

*Alleged Failure to Aid Biafrans*

the government had accepted our request at that time the amount of supplies flowing to the beleaguered areas of Biafra would have been doubled. The government could have saved the lives of many hundred of thousands of people who made up part of the estimated 1.5 million people who have died of starvation in the area since then. The same plea on behalf of the International Red Cross was made by the Canadian Red Cross High Commissioner, Major-General Wrinch. But what happened?

The government dispatched a grand total of three Hercules aircraft to Nigeria and Biafra. They did not stay very long. The first aircraft left for Lagos on October 10, 1968. It was permanently grounded in Lagos until it returned to Canada a few weeks later. The pretext advanced for not using this aircraft was that two of the airstrips in the federally occupied territories were in a poor state of repair and that the Hercules aircraft would damage the runways. The other airfield available was being used, according to Nigerian authorities, for military purposes and therefore was not available. Mr. Speaker, one of these airports was Calabar, an internationally recognized airport. Hercules aircraft are supposed to be able to land in open fields. Actually, a Hercules aircraft did land at the improvised airstrip at Uli, in Biafra. The Canadian officer in charge of the operation expressed mystification about the alleged landing difficulties. The plain fact is that Nigerian government does not seem to have been interested, and there does not appear to have been any protest on the part of the Canadian government that the aircraft was not used in that region.

Another Canadian Hercules aircraft was dispatched on October 15, 1968, to Fernando Po, to assist in the airlift of the International Red Cross from that island to Uli. It made ten flights to Uli with about 200 tons of food. Most of the time the aircraft was grounded, and in about December of the same year, 1968, it returned to Canada where it has remained ever since. The third aircraft was merely a supply aircraft and need not be counted.

• (3:10 p.m.)

The reason given for withdrawing the effort was that one of the church operated aircraft had been shot at, and that the operation had become too dangerous. Nevertheless, the church operations continued. A second reason given by the Prime Minister in this

House about a year ago was that the Biafran authorities would not accept daylight flights proposed by the Nigerian federal government. The Prime Minister made clear that this condition was made, that General Ojukwu would undertake not to use the airstrip during the daylight hours for arms shipments. Here, we get the very first proposal of daylight flights subject to conditions of military significance. The condemnation of General Ojukwu as the obstructor of relief for his own people is used as an excuse for inaction. I will have more to say about this later.

The more we look into why this particular reason (the question of daylight flights) is being advanced and nothing being done, the more we see it is not an adequate or proper reason. I will explain my reason for this statement later. I would like to say if there were no daylight flights bringing arms into Uli, which General Ojukwu was asked to forgo, both the condition by the Nigerians and the refusal of the Biafrans are absolutely senseless. There is no point in asking for the condition nor any point in denying the condition. It is perfectly obvious that was not the purpose. There were in fact air flights coming in with arms and therefore the request had a military significance. If such flights were taking place bringing arms into Uli, General Ojukwu, hard-pressed in a war which he and the people he led thought was a war of extermination, was being asked to surrender his means of defence or in effect to surrender, period.

Of course, the Nigerians knew and I think others, including the Prime Minister, should have recognized that such an offer with this condition was bound to be refused. When it was refused he should have known that it was really a propaganda device, a device that unfortunately has been all too successful in alienating sympathy, not from the Biafran regime—that is not important perhaps—but from the innocent victims of the war.

As I have said, this Canadian effort through the three Hercules lasted a few weeks. It delivered to Biafra 200 tons in 10 flights. I want the House to compare that with the results of the operations of the churches which we, in this motion, are asking the House to support. The joint church operation, apart from the International Red Cross, of which Canair relief, the Canadian agency mentioned in the motion, is an agency and important component had at the end of October last flown 4,183 flights and delivered 45,000 tons of food and supplies into Uli. Yet the Canadian government effort is 200 tons compared