

cate himself. We have been told that a commission of three members has been appointed by the Government to investigate this particular matter, and not later than ten or twelve days ago it was stated that the minister himself, not satisfied with this inquiry, had instituted a departmental investigation to ascertain the true facts. I do not know if this is all that is intended to be done by the Government; but let me say that the fullest light should be thrown upon this matter, so that the people of Canada may know where the responsibility lies. No member on this side of the House intends to be critical, and for my part I certainly have no such intention; but assuredly we are all gravely concerned that the health and comfort of those brave men who are risking their lives in the cause of the Empire shall have every protection that we can afford. I would say to my hon. friend the Minister of Militia, were he in his seat, that in certain quarters the blame is cast upon him. It is said that the fact that the boots which were supplied to the troops were not what they ought to have been; is not the fault of the workmanship or of the material supplied, but the fault of the specifications furnished to the manufacturers. The Shoe and Leather Journal, which is a semi-monthly trade journal published in Toronto, in its issue of the 1st of January, states:

Practical shoe manufacturers give credit to the firms who already have executed Government orders. They say that the shoes were made according to specifications, broadly speaking, and in the case of the supplies for the first contingent, under the most trying circumstances. But the specifications are generally not thought to be those for the 'fighting' shoe. The sole is not heavy enough, and it is not hobnailed or quilted, nor is the heel reinforced by a steel plate. The shank is too narrow and not strong enough to stand spade work. The uppers are not heavy enough in all cases, though sometimes they are sufficiently heavy, but not pliable. In short, the specifications are for a shoe that does very well for use in Canada for parade or training purposes, but which does not answer for wear in England, much less in Europe.

In the same issue of the Shoe and Leather Journal is an interview with Mr. W. V. Matthews, manager of the manufacturing department of the well-known firm of Ames-Holden-MacCready, in which he says:

'Those shoes were never meant for foreign service,' said Mr. Matthews, 'as the Government well knew that their specifications called for shoes that did not at all resemble the standard army patterns generally endorsed by Great Britain and European nations. It was

not the intention of the Government to set a new style in army footwear for nations that had learned by practical experience what was best suited for war use.

'There is an army shoe,' said Mr. Matthews, picking up an English army model, real service style, 'which is the only make that will stand the wear and tear of actual service conditions. A pair of them weight 65 ounces. The shoes supplied to the Canadian Government would not weight more than 38 ounces, which is about 18 ounces to 20 ounces more than the weight of an ordinary pair of men's welts. You cannot observe both shoes and say they were meant to give the same service. It is ridiculous.

'The shoes supplied members of the first contingent were meant to be used by the soldiers while in training to accustom their feet to heavier footwear. The immediate change from light welts to shoes of the army patterns as used in Europe would have crippled most of the volunteers in a week. Knowing that it would be months before the Canadian force went to the firing line, the Government saw fit to specify shoes such as were ordered, and, speaking generally, they received good value from the Canadian manufacturers who shared in the business. Speaking for our firm, we received an order for 62,500 pairs, or about one-fourth of the entire quantity. Not one pair has been returned or complained about. It is quite possible that some manufacturers may not have been so fortunate.'

I must say, Mr. Speaker, that for my part I am not altogether satisfied with the statements made in this interview. Neither am I prepared, upon that statement, to condemn the Government. There are in it assertions which seem to be somewhat contradictory. I cannot think, for example, that the shoes which were ordered by the Government were not intended for use on foreign service, and were only intended to accustom the feet of the men to the use of the heavier boot of the English soldier. Until I get further information on the subject I am disposed to doubt this statement. I am not prepared, as I say, at the present moment to condemn the Government; but I do say that this is a matter which ought to be thoroughly inquired into, and upon which the fullest information should be given to the Canadian people. The atmosphere is filled with various assertions to the effect that the men who were sent to the front were not properly equipped. But I will not refer now to anything but the defect in the boots, which has been so widely discussed in the press of Canada and of England that it cannot be passed over in silence. I say again that I refer to the matter now, not for any party purpose, but in order that we may have the truth and the whole truth about it, so that we may know upon whose shoulders to place the responsibility, and thus guard against the