessive. In a comparison with United States, prairie grocers have been making between two and three hundred per cent profit above the U.S. level.

● (10:00 p.m.)

Should the combines investigation branch require further convincing evidence that prairie prices are excessive, here is is—and I am quoting from the pages of the Batten report:

The top four firms directly control over two-thirds of the market in Regina, Saskatoon and Calgary, and indirectly control through affiliated groups over two-thirds of the market in all five cities. This strongly indicates that the excess profits which are earned on the prairies are due to monopoly power.

Some of us had thought that the purpose of the Combines Investigation Act was to prevent the growth of monopoly power. Perhaps it works that way only with mini-monopolies. It seems that when the Batten commission recommends that there be a combines investigation to focus particular attention on the dominant positions which Canada Safeway