

External Aid

government has adopted an increasingly pro-federal military government Nigerian position. I include the expression "military government" in that statement because I believe it would be a different thing to say that the government is just pro-Nigerian. There has been far too much evidence to date for anyone to suggest that even those people living in the federal part of Nigeria are in strong accord with the actions of their military government or their military forces in the field.

One of the astounding things I found in the remarks of the Prime Minister this afternoon was his suggestion that Canada should not take action at the United Nations either in committee or in the General Assembly because it might strain the very real and very meaningful friendship which Canada enjoys with Nigeria and with other African states. It seems to me, Mr. Minister, that your concern for these friendly types of relationship is greater than your concern for human life itself.

Mr. Sharp: They are the same.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): I doubt they are in terms of the action the government has been carrying on over the past few months.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member must address his remarks to the Chair.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. I am afraid the intervention by the minister made it a more personal confrontation than it was meant to be. I, for one, feel that when we are moving in an area of international conflict, as this one in a sense is at present, there may well be certain risks and certain difficulties in dealing with just the kind of problem we face today. We will have to accept what I will call the reasonable risk in terms of straining the friendship and the views in which other countries might hold us, particularly if this involves a question of human rights or life itself.

• (6:10 p.m.)

The Prime Minister has often referred to the fact that we must be very careful when we are setting precedents or allowing them to be established. I agree with him wholeheartedly. I think we must be very careful in respect of the precedents which are established in the international community. One of the most dangerous and diabolical precedents ever established is being established at this moment, that it is quite all right for a federal or national government to take whatever steps it wishes to put down or control the revolution of a minority, however large

or small, for the sake of national unity. Any number of bombings, any kind of economic blockade no matter how substantial, how complete or how much it may affect civilians, women and children, is quite permissible within the international community provided it is all done in the name of territorial integrity, national sovereignty or some other catchword, which prevents the United Nations or any other international forum from taking action. Is this the kind of precedent we are establishing?

I remember that earlier people in our external affairs department were worried about the analogy that might be drawn between Biafra-Nigeria and Quebec. I would say to my friends in Quebec that they should watch closely the precedent we are allowing to be established. If they are worried and concerned about future rights and liberties they should ask themselves the question, does this justify any action on the part of the federal government in terms of these minorities? Of course, the analogy with Quebec has been a fraudulent one because, thank God, we have not lived through the kind of hell that the people of Biafra-Nigeria have lived through in the past few years. The people who try to suggest there is an analogy are being mischievous and evil.

I am concerned about the situation as it exists in Biafra-Nigeria, and I am concerned as all Canadians are with federalism but not with making federalism a dogmatism. That is not what people with any concept of fairness or concern should try to do, arrange some kind of universal solution that can be applied to every situation. We want to see and treat situations as they are, and that is what our government has failed to do in Nigeria-Biafra.

The government claims to be neutral, yet it talks to only one side. It waits for Colonel Ojukwu to respond, but it never asks him the questions. The government for years has had diplomatic contacts with Nigeria. It feels it is important enough, in order to have a relief operation that will be effective, to send a prime ministerial special representative to Lagos, but it never even makes a ten cent phone call to Biafra. What kind of neutrality is that? That is not neutrality at all. It is simply buying propaganda that has been cleverly designed by other governments which have certain interests in this country, and using the particular communications machine established by Nigeria itself.

If we really wish to take a neutral position, and we have not done so today, then we must