

Canadian Action on Nigeria-Biafra

in an area of great confusion with the population running into several millions.

To be useful the observer teams must be large enough in number to undertake a reasonable surveillance of all areas. It is important, in my judgment, that observers include not only military personnel but others qualified to consider and report the facts. Indeed, it is my suggestion that included in the observer teams should be experienced jurists who could be suggested by the International Commission of Jurists, and experienced representatives of the press whose function is not only to observe but to record facts. If the code of conduct described by the Nigerian government is to be carried out, if the issue of genocide is to be laid to rest, it is necessary that there be adequate and impartial observers and it is essential that they be on the spot now, when the strain is greatest.

I hope that during the course of this debate the Secretary of State for External Affairs will tell us, in more precise terms than those of his earlier statement, his plan in both these areas; I hope he will tell us what representations are being made as to relief, who he is in touch with, what instruments are proposed to be used in dealing with the immediate emergency I have described? In the observer field, how many observers are planned? Where they are to come from? Has contact been made with the Nigerian government for the acceptance of an expanded observer team? If the government is serious, and I believe it must be, about the events of the Biafran tragedy which has aroused the conscience of the people of Canada and of mankind, it must be prepared to act now, to act urgently and to give in the debate tonight precise answers to these questions.

In the past, Mr. Speaker, Canada has been proud to lead the world in humanitarian concern and in the field of peacekeeping. The time is now, tonight, to demonstrate that Canadians can and will give effective, vigorous and urgently needed leadership in this tragic situation. Humanity, respect for human life and the future of the world community alike demand that we do not fail.

Mr. R. Gordon L. Fairweather (Fundy-Royal): Mr. Speaker, it is only the extraordinary nature of this debate that would make me impose myself on this Parliament twice in the same day, but you will have to put up with me and I make no apology for the necessity for the debate itself.

Canada and the world know where Biafra is now as countries scramble to provide food

[Mr. Brewin.]

and medicine, freed from any political or diplomatic hang-ups. However, in a word or two I should like to recall the particularly brave people from various countries of the world who saw the need and responded, untroubled by diplomatic nuance, heedless of arguments about whether hundreds of thousands of deaths are an internal matter.

● (8:20 p.m.)

There is a great deal of cynicism about the relevancy of churches in today's order of things, but I suggest that without the churches the death toll would have been even more ghastly. Without the action of Joint Church Aid and Canairelief during the awful months from June until a day or two ago no food and medicine would have got into Biafra. It seems to me that on the occasions I have taken part in discussion on this issue I have been unable to get across what I think is the fundamental issue, that of man being willing to stand by. God knows, we have stood by enough in our generation, and that is what I cannot get out of my head.

I wish to read from what I think is one of the most splendid pieces of writing about this whole matter. The article was written by Renata Adler and appeared in *New Yorker* magazine last October. It summarizes the context that I have always felt applies to this matter. Why should I presume to suggest that others do not feel the same way? This is the context, surely, in which this tragedy should grip mankind. I read from this article as follows:

The absurdist element keeps coming up in Biafra.

Of course, now "keeps" will have to be changed to "kept". I continue:

The sense here is of a people about to die in isolation and pretending not to know it—convinced in any case by their recent history that they have no choice. Victims are seldom pure, or even entirely attractive, and a case can certainly be made against any victim of murder before some higher court of absolute irrelevance. But Biafrans (fighting a war, in a sense, for a position argued in Hannah Arendt's 'Eichmann in Jerusalem') are determined to avoid at least the accusation of passive complicity in their own destruction and resist, trusting their own interpretation of what the risks of capitulation and the costs of survival might be. Once the foremost advocates of Nigerian unity, they have been persuaded by a series, both before and since the war, of broken accords, systematic exclusions, and outright massacres, both total and selective (including the killing of all males over ten years old in a captured Biafran town whose civilians did not leave), that Nigeria intends to eliminate the peoples