

Inquiries of the Ministry

situation to which the House might want to direct its attention on an urgent basis. Considering all the factors and all the circumstances I would rule that the motion should be put and, if it is carried, that the debate take place at eight o'clock this evening. Therefore I will seek the opinion of the House on whether or not the hon. member has leave to move the motion for the purpose of discussing the matter stated by him under the terms of Standing Order 26.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: The debate on the proposed motion shall stand over until eight o'clock this evening.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**EXTERNAL AFFAIRS****BIAFRA—SAFETY OF CANADIANS—
LOCATION OF AIRCRAFT**

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I realize that we are going to have a debate this evening on this question but I should like to direct a related question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Will the minister say whether he has been in touch with the High Commissioner in Lagos to ascertain the whereabouts and safety of Canadians engaged in relief work in Biafra?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, before the collapse of the Biafran resistance it was our understanding that there were only three Canadians working in that area. Our information is that they were all safely evacuated.

Mr. Stanfield: Mr. Speaker, will the Secretary of State for External Affairs inform the House whether or not the Canadian aircraft are being moved into forward positions in order to be able to provide relief, or are these aircraft being maintained in Canada at this juncture?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I will allow the question asked by the Leader of the Opposition and certainly will allow the minister to reply. However, I think it should be in order for me at this time to caution hon. members that in view of the fact there will be a debate tonight these questions might perhaps be asked at that time. I assume the minister would then make a statement in reply to

points raised by hon. members. As I have said, the question asked by the Leader of the Opposition is quite in order and it might be replied to at this time by the minister.

Mr. Sharp: Mr. Speaker, we have been looking at this question very carefully. The advice we received from the military authorities in this country is that under present circumstances, if we have our planes ready here to fly, they are probably in as good a position to fulfil the vital role of relief operations as they would be if they were at a place like London, for example. There is no question, of course, about moving them into Lagos until we have an agreement with the Nigerian authorities.

NIGERIA-BIAFRA—REQUEST FOR CONSIDERATION OF SITUATION BY STANDING COMMITTEE

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether I might put a supplementary question to the Government House Leader rather than to the Secretary of State for External Affairs. In view of the motion made a few minutes ago and the apparent willingness of all hon. members to deal in some continuing way with the situation, and because of the necessity at this point of having a small body of people able to look at some of the details which undoubtedly will be presented in a general way during the debate this evening, would the Government House Leader be agreeable to meeting with other House Leaders some time during the day with a view to bringing forward a suitable motion, perhaps this evening, so the committee might be empowered to carry on this type of activity?

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, there is a House Leaders meeting scheduled for 3:30 p.m.

While I am on my feet perhaps I could point out that there was agreement that the business to be called for today, Bill C-12, would be disposed of at today's sitting. Perhaps we might have an agreement that private members' hour be suspended in order that Bill C-12 be disposed of by six o'clock this afternoon.

Mr. Baldwin: Possibly we could discuss that also at 3:30, Mr. Speaker.