

*Canadian Action on Nigeria-Biafra*

of the region that is now Biafra, and that the intention of genocide is not one that you test, passively, until the last returns are in. In the massacres of summer, 1966 (nearly a full year before Biafra's secession from Nigeria), thirty thousand natives of the Biafran region were murdered. "I have just been reading 'Exodus'", Professor Nwosu told a group of friends, some time after his night of waiting at State House. "Before the war, a novel to me was a trivial thing. But I should have known the west would not be impressed by thirty thousand. Some of you literary people should have told me."

I suggest that there are some assurances—the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin) mentioned some of them—that the government of Canada is entitled to obtain from the Government of Nigeria. They relate to these points: First, that no purges will take place and that prisoners will be fairly and humanely treated. The committee which studied this matter read a little booklet put out by the Nigerian government about the humane treatment of prisoners. I presume the contents of this booklet will be noted by the authorities. The second point is that the observer force be strengthened in scope and number and will be given *carte blanche* permission to travel throughout the entire country.

Third, experience and memory have made the Ibo people believe that mass slaughter will be their fate. The British government, which has a major responsibility for this war, now has an obligation to the peoples of Biafra, Nigeria and the world to ensure that the Biafran surrender is accepted honourably. Fourth, General Gowon will have to account to the United Nations, to the Organization of African Unity and to the Commonwealth, to say nothing of the ordinary peoples of the world who have watched the terrible war unfold. General Gowon has a heavy responsibility, and I sincerely hope that he will be persuaded to act mercifully by those governments which have seen fit to send him arms. Fifth, the United Nations and the ICRC must somehow evolve a formula which will allow the provision of humanitarian aid so that countries will no longer have an excuse to stand on the sidelines, waiting for permission to feed the people and administer medicine.

Recriminations have a hollow ring, particularly tonight. What might have been is conjecture. Surely we agree that self-righteousness is unacceptable when men have watched their brothers die. General Gowon has asked other countries to avoid or stay out of what he classifies an internal Nigerian matter. I ask the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) does this interdiction still hold?

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Does Canada know about this? If the interdiction still holds, what have we done to force the government of Nigeria to change its mind?

Everybody is being bold now. The United Kingdom is flying in an aircraft and the Netherlands are flying 16 aircraft to Nigeria. President Nixon has telephoned the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. Have we telephoned anybody? If so, for what purpose?

Some people have questioned the amount of time our Parliament has taken on this issue. Some doubt the wisdom and efficacy of any involvement in what people classify as other men's troubles. Some are content to mask their sterility of policy with excuses. I suggest that those of us with public responsibility should heed the warning that I suspect is being given to us by a majority of thoughtful people who have been profoundly frustrated by the insensitivity of the United Nations to this issue.

Many people of good will consider it unacceptable for men to do nothing in these circumstances. These people have reason to be disillusioned because of the long months of inaction and indecision over the basically simple matter of feeding people who are starving. I think it would not hurt if we reminded ourselves that we are being overwhelmed by a surfeit of boasting about our technological achievements while at the same time we cannot carry a loaf of bread across a highway.

Since the dawn of history men have been able to feed other men. We have spent a year congratulating ourselves on our advances in the field of human rights and what we like to call fundamental freedoms. But hospitals, marketplaces and feeding stations are still strafed in the name of "one country". Man has landed on the moon and has transferred human hearts, but cannot land on a neutral airstrip and transfer food and medicine. Men say, knowingly, that war is ugly. This is their excuse. If we know that, and God knows we have reason enough to know it in this century, why cannot we evolve a formula to stop war?

● (8:30 p.m.)

Is a slogan worth a life? Is a concept of sovereignty worth a village? Is a boundary drawn by man worth redrawing with man's blood? The governments of the world are hurrying to help in a veritable tumble of concern, but many nights were filled by the sound of aircraft flying dangerously low, paid