

*Inquiries of the Ministry*

inform the house whether the government has expressed any opinion with regard to the enlargement of forces in Viet Nam, particularly as it might affect Cambodia and Laos?

**Mr. Pearson:** Mr. Speaker, this is a question based on newspaper reports which we have not yet had confirmed by any official source.

**FINANCE**REPORTED STATEMENT BY TRADE MINISTER  
ON CORPORATION TAX SURCHARGE

On the orders of the day:

**Hon. George Hees (Northumberland):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to address this question to the right hon. Prime Minister. Was the Minister of Trade and Commerce expressing the view of the government when he said in Halifax that the 3 per cent surtax on corporation levies is a deceptive to industry, and that confidence in the country's economy has been shaken by the deficits this country is experiencing?

**Right Hon. L. B. Pearson (Prime Minister):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman is quoting, of course, from a newspaper account.

**Mr. Hees:** Would the right hon. Prime Minister lean slightly to his left and confirm with the Minister of Trade and Commerce that this is exactly what he did say?

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

**CONSUMER AFFAIRS**INVESTIGATION INTO GROCERY RETAILING  
IN WESTERN PROVINCES

On the orders of the day:

**Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, may I direct this question to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. In view of the minister's announcement over the week end that he has instructed the combines investigation branch to investigate the grocery retail business on the prairies, can he tell us what powers he has given in connection with this investigation? Can he also say whether it will cover the whole of the country, in view of the fact that the grocery retail business is nation wide?

**Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, if I may I should like to clarify the assumption in the hon. member's question. I said I had asked

[Mr. MacDonald (Prince).]

the director of investigation and research to examine the allegations set forth in the particular chapter of the Batten report relating to the grocery industry in western Canada, and that if he were to find substantiation for those allegations he should on his own motion begin an inquiry.

At the moment a formal inquiry is not under way. The officials of the department and the director of investigation and research are investigating those allegations.

**Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Bow River):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a supplementary question to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. Is the minister, as he suggested in Calgary, prepared to meet with the three provincial premiers with regard to this matter and recommend that there be a reference to the restrictive trade practices commission with regard to the high cost of groceries in western Canada?

**Mr. Turner:** The hon. member will recall that I mentioned I had invited Judge Mary Batten to Ottawa. She will arrive on Tuesday night and meet with me and the officials of my department on Wednesday. I would, of course, be willing to meet the three premiers at any time to discuss the matter. The royal commission was commissioned by them, and Judge Mary Batten and her two fellow commissioners reported to them. After they have had an opportunity to review the report they might wish to approach me on the subject.

**Mr. Woolliams:** Will the minister not take the initiative and ask to meet with the three premiers with regard to such an important matter as the high cost of living and the high cost of groceries?

**Mr. Turner:** I think the hon. member would expect me to review the report in some detail before I took any such action.

**Mr. David MacDonald (Prince):** Mr. Speaker, is the minister in a position at the present time to say whether he has given serious consideration to a similar study which would affect the maritime provinces and Quebec?

**Mr. Turner:** This commission was undertaken on the instructions of the three provincial governments. I see no reason that the premiers of the maritime provinces, if they saw fit, might not undertake a similar inquiry.