

*External Aid*

need in Nigeria and Biafra, as I see it, is not merely to feed the starving people but to bring this barbaric war and conflict to an end. Regardless of the political history and contemporary circumstances that surround the Nigerian-Biafran war, and regardless of the legal technicalities and complexities of international law, people are dying by tens of thousands. The situation is of crisis proportion and has all the symptoms of worsening in the future. Today there is no communication whatsoever between the two warring parties, the Biafrans calling for a sovereign state and for separation and the Nigerians who are equally vocal in claiming a federal and single Nigeria.

One very important, and perhaps the most important, observation we made is that Canada has the trust and respect of both sides, more so than any one country in the world except perhaps Sweden, Switzerland or a country of that nature. Therefore, Canada not only has an opportunity but a moral duty to mankind, and a moral commitment to try to end this war. We cannot sit idly by twiddling our thumbs. This is not just an African problem but a tragedy of the human race. It is up to Canada to take the lead in this humanitarian course and to pressure the world to follow suit.

Thousands of people are dying of starvation every day. The lowest estimate came from one of the doctors at Queen Elizabeth hospital in Umuhia. He estimated the figure to be 3,000 a day. This is the lowest estimate. We heard estimates of up to 10,000 and more each and every day in Biafra. Even 4,000 or 5,000 dying a day would be pretty shocking. Most of the people I asked were doctors, nurses, priests and people involved in relief work. The majority of the people starving are children, although a substantial number of older people are also victims of starvation and malnutrition. Most of the starvation is the result of protein deficiency. Biafran doctors and relief workers told us that the situation has improved since the airlift of supplies has begun. They say people are now making improvements. As confirmation of this we were taken to one of a number of sick bays just outside Umuhia to see the progress of the children as a result of the relief. These children are now up and around although only a few weeks ago their feeble bodies were balancing between life and death. This visual progress of these children helps to restore in us a bit of faith in the human race, but it also proves what can be done to save thousands and thousands more lives if Canada can make

a more determined effort to help in this tragedy.

The tragic part is that by the beginning of the new year the natural crops of Biafra will be depleted. These crops, banana, yam, gari, are the basic foodstuffs upon which the people have been living for the past year. They are, as well, basically carbohydrates and bulk foods. Unless something drastic is done now, tens of thousands of people literally will be dying each and every day in Biafra. As a member of the United Nations put it recently, we will have a massive famine in the real sense of the word.

• (9:00 p.m.)

As members of the human race, we have a moral commitment to assist these unfortunate people. Until day flights are commenced, we must fly at night. The churches and the Red Cross organization make flights at night. If I knew that it would help, I would volunteer to fly in every Canadian Hercules that goes into Biafra in order to save lives. This is something we have to do. Without doubt, there are massive deaths of civilians in Biafra. We saw victims of bombing raids, most of whom were children. We talked with person after person who spoke of atrocities committed against them. Every Biafran with whom I spoke told me of a relative or a close friend who had been massacred by the Nigerian people. We were shown testimonies signed by priests relating bombing of feeding stations, refugee camps and hospitals, marketplaces and innocent villagers.

We were shown a village that had been bombed a few weeks before. A Catholic priest told us of a feeding post that had been bombed. He said that 8,000 people were crowded into the centre of this place when a bomber passed over, circled back and dropped three bombs. It then strafed these people. This was not a military target. He also showed us a Catholic hospital that had been bombed. We visited a Red Cross hospital that had been bombed. The officials there were considering removing the Red Cross from the lawn, as they thought this would only be a target if it remained. As my colleague said, there have also been atrocities committed by the Biafrans. This only points up the fact that this is an extremely barbaric war and we must end it as soon as possible.

I could go on talking about the different things we saw and experienced. I could talk about the number of feeding camps we saw. One morning, for example, we visited a