

Alleged Failure to Aid Biafrans

dying. They are dying because they have no food. They are dying because some African states say they know better what to do than humanitarian nations in other parts of the world.

No one has explained why this question was not brought before the United Nations. Can any member among those who were interrupting a moment ago tell me why this question has not been put before the United Nations? A year ago last October the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) said: "If we find that that can be done, and it is necessary to be done, we intend to do it".

I want to refer to the record of a number of Canadians, many of them outstanding Liberals, who have been deeply disappointed at the fact that this government has adopted a squalid, nasty, unreasonable and hypocritical attitude to one of the most serious questions of humanitarian need that we have had to face in many years.

• (5:00 p.m.)

On October 28, 1968, there was an open letter in the *Globe and Mail* to the Prime Minister on the Nigeria-Biafra war. Under the heading "What is happening?", it reads:

There is general agreement among observers recently returned from Biafra that several thousand civilians are dying every day from starvation. Within weeks this figure will reach tens of thousands when the last stores of bulk food are exhausted. Reporters are equally convinced that even an apparent military victory by the federal troops will not end the fighting since the Biafrans are determined to continue a prolonged guerrilla resistance.

By sending some food and aircraft to Nigeria and Biafra, the Government has shown the Canadian people that it accepts a responsibility for international action where human suffering has reached disastrous proportions.

The open letter has other headings such as "What should be done?", "How can this be done?", "What should Canada do". Under that heading it states:

Canada should greatly increase its efforts in co-operation with like-minded nations to:

have a ceasefire resolution adopted at the United Nations—

Canada refused to place this matter before the United Nations, though it has been asked over and over again.

Secondly, the open letter suggests that there should be a stop in the supply of British arms to Nigeria. I think the strongest objection should have been made by this government to the Wilson Government for supplying

Nigeria with arms and thereby prolonging the suffering there.

The letter then suggests that we should exert direct and public pressure to end the fighting and re-establish negotiations. This letter was signed by Stephen Clarkson, a Liberal candidate in Toronto for mayor; Allen Linden, chairman of the recent Harrison Hot Springs conference; Marshall McLuhan, the conscience of the Prime Minister; Tim Reid, M.P.P.; Peter Russell, Professor in Toronto and a leading Liberal; Professor John Saywell, who was one of the supporters of the right hon. gentleman for the leadership of the Liberal party; Charles Templeton; Leon Weinstein, the man whom Senator Keith Davey brought forward as a potential nominee for the Liberal party for mayor of Toronto.

They said this question should be brought before the United Nations and many others joined with them. These are outstanding Liberals but what did they get? They simply received, 13 months after they made that declaration, a pious statement by the Prime Minister that there is nothing that can be done—that in effect is what he says—except through assistance from private quarters.

I want to congratulate the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin) and the hon. member for Fundy-Royal (Mr. Fairweather) on the expression of their viewpoints which they placed fairly before the House.

The attitude of the Government is not that it is marking time but that it is standing still. It is defying the people of Canada openly, overtly and unjustifiably. People ask for action and they receive the reading of an essay on the subject of international relations. I will deal with that in a moment.

We have with us today in this city Mr. Stanley Burke, formerly connected with the CBC. He is a man who gave up his position because of the situation in Biafra and the appeal to his humanitarian sentiments.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Diefenbaker: We think of the sacrifices of Canadians. Four of these brave men, as a price of their emergency flights, in the month of August, 1969 gave their lives. The Government of Canada dare not continue to defy the hopes and desires of the people of Canada. The Prime Minister can leave. Anyone who runs away lives to speak another day. He can leave, he can evacuate the House, but by his actions today he showed more clearly, more