

In opening this debate this afternoon the Prime Minister spoke these words, with which I concur entirely:

" - I remain convinced that an attempt to inscribe the Nigerian conflict on the agenda of the General Assembly would not only be bitterly resented by the Nigerian Government and the member states of the Organization of African Unity, but would also be totally unsuccessful -"

He also said:

"Should we attempt to employ a General Assembly committee for such a discussion, conceding for the moment that we could do so, which is not entirely clear, our efforts would prove not only divisive but totally counter-productive."

I am asking, in the face of these statements, do Hon. Members think we should persist when the consequences of our actions would be those put forward today by the Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister said that we would incur the hostility and opposition of African states, and that would jeopardize our policy of dealing with the situation effectively. We would probably be told that we were not welcome in providing relief assistance in Nigeria, and our observer would probably be told to go home.

And now may I comment on the suggestion that we should intervene to press Britain, the U.S.S.R. and others to cease their sales of arms to the participants in this war? I am sure this House would be gratified if all the countries currently supplying arms to the two sides would cease to do so, and, if I thought that action by Canada would accomplish this, I would not hesitate to propose it. This is however a matter of policy for each government to establish for itself. It is well known that the French Government has denied it provides arms to the rebels. Moreover I ask the Members of the House this question: Would the situation be improved if external pressure caused the British Government to cease all its arms supplies to Nigeria, leaving the field open to the U.S.S.R. to become its principal source?

I should like to refer again to the hope, widely felt by the Canadian people, that this civil war can be brought to an end. I said earlier that the achievement of a peaceful negotiated settlement does not depend on the provision of facilities or the making of proposals by outsiders. Canada stands ready to be of assistance if that would be helpful; and I hope that the responsible course we have followed enhances the possibility of our playing a useful role. Whether any progress can be made toward peace depends, however, on the parties to the dispute. In particular, in my view, it depends on the Nigerian Government providing sufficiently convincing guarantees to the Ibos of their security after the conclusion of hostilities, and on the willingness of the rebels to envisage a negotiated settlement short of complete independence from Nigeria. To advocate a negotiated settlement and secession is a contradiction in terms. I would therefore urge those Canadians who have influence with the rebel side, both in this House and outside, to press them toward conciliation, and thus toward a peaceful settlement. And I call on the parties to this tragic civil war to show their willingness to negotiate positively, in order that with the assistance of the OAU or the Commonwealth Secretariat, a peaceful settlement can be achieved.