

*Canadian Action on Nigeria-Biafra*

least, was prepared to make that sacrifice. But his family was safe. When we talk about this tragedy resting on the conscience of the Canadian people, I suggest to the House that most of it must lie on his conscience. He must assume responsibility for the deaths of thousands of women and children.

The starving faces of Ibo youngsters haunt all Canadians. We have to ask ourselves whether we have done enough for the Ibos and will do enough for them during the next two weeks. Are the Biafrans all Ibos? Nigeria was a nation made up of over 250 ethnic and language groups. There was only one tribe that was Ibo. When Ojukwu unilaterally declared Biafra independent, he did so on behalf of hundreds of thousands of non-Ibos in eastern Nigeria who were offered no plebiscite or vote in regard to that decision.

The faces of little children that haunt the conscience of the world, the faces of little children which were paraded on the lecture platforms across Canada during recent weeks and days, include as well the tragic faces of thousands from other tribes and language groups who were never asked whether they wanted to be liberated by Ojukwu. Yet he declared liberation in their name.

Ironically, Mr. Speaker as Ojukwu fled in recent hours he left Biafra to a non-Ibo, Major Philip Effiong of the Efik tribe, a man who surrendered at four o'clock this afternoon and stated, as the minister told us earlier, that now that those opposed to a peaceful resolution of the dispute had left, perhaps a peaceful solution could be arranged.

All of us are concerned about the possibility of genocide. There are some in Canada who have said that the Nigerian federal government and its troops cannot be trusted. All of us must hope that genocide will not occur. Significantly, although the Ibo massacres of 1966 undeniably took place, since then the Ibo people in federal Nigeria have existed peacefully. Before the surrender yesterday, 2 million Ibos lived within the enclave. There were 7 million outside the enclave, in federal Nigeria. Our observers have reported no bloodshed in the Ibo areas, and let us hope that this situation continues.

In a civil war, where there are perhaps more shades of grey than black and white, there is also bitterness—as our friend from Red Deer has suggested—about alleged Ibo complicity in murders associated with the overthrow of the federal government before

1966. Let those who claim that they want to bring fair minds to bear on this dispute, even those who have been lecturing Canadians in recent weeks about their responsibilities, some of whom are perhaps in the gallery tonight, take this factor into consideration. When we are attempting to develop a feeling of trust and confidence on both sides, let us not distort the facts.

The idea of an expanded observer team is a good one. Every Canadian initiative must be undertaken to urge restraint and moderation so that rehabilitation can proceed. I understand that news dispatches have been broadcast to the world to the effect that the federal government of Nigeria is welcoming additional observers from other nations. The government has been criticized for failing to raise the question of the Nigerian civil war at the United Nations. I served there for three months and it was an interesting experience. These criticisms ignore the fact that months ago Canada discussed this very possibility with the Secretary General of the United Nations. This is to the credit of our Secretary of State for External Affairs and is another fact that has been glossed over by the eloquent critics of this government, who should have spent more time getting the facts and less time on the lecture platforms.

The Secretary General reflected the general United Nations view that such action would do more harm than good. Many of the 126 nations at the United Nations are deeply committed to humanitarian causes. Yet significantly not one of them moved to inscribe the Nigerian civil war on the agenda. Not even one of the four black nations that recognized Biafra undertook the initiative called for by Biafra to ask the United Nations to take action. Why was this? It was because any attempted initiative would come crashing down to defeat and frustration.

• (10:10 p.m.)

Some have said, quite incorrectly, that because of its inability to inscribe the Nigerian civil war on the UN agenda this government is racist. That charge is nonsense whether it comes from Nova Scotia, British Columbia or any other province of this country. You might as well charge the other 125 members of the United Nations, including every black country in the UN, with racism. I resent that kind of statement made in the context of Canada.