

Alleged Failure to Aid Biafrans

get a federal Nigeria to work would be a political miracle. So it is not incumbent upon anyone to say that a structure once created by a colonial power is so sacrosanct that any group of people who suggest that it be altered are immediately to be hounded out of the land and be denounced and harried.

I think we must be positive. We note what has happened. We regret the leadership that was not given. I think, however, it is up to all of us in all parts of this House to try to adopt a positive posture and rally behind at least one remedial action or one avenue. The Canadian people, I am convinced, feel deeply about this question and are concerned about the suffering of mankind in a state that has suffered so much for so long. So I would join all those who plead and implore the government to follow the suggestion of this resolution. There still remains the whole matter of bringing about a cease fire and there is still ahead of us a challenge, but there is this one avenue through which we can do something. Let us, for heaven's sake, and for humanity's sake, do it.

Mr. J. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, it is getting a little late in the day's proceedings; therefore, I shall be as succinct as possible. Before I become involved in the context of my brief remarks I think it probably is worth noting that with perhaps one or two exceptions no government member has really dealt with the resolution which is before the House. They have addressed themselves to a whole host of questions. I should like to remind government members what this debate is not about.

It is not a resolution which recommends that the government of Canada ship arms to Biafra or anywhere else. It is not a recommendation that we take this problem to the United Nations. It is not about genocide. It is not a recommendation that we support one side or the other politically. It is not a motion that we condemn the United Kingdom and the USSR. Nor, finally, is it a resolution that the government recognize Biafra as a political state. All these propositions could be very seriously entertained and they could be very seriously objected to. However, none of them are before the House today. But almost all the government members have chosen to speak on one or other of these matters which are irrelevant in this debate.

The motion before the House suggests that the government has failed to make adequate measures to relieve massive starvation in Nigeria-Biafra and, further, urgently requests

the government to change its policy in this regard. That I suggest, Mr. Speaker, is what we should be discussing. I hope the Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Goyer) when he speaks next will address himself to that question. I should like to go back, therefore, to the argument which I think was put forward in moderate, reasonable and rational terms by the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin) at the outset of the debate.

● (9:50 p.m.)

He tried to focus exclusively on this question and addressed himself to the problem which the government apparently has had in doing anything about the starvation in Nigeria and Biafra. The hon. member for Greenwood suggested that the government has given four reasons at various times for taking no action. He tried, in a very systematic way, to deal with each of these, and not one of them has been adequately answered by any member on the government side. First of all, he said that the government has recently concerned itself almost exclusively with daylight flights; it is not really interested in finding alternative methods to get medical and food supplies to that country. He pointed out, as has the hon. member for Egmont (Mr. MacDonald) and others on this side of the House, that there are serious legitimate reasons for the hesitation of the government of Biafra to accept the various proposals that have been made concerning daylight flights.

It has also been pointed out that the government of Nigeria has raised serious objections to a variety of proposals that have been made concerning daylight flights. I suggest that daylight flights are not the issue and are not what we are debating tonight. The countless attempts by government members to turn the whole question of Nigeria and Biafra into a question of daylight flights must be seen as the kind of charade that it is.

The second point raised by the hon. member for Greenwood, the second reason, he suggests, that the government has given for not becoming involved in this tragic situation, has been that the government has said that the Red Cross is the one institution which we should support in our efforts to provide aid to the people in Nigeria and Biafra. It has been pointed out by the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis) and by others that the Red Cross has not been functioning there since June in terms of flights, and the government knows this very well. Why can we not give