

bring up bears on a report other than the one now before the house and I suggest that he may not continue the remarks he has started to make.

Mr. Grégoire: Mr. Speaker, my remarks deal with the third report as much as, if not more than, they do with the fourth, both of which were presented at the same time. Although concurrence is sought in only one of them today, my remarks deal as much, indeed more, with the third report, because it recommends that the committee be authorized to adjourn from place to place. If it is to be authorized to do so, its hearings should at least be useful. Now, that is precisely the point I want to make. The chairman of the Canadian Consumers Association charged that nothing was being done, that no valid recommendation was being made by the committee or that the government was not considering any action to help housewives, because its election funds are provided by large food processing corporations, and that its decisions are thus influenced by those companies which preclude the government from taking the necessary action to ease up the housewives' budget.

Mr. Speaker, if that accusation is justified, then whatever recommendations the committee makes, the present government will still be bound to the big companies which contribute to its election fund. At a committee hearing, the companies were accused of being mainly responsible for price increases to the consumers, especially on food. If those companies rather than the committee influence the government, what good will it do to hold hearings here and there?

Mr. Speaker, I feel that after such a serious accusation the government should investigate that matter, should reveal what those food companies subscribed to its election fund, so that we can decide whether or not that might constitute an obstacle to logical and normal decisions, in short if that might prevent the government and the committee from making suggestions and offering solutions which will really help Canadian consumers to solve their budget problems.

Mr. Speaker, you will admit with me that the committee received the accusation full in the face, that it did not refute it and that through its silence it admitted the accusation implicitly. I feel some light should be thrown on the subject.

It is all very well to accept election funds from the big companies but if, as a result, the government feels committed, consumers can

Inquiries of the Ministry
see why nothing is being done for the consumers and why food companies take such a heavy toll of their budgets.

That is why I say, when the committee is asked to sit in various localities, that we must make sure that it operates efficiently, and draws valid conclusions capable of helping Canadian housewives. I want to see positive results and to achieve this, the government cannot be committed to those companies which contribute to election funds.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask for an inquiry in that respect. I think the committee should set out clearly its position and state that whatever these contributions might be, it will not be influenced by large corporations that take unfair advantage of Canadian consumers as a whole.

[English]

Motion agreed to.

CANADIAN CONFEDERATION

REQUEST FOR TABLING OF CORRESPONDENCE RESPECTING CONFERENCE PROPOSED BY ONTARIO

On the orders of the day:

Hon. Michael Starr (Ontario): Mr. Speaker, I wish to address a question to the right hon. Prime Minister. In view of the reports appearing in the press in relation to a letter from the Prime Minister to the premier of Ontario dealing with the question of a constitutional conference summoned by Premier Robarts, will the Prime Minister table in parliament the letter along with the reply when it is received?

Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I would have no objection whatever to doing this, to set at rest any rumours as to what I might have said and the tone in which I said it. I have not yet received the reply, but as soon as it is received I will ask Premier Robarts whether he would be agreeable to my tabling both letters.

REQUEST FOR ACCELERATED STUDY BY FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

On the orders of the day:

Hon. Michael Starr (Ontario): Mr. Speaker, I wish to address a supplementary question to the Prime Minister. With reference to the Prime Minister's statement as recorded in *Hansard* at page 12331, on the subject of confederation and the constitution, can the Prime Minister advise how long this study has been carried on, under which minister's authority is it taking place, and when will it be completed?