

country long ago. This book goes on to say:

Except when repairs are needed, the following parts will constantly be injured if allowed to be dismantled by the soldier for cleaning; and when repairs are necessary, they should be removed only by a company artificer, or some one familiar with the handling of tools and delicate mechanisms, viz.: bolt stop, cut-off, safety lock, sleeve lock, front sight, lower band and stacking swivel screws.

From start to finish the book gives details of breaks and smashes which are liable to occur in the Yankee rifle, which is regarded as the most perfect rifle in the world to-day. I have already indicated from this official book more defects in that rifle than are recorded in all this bundle of so-called expert reports on the Ross rifle. How are these reports furnished? The master general of ordnance issues to the various officers in the country an order for reports, and the officers pass on the order to the privates and tell them to point out all the defects they can find in the Ross rifle—a condition of affairs that is not to be found in any other country in the world. Most of these reports are reports of privates to their subaltern officers, and from the subaltern officers to seniors; and when the seniors were brought before the committee last year, one after another said: 'I know nothing about the rifle; I am only going by the reports made to me.' What are these reports? They refer only to the class of defects regarded by the Americans as trivial.

Now, Sir, the reason I have been so persistent in following this matter up is this. I could not conceive it possible that any man could start an agitation on so little data, and I have looked for the motive at the bottom of it all. What have we found? Mr. Nesbitt, before the committee on Public Accounts, made a solemn declaration that he had been approached years ago by representatives of the leading manufacturing firms in England who tried to show him the utter impossibility of conducting a manufacturing establishment like this in Canada, and that we must buy our rifles from the English factories or let them take this factory over. Other attempts are known to have been made on experts in rifle matters, in order to chloroform them to discard the Ross rifle and to bring pressure on the Minister of Militia to induce him to adopt the Lee-Enfield.

These efforts were made from time to time and in various ways. I might point out, in connection with so many of the defects discovered in the rifle, that it was rather strange how many came to the light in Halifax; and just about the time the news could be spread from town to town, the agitation against the rifle began all over the country. It was pointed out yesterday that

the hon. member for Sherbrooke (Mr. Worthington) was six months behind the General of Ordnance in pointing out the defects, but evidently they had been looking for someone to lead the agitation. I want to point out another matter. I did not learn this from the Minister of Militia nor did I ever ask him about it, but I ask him now whether the request was ever made to him, or whether a letter was ever obtained from him by a representative of a British rifle company, to the effect that in case the Ross Company chose to go out of business, the conditions of the contract with that company would be continued? Was the hon. minister ever asked to give such a letter or did he ever give such a letter or was he ever interviewed by any gentleman representing a rifle company in England in connection with this matter?

Sir FREDERICK BORDEN. I have no recollection of ever having given any such letter, but I have no objection to say that I was asked on one or two occasions whether, in the event of the Ross Company withdrawing from business and some other company purchasing it, the government would be prepared to continue the contract with the purchasers. I said that of course that would depend on who the successors were, but I could see no difficulty, if the new company were capable of carrying on the business, as the only object of the government was to have its business properly done.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. I never asked the Minister of Militia that question before, but I received my data from across the water. I was told that it was done by a gentleman who is supposed to have influence.

Mr. WORTHINGTON. I presume the hon. gentleman is referring to me. Might I ask him if he is?

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. I referred to 'a gentleman who is supposed to have influence,' and not to the hon. member for Sherbrooke.

Mr. WORTHINGTON. I am asking the hon. gentleman to reply. Let him either put up or shut up.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. I do not know that I am called on to do either. I do not know that I need reply to a gentleman who has been hawking around the department, showing the commercial instinct as strong as he has been showing it. He referred to commercial interests yesterday, but he himself is a man who has shown a very keen sense of commercial interest by hawking after the Minister of Militia and others for appointment from time to time. Since he speaks of commercial interests, I think it only fair to myself that I should say I had the honour of being offered the highest military positions from the Conservative party in days gone by and that I refused. I was offered the Deputy Ministership of Militia and the Adjutant Generalship of Canada,