

DEFENCE OF CANADA.

DISCUSSION IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON THE EXPENDITURE OF \$3,000,000
EXTRA ON ARMS AND EQUIPMENT OF THE MILITIA.

AS so much interest has been taken in the discussion on the extra appropriation of \$3,000,000 for militia purposes, and as only very brief reports have appeared in the daily papers, THE GAZETTE will publish a verbatim report. There is so much of it that only a portion will be run in any one issue.

MR. FOSTER, in moving the House into a committee to consider the proposal said: I can give now a short resume of what is intended. The resolution speaks for itself, Mr. Speaker, and moreover the proposal has been discussed to a certain extent in this House. Hon. members are quite well aware of the circumstances out of which the proposing of this resolution arose. It was felt by the Government, and I think it is a general feeling throughout the country—I am quite sure it is the unanimous feeling of men of military instincts—that there is a necessity for placing the militia of this country, so far as arms and equipment for the defence of the country are concerned, in a better position than they have been in. First, as regards arms, a rifle for the individual volunteer, and, in the second place, another indispensable part in the defensive armament, the field guns, which will form a second account in the investment that is to be made from the money which it is proposed to ask Parliament to authorize us to raise. Then there is, along with both of these features of the armament, the general equipment and accoutrements which go with them and which require no explanation at my hands. There is also the ammunition which is used by each of these divisions of the armament and which must be supplied in fairly adequate quantity so as to furnish the motive power for the armament intended for the use of our volunteers. This, together with some rapid firing guns, make up, in fact, all that is at present engaging the attention of the Militia Department and the Government. The kind of rifle gave rise to a good deal of discussion in the press of the country and among military men, and a great deal of care was bestowed upon it. The Government had but one desire and that was, irrespective of a slight or even a considerable difference of the cost, to put into the hands of the Canadian volunteer what was considered to be the most approved rifle. Opinions may differ as to whether a single rifle or a magazine rifle is better. Our militia authorities were in close touch with those military authorities in Great Britain, and, as the result of very careful investigation and communication with the highest authorities the Government has decided to purchase the Lee-Enfield rifle. This is a new magazine rifle, which, I believe, is now being manufactured, and which will be placed in the

hands of their own soldiers by the British Government, and is considered by the war authorities there as being the best rifle that is now in sight. Basing its action on the circumstances out of which this resolution has arisen and the sympathies of Parliament and the evident wishes of the country, the Government lost no time in undertaking to have these armaments made ready for use in Canada and they have placed orders in Great Britain for a supply. They have ordered 40,000 of the Lee-Enfield rifles and 2,300 of the Lee-Enfield magazine carbines for the cavalry. Then there are to be four batteries of 12-pounder guns complete with an adequate amount of the best present known ammunition. These, with all that belongs to them, all that is necessary for their complete equipment, will cost about \$1,800,000 or \$1,900,000, or say, \$2,000,000 of the sum we are asking the House to vote. Our military authorities here and those with whom they have consulted consider that this equipment will be of the most excellent equipment in every way and thoroughly up to date, if one may use that expression with reference to it.

MR. MILLS (Bothwell)—How many field guns altogether?

MR. FOSTER—There are four batteries of six guns to a battery. Our authorities consider these to be sufficient for the purpose.

MR. MILLS (Bothwell)—What did they cost?

MR. FOSTER—Does the hon. gentleman wish me to go into details now? I think that would be scarcely necessary. I say that we are getting these arms with ammunition at the very best prices. I have the statement of what they will cost here, but probably it will be better to take that up in committee. One point I wish to emphasize and that is that in order to get these at the smallest cost we have undertaken to pay for them very promptly, and our engagement necessitates the payment of £100,000 in April, and a little more than that in the latter part of June.

MR. MILLS (Bothwell)—From whom are they bought?

MR. FOSTER—They are bought from the War Office in Great Britain, and the payments are to be made to the War Office. All will be delivered by the middle or at least by the end of October of the present year. With reference to the other \$1,000,000 which has not yet been appropriated, the Government, frankly speaking, wishes to have the loan of \$3,000,000. It will depend upon circumstances and partly also upon what may be considered best by the authorities here and at home in close conference and com-

munication with each other, as to whether that shall be spent at some near time in the future and as to how it may be spent.

MR. MILLS (Bothwell)—Is the whole liability incurred to the War Office?

MR. FOSTER—Yes, \$1,844,000, I think.

Motion agreed to, and House resolved itself into committee.

(In the Committee.)

SIR RICHARD CARTWRIGHT—It would be as well that the hon. gentleman should give us some more details. As I understand his proposition, it is to supply sufficient arms and accoutrements for 40,000 men. He might give us a little more details as to the cost of the rifles and ammunition separately, and also as to the cost of the artillery and the ammunition provided for it. So far as I understand him, the \$2,000,000 of which he spoke will be consumed in providing for 40,000 stand of arms, and in providing twenty-four guns.

MR. DAVIES (P.E.I.)—I would also like to know if I understood the Minister correctly to say that our liability for this \$1,800,000 is entirely with the War Department, and not with any private contractor.

MR. FOSTER—Yes.

MR. DAVIES (P.E.I.)—The money is paid by us to the Department?

MR. FOSTER—Everything goes through them. We deal with the War Office directly, and no one else. I may say that they are given at cost, and we give a commission of 5 per cent. for inspection, and the like of that, all paid to the War Department. I think the rifles are given to us at cost. I think it is the general practice carried out by the War Office that they supply from their own factories a certain proportion, and they get the rest of the supplies through the trade. They are carrying out that plan in supplying us; so that although we deal simply with the War Office alone, our purchases are divided into two parts, those which are furnished directly by the War Office from the Government factories, and those that are furnished to us by the War Office through the trade, that is, not the Government factories, but the makers of war material outside the Government factories. Now, the rifles cost from the trade £4 sterling; the bayonets and scabbards are 13s. 6d.; carbines, 2,300, cost £8,000. Those are factory supplies. The rifles from the Government factories are supplied at £3 10s.

MR. MULOCK—What rifles are they?

MR. FOSTER—The Lee-Enfield. As I said before, everything is inspected and approved by the inspectors of the War Office, and for that inspection a charge of 5 per cent. is made. Then there is the ammunition, eighteen million rounds ".303" ball cordite, costing £76,000, that is from the Government factory; 9,000 rounds ".303," dummy