

Supply—National Defence

rather strange that at the time, after all these years of being prepared to make our own weapons, we should be so concerned now about embarking on the production of our own equipment.

I do raise some question about the fact that it would take a year and a half to produce a .300 calibre rifle, because the machine tools are standard tools very largely, except for the tools which bore the internal diameter of the tube, and the other designs. If they are using a rifle that is of standard pattern in the United States the designs and patterns are ones that could be brought here for that purpose.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I think that the members of this committee have reason to review with some care what has been taking place in regard to the public accounts committee, because undoubtedly an impression was conveyed there—and I am sure, conveyed in complete good faith—which is certainly contrary to that now placed before this committee. I would point out that the reason these questions are following in regard to the production of weapons is that this question was raised before dinner—not by me—and the discussion took place. The Minister of Defence Production gave explanations, and it seems logical that we should follow this through to the rational point. I should like to ask the Minister of National Defence what is being produced in the way of military equipment at the small arms arsenal at Toronto at this time.

Mr. Claxton: That is a matter for the Minister of Defence Production when his own estimates come up. I should like to give a further answer to the hon. leader of the opposition and say that from my recollection—no doubt I am giving another military secret—perhaps for three divisions some 20,000 rifles might be required. During the second world war we produced rifles by the hundred thousand. To tool up for a production of 20,000 is far more expensive than to buy them from the United States—I mean by “far” very much more expensive.

Then, I did not say it would take a year and a half to produce the equipment from the manufacturing point of view; but to effect any changeover, given the present circumstances, we will be in the situation where Britain, the countries of Europe and ourselves will have part American and part British and part other type equipment for some period of time. We have done more than any country on the face of the earth to end that situation. We have not succeeded, but because we have not succeeded we do not see why we should be blamed. We have done

our utmost, and we would like very much to be in a position to use some of our resources for the production of arms and weapons for other countries. We thought the most effective way we could do this would be to give equipment to the value of about one hundred and fifty million dollars to other countries and replace it and accelerate the job of standardization so that on the other side of the ocean they would have British type equipment; on this side we would have American type equipment; in between we are going to be a bit mixed up. Of course we know that is inevitable, but this course will speed the kind of operation which has never happened before in the history of the world and we hope it may be successful in bringing about some acceptance of common standards by other nations. We have made our way very plain, and I do not see what else we can do. There has not been any suggestion here that we should have taken any other course. I have discussed this around the table with the North Atlantic treaty nations. They think it is right. They are glad to get our equipment, and they think it is a good thing for them to standardize all equipment of the type which they got either from the British, from ourselves or from others after the end of the second world war; whereas we go on with the United States type. It all seems to make sense to them and to us.

Mr. Green: Has France adopted the British standard?

Mr. Claxton: No. I must say on this question of standards it has already been indicated by the Minister of Defence Production that one weapon, the 3-inch 50-calibre naval gun, has been adopted by the British, by the Americans and by ourselves. It is an American gun. It is a very complicated and difficult gun to make. I was told—I do not know whether it is true—that it takes $7\frac{1}{2}$ tons of blueprints. There are other common types. We had mortars and some anti-tank weapons. Already they are common to all countries. There will be more. This thing will grow. It is developing; and I think we are going to be more in line with both the British and the Americans than any country—so long as we fight together—so that we will not have much difficulty. And when I refer to fighting together I mean fighting alongside each other—and it is inconceivable that in the event of war that should not happen. In such event we will not have much difficulty about supplies.

Mr. Drew: The minister did not answer the question I asked, but he did raise a point which he said had come to his attention after he sat down, and that was that the total number of rifles required for three divisions