

There are others here not under my disability—for instance, Mr. Brodeur, who represents the Naval Department of Canada, but so far as I am concerned I wish time for further consideration.

Let me, however, by way of addition mention one matter which arose out of the address of your colleague, the Secretary of State for War, affecting the possibilities of the development of local supplies of ammunition within the Commonwealth. These are a necessity in most States, but of far greater urgency in Australia than elsewhere. We desire to see established cordite and ammunition factories which should be sufficient for our own wants. These wants in time of peace are necessarily very small, while in time of war, with the possibility of interruption of communications, they would be very large. Our difficulty, therefore, is to face the cost of establishing or subsidising factories for the manufacture of this ammunition within our own borders, because of that enormous difference between the regular demand upon the factories and their machinery and the extraordinary demand for which they ought to be equipped to some extent. Possibly in the matter of cordite ammunition for small arms, we do not see much difficulty. We think we can establish a factory which would meet our wants fully in peace, and reasonably in war, keeping reserves always in hand. But if we could enlarge the scope so as to supply the squadron or squadrons in our seas with, at all events, part of the ammunition and the cordite they require, that would enable us to conduct that factory on a much larger scale. It is not a desire to make a profit out of supplying the naval wants, but simply to keep the factory going on a greater scale, and enlarge its capacity so that it might be less inadequate in time of war. Of course we recognise the great difficulty in the testing of this cordite, which is now very elaborately carried out with a great number of guns of different types. It is necessary to test the cordite for a gun of a particular type in a gun of that type, but as it happens, at the present time that need not be an insuperable objection, because we have quite a variety of guns in Australia, many more types than we ought to have had, since they have not conferred upon us that defensive strength which we should have enjoyed if we had been limited to a few types. Opinions have varied in the Admiralty and War Office, as they must vary from time to time, and we have had the full effect of the variations. However, under the circumstances, the report of the Committee of Imperial Defence advises us to lay aside quite a number of these guns, and they are of the same types, or sufficiently near to the types of guns, which we would require for testing purposes. Now, until those guns are worn out—and then the question of supplying them might be a more serious matter—they would perhaps suffice for the application of tests. We would be able at least to commence with them. I am not pressing for an answer to-day. I have expressed already my inability to cope off-hand with the great questions you have raised, without more time for consideration. Nor would I ask for a reply on this point until we have told you what we can offer. In making this proposition for the supply of ammunition we do not expect that the Imperial Navy should accept from us cordite or any other supplies any less efficiently tested than they are here. We accept that.

Lord TWEEDMOUTH: It would be absolutely necessary that we should test the cordite in the most effective manner.

Mr. DEAKIN: Absolutely necessary.

Lord TWEEDMOUTH: There is another thing to be remembered, that as far as our knowledge at present goes of cordite, or a large class of cordite at any rate, provided it is kept at a low temperature under 60 degrees its life is very long—certainly 60 or 70 years—whereas when it is long affected by a high temperature it goes bad.

Fifth Day.
23 April 1907.

NAVAL DEFENCE.
(Mr. Deakin.)