

*Alleged Failure to Aid Biafrans*

about Canairelief and other groups of wonderful and inspired people in this country. It has been said more than once today that this is not surely a question of brittle formalism or narrow legalism. Surely, if ever there was a matter which should occupy the attention of thoughtful men and allow them to make their decisions on humanitarian considerations, this is one. Abraham Lincoln said that he was one of those who looked upon mankind through the pensive eyes of pity. Surely, we make no apology if we become emotional and profoundly concerned about this terrible tragedy.

I will not go over the discussions, the agreements broken or the confused statements and diplomatic obfuscations which have been so clearly and powerfully delineated by my colleague, the hon. member for Egmont (Mr. MacDonald), and by the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis). This is a grim war that has brought agony, destruction and death to too many people for too long. Many months ago—it seems ages ago—I first raised this matter as a question to then Prime Minister Pearson. I cite this recollection as a mere and small matter of record and, heaven knows, not as a statement of righteousness.

I have been pained by what the Government has neglected to do.

● (9:40 p.m.)

Of late I have become concerned and shocked by the harshness of the Prime Minister's comment about Colonel Ojukwu and his struggle. I think we have missed so many opportunities. We have missed them within the Commonwealth. We did not move when we were on the Security Council. There were opportunities under the rules to have this matter placed on the agenda of the General Assembly. This was never done. We could surely have found some means whereby interested Canadians could have been brought in on both sides. I even thought at one time that perhaps the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association could have been a very active group in this regard. There is so much that could have been done. But today we sup the cup of opportunities missed and initiatives not taken. The suggestion of this debate is practical and pertinent. May I also say it is merciful.

The suggestion that tangible assistance be given to Canairelief is one which can be and should be carried out. I hope with all my heart this will be done. I am pleased that generally the debate has been on a high plane, although I cannot help but observe that

[Mr. Macquarrie.]

the hon. member for Burnaby-Seymour, recently returned from the international conclave at the General Assembly, seems not yet to fit neatly into the garment of non-partisanship. I thought the attempt on his part to score a debating point on the NDP by noting out loud that the Labour party is in power in Britain was not too germane to the issue. Is it significant that this was or still is a socialist party, or that the NDP is or was a socialist party? Is that really the issue?

Is it not reasonable to conclude that governments of countries speak on foreign matters to governments of other countries? Does not the Prime Minister of this country confer with the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom? Is there not still a hot-line between Westminster and Ottawa? The time was when Canada's prime ministers gave leadership within the Commonwealth. It is not the NDP's major responsibility to talk to a Labour government. Surely the Prime Minister of Canada can confer with his opposite number there.

I am afraid that the United Kingdom's role in this tragedy has not been a glorious one. Along with the USSR and the UAR the United Kingdom is a heavy supplier of death-dealing armaments. I read with sadness that they intend to increase their contribution in that particular field. At an international gathering not long ago I heard a minister of the British government say:

—I invite my friends in all parts of the Commonwealth to ponder over one overriding principle of international behaviour which the United Kingdom in relation to Nigeria finds it really must abide by. And this is when an independent sovereign nation, a free and independent member of this Commonwealth, deems that its integrity, its territorial integrity, is in danger. It has a right to turn to friendly countries, especially in the Commonwealth, for the supplies which it considers necessary to maintain that integrity and that independence.

That is a shocking suggestion. When I got the floor I took the liberty of indicating I thought it was a shocking suggestion that it is concomitant with friendly relations that one had the right to call on a friendly state for arms to suppress people within its own borders. There is much that could be said about the dreary prelude to the present sad situation. I do not know all the stories about oil. I am not one of the economic determinants, but I am concerned by what I read and hear. I do know that the former colonial power left a bitter legacy. I was impressed by a debate in the House of Lords not long ago where the Archbishop of Canterbury maintained that to