

Brought up by

Senator Keating

C. R. Boydell

27-5-15

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

1 9 1 5



PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

R E P O R T

relating to the proposed Increase of Output
of the

SMALL ARMS FACTORY, LITHGOW.

Members
of the

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works.

First Committee

Edward Riley, Esquire, M.P., Chairman.

Senate

Senator the Honorable
John Henry Keating
Senator Patrick Joseph Lynch,
Vice-Chairman,
Senator William Harrison Story

House of Representatives

James Edward Fenton, Esquire, M.P.
William Hyfe Finlayson, Esquire, M.P.
The Honorable Henry Gregory, M.P.
Sydney Sampson, Esquire, M.P.
William Henry Laird Smith, Esquire, M.P.

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

SMALL ARMS FACTORY, LITHGOW.

Proposed Increase of Output.

R E P O R T

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works to which the House of Representatives referred for consideration and report the question of the extension of buildings, plant, etc., Small Arms Factory, Lithgow, has the honor to report as follows:-

When the motion was passed in the House of Representatives special emphasis was laid on the fact that the matter should be dealt with as one of urgency. The reason advanced was that the Government desired to obtain at the earliest possible moment a larger output of rifles per month than is now being turned out by the factory.

2. At an early stage of its inquiries it was apparent to the Committee that any extension of the present factory would not have the effect of increasing the output of rifles for the next 18 months or two years, and being aware of the Government's wish to accelerate that output the Committee resolved to concentrate its attention

for the present on that most vital question and embody its decision in a report to Parliament on the question of the increased output pending the issue of a second report on the general question referred to it by the House of Representatives.

3. Eliminating the question of extending the factory which could not be effected in much less than 18 months and also the question of crowding into the present building further machinery, which, if ordered now, could not be received and erected for some considerable time, the only reasonable way of increasing the output is by getting more work out of the machinery at present in the factory.

4. The machines are at present working 12 hours per day, or 4 hours longer per day than the ordinary 8 hour shift. It would not be practicable or advisable to extend the hours of overtime at present worked by the men, and the alternative which naturally suggests itself is to work a second shift.

5. This course is beset by three main difficulties as it involves obtaining -

- (a) more material,
- (b) more men, and
- (c) housing accommodation for the additional men employed.

6. The Committee directed its attention to a consideration of these difficulties and is confident that they can all be overcome.

7. In regard to (a) it was ascertained in evidence that the factory has sufficient steel in hand and on the water to enable it to double its output for twelve months without exhausting its stock, by which time the agents who supply the steel are sanguine that further supplies can be obtained.

8. There has been some difficulty in obtaining adequate supplies of suitable timber for rifle stocks, but the Committee learned that a sufficient supply can be obtained from the Department of Home Affairs (by drawing of certain timber which was laid down for seasoning for other purposes), and from outside sources.

9. In regard to (b) it was given in evidence that large numbers of applications for employment have been received by the management of the factory, and the Committee does not anticipate any great difficulty in obtaining as many men as are required to form a second shift - bearing in mind that trained men could be obtained from amongst the number at present employed to take the positions of foremen and section hands; remembering also that the State Governments in conference have

have offered to place at the disposal of the Commonwealth skilled State employees if so desired. In connection with this matter it might be mentioned that the President of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, Lithgow Branch, who is an employee of the factory, has given an assurance on behalf of himself and the members of his society that recognising the national importance of this matter the men are ready to exert every effort to assist the management in every way possible.

10. In regard to (a) a difficulty arises which can only be overcome immediately by the co-operation of the townspeople of Lithgow.

11. The factory at present employs about 480 hands, and if a double shift be instituted, it would not be possible to obtain all the requisite labour locally so that anything up to 200 or 250 hands would have to be brought to Lithgow from elsewhere.

12. There are not sufficient vacant houses in Lithgow to accommodate this number, but the Committee was assured by the Mayor of the town ^{by} and the proprietor of the "Lithgow Mercury" that the townspeople would exert themselves to the extent of arranging accommodation for the newcomers.

13. The initiation of a second shift would
necessarily

(5)

necessarily require a good deal of additional supervision and a certain amount of training of the new men employed so that possibly an immediate increase in the output would not be apparent. The Committee is of opinion, however, that within a reasonable time of commencing the second shift the factory should be turning out at least 70 per cent more rifles than are being turned out at the present time.

14. The Committee therefore recommends that arrangements be made forthwith for the starting of a second shift.

Edward Riley

C h a i r m a n.

Office of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works,
120 King Street,
Melbourne, 27th May, 1915.