

upon this investigation for a long time now, and it looks as if most persons in this country who might be interested in that report will probably be numbered among the dead before any report is made. An Order in Council was passed not so very long ago delegating to the provinces and the municipalities the power of investigating, and, in certain circumstances, taking action where it was found that the prevailing prices were unfair and unjust. That was not a serious attempt to meet the situation, I submit. It is purely a jest. It was never intended as a serious act in respect to a very serious and vital question to the people of this country. I am perfectly justified in designating that Order in Council as an intended jest.

I said at the beginning of my remarks that there were many things not contained in the financial statement of the Minister of Finance which the people of this country might naturally expect to find in it. But I do not propose prolonging further my remarks at the present time. My colleagues upon this side will amplify and add to all that I have ventured to address to the House this afternoon in my imperfect way, and I shall no longer continue my remarks upon the motion of the Minister of Finance.

Mr. MICHAEL CLARK (Red Deer): I rise, Sir, because, in the first place, I think it would be unfortunate for this debate to collapse at this moment without some attempt to bring home to the Parliament and to the people of Canada the exact financial position of the country as a result of the war; some conception of the magnitude of the problems which have arisen during the war and which are, no doubt, present to the mind of the hon. Minister of Finance, as, indeed, he indicated in very, very brief references in a very brief speech.

I cannot, Sir, quite join in the congratulations of my hon. friend from Halifax (Mr. A. K. Maclean) to the minister on the brevity of his speech. I myself believe in a brief speech; it is, as a rule, more effective than a long drawn-out harangue. But a Budget speech may be so brief as to be almost perfunctory. We have been accustomed for years in this House, in dealing with trade questions in the Budget, to hear our Finance Minister of either complexion of politics, in stating the figures of the trade, go into a little detail as to what part of it constitutes exports and what part of it constitutes imports; as to what part of the trade takes place with the United Kingdom and what part of it takes place with

[Mr. A. K. Maclean.]

the United States, the two countries with which, of course, we do the vast proportion of our trade. That is one of the items in which, I venture to say, the speech of my hon. friend was brief almost to the point of being perfunctory. I can join, however, my hon. friend, the junior member for Halifax, in his congratulations to the minister on the favourable statement he has to make to the House as to the mere figures of the trade of the country and as to the prosperity we are enjoying at the present time. I join equally my hon. friend in the warnings he gave the House—warnings which were not needed by the minister—as to the transient nature of that prosperity and as to the peculiar way in which our trade has been increased.

Let me repeat, that it would be a misfortune if this debate had been allowed to collapse at the present moment. I do not think that the minister's speech, apart from dealing with the mere figures of our trade at the moment, can be considered a satisfactory statement of the financial conditions of the country; nor yet did it afford evidence of any idea in the mind of the minister or in the policy of the Government, as to the necessary steps which must be taken to deal with the terrible problems which are before this country and which have been referred to in a measure by my hon. friend the junior member for Halifax. Take the one figure that was given to us by my hon. friend from Halifax, that of a yearly interest charge of \$65,000,000 which has already accrued as debt interest alone in this country since the beginning of war. When I reflect, Sir, that the total income and expenditure of Canada for all purposes was much below that figure twenty years ago, I cannot but think that as we are approaching the end of the war—we all hope so, anyhow—the minister might have given some evidence of the steps and the policies which will be necessary to deal with such interest charge and with the other innumerable problems which have already arisen out of the war and which will increase as the months go on.

The Minister of Finance closed his statement by saying that there were no tariff changes in the Budget. Well, as my hon. friend from Halifax has pointed out, that is not the way we get our tariff changes nowadays. In other words, if we are to apply the arguments which we heard in the country six years ago from my friend the Minister of Finance and from every gentleman on the other side of the House whose speeches I have perused—and which