

factory at Quebec, in testing the rifle. They sent in a report to the government which was favourable to the rifle, and on the strength of that report it has been adopted.

Hon. Mr. HAGGART. Does it use the ordinary ammunition?

The MINISTER OF MILITIA AND DEFENCE. The same exactly, and in the contract which will be entered into with Sir Charles Ross provision will be made that in case we desire to change the rifle, or in case any discovery is made, he will, on receiving notice, manufacture such a rifle as the department may require.

Another matter which has been referred to by my hon. friend and by the General, and in which I agree with both, is the question of distributing the rifles we now have to the rural militia. When I came into office, I found, as I have explained here before, that the General who was here at the time my hon. friend was in office, had recommended very strongly that these rifles should not be distributed until central armouries were constructed, on the ground that the rifle was a very sensitive weapon, and must have the care of an armourer. It has been sufficiently proved, I think, by what has taken place in South Africa, that it is not such a delicate weapon, for it has stood the test very well. I doubt if any rifle could have stood the test better than the Lee-Enfield or the Lee-Metford has done. Therefore the Major General has recommended that the rifles be at once distributed, and that the old system of company armouries under proper inspection, more frequent than in the past, be continued; and on the strength of that recommendation, instructions have been given that these rifles be at once issued and the old rifles called in. I think this will be very satisfactory news to the militia all over the country. I think it is a step in the right direction, and I am very sorry we did not take it before.

I do not know that there are many other points of importance to which my hon. friend referred, and I will bring my remarks to a close by saying that from my experience during the five years I have been in office, I think it is possible for us to have in this country a very effective defensive force at an expenditure very little in excess of that which we are making at the present time. Without repeating what I have said as to the methods we propose to take in the future in recruiting men for the active militia, I may say that, along the lines of interesting the citizens of the country in rifle shooting, and bringing them into sympathy with the militia by giving them something practical to do, I believe that, without any increase of expenditure at all we can enormously increase the interest and bring in thousands of young men who will be ready and properly equipped, if the unfortunate time ever occurs, to defend our country. What we want to have, always

ready, always at hand, is an effective staff. We want an effective headquarters staff. We want the machinery ready to be set in motion. We want, as my hon. friend has said, decentralization to the extent at any rate of having not only an effective headquarters staff, but effective district staffs, ready to act immediately when called upon. We want officers—educated, well-trained officers; and I approve entirely of the suggestions which the General makes, that we should insist in the future upon a higher grade of education; that we should apply higher tests to the officers, making them pass more severe examinations. In that way we are now adding every year to our reserve of officers, our list of unattached officers, men who have gone out by the system we adopted a few years ago of limiting the term of service for officers. The colonel of a regiment goes out after five years; the next below him steps up and takes his place, and so on. There is a step up for every man in the regiment. That very fact has given additional zest and interest to the militia of the country. A man joining to-day, even at the bottom of the list, knows that some day in the not very distant future he will have a chance of getting to the top if he is a young man. Then, the old men who go out are not lost to the militia. They go on the reserve or unattached list and there remain; and I think we should take some means, as we are doing, to keep these men in touch with the militia by giving them something to do. In this way we are increasing every year the number of trained and educated officers whom we have at our disposal. We have a fairly equipped staff with all the branches that are required for an army in the field, at headquarters. We have organized here a medical army corps, to which the general refers in the highest terms, and to which my hon. friend did not refer, although it is worthy of passing notice. I believe that we have here a medical army service corps second to none in the world. That was shown the other day in South Africa. Our field hospital corps had scarcely landed when it was put to the most severe test which could be applied to any such organization, and I had the satisfaction of receiving a cablegram from Col. Evans stating that it had acquitted itself with the greatest possible credit. We are organizing now an army service corps. We have an officer in England to-day, Col. Biggar, who is taking a course of study there, who has had experience in South Africa, and who will return in a few months fully able to organize, from one end of the country to the other, that most important branch of the service. I repeat that with all these important branches fairly organized at headquarters and in the districts, with a very large number of officers ready to be called upon at any moment, and with the precautions we are now taking to edu-