

The Government continued to maintain that its defence policy was intact. Defence Minister Bill McKnight reiterated Mr. Wilson's sentiment:

Obviously the goals in the White Paper will be achieved more slowly and, in some cases, less fully. We will keep our present forces in Europe. We will continue to provide the North American defence role in which we have been involved and we will continue to stand ready for peace-keeping missions around the world.<sup>4</sup>

The Defence Minister also declared that the financial means left to DND enabled it to continue modernizing the Canadian Forces: "...even if the rate of progress is slowed, the continued expenditure of over \$2 billion annually on capital equipment will continue to rebuild our Canadian forces."<sup>5</sup>

The Government was pressed to explain the overall approach chosen to implement the planned cutbacks. Questions of priorities, where the Government was going to decrease funding, and what effect that would have on DND functions, were raised. Reflecting their Party's support for Canadian withdrawal from the NATO Alliance, members of the NDP felt the Government should reduce its commitment to Europe. In the words of NDP Member Bill Blaikie:

Instead of working toward saving money by making Canadian troop reductions in Europe in the near future, preferably as part of a negotiated reduction in conventional forces by NATO and the Warsaw Pact, the Government has chosen to sabotage the economies of many Canadian communities like Portage La Prairie, Manitoba, which stands to be devastated by the elimination of its base.<sup>6</sup>

The Defence Minister maintained that Canada's contributions to peace and security were best made by concentrating on collective security within the Alliance. By closing uneconomical bases, Canada could maintain these commitments and properly equip its forces. In regard to reserves and personnel he stated:

We will continue to increase our reserves. It will be at a slower rate than identified, but with the commitment to using a total force concept it will be necessary to continue to create reserves around this country.

What has happened is that financial constraint will require us to find some personnel savings so that we have room for other expenditures.... There will be a slight reduction in our civilian and military personnel over the next five years.<sup>7</sup>

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4 *Commons Debates*, 11 May 1989, p. 1585.

5 *Commons Debates*, 11 May 1989, p. 1585.

6 *Commons Debates*, 2 May 1989, p. 1192.

7 *Commons Debates*, 11 May 1989, p. 1584.