

Some 14 bases and stations will either be closed or rationalized. These plans are advanced for economic reasons and they are based on military rationale. With changes in technology, CFS Holberg, Sydney and Barington are no longer necessary and Gander can be reduced in size. Mont Apica will be replaced with other facilities nearby.

On other occasions in the House, I have mentioned the tracker fleet at Summerside. It is over 30 years old and could not be kept going beyond 1992 without major retro-fit. It no longer has a military role. These aircraft and the base that supports these aircraft because of that necessity are surplus to military needs.

Portage la Prairie is another base that has been discussed. We are actively pursuing plans to co-operate with the commercial sector for the preliminary flight training that takes place there. When it is concluded, that activity will allow adequate notice to the people of Portage la Prairie because in the near future we will be going forward with requests for availability and costs in that project.

The remaining bases that are being closed or rationalized are to bring about cost efficiency to the base structure. It is an efficiency that we must now have to compensate for the reduction in the Budget.

There are some Members who perhaps will not recall that some 20 years ago there were 120,000 men and women in Canada's military. The bases that have been identified have been in existence for over that period of time. With fewer military personnel, the military need from a defence and capability point of view can no longer be supported. Some people have suggested that this may be a plot against certain regions and certain provinces.

**Some Hon. Members:** True. True.

**Mr. McKnight:** The simple fact is that those bases were opened when they were needed. When they are no longer needed because of changes in technology, resources and priorities, then the need to close them is as apparent as the need was to open them.

• (1230)

Those who wish we could keep these bases open are saying that the military payroll in the community is more important than having properly equipped armed forces who can fulfil the commitments that the Canadian

people task the men and women in the military to fulfil. Those who would suggest that we close bases in Europe instead would see Canada sacrifice its contribution to stability and peace around the world so that obsolete facilities could be kept full of men and women who in turn have obsolete equipment and would be doing things that would no longer need to be done from a military perspective. Uneconomic bases must be closed so we can bring into balance the infrastructure and the capital dollars that we have to provide the equipment that men and women need in the military.

This contribution of \$2.7 billion to the war on the debt over the next five years is significant and everyone understands, particularly this Minister, how painful that is at DND. I am convinced though that we must halt this slide of our national finance into the pit of oblivion. DND and all other Departments of Government will be asked to make a contribution and we have made that contribution. If we had not made it we would continue to have to sacrifice more and more as we slide further and further into that pit.

I firmly believe that lack of economic security would impair our ability to have defensive security and that is an important part of Canada and an important part of the debate in which we are involved.

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.

I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, 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.

The White Paper tabled some two years ago continues to provide the basic parameters of our defence policy. Those programs will be put in place more slowly but the budget will continue to grow in real terms, although at a reduced rate.

The last four years' real efforts that have been taken to end the neglect of our armed forces and to bring into line our defence commitments and our defence capacities are efforts that have been recognized and will continue.