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Senator Lynch.
C. D. Reynolds
17-6-15.



PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

P A P E R S
to be laid on the Table of the
S E N A T E .

R E P O R T
relating to the proposed Increase of Plant
at the
SMALL ARMS FACTORY, LITHGOW.

1915.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

R E P O R T

relating to the proposed Increase of Plant
at 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 Fyfe Finlayson, Esquire, M.P.
The Honorable Henry Gregory, M.P.
Sydney Sampson, Esquire, M.P.
William Henry Laird Smith, Esquire, M.P.

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PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

SMALL ARMS FACTORY, LITHGOW.

Proposed Increase of Plant.

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:-

1. The question as a whole is receiving the careful attention of the Committee, and a number of witnesses has been called to give evidence on the various points requiring consideration.

2. In view, however, of an intimation received from the Minister of Defence that it is of urgent importance to his Department that a decision should be arrived at as early as possible as to whether further machinery is to be obtained for the Factory so that the necessary orders may be placed forthwith, the Committee has decided to communicate to Parliament its decision in regard to machinery, pending further consideration of the question of the site and buildings respecting

which the evidence is not yet complete.

Existing Plant.

3. The plant at present installed in the Small Arms Factory at Lithgow was obtained by the Commonwealth Government from the Pratt and Whitney Company of Hartford, Connecticut, U.S.A., under an agreement that the machinery supplied was to be capable of manufacturing at the rate of fifty (50) M.L.-E. short rifles of the latest approved War Office pattern, with sword bayonets and scabbards complete, per working day of eight (8) hours, when operated by 144 unskilled and not more than two skilled Australian workmen who were to be instructed by the Contractor free of cost to the Commonwealth. This staff to include all labor other than that required for supervision, clerical duties, tool room staff, engine and boiler tending, and shop labouring.

4. In addition, or as part of, the complete plant the tender included the cost of -

- (a) A complete tool-room equipment of precision machinery for reproducing the gauges, tools and milling cutters, repairing the machines and appliances, and grinding the cutters and tools. The number and type of the tool-room machines, etc., were to be specified in detail.
- (b) Two complete sets of tools and milling cutters for the different machines.
- (c) Three complete sets of gauges, viz:-
 - 1 set of working gauges
 - 1 set of inspection gauges
 - 1 set of reference gauges and master gauges for same.

(d)

- (d) Machinery for manufacturing packing cases of standard War Office patterns for packing the specified output of rifles and bayonets.
- (e) The cost of delivery, shipment, and erection at the factory in Australia with the exception of the cost of transit from the wharf at Sydney to the factory which was borne by the Commonwealth.
- (f) Detailed working plans of all fixtures, fittings, and arrangements which were required for the various operations connected with the manufacture of Small Arms and the proper installation of the machinery supplied and which were not included in the plant tendered for. These plans were to be supplied within three months from the date of signing the contract and were to be to the approval of the Inspecting Officer.

5. The amount of the accepted tender was £68,144/8/3, and the time for completion of tender 68 weeks. This time, for reasons for which the Contractors were not responsible, was exceeded.

6. During the year 1913 certain additions were made to the machinery thereby increasing its estimated producing capacity by thirty-three and one-third per cent - so that the existing machinery under favorable circumstances should be capable of turning out 20,000 rifles per annum when working 8 hours per day.

7. From various causes this output has not yet been attained, but the Committee is satisfied from the evidence placed before it that the plant is capable of turning out that number of rifles per annum.

Present Proposal.

8. The present proposal is to expend a sum

of

of £38,727 in duplicating such machines as are necessary to enable the factory to double the output possible with the existing machinery.

Committee's Investigations.

9. The Committee has given careful attention to this question of the increased output of rifles and is of opinion that if the Commonwealth is to be independent of outside assistance in equipping its Forces it should be in a position to produce by normal hours of labor a sufficient number of rifles to meet its needs in times of peace.

10. In the course of its inquiries, the Committee learned that upwards of 15,000 rifles are now required every year to arm new trainees in normal times, while under existing arrangements 3,000 rifles are issued per annum to rifle clubs.

11. Bearing in mind the fact that with increasing population the number of trainees per annum will greatly increase, and having in view the possibility of public sentiment or legislative action leading to greater activity amongst rifle clubs, the Committee is of opinion that an output of 20,000 rifles per annum from the Factory would barely meet current needs and preclude the possibil-

ity of laying in a reserve supply of rifles which is eminently desirable.

12. The Committee has not lost sight of the fact also that, under existing conditions, if any important machine were to break down and no duplicate were available, the result might considerably limit the output of the factory until such time as the machine could be replaced - a process involving perhaps months of delay.

13. It should perhaps be made clear that it is improbable that any machinery ordered now will be delivered under 12 or 16 months and that possibly 2 or 3 months more will elapse before that machinery is installed and in working order. Consequently it will be nearly 2 years before the additional machinery will be turning out rifles.

Conclusion.

14. The Committee after careful consideration is of opinion that it would be advantageous from all points of view for the Commonwealth to have additional plant and be capable of not only supplying its own needs and laying in a reserve of rifles for future use, but also in time of stress by working the factory continuously possibly supplying other parts of the Empire. It, therefore

therefore, recommends that the additional machinery necessary to duplicate the present producing capacity of the existing plant be purchased.

15. The decision arrived at by the Committee is shown in the following extract from its Minutes of Proceedings:-

Senator Story moved - That the Committee recommends the purchase of additional machinery necessary to duplicate the present producing capacity of the existing plant at the Lithgow Small Arms Factory.

Seconded by Mr Gregory. Carried unanimously.

Edward Riley

C h a i r m a n.

Office of the
Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works,

120 King Street,

Melbourne, 17th June, 1915.