

and sovereign Canada. The Government he leads is determined to provide members of the Canadian Forces with a clear mandate and with the resources necessary to do their job.

Since coming to office, we have reintroduced distinctive environmental uniforms. We have opened up the Canadian Forces to increased opportunities for women, we have pursued initiatives to improve opportunity for members of both official language groups and we have started to narrow the capabilities gap. We have continued to pursue workable and meaningful arms control agreements and we have increased our troop strength in Europe by over 25 per cent.

As I conclude, perhaps I would be permitted by the House a personal note about the men and women who serve in the Canadian forces. The last 11 months have been among the most exciting and rewarding of my life because of the opportunity I have had to meet many of the dedicated men and women who daily lay their lives on the line in the defence of Canada. They live by a code of honour and duty and serve their country proudly. These dedicated Canadians deserve our thanks and support in their important work. On behalf of the Government of Canada I want to express our deep gratitude and pride to each and every one of them.

• (1230)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Beatty: The White Paper I have tabled today will provide a much needed sense of purpose, direction, pride and identity for the Canadian Forces. When implemented it will enhance the security of Canadians and help to re-establish Canada as a responsible and reliable defence partner. We must do our fair share in carrying the burden of collective defence if our views are to be respected and our independence preserved. We are a proud people and we will honour our commitments.

It has been a long and hard journey to get this far. The way ahead will not be any easier. We now have a coherent, comprehensive defence policy framework, a road-map to guide us into the 21st century.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Douglas C. Frith (Sudbury): Mr. Speaker, I hope the Members who have just finished applauding that address by the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Beatty) will wait around to listen to at least some of the arguments the Opposition will be making with respect to the White Paper.

Before I get into the substance of the White Paper I want to review some of what I believe are the myths that the Conservative Government is attempting to create about what Liberal defence policy stood for. The implication is that the Liberal Party stands for weak defence.

Mr. Mazankowski: You have a proven record on that.

Statements by Ministers

Mr. Frith: The implication is that the Liberal Party decreases defence spending while it is in power but a Conservative Government increases defence spending. I want to review the track record of the Conservative Party since it came to power in September of 1984 and compare it with the Liberal Party policy from 1979 through to 1984.

Mr. Dick: Why don't you do it before 1979?

Mr. Frith: The Associate Minister of National Defence (Mr. Dick) can have his say in a moment.

In 1979, the Liberal Government made a commitment to its NATO partners to increase defence spending by 3 per cent in real terms. Our track record from 1979 to 1984 indicates that we actually exceeded the 3 per cent goal.

Mr. Hopkins: By far.

Mr. Frith: By far. It was 4 per cent in 1980-81, to as high as 8.9 per cent in 1984-85.

Let us compare that with the Conservative track record. Never mind the Tory campaign promise of the summer of 1984 that they would increase defence spending by 6 per cent in real terms. My understanding, and correct me if I am wrong, is that all of the spending projections in the White Paper are based on the assumption that defence spending over the next 15 years will increase by only 2 per cent in real terms. That is not the 6 per cent they promised during the election. It is significantly lower than the 3 per cent during the Liberal Government years of 1979-1984. I just want to make sure that at least that myth is dispelled.

In addition, during the Minister's speech he indicated what the capital acquisition program would be. So that the record is clear, I want it understood that it was a Liberal Government that made the decision to upgrade the North Warning System which was completed in the first few years of the Conservative Government. It was a Liberal Government that purchased the 138 CF-18 fighters to upgrade our Air Force. It was a Liberal Government that decided to build new frigates for the Canadian Navy. I might point out as well that we were committed to a three-phase program. As a result of today's White Paper the third phase of that frigate program is going to be scrapped. I will come to the specifics in a moment.

The point I am making is that I will not allow the Conservative Government to promulgate the myth that the Liberal Party was never committed to the defence of this nation and the western alliance, because nothing is further from the truth. Our track record speaks for itself. I want the Canadian public to understand that the track record of the Conservative Party is one of lower growth rates in defence spending than occurred in the previous seven years of Liberal Government.

Mr. Mazankowski: Allmand says we are spending too much.

Mr. Allmand: On submarines.