

Sir FREDERICK BORDEN: I will not detain the Conference by going into detail. I have read the paper proposed by the Army Council for discussion, and so far as a layman is able to express an opinion, it seems to me to be an admirable paper and one in which I thoroughly concur. There are, however, one or two points which I would like to mention, and one is in connection with the very first paragraph, where it is laid down that the fundamental principle of the maintenance of the Empire rests primarily on supremacy at sea. We must agree in that view, and in that connection I would like to submit the advisability—the necessity, perhaps—for the establishment in the different Dominions of factories, which will be able to manufacture arms, for instance, and guns and ammunition, and so on, which would render those communities safer in the event of the misfortune occurring of the sea control being temporarily lost. I noticed in one of the other papers submitted some reference to the necessity for having the different parts of the Empire—the forces of the different parts of the Empire—armed with the same weapon, or at any rate with a weapon using the same ammunition. In Canada we have encouraged the establishment of a rifle factory, which produces rifles firing .303 ammunition, although the rifle differs somewhat in mechanism. I would like to say here that I did my best to induce one of the factories in England to establish a branch in Canada some years ago to manufacture the Lee-Enfield rifle, but failed. I had to do the next best thing, that is to get someone who was willing to establish a factory, and that has been done, and we hope, although there has been some difficulty, that a very good rifle will be issued, and, in fact, it is now being issued to the troops. It seems to me, although nothing has been said about that in this very important paper, that that is a matter worth bringing to the attention of this Conference, and that encouragement should be given to the different Colonies to bring about the establishment not only of small arms factories but of factories which would manufacture ordnance as well.

With regard to one other matter which, as Mr. Haldane said, is a matter of minor importance, that of purchasing through the War Office such military stores as may be required, in the very connection which I have just mentioned I would like to say that in 1900 Canada wanted to purchase a considerable number of rifles here. I think I wanted to purchase 15,000 rifles. I found it impossible to secure a single rifle. After a time I was offered some 5,000 if I would wait long enough. That is a condition of things which may arise—we hope it will not—at any moment, and that is another argument in favour of having an independent source of supply within the Dominions themselves. It is also a reason why we should not be tied up absolutely to purchase either from the War Office or through the War Office. I agree that so far as possible it should be done. I agree absolutely that we should purchase the same types of guns, and guns that will use the same ammunition. So far as Canada is concerned, we made a contract some years ago with Vickers, Sons, and Maxim for the new artillery gun, and I believe the first delivery of those guns was made to Canada, but we were very careful to impose the condition that the guns must be in every detail first accepted by the War Office, and that the price we should pay should be the price paid by the War Office. I cannot see that there is any disagreeable competition in that. It has been suggested—perhaps not in those papers—that we are competing really with the War Office in giving an order of that kind. There can be no competition when we lay down as a very first principle that the price is to be the War Office price, and also that the gun shall be precisely the same gun. Those are perhaps matters of detail, but I thought it only fair that I should make a statement as to what has actually happened in that respect.

Now, in conclusion, I have only to say that I am sure there is, so far as the Canadian people, and so far as the Canadian Militia are concerned—and

Fourth Day.
20 April 1907.

MILITARY
DEFENCE.