

House of Commons Debates

FOURTH SESSION—TENTH PARLIAMENT

SPEECH

OF

MR. SAM. HUGHES, M.P.

ON

THE ROSS RIFLE

OTTAWA, FRIDAY, MAY 22, 1908.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES (Victoria and Halliburton). Mr. Speaker, I have been asked by the hon. member for North Toronto, (Mr. Foster) what I am going to do now. My first step is to draw closer to my leader in the hope that I may be able to induce him to see the error of his way and later on induce the hon. member for Sherbrooke (Mr. Worthington) to withdraw the motion which he has placed before the House or to turn around and support me in assisting to vote that motion down. With reference to my leader, I may say at the outset that I wish to correct a false impression which has been insidiously created, or attempted to be created, by gentlemen who have been supporting the views laid down by the hon. member for Sherbrooke. In fact, the hon. member for Sherbrooke himself stated that one reason why this important matter of the Ross rifle tragedy had not been brought by the Conservative party in a formal manner before this House and the country was that the leader of the opposition chanced to be of the same name and of the same family as the hon. Minister of Militia and Defence (Sir Frederick Borden). In so far as the coming First Minister of Canada, the present leader of the opposition is concern-

ed, in his suggestions to the Militia Committee of the Liberal-Conservative party—a committee of which I have the honour to be chairman—his requests have invariably been to probe to the bottom any matter concerning the militia expenditure of this country, or concerning anything arising from the expenditure of public money or the conduct of public affairs in connection with that department. He has given the same encouragement to inquire into the affairs of that department as he has to investigate other departments. I shall have something to say upon that subject later on. There is one thing that the hon. member for Sherbrooke is noted for, in which he stands pre-eminent, and that is the magnificent smile that he has. He is smiling now, but before I get through I purpose endeavouring to show that smile on the other side of his face. I purpose endeavouring to show what his conduct has been in the treatment of this matter. He may say that the Militia Committee has never done its duty. It rests with the hon. gentleman or with any other hon. member who discusses this question fairly and squarely to show wherein there has been anything neglectful or improper on my part in looking after the militia interests

of this country. Long years ago, when the Conservative party went into opposition, the Rt. Hon. Sir Charles Tupper spoke to me and asked me to take general supervision of the militia affairs of this country. I consented to do so.

Some hon. MEMBERS. Oh, oh.

Mr. FOSTER. Lightened the task of the minister!

Mr. SAM HUGHES. I mean from an opposition viewpoint—as far as criticism by the Conservative party is concerned, and I had the honour of being asked, when the Conservative party was in power, of occupying the position of Minister of Militia in this country. Sir Charles Tupper asked me, in opposition, to take general supervision of the militia affairs of this country and I consented to do so on the distinct understanding that, in so far as practicable, questions bearing upon the militia should be removed entirely from the arena of party politics. When Mr. R. L. Borden was appointed leader of the opposition I had the same understanding with him—that, as far as possible, matters affecting the militia would not be thrown into the arena of party politics unless it were absolutely necessary. You may search the records of the United States in vain, you may search the records of Great Britain in vain, of France or any other civilized country on the face of the earth; to the hon. member for Sherbrooke belongs the unique distinction of having first brought into the arena of party politics the discussion of the weapon or the arm that we may be called upon to use. Millions upon millions of dollars have been expended in Great Britain in changing rifles, in testing rifles; millions upon millions have been expended in the United States, as I shall show, in testing and changing rifles and I challenge the hon. member for Sherbrooke, with all his detective instincts, to produce one solitary instance wherein a member of parliament in Great Britain, or of Congress in the United States, or any representative of the people, has been found base enough to stand in his place, as this hon. gentleman has stood for two sessions, and endeavour to create personal animosities at the expense of the arm of the country. There are ways and ways of criticising these matters. The little defects—I use the term 'defects' advisedly—that have cropped up and shown themselves in connection with the Ross rifle from time to time, were being removed one after the other and the report to which reference has been made by the hon. member for Sherbrooke, the criticisms of those wisacres in England and the criticisms of others in various parts of the country were not the means of calling attention to these defects, because they had been discovered and remedied by the Canadian committee before these reports were received in this coun-

try. However, the hon. gentleman told us last night how he had been sitting impatiently all session in order to get strewing the earth with the fragments of this Ross rifle and with the remains of the hon. Minister of Militia and incidentally with those of the hon. member for Victoria and Halliburton. Well, Sir, the mountain has laboured and brought forth a mouse, stillborn. Whether it was due to the fact that the parentage and the medical attendance were one and the same person or not I give it up, but it is the sorriest object I have ever seen presented to the people of a free country. I regret very much that on the present occasion I have to take issue with the Conservative party, but it is not the first time I have done so. One thing that I do remember having heard the late Hon. Sir Oliver Mowat say was that next to the approval of his own conscience he regarded the honest opinions of his fellow men. That is exactly the position in which I stand. But much as I regard the approval of my fellow men, I regard the approval of my own conscience very much more. In matters of politics, I am prepared to follow my leader in non-essentials, but in essentials I claim the right to follow my own bent, and I am prepared to abide by the consequences. I do not deny that it gives me a good deal of tribulation not to have my friends in the Conservative party stand with me; but on other occasions when I have differed from them, I have had the endorsement of the people of my own county. I have learned that my scalp remains on my head, not by grace of the hon. member for Sherbrooke or of any other set of men in this country.

On two notable occasions I have differed from my party. One of them was the occasion of the Manitoba School Act of 1896 when my good friend the present member for North Toronto (Mr. Foster) sought with his mellifluous voice to induce me to give up the line of conduct which I had laid down for myself and take another line. I did not choose, as some other hon. gentlemen on this side of the House did, to follow the bad leadership on that occasion of the present right hon. First Minister, nor did I choose to follow the leadership of the present member for North Toronto. I took the line that there should be no separate schools imposed on Manitoba either then by the Liberal-Conservative party or six months after through the instrumentality of the First Minister. I took the stand that the people of Manitoba should be left free to take their own course, and, Sir, I faced the best gentlemen that could be sent by the First Minister or by the emissaries of the Conservative party who wished to destroy me, and I had the endorsement of the people of my county, and to-day I have the endorsement of the people of Canada along that line—at least the endorsement of any whose endorsement I care to have.

Another occasion on which I differed from

my party was in the year 1898, when the Yukon question was before this House. The Hon. Sir Charles Tupper, the leader of the Conservative party at that time, conceived the idea, the patriotic idea, of having an all-Canadian route into the Yukon. His idea was to have the road start from Kitimaat Harbour and pass up through Canadian territory behind that strip of Yankee territory and into the Yukon country, I will not be contradicted by Sir Charles Tupper nor by any other man later on, for I know whereof I speak. With a broad spirit of patriotism Sir Charles Tupper approached the Minister of the Interior of the day, the Hon. Clifford Sifton, and induced Mr. Sifton to make that a plank in the platform of the Liberal government of the day. The question came before the country. The proposition did not commend itself to the present member for North Toronto; it did not commend itself to the Toronto 'World'; it did not commend itself to certain other gentlemen in the Conservative party. The agitation broke out and Sir Charles Tupper had reluctantly to bow in order to hold his leadership of the party and oppose his own project. I know whereof I speak. I chanced to be in Australia at the time. When I returned to Canada I found to my regret that Sir Charles Tupper had seen fit, in order as he thought to hold his party together, instead of breasting the storm, to turn around and oppose the project. The last time Sir Charles Tupper ever addressed a Conservative open caucus in Ottawa—it is no secret, because he has himself told it publicly—in his own home down on the banks of the Ottawa, he stated that in the past the Conservative party had made two mistakes. One of them was a trivial affair, the other was that it had not loyally supported the Liberal party in pushing an all-Canadian route into the Yukon. I have seen the country, Sir, both on the Manitoba school question and on the Yukon question, come to endorse the stand I took in differing from my party on those occasions, and I have seen the best men of my party acknowledge that in stepping out from my party on those two questions I was right. I have no fear, Sir, that in six months or a year from to-day, possibly a much shorter time than six months, the universal sentiment in the Conservative party will be that I have taken the right line on this matter, and that the gentlemen who have followed the lead of the hon. member for Sherbrooke, misled by his little tittle-tattle of newspaper yarns throughout the country, will discover their mistake. At any rate, I am not losing any sleep over the issue; I am standing by the dictates of my own conscience.

Now, Sir, the question of a rifle is before the people of Canada. The hon. member for Sherbrooke has been instrumental in various ways in endeavouring to create

sentiment against the government on this matter. If it were merely a question of creating a sentiment against the government, I think from my record in the past I could be trusted to do my duty for the Liberal-Conservative party to nearly as great an extent as the hon. member for Sherbrooke. Ask the Liberal-Conservatives in any constituency in the Dominion of Canada, and they will tell you that wherever my services could be of avail, they have always been at the disposal of the Liberal-Conservative candidate, and I can say without any egotism that the Hon. J. P. Whitney has on more than one occasion stated that I am possibly the only member of parliament who on all occasions has been ready in season and out of season to do his duty for the Ontario Liberal-Conservative party. What is the record of my hon. friend from Sherbrooke? What has he done for the Liberal-Conservative party? In 1904 did he not bring members on the government side of the House and demand that the Minister of Militia give him the position of principal medical officer of the militia force of Canada? Did he or did he not? He dare not deny it.

Mr. WORTHINGTON. What does the hon. gentleman say?

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. I ask the hon. member for Sherbrooke did he or did he not demand of the Minister of Militia that he be given the position of principal medical officer of the militia of the Dominion of Canada?

Mr. WORTHINGTON. I did not.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. All I have to say is that the hon. gentleman admitted it to me in the presence of Dr. Daniel, the member for St. John.

Mr. WORTHINGTON. That is absolutely untrue. He did not utter those words.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. The hon. member for Richmond and Wolfe (Mr. Tobin) also said the same thing publicly, namely, that the hon. gentleman (Mr. Worthington) had demanded from the Minister of Militia the principal medical officership for the Dominion, and then when he could not get it, threatened he would go back to Sherbrooke and run in the Tory interest. Then there was a sort of bargain made, and he agreed to take the position of principal medical officer for the province of Quebec. But the Minister of Militia, with his usual lethargy, was so slow in getting the appointment through, that the hon. gentleman was elected about the time he got it. Then we all remember that the Minister of Justice of that day (Sir Charles Fitzpatrick) had an Act passed amending the Act relating to the independence of the members of parliament in order to allow the hon. gentleman (Mr. Worthington) to draw out his pay of \$1 or \$1.25 per day, every day of his life-

time, in the position he holds in the province of Quebec. This is the gentleman who has the assurance to cast an imputation on my loyalty to the Liberal-Conservative party. Would or would not the hon. gentleman have been prepared to accept another military medical position, one at Victoria, since he has had a seat in this House? We know he would. And he forsooth is the man who drags the Liberal-Conservative party through the mud and mire in connection with this question of the Ross rifle. Later on I shall dissect the causes and motives of his action.

I do not object to criticism of rifles or criticism of any kind. A man in public life who thinks he is above criticism had better retire. I am always ready to meet my critics and give them a Roland for their Oliver. But we find various classes of critics. As far as the Ross rifle is concerned, there is no doubt room for some criticism. In fact there has never been a rifle issued yet that was above criticism. And whenever there has been a change of rifles, there always has been criticism and hostility to the change. When Colonel Dennison of Toronto was down here with his little operatic company playing in a theatre, one of the comedy hits was a statement that certain soldiers, in firing at the enemy, had missed, and fortunately missed, for they happened to be firing on their own friends. And when the thing came to be investigated, it was found that they were armed with the new rifle which accounted for their fortunate bad shooting. The hon. gentleman was present and his mouth almost split open with laughter because he thought the joke was on the Ross rifle. But as a matter of fact when the piece was written, the change had been made in the British army from the Martini to the Lee-Enfield, and the opposition was so strong to the change, that plays were written belittling it all over the British empire. I have never yet seen a change from one rifle to another which has not created wide dissatisfaction, unfair criticism and hostility. The soldiers, who have been accustomed to using the one rifle, will always find something to condemn in the new.

As a critic I myself am always anxious to get a crack at the enemy, but I am one of those who like to be sure of their data before going ahead. Nevertheless we cannot all examine into the details of every case, and in politics we have to be led by sentiment in many of these matters, and that is why the Liberal-Conservative party to-day finds itself committed to the motion submitted by the hon. member for Sherbrooke (Mr. Worthington). These men are absolutely honest and deserve every consideration, and I do not see why I should have the slightest feeling against any member of our party who deems it his duty to

vote for this resolution? I know what their sentiments are and what their actions would be if this thing came up six months from to-day.

We have had the criticisms of the honest riflemen of the country, but taking the sum and substance of the criticisms which the hon. gentleman laid on the table yesterday, what do they amount to? A lot of tu'penny-ha'penny little things that would not be regarded as of any importance. Fore-sight screw loose, back sight out of shape and so on. Let me give the criticism of honest riflemen. They say that for rifle shooting, you must have a heavier barrel. Well, we have got that now. I shall not charge the hon. gentleman with dishonesty because I am not sure whether he knows that the United States have a short rifle and a long rifle. The English have a short rifle and a long rifle. And at not one of the important matches in England or the United States is the short rifle used. Why then should the short rifle of Canada be put in competition with the long rifle of other lands? At the Palma match at our range last year, which the right hon. the First Minister honoured with his presence—I was sorry not to have my hon. friend the leader of the opposition there—not a short rifle was used. The Yankees since 1903 have had the short rifle but they have used the long rifle, England uses the long Lee-Enfield, and so do the Australians. Why was the hon. gentleman not honest enough to say that for target purposes the short rifle is never put in competition with the long rifle? I appeal to my hon. friend from Kings and Albert (Mr. Fowler) who, thirty or forty years ago, knew something about rifle shooting.

Mr. FOWLER. Before you were born?

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. Oh, no.

Mr. FOWLER. That is the time you won that Fenian medal.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. That is right. I appeal to my hon. friend from Kings and Albert (Mr. Fowler) to state whether in those days he used his cavalry carbine in competition against the long Snider. These riflemen criticise the light barrel for target purposes; they criticise what I may term the abominable back sight on the rifle, and very rightly. But the back sight is one of the fads introduced in imitation of the Boers. The Mauser rifle, which was used by the Boers, had this lever sight. The sight hinged and worked from a lever back. It seemed to answer for field purposes; and consequently it was adopted, not only in England, but for a time in Canada and the United States. In Canada it has been discarded and also in the United States and its life will be short in England. The honest riflemen criticise the fastening of

the barrel and the receiver. One of the criticisms made by a few of the critics has regard to the attachment of the barrel to the receiver and it is a very judicious criticism. The old attachment in Mark I was on fine thread. In Mark II it was changed to a large single coarse thread and that has been found in odd cases to work loose. It has been abandoned. Then the safety catch is another of the objectionable features. And speaking on this one thing, the hon. member for Sherbrooke said it was criminal on the part of the Minister of Militia to allow it to go before the people.

I was pointing out what the people of the United States have been doing in rifle matters. In 1900 they modelled their first short Springfield rifle. In 1901 it was adopted; in 1902 it was perfected. And in 1903 it was put into the hands of the troops. I have here their latest issue of instructions and I commend this to the Minister of Militia. These instructions were issued on March 3, 1904, revised April 18, 1906, and reissued on February 14, 1908. They are entitled: Instructions regarding the use of the United States service rifle. Although the rifle has been in the hands of the troops all these years, though it has been perfected from time to time, nevertheless we find instructions issued in regard to the safety catch in these words. I quote from the Instructions:

Precautions.

If it is desirable to carry the piece cocked with the cartridge in the chamber, the bolt mechanism should be secured by turning the safety lock to the right. In this position it is important that the safety lock be kept turned fully to the right, since, if it is turned to the left nearly to the 'ready' position and the trigger pulled it is possible that the sear may not engage the cocking shoulder. Should this happen the rifle will be discharged upon turning the safety lock fully to the ready position. Under no consideration should the cartridge be left in the chamber.

Identically what is pointed out if the safety catch in old Mark II does not engage properly. But, unlike the American rifle, the Canadian rifle—the Ross rifle—has amended this defective safety action. The English government have a safety action on the old long Lee-Enfield which is absolutely dangerous. And here is the instruction in the new work of the United States government, showing that on the 14th of April last, their safety catch is still absolutely unsafe, whereas as soon as we found any difficulty in the safety catch of the Canadian rifle we amended it, and it is as safe to-day as if the rifle were not loaded. So the only real criticism that was made against the safety of the rifle, so far as the safety catch is concerned, has been exploded. Let me point out that, before the safety catch in the Mark II Canadian rifle could do any harm, the

rifle must be loaded, the safety-catch must be pushed in only half way, the trigger must be pulled so as to disengage the sear, and the safety-catch must then be released again. You must go through all these unlikely performances before an accident can occur in the Canadian rifle. In the American rifle they still have the danger, all must, and do, warn their soldiers against it.

Now, there is another criticism made, honestly made, and one worthy of note, and that is that the sights on the short barrel are so close together that one cannot get proper range in firing. That is known the world over.

But there is a critic of another class to whom I shall refer. He is a gentleman who is after personal preferment, possibly gain of some sort, or, possibly, after the scalp of his neighbour, with no fair justification. This is the class of critic you will sometimes find—whether in this case or not, we shall see later on. Before proceeding further, I desire to give a little history of rifles. And I may say that had this motion presented by the hon. member for Sherbrooke (Mr. Worthington) been couched in somewhat different terms, if it were expressed in a little different tone or by any other man, it might have had some encouragement from me. For, I feel that the Minister of Militia (Sir Frederick Borden) is more or less open to serious condemnation for his apathy—not to apply any harsher term—in trusting, as he has done, in the past, to his ordnance officials to too great an extent. He failed to send out instructions, similar to those I have shown in the American book, as should have been done in the case of an issue of new rifles. At all events, as responsible head of the department, the minister must be held answerable for this. I think the minister should have given more personal supervision to this important matter; he should have made sure that his ordnance officers, of one class and other, knew their business. I do not think they did know their business. I have no desire to injure any man, but I have no hesitation in saying that the gentlemen who have been in charge of these matters have not always been up with their business. I will go so far as to say that many have strong personal animus and may have been endeavouring to kill this rifle. That should not be tolerated by the minister. Had I anything to say about the matter, the head of such an officer would soon drop in the basket. If I saw such work as has been going on here, such confidential reports given away as have been given away, and encouragement given to destructive criticism, drastic action would have been taken; and, if that had been done, the matter would have gone along much more smoothly. I condemn the minister for not giving out instructions when the rifles were issued. He is now issuing these instructions when it is practically needless. He

should have done what was done in the case of the Lee-Enfield. When that rifle was put in the hands of our soldiers, as commander of a regiment, I received positive instructions that the rifles were not to be left in the hands of the soldiers even over night. The rifles were to be placed in the boxes, shipped to the central armoury of the regiment, and taken out by an experienced armourer, and placed in the racks. We had to go to considerable expense, in our regiment, in order to carry out these instructions. Not a man, not even the company armourer was allowed to take out one of these rifles. If anything went wrong with a rifle it was handled as carefully as eggs and sent to the official armourer sergeant. No such instructions as these were sent with the Ross rifle. At once the critics got after the rifle. Instructions were given by the Master General of Ordnance to have all the reports of faults sent to the department. The rifle was torn to pieces, the foresight was taken off, the backsight taken to pieces, the bolts dismounted and not put back properly, and so on. It was no wonder the rifles met with mishap in these minor matters.

Now, in justification of the few changes that have been made in the Ross rifle, I wish to run over some of the changes that have been made in the Lee-Enfield—not to go back to the Enfield, or the Snider, or the Martini, all of which have been official in my own time. Mark I of the Lee-Metford rifle was adopted in December, 1888. If any hon. members are curious to get the full details, I have them here in the official Red Book issued by the British War Office. Then came the Lee-Metford Mark I* which was issued in January, 1892. The Lee-Metford Mark II was issued in April, 1892. The Lee-Metford Mark II* was issued in April, 1895. The Lee-Enfield Mark I, was issued in November, 1895; Lee-Enfield Mark I* in 1898, about the end of the year. These are all long rifles, and all are practically different marks of the long Lee-Enfield. Then came out the short Lee-Enfield. There have been one or two marks of the long Lee-Enfield since. Then there was the Mark I short Lee-Enfield issued in 1903, and there have been two different Marks since then to my knowledge, and I am told, three or four more. That is, in the long and short Lee-Enfield the official arm of the British service, we have ten or twelve distinctive issues and distinctive marks. The changes that have been made in some of these are shown in the official red book. In one change alone, that is from Lee-Metford Mark I* to Lee-Metford Mark II, the first issued in January, 1892, and the second in April, 1892, the changes made in the rifle, as tabulated here, item by item, at pages 314 and 315 of the red book of the British army, are no fewer than one hundred and twenty-five in number.

In other words, in that one change alone

from the Lee-Enfield Mark I star to the Lee-Enfield Mark II, there were more important changes twice over than have taken place in the Ross rifle from start to finish. The history of the Ross rifle is simple. A number of years ago Sir Charles Ross, a young fellow in the old country with more enthusiasm than judgment, to my mind—I refer now to his risking his own financial interests in this rifle—an enthusiastic soldier, invented a straight pull rifle which is practically the same rifle as has been adopted by the Swiss and Austrian governments. We hear a great deal about the splendid service of the Swiss nation, and their rifle is practically the same as was first invented by Sir Charles Ross. I will not go into details of the rifles introduced here, but I will refer to the reports made on the Springfield, Lee-Enfield, and the reports made by the British War Office at Woolwich in connection with the Ross rifle, and show that the Ross rifle compared favourably with any rifle in the experimental stage of its career. Sir Charles Ross carried one of these rifles through the South African war. That rifle is to the front, and it is in splendid preservation, after having served through the South African war, just as the Ross rifles that are in the racks all over the country to-day are in splendid condition, and are ready to take the field at a moment's notice. I may point out here that the highest record for shooting that ever was made by any rifle was made by one of these rifles taken out of the rack in the city of Quebec the other day, taken out by the enemies of the rifle, and handed to a soldier, Lieut. Mortimer. He made with that rifle the magnificent score of 35 aimed shots to the minute, and every one of them hit the target, a thing that never was paralleled in the history of the world. The highest score up to that, I think, was 25 or 27. I think Wallingford made 27 with the Lee-Enfield at one time. But Mortimer hit the target with the Mark II Ross rifle 35 times in one minute, firing Mark II, a score that has never been equalled. He made 34 in a minute with Mark III, when the rifle was on trial for adoption. Now let me give you the result of trials of the rifle for adoption, and if we can see that the Ross rifle has come nearly up to the standard of the test of other rifles, in its experimental stage, surely there is no great disgrace to the Ross rifle, and no great cause of condemnation. I have here the United States report sent me by the Secretary of War, the report for 1901. It speaks of the board having made a test of the new United States rifle, and goes on to say:

Rapidity with accuracy—At the third shot, a cartridge fed from the magazine, one cartridge going into the chamber and one partially out of magazine.

Then it speaks of jamming:

It was noted that the clips were a little weak and bent when the cartridges were be-

ing forced into the magazine. The second and third clips were hard to operate. At the fifth clip there was a delay, due to difficulty of operation, of about 10 seconds. During the firing of the sixth clip a jam occurred. The second cartridge wedged forward, the rim being out of the channel.

Now comes rapidity at will, that is, an unaimed fire from the hip:

Jammed after the second shot, one cartridge partially in chamber and next wedged between upper cartridge and receiver.

That is the rifle which was officially recommended by the board of United States officers for adoption in their service. The first test was repeated on account of the failure.

Cut-off worked out almost entirely.

(a) repeated; cut-off worked out again completely.

(b) Repeated again; first shot caused cut-off to work partially out, allowing bolt to catch cartridge in magazine.

The cut-off was pushed in and another shot fired; this also caused the cut-off to work out.

After another shot, bolt just passed over head of upper cartridge. This was tried twice more, with the same result.

Now we come to the endurance test. Speaking of the firing:

At the first push of the bolt forward two cartridges started to feed forward, the lower cartridge being in advance with head out of guide groove.

During the firing of the second clip, when cartridges were pressed down, the next to the top cartridge clipped forward so that the head of the top cartridge was in rear of the head of the one below it, and when the bolt was pushed forward the two cartridges were carried forward together, causing a jam.

And so on page after page of this book speaks of the jamming and blockading of this American rifle. At the end of the report we find the following:

Conclusion—The board is of the opinion that the arm has successfully passed the test to which it has been subjected, the minor difficulties which were experienced being only what might reasonably be expected in the case of a new gun that had not been previously tested.

There is the official report of the board of the United States government on their splendid new rifle, said to be the best rifle in the world. Next, I come to 1902 where we have another report. In 1903 we come to another official test. On page 11 of the report of the Secretary for War, we find section 26:

As a result of the tests a good many changes were embodied in the arm, the most important of which were the following:

Then come six important changes and several minor changes made two years after it had been officially adopted, but I will not trouble the House by reading them. Now we come on to the test after it had

been perfected for two years, and was found by thousands in the hands of the troops:

First lot of 100 cartridges fired from the magazine; time, 6 minutes. When charging the magazine with two of the clips the cartridges stacked; that is, the second cartridge remained directly above the first, along the right wall of the magazine, and all five cartridges could not be inserted.

Third lot of 100 cartridges fired from the magazine; time, 8 minutes. For the last 50 shots the bottom cartridge could not be fed from the magazine, as it was caught between the rib on the follower and the right wall of the magazine.

Then we find page after page of trials, and page after page showing defects in what is claimed to be the greatest rifle in the world to-day. In 1904 we find in the report of the Secretary of War a description of a change of the rifle, making the twist in grooving one in 10 inches, after various experiments. Coming down to 1905, four years after it had been officially adopted, what do we find there?

Changes made in four important features allowed only 34,000 finished arms to be assembled during the fiscal year.

He goes on to name them, four important changes, with several minor ones made in that year. On page 19 and following pages of the report of the Secretary of War for 1905, and even down to 1906, on page 20, we find this in the official report of the Secretary of War for the United States on this splendid rifle, the greatest in the world, that had been in the hands of the troops for five years:

Reports of the breakages have been received, but no trouble is anticipated from the parts made of the proper material. Other minor defects have also been developed, but corrective measures have been applied, and it is believed that the new musket will go into the service practically perfected.

Here is the report of the government of the United States and here is the line of conduct pursued by patriotic men in that country. They all settle together as to what changes should be made in the rifle, they agree as to the defects, and having determined these defects, they are properly remedied. They are laid before the board and they are remedied, but there are no pyrotechnics, no efforts to blast men's reputations or to drive men out of public life and no attempt to make political capital out of a question of this kind. In the report of 1907 what do we find?

The minor defects mentioned in my report of a year since have been overcome, and, with the exception of the weapons in the hands of the troops, the greater part have been re-chambered for the model of 1906 ammunition.

So that they had to re-chamber every rifle that they issued in order to meet the requirements of the service in that country.

That, Sir, is the record of the United States rifle. What is the record of the Canadian rifle? Mark I was issued; certain improvements were made in it. Mark II was issued. Certain changes were made from Mark I to Mark II which did not turn out to be very advantageous. These were changed back again from Mark II to Mark III. The old lever backsight has been abandoned and a return has been made to the form presented in old Mark I. The thread attaching the barrel to the receiver in Mark II has been abandoned and a return made to the thread in the old Mark I. This is the Whitworth thread. When Sir Charles Ross presented his rifle to the committee it had a double trigger action, it had a gathering pull and a final pull. That was in the rifle which he presented for adoption. We have abandoned the single pull and returned to the double trigger pull as presented in the original rifle. We have also returned to the long barrel so that it may be better adapted for shooting purposes. We have also done what the United States people have not yet been able to do and what the English people have not yet been able to do; we have an absolutely perfect safety catch which acts the moment the sear is released from the cocking piece bent and insures its safe reengagement. There are some small changes, such as screws, bands and swivel straps, which are of no account. Last year, in my address to this House, I went with considerable detail into the difference between the Ross rifle and the Lee-Enfield rifle. I do not know that it is necessary at this time to repeat that comparison. There are important differences but they are involved in the one great principle of the straight pull. That is only two motions, in loading and firing, simply pulling the bolt back and pressing it forward again, as against four motions in what we call the lever or rotary motion rifles. The two nations that use straight pull rifles are the Austrian and Swiss nations. The other nations largely use the rotary motion. Fault was found by the hon. member for Sherbrooke yesterday with regard to the report of the United States government on the Ross rifle test at Springfield. I think I have made it absolutely clear that the report upon that rifle is satisfactory, taking into consideration the report of the same committee upon their own rifle. There have been fewer changes made in the Ross rifle since that date than in the American rifle. I have known a number of gentlemen high up in the Ordnance Department of the United States and had they not adapted, two years before, Sir Charles Ross appeared before them, the new Springfield rifle, the chances are a thousand to one that the United States government would have adopted the principle of the Ross rifle for their national arm.

I now come to the question of long and

short rifles. The question of the backsight is the crux of the whole situation and the cause of the whole dissatisfaction with the Ross rifle. There is, I am free to say, in the lever backsight, an abominable sight to the Ross rifle. No man can make good scores consecutively with it. The sight will jump four or five degrees when the recoil comes. With the lever sight there is a straight reaction and a shock which frequently jars the springs holding the sight in its position and a change of three or four degrees would make a difference of 200 or 300 yards in the sighting of the rifle. The South African war was responsible for the fad of the lever or Dutch pattern sight. After the South African war the British government changed to the short barrel, adopting what they call the Dutch pattern sight and discarding the bayonet. But, they have got over that. We have seen the effect of the short barrel. The Russo-Japanese war showed the effect of the long barrel on accurate shooting. They found out that the short rifle was no good for accurate shooting. In all the matches held in England last year, at Bisley and everywhere else, there was not one short rifle in use, and in the great matches of the United States last year there was not one short United States rifle in use, although the new United States rifle has an initial velocity of 2,700 feet to the second and in that way it is supposed to overcome the defect of the short barrel. The Lee-Enfield barrel (short) is twenty-five inches long, the American rifle is twenty-four inches long and the Ross short rifle twenty-eight inches long, a little longer than either and, to that extent, better adapted for good shooting. That it has been successful in making a good shooting rifle I might refer to the fact that last year in Toronto Mr. Mortimer took the first prize in the aggregate matches even with the old lever sight, and I might also state that at the Ottawa ranges Ommansden and Wallingford, the two noted English riflemen, made most magnificent scores. Ommansden named his shot every time but he did not have the lever backsight on. He had the Sutherland sight. He named every shot. He said: I am going to make a bull at such and such a spot and he fired and made the bull. He hit the target in every instance at the exact spot that he had named. But, he admitted that holding the short barrel is much harder on the men. It calls for the exercise of much greater physical force to hold the short barrel down to position than if it were a more substantial and steadier barrel. There is a return in Mark III to the long rifle, first, on account of the accuracy of shooting, second, it is better adapted for the bayonet, and third, it has been shown that the important feature of warfare is no longer masses of men and troops but that the result depends largely on accurate

shooting. In warfare to-day the effort is made to fire at individual men when one sees them. You rarely ever get a chance to fire at large masses of men. The great advantage of a rifle of this kind is that a sharpshooter can get his position and pick the gunners off the guns as far as they can be seen, and they can do it at 3,000 yards without much trouble.

We have, therefore, decided to return to the use of the long barrel. One was sent to British Columbia and it has given great satisfaction. I have letters and telegrams from various parts of the Northwest urging that the long barrel, Mark III, be rushed through immediately so that it can be used at Bisley and in the rifle matches this year. One of the highest scores ever made in Canada was made last Saturday at the Ottawa ranges, Mortimer scoring 102. Major Sutherland in the first shot made 97, and Major Hutcheson firing over the ranges first time of firing made 96 out of 105. It may be asked what use is this fast shooting? I will tell you. The rule in warfare as regards the rifle is that you want to get the maximum of energy with the minimum of time and the maximum of effectiveness. The Ross rifle in the hands of Mortimer at Quebec a few weeks ago—when this white-washing expedition was sent down there according to the member for Sherbrooke—was subjected to a public trial and the public trial was made because the 'Star' and its satellites in Montreal would have described it as a hole and corner affair if the test had been private. The famous man of the Montreal 'Star' stood there with his mouth wide open as if it were stretched when he saw four shells in the air at a time when the Ross rifle was being fired. Mortimer has made his record several times with a Ross rifle and he made it with this despised Mark II taken out of the rack there, and that record is 35 per minute aimed fire. The record of the Lee-Enfield with Wallingford, the most famous shot in the British empire, is 27, and the record of the United States rifle was 24, and this year it is 25. Here is the contrast: Ross rifle, 35 per minute aim fire; Lee-Enfield, 27 per minute aim fire; United States rifle, 25 per minute aim fire. Then, firing at random, at the enemy in the dark for instance; from the hip or the side unaimed fire. The United States rifle has gone as high as 35 to the minute; the English rifle, I believe, has never exceeded 27, while the Ross rifle has gone as high as 50 to the minute unaimed fire, showing that in every respect the Ross rifle is infinitely superior in its rapidity of fire. At Quebec the Ross rifle fired 150 rounds, made 147 hits, 34 of which were bullseyes and all the rest close around the bull, in five minutes and one second, and they started with the magazine empty. That has never been approached in rifle shooting before.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. What is the meaning of the magazine being empty?

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. If a man starts with the magazine full he has five shots advantage, and with the magazine empty he has to put in five shots or ten, as the case may be, to get ready to fire. I understand that the English and American records were made with the magazine loaded. I thought the British and United States tests were conducted with the magazine starting empty and accordingly we tested the Ross rifle with the magazine empty, but I have since found that the British and American tests were with the magazines full, which would have made a few points more in favour of the Ross rifle in the comparison. However, we need not bother about that, as the record of the Ross rifle is pretty good as it is. Another record is that a Ross rifle fired 300 shots recently at Quebec and made 294 hits, aim fire, at target, 101 being bullseyes, and that was done in 14 minutes and 11 seconds, a record which no two rifles together have ever approached before in the world, and half of them were single-fire.

Mr R. L. BORDEN. What range?

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. Close range. The supposition is that the enemy is rushing at close range and that was the object of the test. If an enemy should rush at close range then the effectiveness of a rifle is as to how many shots you can pump into the enemy when he is approaching you in the rush which commences from 50 to 100 yards. That is where the effectiveness of the magazine rifle comes in, or otherwise a single rifle would be just as good as any.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. What was the time?

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. 150 rounds, 147 hits, 34 bulls, in five minutes and one second, starting with the magazine empty. Then there were 300 rounds fired, 294 hits, 101 bulls in fourteen minutes and eleven seconds. The records of any two rifles in the world put together have never come up to that. The advantage of the Ross magazine is its great rapidity. The Ross magazine differs materially from any other magazine rifle. There are what may be called two types of magazine rifles, the clip and charger loader and the single cartridge loader. The cartridges are all placed in an iron fixture called a clip, and are put into the rifle and are fired shot after shot. The charger type slides them all into the magazine at once. The second class, or slow loader, places cartridge after cartridge in the magazine. One class is a quick loader and the other a slow loader, as in the British rifle where you load shot by shot. The Ross rifle differs from both in that by a lifter piece worked by the left hand you can depress the bed of the magazine and catch the cartridges all loose,

throwing them into the rifle, and by working the fingers on this lifter piece a couple times the cartridges are all placed in position so that it is not possible to have it jam. When the Ross rifle jams it is owing to the fact that the soldier is not sufficiently trained in the use of this lifter piece. I will explain how the jam occurs in the rifle. In the British and Canadian cartridges there is what is called the head of the cartridge, where the end of the cartridge projects out beyond the side. In the Mauser rifle the cartridges have not this projection. When the top cartridge head comes behind the head of the second cartridge and is shifted forward by the bolt, it pulls the lower cartridge with it. That often occurs. It occurred in the Lee-Enfield firing there, but I have not given the figures for it because the men who fired the Lee-Enfield at Quebec were experts only in the sense of ordinary listed men and not in the same class with Wallingford and Ormandsen, who made the records in the British army. Therefore, in fairness to these men I am taking the standard rifle record made with the British rifle by these experts. When a jam occurs with a Ross rifle the only way it can occur is because the soldier did not arrange the lifter piece properly. Mortimer fired 300 rounds with the Ross rifle and there was no jam at all. Now, I want to call the attention of the Minister of Militia to this: There was Sergeant O'Brien, one of his own men with his musketry instructor certificate, and he had never been instructed in the proper use of the working of that finger piece until he fired in Quebec at the experimental tests. He did not understand the working of it and he got confused, and yet that man is a splendid fellow and I am told one of the best musketry instructors in Canada. The minister should see that his instructors all over the country are trained in the use of the finger piece, so that soldiers under them will have some chance to know the strong point of the rifle. I need not deal with the magazine further than to say it is well known that the Ross rifle has the most rapid magazine of any rifle. It is easy of manipulation and it is very useful in night attacks. I have on other occasions made a comparison of the Ross rifle and the Lee-Enfield.

Our good friend the member for Sherbrooke assumed an entirely different tone this year from that of his last year's speech. I do not know the reason of that. Possibly he has had uphill work all over the country: for I know that the best men in the militia service to-day stand by the Ross rifle and are going to stand by it without any doubt whatever. Last year he had an air of confidence and assurance, and I may take the liberty of looking for a motive for his action. We knew that there were certain minor defects in the Ross rifle, and that

these defects were being remedied, just as our friends in the United States have been remedying the defects in their rifle. Let me point out the defects in the United States magazine rifle, which is famous as the most perfect rifle in the world. The official book No. 1923 'description and rules for the management of the United States magazine rifle,' issued on the 4th of February 1908, at page 41 mentions the parts which are most liable to require repairs. These are the bolt-stop, the cocking-piece, the lower band swivel and screw, the safety-lock, the stacking swivel and screw, the stock and the striker. It speaks of the stock being broken at the small of the butt. In the whole history of the Ross rifle there have been only two rifles broken at the small of the butt, and these were broken maliciously. There have been only two rifle stocks broken along the barrels; and when the men who broke them were brought before the committee and stated that they were broken by a fall, they were laughed at. Then this United States report goes on to tell how to replace broken parts, mentioning the butt-plate, cap-pin, the front sight, the lower band swivel screw, the stacking swivel screw, the trigger pin. These are not fatal injuries. It then goes on to point out the injuries that do not render the parts unserviceable. These are: the bolt, the butt, the plate, the butt swivel, the cocking piece, the extractor, the floor plate, the guard. With regard to the bolt it says:

The entire flange at front end may be broken off, except a small portion on the opposite side from the extractor hook which is required to hold in connection with the extractor hook the empty case while it is being drawn to the rear for ejection. If automatic ejection be not considered, the entire flange may be dispensed with.

Then it says:

The parts not essential, or only so to a degree, are the ejector, safety lock, cut-off, bolt stop, sleeve lock, floor plate, magazine spring and follower.

It goes on further to say:

Complaints have not infrequently been received that a main-spring was too weak to perform its office, when the fault rested with the soldier, who in sighting inadvertently raised the bolt handle with his hand before pulling the trigger, and thus caused the force of the spring to be expended in closing the bolt, instead of in exploding the cartridge.

All cams and bearings should be kept slightly oiled to prevent wear.

When firing many successive rounds care must be taken that unburned grains of powder do not collect and pack in the locking lug recesses of the receiver, as this will interfere with the perfect closing of the bolt. Such accumulations can be blown out from time to time, or, when packed, removed by a knife or the screw-driver.

If we had to do this with the Ross rifle, there would have been a rebellion in the

country long ago. This book goes on to say:

Except when repairs are needed, the following parts will constantly be injured if allowed to be dismantled by the soldier for cleaning; and when repairs are necessary, they should be removed only by a company artificer, or some one familiar with the handling of tools and delicate mechanisms, viz.: bolt stop, cut-off, safety lock, sleeve lock, front sight, lower band and stacking swivel screws.

From start to finish the book gives details of breaks and smashes which are liable to occur in the Yankee rifle, which is regarded as the most perfect rifle in the world to-day. I have already indicated from this official book more defects in that rifle than are recorded in all this bundle of so-called expert reports on the Ross rifle. How are these reports furnished? The master general of ordnance issues to the various officers in the country an order for reports, and the officers pass on the order to the privates and tell them to point out all the defects they can find in the Ross rifle—a condition of affairs that is not to be found in any other country in the world. Most of these reports are reports of privates to their subaltern officers, and from the subaltern officers to seniors; and when the seniors were brought before the committee last year, one after another said: 'I know nothing about the rifle; I am only going by the reports made to me.' What are these reports? They refer only to the class of defects regarded by the Americans as trivial.

Now, Sir, the reason I have been so persistent in following this matter up is this. I could not conceive it possible that any man could start an agitation on so little data, and I have looked for the motive at the bottom of it all. What have we found? Mr. Nesbitt, before the committee on Public Accounts, made a solemn declaration that he had been approached years ago by representatives of the leading manufacturing firms in England who tried to show him the utter impossibility of conducting a manufacturing establishment like this in Canada, and that we must buy our rifles from the English factories or let them take this factory over. Other attempts are known to have been made on experts in rifle matters, in order to chloroform them to discard the Ross rifle and to bring pressure on the Minister of Militia to induce him to adopt the Lee-Enfield.

These efforts were made from time to time and in various ways. I might point out, in connection with so many of the defects discovered in the rifle, that it was rather strange how many came to the light in Halifax; and just about the time the news could be spread from town to town, the agitation against the rifle began all over the country. It was pointed out yesterday that

the hon. member for Sherbrooke (Mr. Worthington) was six months behind the General of Ordnance in pointing out the defects, but evidently they had been looking for someone to lead the agitation. I want to point out another matter. I did not learn this from the Minister of Militia nor did I ever ask him about it, but I ask him now whether the request was ever made to him, or whether a letter was ever obtained from him by a representative of a British rifle company, to the effect that in case the Ross Company chose to go out of business, the conditions of the contract with that company would be continued? Was the hon. minister ever asked to give such a letter or did he ever give such a letter or was he ever interviewed by any gentleman representing a rifle company in England in connection with this matter?

Sir FREDERICK BORDEN. I have no recollection of ever having given any such letter, but I have no objection to say that I was asked on one or two occasions whether, in the event of the Ross Company withdrawing from business and some other company purchasing it, the government would be prepared to continue the contract with the purchasers. I said that of course that would depend on who the successors were, but I could see no difficulty, if the new company were capable of carrying on the business, as the only object of the government was to have its business properly done.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. I never asked the Minister of Militia that question before, but I received my data from across the water. I was told that it was done by a gentleman who is supposed to have influence.

Mr. WORTHINGTON. I presume the hon. gentleman is referring to me. Might I ask him if he is?

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. I referred to 'a gentleman who is supposed to have influence,' and not to the hon. member for Sherbrooke.

Mr. WORTHINGTON. I am asking the hon. gentleman to reply. Let him either put up or shut up.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. I do not know that I am called on to do either. I do not know that I need reply to a gentleman who has been hawking around the department, showing the commercial instinct as strong as he has been showing it. He referred to commercial interests yesterday, but he himself is a man who has shown a very keen sense of commercial interest by hawking after the Minister of Militia and others for appointment from time to time. Since he speaks of commercial interests, I think it only fair to myself that I should say I had the honour of being offered the highest military positions from the Conservative party in days gone by and that I refused. I was offered the Deputy Ministership of Militia and the Adjutant Generalship of Canada,

and I never had to hawk after these positions.

Sir FREDERICK BORDEN. I think I ought to say that the hon. member for Sherbrooke (Mr. Worthington) is not the gentleman to whom I referred. He never discussed with me the question as to the successor to the Ross Rifle Company.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. Oh, no, the agent has a much greater man. I might as well be frank and say I understood it was a gentleman from Montreal, a multi-millionaire, the representative of the Vickers-Maxim Small Arms Company. I got word from across the water that that was done.

Mr. FOWLER. By cable ?

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. It came at all events. When this notice was put on the paper a year ago, I looked for a motive. I thought it very strange that an officer who had served with me in South Africa, fighting the battles of the empire, under the same commander, should not have come and spoken to me on the subject.

Mr. WORTHINGTON. What have you got to do about it ?

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. I am just coming to that. It was strange that a gentleman, a member of the great Conservative party, following the same noble leader, would not have come to me and said something to me about it. Now I come to what I have got to do about it. Soon after the notice was put on the paper last year, the hon. member for Beauharnois (Mr. Bergeron) notified me that Dr. Worthington had something terrible against me. He is going to expose you, said Mr. Bergeron, and your grafting in connection with the Ross rifle. And he asked : Is it not possible for you to pay back the money ?

Mr. WORTHINGTON. I thought you knew Bergeron better than that.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. What right had any member of the Conservative party to hint about graft ?

Mr. FOSTER. You are hinting at it.

Mr. SAM. HUGHES. I am meeting charges made. It was insidiously whispered in the saloon and the back lanes that the member for Sherbrooke (Mr. Worthington) was going to drive me from public life. The hon. gentleman's friends said: Sam. Hughes is to be exposed in graft and driven from public life. That is why the matter was fought to a finish by me in the Public Accounts Committee and the hon. gentleman and his friends driven to the wall every time. And whenever he raises his voice against the Ross rifle, he will be driven into a corner. He should have known that I could not be so easily stampeded. He was within seeing distance on more than one occasion—but perhaps he was not in a

position to see much—when better men than he failed to stampede your humble servant. He should have known therefore that one such as he could not stampede me. He saw that in another land than this. It will take a much better and bolder man than the hon. gentleman to stampede your humble servant. He has failed in his agitation. He has failed most signally. I have telegrams from different parts of the country demanding that the Mark III Ross rifle be placed in the hands of our militia for shooting this year. I take this opportunity of urging on the minister all due diligence in placing that rifle—which is now perfected as nearly as possible—in the hands of our soldiers. I have no doubt that the rifle is still open to improvement. No doubt there is still some slight imperfection. There is now—I would not call it a defect—but a very slight imperfection, but the material at hand did not allow of our making the improvement. In the next issue however that improvement will be absolutely carried out, and we shall have a rifle the most perfect and complete in the world.

I shall not refer to defects further than to say this. I have been told by militia officers that the reason that they have been against the rifle was the reports furnished them by gentlemen in connection with the government at Ottawa. I shall not refer in detail to the accidents supposed to have taken place at St. John, Eastman and Lethbridge. At St. John the accident was a trifling affair. The cocking piece and a small spring had flown back and struck the man in the face. The rifle was not rendered unserviceable but was perfectly serviceable the moment the spring was put in place again. The Eastman rifle had been tampered with. The sear had been tampered with and the bolt dismounted, the retaining washer had been left out in putting the parts in place again. Evidently whoever took the parts out was, like the boy with a watch, unable to put them back into their proper places, and to this the accident was due. It was not due to any defect in the arm itself. But it is very strange that the accident should have occurred in a locality so convenient to the hon. member for Sherbrooke (Mr. Worthington). The hon. member referred to my reports of the Springfield tests. All that I have to say is that I have read to the House the reports of the Springfield tests of the American rifle, and I leave the House and the country to judge whether the Lee-Enfield is worse than the Ross rifle at Springfield. In both cases defects have been developed.

I shall not take up time discussing at length the cost of the rifle. On that subject, I have but a few words to say. I have the report of the British War Office showing that their rifles, in the preliminary stages, were paid for at the rate of £5 5s. and £5 18s. for others. This would repre-

sent a cost of upwards of \$30 for the rifle in Canada, or \$5 more than the Ross rifle costs to-day. I might point out that as late as 1904, the new short rifle was put into the hands of the soldiers in Great Britain at a cost of £4 11s. 4½d., which would represent a cost of at least \$23 in this country.

My good friend from Sherbrooke yesterday, as one gentleman remarked, had nothing to say and said it very badly. So far as the hon. member for East Hastings (Mr. Northrup) is concerned, he also had nothing to say, but he said it very well. He made the best of a bad job. I was sleeping most of the time, but I understood that the part of his speech that I did not hear very distinctly was also very good. I would like to correct him in one point, however. He spoke of the Ross rifle being tested with forty grains of cordite giving an explosive force of twenty-two tons. I think he will find that nearer to thirty or thirty-five tons. But that is a matter of detail which does not greatly concern us here.

I may point out that the Ross rifle has been in the hands of the soldiers of this country for some time and that over 50,000 of them have been issued. No rifle ever issued to troops has been subject to the criticism, the adverse, interested criticism, to which the Ross rifle has been subjected. And yet, Sir, it stands before the country to-day the peer of any short rifle in existence. The long Ross rifle is but recently out, only a few having been issued, but, so far as issued, they are meeting with favour on every hand. The slight defects, if you may call them defects, that were found to exist in Mark II are already overcome in that rifle. These defects I pointed out in the short barrel, the light barrel and the imperfect safety catch. I have already pointed out that, in the American rifle, they have an unsafe safety catch, whereas in Mark III Ross rifle we have overcome that difficulty absolutely and have an absolutely safe safety-catch. We have also introduced a few minor improvements, such as strong trigger guard and double trigger action. The old trigger action in Mark I is the best. It is the one we wanted from the beginning, but we could not get it adopted. But now we are getting into line with other nations and adopting it. We might have been the first to use it. With these improvements, Mark III rifle stands unsurpassed, unequalled, in the world to-day.

I have been charged further with toadying to the Minister of Militia and toadying to the Liberal party. One gentleman makes it a cause of criticism that I cross the floor of the House and actually sit down and talk to hon. gentlemen on the other side. Well, I have seen my leader (Mr. R. L. Borden) do that. I have even seen the hon. member for North Toronto (Mr. Foster) do that. And for myself, I may say that, when I want to talk to a gentle-

man, I am not afraid to talk to him in daylight. I do not go sneaking around the departments; I do not condemn a fellow member for walking across the floor and talking to a minister on business or on any subject. So, I do not accept censure from the very men in the Tory party, some of whom are accustomed to go to the departments of this government, sneaking round, asking favours and appointments—and getting them. Some of these are among the men who are attacking me in connection with this Ross rifle. I am not afraid to let the world know what I am doing. I have never found it advantageous to play the hypocrite. I am not under any obligation to the Prime Minister (Sir Wilfrid Laurier), the Minister of Militia (Sir Frederick Borden) or the whole Liberal party. I have treated them as gentlemen, but when they have gone astray I have not hesitated to let them feel the weight—whatever it might be, heavy or light—of my indignation. I have been a loyal follower, so far as I could be, of the leader of the opposition; and so long as the Conservative party takes a straight line I will follow it. But, as I have said, I owe no allegiance to any man that affects my allegiance to my own conscience. So, when the Conservative party departs from the course of right as they have done in this case, as they did on the Yukon question, and as they did on the Manitoba school question, I will not follow it. I owe allegiance to my own conscience first and to my constituents second. I am not afraid to stand on my record. And, should I choose to come back to parliament, after the next election, you will find the electors of Victoria and Halliburton will not hesitate to back up your humble servant. I do not know whether the hon. member for Sherbrooke will be able to say as much regarding his constituency. At all events, I will be able to look the hon. member for Sherbrooke, or his constituency, or my own constituency of Victoria and Haliburton in the face, without fear that it can ever be shown that I have played the sneak, trying to track down, or injure or ruin the reputation of a fellow member. If any member wished to attack me, he should have been loyal enough to come to me. He should have come and said to me: I understand you have been caught grafting and I have the data here against you; prepare to defend yourself and get out of it as well as you can. But I had to learn from the hon. member for Beauharnois (Mr. Bergeron) of the complaints that the hon. member was bringing this year and last year. I reasoned with the hon. member for Beauharnois. For weeks after, I could not convince him that I was not in it up to the neck. I explain this to show why I was so persistent in fighting this matter out in the Public Accounts Committee last year and this year, and why I propose fighting it out to the bitter end.