

*Canadian Action on Nigeria-Biafra*

a man who was to become our Prime Minister won the Nobel Peace Prize, many Canadians felt they had participated with him in winning this prize. But in the last year and a half we seem to have been hung-up with nineteenth century theories and attitudes. Instead of tackling the realities facing us in the world today, our Prime Minister seems to hide behind a very cold, academic approach. That is true of this issue and many others.

The Secretary of State for External Affairs has fallen into the same trap and is showing the type of attitude displayed by the Prime Minister. If something looks good on paper, if it is good in theory and if there are precedents for it, the government will accept it. Yet we seem to be hung-up with our concepts of federalism and with a constitution that seems sacred. We have hidden behind our concepts of sovereignty and territorial integrity, and just look at what has happened! This is not good enough. In this matter Canada must act immediately: It must delay no more, because the lives of millions of people are involved. They may die of starvation and disease unless we take action immediately.

We cannot any longer tolerate past attitudes. Is it not ironic that countries making up the United Nations would not intervene in this struggle or even bring relief because this was a so-called civil war, and now that the war is over they are all anxious to provide help? That is one of the biggest contradictions in this matter. That is why governments must find alternative solutions to problems like these which confront peoples in this modern world. In our modern world of technology and electronics new solutions must be found. If we and others had taken different attitudes to this question, the tragedy in Biafra might have been averted. What has happened today is history. The immediate problem is how we are to act now. Hours count, not days; we must act within hours, and not within days or weeks. We must bring relief to these unfortunate people within a matter of hours.

I think we all know the history of the Nigerian-Biafran conflict, and most of us know that about 2 million people have died in it. But does anyone realize the seriousness of the situation today in Nigeria and Biafra? One has only to look at newspaper reports to know what is happening. May I read from an article that appeared in this evening's *Ottawa Citizen*. It was written by Richard Hall, who was the last foreign correspondent to leave the war zone on Saturday night. The headline

[Mr. Nystrom.]

at the top of the newspaper in bold red letters is, " 'They run like rabbits' in hail of fire". The correspondent gives us this story:

Biafra is dying bloodily and terror-stricken.

The triumphant Nigerian army is advancing into the chaotic heart of Ojukwu's breakaway country.

The demoralized Biafran army has been stunned by the blitzkrieg onslaught mounted by the federal forces and is now offering little resistance and fleeing.

Five million civilians are running rabbit-like from the remaining crowded areas.

Several Nigerian MiG fighters add to the confusion by rocketing and machine-gunning lines of refugees.

Amid the crowds are wounded and shell-shocked Biafran soldiers.

● (9:50 p.m.)

Further on he says:

During the inevitable overrun of Biafra, their lives lie in the balance.

As I left, Owerri was being shelled and rocketed. It is now a ghost town, yet last Thursday night it contained some quarter of a million people. As I went north, I saw appalling sights of Biafra's death throes.

They are burned in my memory: men, women and children carrying pathetic belongings, some collapsing weeping at the roadside.

I could read more of the article. It describes the situation there at the present time. There is in today's issue of the *Ottawa Citizen* another article written by the same foreign correspondent. He talks about the soldiers at the war front and the situation many of them are facing, and says:

Soldiers at the front ate on an average once every three days. They had only ground cassava with soup.

A doctor told me: "Abdominal wounds are hard to operate on—the men are so thin."

Against them the Biafrans faced well-fed and better armed troops.

The Nigerians knew they had their enemies at their mercy. When the final push came, the line buckled.

This, Mr. Speaker, once again paints a very vivid picture of the real situation in Biafra and Nigeria tonight. This is why the Canadian government must act now. The member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin) and the member for Fundy-Royal (Mr. Fairweather) mentioned a number of plans or alternative activities this government could adopt.

In the motion before us today there are two suggestions that should immediately be adopted by the government. I do not want to repeat the details at this time. Basically, we are calling for observers to go to the front lines