

*Alleged Failure to Aid Biafrans*

by both sides. If we decide that we can contribute something constructive, and I think we can, and can do something about ending the war, let us stop hiding behind arguments about who is right or wrong. Let us stop bickering among ourselves about the different political implications that the war between Nigeria and Biafra has for us.

I am greatly concerned about what is happening in Biafra, Mr. Speaker, because little more than one year ago I and the Liberal member for Cochrane (Mr. Stewart) went to Nigeria and Biafra to see what was going on. I remember leaving the island of Sao Tomé at night, not knowing whether we would make it into the airfield or whether we would come out again. We had to fly over anti-aircraft guns and land at a dilapidated airport where aircraft crashed sometimes on landing. There was also the possibility that we would be bombed on landing. The hon. member and I went to find out first-hand what was happening in Biafra and to gather as much information as possible so that we could be instrumental in alleviating the suffering there. I encourage all members of this House to go to Biafra and see what is happening, because most people who go there come back with the conviction that something must be done and all feel frustrated and helpless about what is not being done.

One wonders how the world community can tolerate what is happening in Biafra. I remember that the hon. member and I were standing in a place at seven o'clock one morning among 4,000 or 5,000 small children, all under ten years of age, and they were looking up to us and asking for help. Many of them did not have clothes on and many had swollen stomachs brought on by a protein-deficient diet. Their arms and legs were as thin as sticks. We asked ourselves: Just how concerned is the world community about all this suffering? How can it tolerate this situation?

I ask now: How international are we in our concepts, and how civilized are we? I often wonder if we do not wear just a thin veneer of civilization which, when penetrated, reveals the basic savage underneath. The world can tolerate only so much of this kind of thing before it affects all of us. We can take only so much of it before the whole world blows up. I hope that Biafra will not become another gigantic Auschwitz. I hope that 20 years from now we will not look back and say that if we had done more to help 20

years earlier a great many people would not have died needlessly. We can, and should, do much to prevent something like this happening.

When I speak about Biafra, I do so from an international point of view. I see the problem there not just as an African problem but as something that affects all people no matter where they live in the world. After all, with technical progress, the whole world has become a global village; everything that happens over there must affect us here at home, and vice versa. Many of the problems plaguing Biafra are plaguing other countries, because one can see starvation, depredation and discrimination in many parts of the world. There is fear all over the world. Worse of all, not only the people of Biafra but those at home feel helpless. Powerless and underprivileged groups exist in our own society.

• (9:00 p.m.)

May I remind the House, Mr. Speaker, that the Secretary General of the United Nations, U Thant, said a few years ago that as long as about two-thirds of the world's population were starving, suffering or living in a great deal of poverty, none of us would be saved, regardless of our country or industrial situation. It must be our objective and hope to try and alleviate suffering no matter where or how it occurs, because a blow to or scar on any society in the world is indeed a blow to all mankind.

Our Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and government must do something constructive. They must start acting on some of the new politics they have talked about for the last year and a half. They must move toward eradicating some of the injustice and starvation that exists in Biafra and many other parts of the world. They must bring Canada into the forefront and try to ease some of the suffering in Biafra. The only way we will do this is by making all members of the House concerned and aware of what is happening there.

Perhaps I could take this opportunity to remind hon. members of what is actually happening in Biafra. As I already said, many, many people are dying of starvation. About 2,000 people are dying every day. This has been happening for the last couple of years. When I was in that area last year, between 3,000 and 5,000 were dying of starvation every day. We were told this by the people who worked in the Red Cross centres, church