

the present duties on luxuries. Speaking generally, however, I say that the imposition of the 7½ per cent surtax was a mistake in the first place, and I think in justice to the people of this country it should be removed, or modified at least and this would have been a proper time for the Minister of Finance to act in that respect.

The Minister of Finance was considering the question of tariffs quite recently, from motives of party welfare I have no doubt, and not in the interests of the state, and by subterranean paths rather than by direct routes. I am sure it must have been a veritable Gethsemane for him when the hon. gentleman who now sits at his right hand (Mr. Meighen) returned from the West a few days ago and informed him that he must enter into a reciprocity treaty with the United States. The Government have, in fact, entered into a statutory reciprocity treaty with the United States, terminable at the will of either country, in respect of wheat and flour, which have been so long the subject of discussion in Parliament and the country. If the Government are truthful men, and speak after intelligent consideration of the matters upon which they assume to guide and instruct the public, I suppose now, in view of this arrangement, we must expect Canadian wheat to lose its identity, Canadian east-bound and westbound traffic to be very much injured, if it does not altogether cease to exist, the flour mills of this country to be ruined and go into the hands of receivers, and this country to become, for a time at least, the back-door of Chicago. But if the Government are not true prophets, and the prevailing view in Western Canada is correct, we shall all be benefited temporarily, and later this temporary arrangement will inevitably be made permanent.

Mr. GRAHAM: Under which flag?

Mr. A. K. MACLEAN: I am not going to say very much about the placing of wheat on the free list, because there are many gentlemen on this side of the House who are better informed on that subject than I, and they propose discussing the subject in this debate. I have only one word to say about it. This statutory treaty, was negotiated and put into effect under the War Measures Act. Now, Mr. Speaker, I say that by no flight of the imagination can any man truthfully say that that Order in Council was properly a war measure.

Mr. LEMIEUX: It was a death-bed repentance.

Mr. A. K. MACLEAN: It was a political measure prompted by partisan motives almost entirely, I venture to say. It involved an amendment to the tariff of this country. Now, in our Customs Act, we have ample machinery for doing exactly what was done by this Order in Council passed under the War Measures Act. At any rate, Parliament was about to meet; the representatives of the people were soon to assemble in this forum to deliberate on all matters of interest to the country, and in fairness and justice to the people, who are the masters, I say this change in the tariff should have been announced here by the minister. He should have given Parliament his reasons for the change here to-day; the representatives of the people should have heard from his own lips the reasons which prompted him to make this move, so that we could determine whether or not he was justified in making it.

Mr. GRAHAM: His reason for the change is sitting right beside him (Mr. Meighen).

Mr. A. K. MACLEAN: I doubt very much if he had authority under the War Measures Act to pass the Order in Council. I have not given the matter much consideration, though I propose to do so later on, but I doubt very much if the Order in Council is within the spirit of the Act, and I am afraid my hon. friend had no legal authority for passing the Order in Council. Indeed, I doubt very much whether the United States will accept the Order in Council as the equivalent of placing wheat and flour on the free list. I doubt if in the end they will permit our wheat and flour to enter the United States duty free. It is certainly not within the spirit of the conditions contained in their tariff Act. I doubt whether the proper authority in the United States responsible for rulings on tariff questions will consider this Order in Council as placing Canadian wheat and flour on their free list in the sense intended by the United States Tariff Act. However, this matter will be discussed later on. I assume that hon. gentlemen opposite consider that the passage of this Order in Council will result in some benefit to the producers of wheat in western Canada. I assume they had that in mind when the Order in Council was passed, although not so much as they had in mind party considerations. But if they thought it would benefit the West, why was not the Order in Council passed last