

*External Aid*

the Canadian Red Cross society, and we await confirmation from the Nigerian Red Cross that they can be put to effective use.

In all these efforts we have worked closely with and relied heavily on the International Red Cross and the Canadian Red Cross society. We are grateful for their help and advice.

The committee proposed that we should offer, in concert with other interested governments, to provide non-military assistance in building a civil airstrip for the exclusive use of relief flights. This is a useful proposal which will be explored, along with others, in preparing further development of our aid program to Nigeria. For the immediate future we have considered it better to use the facilities already existing and, for example, just recently we offered the lighter Caribou aircraft for use in federal held territory, since the Hercules is too heavy for the forward airfields.

**An hon. Member:** Do you really believe that?

**Mr. Sharp:** Yes, I believe it, and I have evidence to justify that belief.

**Mr. MacDonald (Egmont):** That is nonsense.

**Mr. Sharp:** If we had any evidence to show that Hercules aircraft could be landed more than once or twice on any of these airstrips, they would be flying there.

**Mr. MacDonald (Egmont):** What about an airdrop?

**Mr. Sharp:** An air drop is a different question. I am talking of using Hercules aircraft on airstrips. The hon. gentleman said that my contention was nonsense. He ought to know that he is speaking nonsense.

**Mr. MacDonald (Egmont):** Not at all.

**Mr. Sharp:** The evidence we have is that if Hercules aircraft could land more than two or three times on those airstrips, they would be flying to them today. They have been offered for that purpose. There is no other reason for them not to be available.

**Mr. Fairweather:** Why do they not land two or three times, then?

**Mr. Sharp:** Because they will destroy the airstrips.

The Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, appealed to the house to debate this matter seriously. I am trying to put the facts before the house in a serious manner. It has been

said on a number of occasions that the Canadian government would like to have the Hercules aircraft fly into Nigerian territory and into Biafran territory. They are not flying to Biafran territory because we cannot obtain agreement from the rebels, and they are not flying into Nigeria because there are no airstrips suitable for that size of aircraft.

I hope Colonel Ojukwu is listening when the Prime Minister of the country makes an appeal. I hope he responds quickly so that we may help to feed these people that my hon. friends are speaking about so frequently.

**Mr. Lewis:** Why don't you send aid?

**Mr. Sharp:** I am quite sure that Colonel Ojukwu and his government know exactly what the Prime Minister of Canada has said so eloquently in this house.

**An hon. Member:** How could he know that?

**Mr. Trudeau:** By listening to the opposition, obviously.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Perhaps the minister might be allowed to continue his speech.

**Mr. Sharp:** The government heartily endorses the committee's appeal to all Canadians to support the relief effort with their contributions. With the new allocation I have mentioned the government's contributions to relief and transport activities now come close to \$3 million.

The committee's sixth recommendation deals with assistance to children from stricken areas. The Canadian Hercules aircraft stationed on the island of Fernando Po has been authorized to transport refugees to other neighbouring countries which are ready to welcome them. These people have been brought out from the rebel area by the Red Cross in order that they can be given better care. The government has been happy to assist the International Red Cross in moving them to other countries. As to bringing children from the rebel area to Canada, the government does not think it wise to press this idea in the face of the adverse views of those directly concerned.

The government accepts the committee's view that Canada should not sell arms to either side in this conflict. Indeed, as hon. members know, that has been the government's policy throughout.