

*External Aid*

men, we came to understand that this situation in Nigeria, which is centred on Biafra, was not so easy to describe from either one side or the other. There was talk of genocide. Need we wait for proof of genocide to initiate our action? It has been said that we have done more than any other country. I am glad that we have done what we have done. We in the opposition who have urged for greater action by the government have not intended that we should contravene any sovereign rights of Nigeria. All we have asked has been that, on the humanitarian side, we follow the pattern of countries like Switzerland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. They did not wait to rationalize their position; they went in with aid. Sweden has one Hercules aircraft in its air force, but it managed to transfer title of that aircraft to the Swedish Red Cross and thus to the International Red Cross. Scores of trips have been made with that aircraft. I rather believe that on a per capita basis countries like these have made a greater contribution than we have.

● (6:50 p.m.)

I do not minimize what we have done, because this has been good as well; but I would just say this, Mr. Speaker, that we cannot do justice to the situation in Nigeria unless we take cognizance of what has happened there in the last eight years. This is a civil war; there is no doubt about that. It is a civil war that has been brought about through tribal differences and by false assumptions made by those responsible for drawing the borders of Nigeria, and in thinking that under self-rule government could develop as it did under colonial rule in a harmonious way between the various tribes.

For example, you cannot separate the secessionist position of the Ibo people of Biafra today from the massacres of 1968. Very little has been said about this but the bitterness of that bloodshed, the first being civilian instigated and the second, following the first coup, being militarily instigated, is part of the background in understanding the situation.

The original concept of Nigeria, taking in three major tribal groups, the Hausas in the north, the Yorubas in the west and the Ibos in the east, was an effort to bring about a federation of three peoples basically different from each other, living together with numerous smaller tribes, in the hope that the country of Nigeria could be viable as an independent state. But this is only one part of the background. We who have been part of the

[Mr. Thompson (Red Deer).]

committee are familiar with the overall picture. In fact, portions of the testimony given before the committee were very excellent expository statements of the events that led up to the present situation.

What can we do about it? I do not for a moment believe that anyone who took part in the committee proceedings had any other intention than that of trying to awaken ourselves and the government to the fact that we in Canada should be doing more than we were doing. Any statements to the contrary made here this afternoon are unfair and prejudiced.

When the committee first sat we in the Conservative party stated very clearly in our opening statement that there were two aspects of the problem that we were to consider, one the humanitarian aspect, and the other the political-military aspect. In the first instance I believe that we have done a lot on the humanitarian side. Nevertheless, I think all of us believe, whether we try to justify or criticize the position of the government, that we should have done more. We wish we could have done more, because in our plenty and our affluence it seems to me that we owe a debt to others less fortunate than ourselves, and there is certainly no better opportunity to demonstrate that than in a situation such as exists now in Biafra. But, on the other side, we have the responsibility which falls under the political and military side. This is, not to go in with our armed forces. I do not mean that we should transgress the sovereignty of the Nigerian federal military government. There are other ways of using our influence, and we do have influence. Hardly any nation in the world has more influence among the world's emerging nations than we have.

Also, we have influence with the world's larger nations. Examine the Suez situation, sir, which occurred a few years before the Nigerian independence movement occurred. If the Canadian government had then followed the sort of course it is following in this situation, I think the outcome of that episode would have been far different. The world will thank us if we can be of help in the Nigerian crisis as it did at Suez.

Though the government talks to the world about Nigeria or Biafra it seems to have lost touch with what has happened there. Its utterances lead to confusion, and that confusion may be seen in part when examining the committee's report.

I am not opposed to the report the committee has made to this house. I think every