

reference to this matter, because it has a bearing upon the question of remedying all the defects:

"We particularly draw attention to the fact that the trouble is only a small detail of manufacturing owing to the difference in the shells, not having had the advantage of testing with government cartridges and we undertake to meet all the necessary requirements on this point (Sgd.) Charles Ross. (Sgd.) J. A. BENNETT."

Bennett was his manager.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. Is that report in the printed evidence?

Sir FREDERICK BORDEN. Yes, you will find it at page 204. Then, of course, there are letters from Colonel Hughes and from Colonel Anderson which I will not delay the House by reading. The hon. member (Mr. Worthington) read to-day certain alleged reports from the Springfield arsenals. I have already referred to them and given my opinion that they are not of much value until their authenticity is proven. So far as I am concerned I am not prepared to accept their authenticity. The hon. member also referred to what he called War Office reports and Hythe tests, and he ventured to say that when I was asked a certain question I had denied that any communication had been received from the War Office with reference to the Ross rifle. If the hon. member had been fair enough to read my answer he would have seen I had done nothing of the kind. I said there had been a communication and that it was marked 'secret,' and I referred to the nature of the communication. The communication points out that it might be undesirable to adopt a rifle which was not precisely like the Lee-Enfield because two forces fighting together in the field might require different parts and their armourers might be serving out parts for only one kind of rifle. That is a difficulty that no doubt would exist, but so far as the Ross rifle is concerned there was no very great difficulty about it. As I pointed out in 1902 when this matter was discussed in the colonial conference, the rifle is so simple that it is quite easy for a man, or at any rate for a sergeant in each company or in each regiment, to carry with him the necessary spare parts. That was pointed out and it was not denied; in fact, it was affirmed. What was denied was a statement which appeared in a newspaper in this city, and which the hon. member (Mr. Worthington) seems disposed to adhere to notwithstanding my contradiction, and which was that the Ross rifle had been tested at Hythe. I gave the specific statement on that head: That neither Sir Charles Ross nor his agent nor anybody for him nor any one on behalf of this government had ever handed over to any of the authorities at Hythe any rifles whatever for the purpose of testing them.

In that connection I was practically charged—and this will illustrate the animus which actuates the opponents of this rifle—I was charged with having purloined from the parliamentary library a book which was said to have been there and to have mysteriously disappeared. I was able to produce here from the librarian a distinct statement that no such report from the War Office had ever been in the library and that every report of the year mentioned or of recent years that ever had been in the library was there still. I mention this again to show the animus behind all this and the unfairness of this crusade, for it is nothing else. A newspaper stated—inspired I believe by the hon. member—the Ottawa 'Citizen,' stated that I had refused to bring down a report sent here by the War Office with regard to this rifle and that such report had been kept off the files. And I was able to bring here to my desk the next day the return as I laid it on the table as long ago as March, 1907, and showed to this House the full report of the War Office just as it was sent to the Department of Militia, and I was able to show further that I had in the speech which I made in this House in January, 1907, referred to this very report as having been received and stated I was going to bring it down to the House. It is just as well perhaps to take note of these things so that the House may discount a little bit the professions of patriotism put forward by the hon. member who moved this motion.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. Is this report of the War Office the report of the alleged trial or experiment at Hythe?

Sir FREDERICK BORDEN. No, I am speaking now about the report made at the Woolwich Arsenal on rifles which I sent to the War Office for the purpose.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. What was the Hythe investigation?

Sir FREDERICK BORDEN. I said that neither the department nor Sir Charles Ross nor anybody for him ever sent any rifle there, and Sir Charles Ross assured me that it is an entire mistake to say that his rifle has ever been sent to Hythe or reported upon there.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. I suppose it might have been tested there although it was not sent by Sir Charles Ross. Does the hon. minister know whether the Ross rifle was tested although it was not tested under his auspices?

Sir FREDERICK BORDEN. I would not say that it was not. It was about the time that the original rifle was handed to the government to be submitted to the committee which I spoke of a moment ago. I do not think there could have been such a test.

Mr. FOSTER. How many rifles have been