

*Inquiries of the Ministry*

is therefore meaningless. His answer in no way constitutes a denial of my statement.

The letter from our Canadian ambassador is dated October 24, 1968 and is addressed to His Excellency the ambassador and permanent representative of the mission of Nigeria to the United Nations. Perhaps I had better read it since it is quite brief:

Dear Ambassador:

My minister, the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, has asked me to enquire urgently about the role of the churches in respect of relief supplies. One of the leading critics of the government, Mr. Brewin, whom you will recall came to New York and met with Dr. Arikpo, claims that he was told that the federal government would not oppose flights into rebel held areas from Sao Tomé by churches using Canadian Hercules aircraft. This statement does not appear to have been made to Mr. Sharp himself but may have been made during the visit of certain Canadian parliamentarians when they met the commissioner for external affairs.

Mr. Sharp would be very grateful if you could let him know, as a matter of urgency, whether in fact such a statement has been made or whether the federal Nigerian government would be likely to permit such an arrangement.

I do not need to read the reply which in effect says that the statement was not made at all by the Nigerian commissioner or any other member of the Nigerian delegation. The statement attributed to me in this matter is completely inaccurate as could well have been ascertained by reference to *Hansard*. I made this statement publicly in this house and it is contained in *Hansard*. First of all, I should like to refer to page 1650 of *Hansard*, and quote the statement:

Mr. Speaker, this supplementary question is also for the Secretary of State for External Affairs. In view of the difficulty in obtaining permission in respect of the airlift from Fernando Po, has the minister consulted with the Red Cross concerning the statement made by the foreign minister of Nigeria that there would be no opposition to flights in from Sao Tomé by the churches using Canadian planes if the Red Cross would supervise or at least look into the operation?

I point out to the house and to you, Mr. Speaker, that this is quite different from the statement attributed to me in the letter I have read. This is a conditional statement. This matter was referred to again, by me as reported on page 1939 of *Hansard* for October 23:

Will the Secretary of State for External Affairs confirm a statement made by Dr. Arikpo in New York on October 8, in the presence of the minister's parliamentary secretary and several other members of parliament including the hon. member for Egmont and myself, to the effect that there would be no objection on the part of the Nigerian government to mercy flights from Sao Tomé to Biafra provided the Red Cross inspected the cargo?

[Mr. Brewin.]

Again, the matter was referred to as reported on page 2032 of *Hansard* for October 25:

Would the Prime Minister tell the house whether or not a determined effort is being made to check the statement I have made on a number of occasions, and which has also been made by the hon. member for Egmont, that on Tuesday, October 8, the High Commissioner for Nigeria agreed to the supplies being flown in from Sao Tomé with one condition only, that they be inspected by the Red Cross? Why is further consent needed? Will the Prime Minister tell us that?

On the three occasions on which I referred to this subject I made it quite clear that the statement made by Dr. Arikpo was a conditional statement based on agreement that the Red Cross would supervise the operation. I do not at all blame the ambassador, who happens to be a personal friend of mine, but the statement made in the letter made no reference whatever to the condition which I mentioned on each occasion that the flights be supervised by the Red Cross. I say to this house that so far as I am concerned, and there are plenty of witnesses who are ready to support this statement as reported by me and not as contained in the letter, the statement was in fact made in answer to a question by me to Dr. Arikpo publicly. I repeat the statement here. I say to the Secretary of State for External Affairs that unless he is ready to accept my word on this matter I will ask that the matter be referred to the standing committee on external affairs where evidence can be received and sworn to, not only by me but by his own parliamentary secretary and others. I suggest that in future, when letters are sent out on matters as important as this, some effort should be made to make them accurate and fair.

**Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs):** Mr. Speaker, I regret that the question was put by our ambassador in New York in the way it was in the letter. However, I should like to say to the hon. gentleman and to the house that if the question had been put in the other form, as it was put orally by me yesterday to Dr. Arikpo when I met him in New York, the answer would have been the same. He said he did not make any such statement. I have spoken to my parliamentary secretary about it and he denies that any statement in that form was made. If it would be of any value to the hon. member and to the house, I would be glad to put the question more precisely, quoting the words from *Hansard*. I did use them on the telephone to Mr. Ignatieff, but when he put