

to you and given out to the public by your Chief, Sir Robert Borden, as follows:—

“As the Canadian troops have been suffering very serious losses during the last fortnight when defending what is known as the Ypres salient, the Canadian authorities have asked for information from the British General Staff. The reply that was received was that the position was an important one, and that in spite of the serious losses sustained it was considered necessary to defend it.”

We could go on indefinitely with a recital of your inglorious record of bluster, braggadocio, self-praise and equivocation, but space forbids. We earnestly hope for the sake of Canada that your career as a Minister will soon end. For two years

you have strutted and brain-stormed your way through things, brow-beating here and insulting there, “canning” this officer and “damming” that, flaunting your colleagues and the public, until you have become the despair of everybody, including your own political friends.

In times of peace you might be tolerated as a dress parade figurehead, but in war your actions indicate that you are a positive menace to the State. You have all the qualities which a good soldier should not possess. A really great soldier is always modest, but modesty is foreign to your nature. A big soldier thinks more than he talks; you talk without thinking. A good military man sinks his individuality for the common good; you constantly flaunt your personality in the face of people, and, your main idea, judged by your actions, seems to be to glorify yourself.

THE ROSS RIFLE

When Sir Frederick Borden was Minister of Militia, he encouraged the establishment of a rifle factory at the City of Quebec. In this factory the Ross Rifle is manufactured. Sir Frederick's efforts were in some quarters stoutly opposed. Previous to 1911 debates took place in Parliament on the Ross Rifle and this rifle was subjected to investigation by the Public Accounts Committee of the House of Commons. The arm had a strong champion in the present Minister of Militia, and rifle associations and experts were high in praise of the weapon for rifle practice and inferentially for war purposes.

The test of actual war has come. It is not rifle practice experts that are now heard from. The voice of those who have to do at the front in the great world struggle still waging has been heard. Possibly the strongest voice is that of General Alderson, former Commander of the Canadian Forces at the front, when he says:—

“I may say that very soon after we got out here with the First Division I found that the men were picking up the Lee-Enfields whenever they could and throwing away the Rosses. I issued an order that this was not to be allowed, and prior to the second battle of Ypres that order was carried out. The experience of the battle showed that the Ross jammed so badly that I was obliged to let this order die a natural death. When the division was re-armed with the Lee-Enfields the men cheered loudly on hearing the news, and it was found that there were already more than 3,000 of the rifles in the division.”

Another disquieting report was published in the Toronto Telegram of May 25th, 1916, which was extracted from a communication received from London, England. This report stated that when General Alderson and his divisional commanders made known their objections to the Ross Rifle, they received a strong reprimand from Ottawa in the form of a mandate which was sent to every battalion commander in the Canadian Army. This mandate, it is stated, went so far as to tell these officers that no further criticism of the Ross Rifle would be tolerated; that henceforth no soldier must dare discard his Ross Rifle, and disobedience of this edict would be immediately punished.

Can it be possible that such a mandate was ever issued from Ottawa, and if so, what is the reason?

This same communication from London contained a somewhat defensive reference to the pattern of the Ross Rifle in the following terms:—

“Someone who has examined many hundreds of Ross Rifles has another explanation for its failure. He holds that the actual construction of the rifle is

not to blame. It is said that in almost every Ross he has examined some small part has been defective. Some bolt or lever, perhaps small, but important, some vital unit, calling for tempered steel of glass hardness, has proved to be fashioned of soft metal. It wears and, as in the case of the chain snapping at its weakest link, so this part ruins the rifle.”

Months ago a committee of impartial British officers and expert rifle men, appointed by the War Office, made a report on the Ross Rifle which was forwarded to the Canadian Government. Members of the Liberal Opposition, both in the House of Commons and elsewhere have requested that this report be made public, but so far without avail. Is this report adverse to the Ross Rifle? Obviously so, or the Government would gladly use it to disprove the adverse criticism of returned soldiers and others.

Sir Robert Borden on May 17th, 1916, informed the House of Commons that Sir Douglas Haig, Commander-in-Chief of the British Forces, had been asked to make a thorough test of the Ross Rifle and to report to the Canadian Government. It is hoped that when this report is received it will not receive the same treatment as the report of the British experts appointed by the War Office.

From a Canadian manufacturing point of view it matters not whether it is the Ross Rifle that is manufactured in Canada or not. If it is as good a rifle as the best, let us keep it as our National Rifle and continue to manufacture it in Canada. If the report of these experts is unfavorable, let it be discarded and used for training only. There should be no mandates, no more threats issued from Ottawa.

If Canadian soldiers have been going into the trenches with an unserviceable rifle, false pride must be abandoned and our Canadian soldier equipped with the best. The Borden Government is responsible and cannot shift the responsibility by whining that the Ross Rifle was first manufactured when a Liberal Government was in power. That was before the War and before the Ross arm could be tested out under actual war service conditions.

A great responsibility rests upon the Government to give the whole facts to the people of Canada. Relatives of men who have gone to the front have in most cases made a sacrifice as great as that of the soldier himself. They are entitled to the assurance that Canadian soldiers are getting the best possible protection. If these reports of independent experts give that assurance, go on with the Rifles. If they do not give that assurance, stop manufacturing! **Let the reports be made public.**