

*Alleged Failure to Aid Biafrans*

of factors. These include (without attempting to be exhaustive or assess the relative strength of these factors) religious, tribal and economic rivalries, jealousies and hatreds, the bitterness of a civil war and the past history of atrocities and improper treatment of minorities.

While there have been atrocities and extreme bitterness in this civil war, there is no evidence that troop formations are engaged in genocide. The evidence indicates the government of Nigeria is attempting to impose and maintain proper standards of conduct and discipline among its troops. A code of proper conduct has been issued by the government to the Nigerian troops. In general, the attempt to enforce proper discipline and conduct seems to be as successful as could be expected in the difficult circumstances which exist.

Since that time there has been less talk of genocide in Biafra. But the idea seems to die very hard. This is indicated again by the remarks of the hon. member for Greenwood, as reported at page 1197 of *Hansard* where in referring to the Prime Minister he said:

—it is clear the right hon. gentleman is now aware of the great concern felt by the Canadian people about the immense tragedy which has already cost between one million and two million lives and which threatens to exterminate a whole people.

I think all members will agree that this is an immense human tragedy. But we do not agree that it serves any useful purpose to overstate the case and to suggest that an entire people is threatened with extermination. Hon. members will recall the statement made a few months ago by former Nigerian president Azikiwe. A press clipping that I have read as follows:

Former Nigerian president Nnamdi Azikiwe said today he was kept under house arrest by Biafra last year when he was supposed to have been a supporter of its cause.

He made the statement at a press conference called to mark his declaration—broadcast in Lagos earlier today—that Biafra should negotiate for peace.

In the broadcast, Azikiwe, an influential member of the Ibo tribe, said he no longer believed Ibos were in danger of extermination by other Nigerians—and said the time was right to make peace.

In the same press conference I believe he also indicated that almost 70 per cent of all Ibos now live in territory occupied by federal Nigerian forces, and far from being exterminated, many held high positions in that territory. This, of course, is in complete accord with the findings of the standing committee of this House.

Hon. members of the opposition really cannot expect to cry “wolf” too often; their allegations of genocide a year ago were not substantiated. Can this House tonight give

[Mr. Wahn.]

any greater credence to the allegation of a plot and conspiracy between the Nigerian and British Governments to deceive the world with regard to the possibility of daytime flights? I remind members also that former Ibo President Azikiwe, in the statement to which he referred earlier, claimed that General Ojukwu has been too inflexible in his attitude toward daylight flights.

● (9:30 p.m.)

The basic objection to Canadian government assistance to night relief flights is that these might provide some cover for shipments of military supplies. The hon. member for Egmont (Mr. MacDonald) addressed himself courageously to dealing with this particular question. I believe he is perhaps the only member of the opposition who has dealt with it extensively. But he did not, nor has any opposition member, provided convincing evidence that the night relief flights which the opposition recommends could not and do not provide cover for military shipments to Biafra.

Until further evidence is advanced by opposition members I suggest that the House must accept the view, which appears to have been accepted not only by Nigeria but by the International Red Cross representatives and by our own government—indeed, by most governments—that night flights are desired by Biafran military authorities to help provide cover for military shipments and to assist in breaking the Nigerian blockade on military supplies to Biafra. If that is so, and the weight of evidence might indicate that it is, and if the night flights are desired by Biafran authorities for that purpose, it might explain a great deal. It might explain the difficulties experienced not only by the Canadian government but by other governments as well in their efforts to bring relief supplies to Biafra in the large volume necessary to prevent starvation and death in that country.

At this point, I should say that it is most unfortunate the International Red Cross has been subjected to the type of criticism voiced in the course of this debate. If it has not been able to arrange daylight flights, I am convinced it is not because of any fault on the part of the International Red Cross. It is rather that the authorities involved have been unable to reach the agreement which is necessary to permit such flights. The Red Cross, which has a proud record in providing relief in international emergencies, should not