

*Supply—National Defence*

By Mr. Fulton:

Q. Has it been decided to adopt the American .300 rifle as the standard rifle for the Canadian forces, particularly for the Canadian army?

A. It has.

**The Deputy Chairman:** Order. As a matter of information may I ask the leader of the opposition if this evidence has been reported to the house? If it has not, it may not be quoted. If it has, I am sorry to have interrupted the hon. gentleman.

**Mr. Drew:** No, Mr. Chairman, it has not been reported to the house, and if any objection is taken of course it cannot be read. I should have thought that on a matter so important there would be unanimous consent to the reading of a question and answer which have such a direct bearing on a question and answer given in this house today, especially since the question and answer I read are wholly incompatible with the answer by the Minister of Defence Production. One statement or the other is correct. The statement by the deputy minister of national defence, which I shall simply refer to as a statement to that effect, does at least indicate a belated carrying out of the declaration by the Minister of National Defence in Detroit on May 2, two years ago. But today we had the statement by the Minister of Defence Production that these rifles are not being made. It did not stop at that point. The minister went on to explain that no orders will be placed—and I am using the words he used in this house this afternoon—"until a decision is made as to what will be the standard weapon to produce in Canada".

The members of this committee need a great deal more information now before we depart from this discussion. If the answer of the deputy minister of national defence is correct I should think all the members of this committee would want to know why we were selling rifles and machine guns and ammunition outside this country. Many were under the impression that a decision to change had been made. I would imagine many hon. members would want to know why large quantities of .303 ammunition were sold to China at a time when the ultimate use of that ammunition was likely to be in very uncertain hands. Certainly there was indication after indication that the reason we were disposing of .303 weapons and ammunition was that a decision had been made to change to the American standard, and of course we had the statement of the Minister of National Defence to that effect. Now, I should think first of all, Mr. Chairman, there should be the clearest possible statement by the Minister of National Defence explaining his statement of two years ago. What has

happened since then? Then, either from the Minister of National Defence or from the Minister of Defence Production, a full and complete statement as to what use is now being made of the small arms arsenal at or near Toronto, and exactly what is going to be done in regard to the equipment of our forces.

**Mr. Claxton:** The first observation I should like to make, Mr. Chairman, is that if we agreed to the position which you put to the committee two or three times, and which as I understood was agreed to by the committee, it would be a good thing if we kept to the order laid down, that is to deal with administration, inspection services, civil defence, and so on in order. Since the question has come up, I shall deal with it now.

On May 2, 1949, I did not say what was reported by the hon. leader of the opposition.

**Mr. Drew:** I do not want to interrupt, but it was not reported by the leader of the opposition, it was a report which the press carried.

**Mr. McIlraith:** You took the responsibility of reading it to the committee.

**Mr. Drew:** Certainly I read it.

**Mr. McIlraith:** You took the responsibility of putting it on the record.

**Mr. Claxton:** Let us say you reported the report.

**Mr. Drew:** I have read the report.

**Mr. Claxton:** That is all I said, and that is all I meant. I do not see why we should have to have little fights over such a small thing as this.

**An hon. Member:** Neither do we.

**Mr. Claxton:** Who started it? I did not. What I said on May 2, 1949, when I was speaking in Detroit was:

A great step forward would be the adoption by the friendly powers of the rimless cartridge and the .300 calibre. We in Canada have decided to take that step but bringing it about is again a difficult matter because we have some hundreds of thousands of perfectly useful weapons with rimmed cartridges and the .303 calibre.

At that time the countries with which we were most closely associated in our defence were Britain and the United States. We had set up a joint committee on the standardization of weapons. One of the most important weapons to be standardized was the rifle. The aim of all three countries was to achieve a common standard. Certainly, it was the aim of Canada, perhaps more than the other two, and for this reason. Both Britain and the United States have such large needs for weapons of all types that they can get an