

House of Commons Debates

FOURTH SESSION--TENTH PARLIAMENT

SPEECH

OF THE

HON. SIR FREDERICK BORDEN, M.P.

ON

THE ROSS RIFLE

OTTAWA, THURSDAY, MAY 21, 1908.

Hon. Sir FREDERICK BORDEN (Minister of Militia). It can scarcely be truly said, Mr. Speaker, of the hon. gentleman's performance that he was 'all things by turns and nothing long.' He was all things by turns, but always very long. It would be difficult to say in which roll he was most interesting—whether as a Heaven-born patriot, as he declared himself in the opening of his speech, or as a humorist, in which mood he seemed disposed to close his remarks. But though his peroration may have been really genuinely humorous and amusing to himself, I doubt if any one else in this House fairly appreciated it. The hon. gentleman has succeeded at last in carrying his point with his party. He has apparently been strong enough to convince his party that it is a desirable thing—

Mr. SAM HUGHES. Pardon me, please.

Sir FREDERICK BORDEN—a portion of his party—that it is a desirable thing in the interests of that party and in the interests of the country that this question of arming the militia should be brought down to the level—the low level from the hon. gentleman's point of view—of party warfare. The hon. gentleman talks about patriotism. He says that he is actuated by a strong patriotic desire—and by that alone—to benefit his country and to benefit the militia, of which he is an officer. But I doubt very much if he will be able to convince right-thinking men, right-thinking officers of the force to which he belongs,

that this is the truest and best way of exhibiting his love for the country and his love for the militia force. He may feel that his efforts have been rewarded to some extent. I think they have. If the desire to throw doubt upon a weapon with which the army of this country is to be armed, if that, in his mind, is the highest thing to be sought after, the thing which a member of parliament and an officer occupying a prominent position in the militia, should work for above and beyond everything, then I think the hon. gentleman may congratulate himself upon a certain measure of success, because, with the aid of certain newspapers—which, in some cases, he has inspired, and which, in more frequent instances have inspired him—the hon. gentleman has been able to cause a condition of doubt to exist among the militia force of this country; a condition, however, which, I am happy to be able to say, is very rapidly disappearing since the reports of the investigation which has taken place before the Public Accounts Committee during the past year and a half have been thoroughly circulated among the people. The hon. gentleman has taken a long time to get his courage up to the sticking point. He spent all last session asking questions—every day—

Mr. WORTHINGTON. Will the hon. gentleman (Sir Frederick Borden) allow me to say just here: the reason of the delay is due to his usual length of time in bringing down the reports we asked for, and the