

Supply—Defence Production

to use its good offices to seek a further meeting, and to impress upon the other governments our feeling of urgency in regard to this aspect of the problem. The minister mentioned the fact that there had been agreement in regard to the standardization of some fourteen types of weapons.

Mr. Howe: I do not want to mislead my hon. friend. The Minister of National Defence says that about four hundred items have been agreed to, but of those fourteen are important and the others are minor.

Mr. Drew: There is a vast difference, of course, between the four hundred items and the weapons. We all know what the important weapons are. We know that as yet there is no agreement in regard to rifles and machine guns. When we speak of standardization, it has its primary effect upon the organization of the land forces. The next weapons we come to are the artillery weapons. Today the minister explained that we have decided to adopt the 105 millimetre and 155 millimetre howitzers in place of the 25-pounder and the 5.5 howitzer. I understand, and I would wish to be corrected if I am wrong, that there is not an agreed standard between the governments of the United States and the United Kingdom in regard to those weapons. Is that correct?

Mr. Howe: I had the other understanding, but I do not want to be too positive. I think at the moment we are discussing a good deal of classified material. I can tell my hon. friend, if it will comfort him, that we are making 155 millimetre howitzers for the United Kingdom, so I assume that is a standard.

Mr. Drew: Is that on a firm order?

Mr. Howe: Yes.

Mr. Drew: The reason I ask is because it might be on a firm order or it might be on the same basis as the walkie-talkies.

Mr. Howe: No.

Mr. Drew: Surely the minister must know whether in fact there has been agreement. After all, these are not merely decisions of two nations; they are decisions that affect NATO preparations. I know this has been under discussion, and I know there is agreement as to the desirability, but surely the minister is in a position to say whether in fact there is formal agreement between the government of the United States and the government of the United Kingdom that the 105 millimetre and 155 millimetre howitzers will be the standard weapons.

Mr. Howe: In the first place, I am speaking about a matter that my hon. friend will

[Mr. Drew.]

appreciate is not my concern. That is a matter for the armed services. If I said there was agreement, I would be saying what I believe. If the hon. member asked the source of my information, I could not tell him. I can only say that the army does not ask us to go into large scale production on an item which has not been agreed upon among the three countries, and we have been asked to go into large scale production on the 105 and 155 millimetre guns. So I am assuming that they are standard to the three countries. I think I am correct in the assumption, but I am not the man to answer that question. In fact, the whole matter of standardization is outside my province. It is a matter for the armed services.

Mr. Drew: Mr. Chairman, the Minister of Defence Production has indicated the very close association of these two departments in all that they do. The activities of these departments are closely interlocked by virtue of the fact that the Department of Defence Production is the department which interprets in terms of actually finished articles the requirements of the Department of National Defence. The Department of National Defence establishes its requirements, and the Department of Defence Production then takes steps to bring those requirements into production. It seems to me that in the discussion of defence production this is directly related to the effectiveness of what we are doing, and this is the appropriate time to emphasize the tremendous urgency of some decision in regard to standardization. Whatever minister is responsible, the government itself should be ready to take whatever steps are necessary to seek some conclusion in regard to standardization, if in fact the emergency is of the nature that has been explained to us and that justifies the tremendous sum of money we are called upon to approve.

I know that the Minister of Defence Production did not seek to convey the impression but unintentionally the suggestion was left that we have not achieved standardization in regard to only two of the weapon categories, rifles and machine guns, whereas we have achieved some measure of standardization in other fields. I would point out that the infantry is still the most important segment of the whole defence formation from the aspect of the occupation and holding of any area. To a large extent the character and ultimate form of all our defence forces is determined by the organization of the infantry and the other land forces. The characteristics of these land forces are largely decided by the type of weapons they possess. For that reason the rifle and the machine gun are, in fact, the basic equipment of the whole defence