

Alleged Failure to Aid Biafrans

Mr. Perrault: Mr. Speaker, just before the dinner break I had endeavoured to point out that the Organization for African Unity had passed a resolution in Addis Ababa, the essence of which was that Africans want to find African solutions to the Nigerian crisis. They do not want the kind of charity that perhaps some of us would like to dispense and feel should be dispensed. A chap from one of the emerging states said to me last week, "How would you feel if you had a difficult situation in Canada and six African states decided unilaterally to make an airlift to Saskatchewan without reference to the government of the province or the government of Canada?" The leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) knows that these are the kind of attitudes that exist at the United Nations, because he must have encountered them while he was there. I am simply pointing out that, despite the attitude of the Organization for African Unity, Canadian initiatives to bring about a permanent and lasting solution to the Nigerian tragedy are among the finest in the world.

I have with me tonight a partial chronology of some of the things that we have been trying to do, but before I come to that let me quote the official Swedish position which that country adopted at the United Nations:

We deplore the continuing difficulties in making that relief action effective.

Some of these difficulties were outlined by Gordon Pape in an article that appeared in the *Montreal Gazette* of November 19, 1969. He is a respected member of the press gallery in Ottawa. In his article he said there is a growing feeling that Biafran aid is not being held up by government inaction at this end, but rather by General Ojukwu. His article goes on:

The U.S. government, acting under direct orders from President Nixon, then proceeded to obtain guarantees from Nigeria that no such military operations would be undertaken and that the flights would not be molested.

That has reference to the daylight relief flights.

Despite these assurances, Biafra again rejected the proposal October 24, opting instead to have relief supplies brought in by boat—an operation that is impossible—

There is virtually no sympathy at the United Nations for the intransigent attitude taken by General Ojukwu and the Biafran authorities. How can Canada be anti-Biafra when through Canadian initiative this agreement was negotiated? This agreement was to guarantee that airfields would not be bombed

[Mr. Deputy Speaker.]

if daylight relief flights were to commence, yet the plan was rejected.

Mr. Stanley Burke, a man deeply dedicated to alleviating the plight of youngsters in Biafra, said the other day, according to a newspaper report—I hope he was misquoted—that Canada was doing nothing to alleviate suffering in Biafra. I should like to point out that up to the end of March this year \$952,594 worth of aid found its way into Biafra, as well as \$1,491,514 worth through the Nigerian route. The total amount of aid topped \$2.8 million. In face of these figures, how can it be said that Canada has contributed no aid at all to Biafra.

I return to what the Swedish foreign minister said at the United Nations:

The African States consider that their own Organization for African Unity has a special responsibility and a special possibility to contribute to a solution. We find that approach reasonable and realistic.

I would inform my social democratic friends at the other end of the House that Canadians, too, found this approach reasonable and realistic. Surely some of the members of the House who attended the session of the United Nations as parliamentary observers also realized, following the discussions that they had with the Biafrans and the Nigerians, that this approach was realistic. Conferences were arranged through the good offices of this government in order that they could hear the arguments on both sides. Some of these members significantly are not going to participate in this debate because they realize the difficulties that are being faced by Canada at the United Nations. They also appreciate all that is being done despite these difficulties.

The position taken by the representative of Norway was that the Organization for African Unity can solve the conflict, and he went on to say that his government is of the opinion that this organization is especially well qualified to find a basis for a negotiated solution. Similar positions were adopted by the other Scandinavian countries. They were of the opinion that the OAU approach to a settlement of the tragedy was a sound one. Canada supports that position, along with most of the leading nations of the world.

Today the members of the government are pilloried and condemned. The right hon. gentleman who is a former prime minister stated that we are defying the wish of the people of Canada; that we have refused to place the issue before the United Nations. I would inform him that a meeting with U Thant was