

why two thousand men were being laid off at the John Inglis plant in Toronto, he replied that they were levelling off their production. It seems to me that there should be no levelling off of production until every reserve unit in Canada has sufficient small arms to make themselves an effective fighting force in the event of an invasion of Canada. I recognize that what the minister says is true, that the last units to get weapons would be the reserve force. The first is the general service personnel, then the home defence personnel, and then the last is naturally the reserve force. But they ought to get the necessary weapons long before we start to discuss levelling off of production in a small arms plant.

Mr. HOWE: May I interject a remark at this stage? I did not say that we are levelling off the production of Bren guns; I do not think I have mentioned Bren guns. We are dropping two other guns which are now being made at the Inglis plant, but we are still increasing the production of Bren guns and probably will do so for some time.

Mr. DOUGLAS (Weyburn): I am glad the minister says that there is to be no levelling off of production of Bren guns. The principal production at the John Inglis plant has been the Bren gun. I do not think there should be any levelling off of production of the Boys anti-tank rifle. The reserve units could certainly use many of these rifles, because I know of only a few men in the reserve forces who have fired them. I would suggest to the minister that until the reserve forces have been completely equipped, there should be no change in the production schedule of Canada. I have a couple of questions I should like to ask the minister, but I do not know whether he will want to answer them. The first is with reference to mortars. The minister will know from having read the several books that have been written on Dieppe, such as "Dress Rehearsal" by Reynolds and "Combined Operations" by Saunders, that the value of the mortar as an infantry weapon has increased tremendously as a result of the Dieppe operation. I understand that the Germans have perfected the technique of the mortar and are now using a four-inch mortar which throws a twenty-five pound bomb as compared with a three-inch mortar throwing a ten-pound bomb with which our infantry is equipped. I am not asking the minister to tell us what the department is doing, but I am sure the committee would like some assurance from him as to the possibility of a more adequate use of the trench mortar.

[Mr. T. C. Douglas.]

Has the minister received any reports on the performance of small arms as a result of the Dieppe operation? I have in mind particularly the Sten sub-machine gun. A number of men who came back from Dieppe, with whom I have talked and who were equipped with Sten sub-machine guns, all gave the same report. As the minister knows, there are parts of the Sten sub-machine gun which are quite exposed, and when it is dropped in sand it has a tendency to become plugged. This is not true of the Reising gun, which is well closed in. You can drop it anywhere, pick it up again and use it. Many of these men found that the Sten sub-machine gun—I know this is an excellent gun on the range because I have fired it many times—had a tendency to jam in actual battle conditions where it was necessary for men to throw themselves down on the sand.

Mr. RALSTON: With reference to the mortar I know my hon. friend will not expect me to say more than that the matter to which he has referred has been in the minds and has had the consideration of the weapon development people of all the allied nations, and none more so than our own army technical development board. When I was speaking the other day I mentioned a development which might have something to do with it. I can assure my hon. friend that every step is being taken to see that our weapons are second to none, and certain matters have been worked out already in that respect.

With reference to the Sten gun I think this weapon has had perhaps as severe trials as any gun could have during the last six months. I am speaking of the Canadian Sten particularly. We have watched with great interest the reports which have come in, and as a result of these reports we are increasing the production of the Canadian Sten gun. I think it will be found to stand up all right. The Reising gun has not had a test under battle conditions, nor has it been tested under conditions which would approximate those of battle, but the Sten gun has. We are advised that the Canadian Sten gun is a gun which our troops overseas can use in connection with any activities which may take place. As I say, as a result of the reports which have been made we are increasing the production.

Mr. ADAMSON: Could the minister clarify the role of the reserve army? I know the minister has probably already given a statement in this regard, but I do not think he has done so during this debate. I know that everywhere the minister goes he is asked to describe the role of the reserve army. This