

External Aid

than 20 of these aircraft. The fact that Canada could supply the needed planes was obvious. But what was the response of this government? On July 12 the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) first mentioned the possibility of Canada supplying Hercules aircraft. However, this suggestion was hedged by the decision to use only the Red Cross as the agency to distribute our relief and direct our planes, and the decision to obtain clearances from every interested jurisdiction before allowing the planes to move. If the churches had ever gone through this panoply of clearances the figures for deaths would have been substantially higher.

This decision was made in spite of the well known fact that church agencies, in terms of performance, were more effective than the Red Cross had been and in spite of the fact that the jurisdictions involved were giving *de facto* permission to fly through by making no moves to stop the flights. I believe, however, in the middle of summer we were warned that unless we were careful we could expect Nigeria to declare war on Canada. I must say that this piece of patent nonsense was not taken seriously by very many responsible people in the nation. The predictable result of this cautious decision was that it was not until October 12, 90 days after the minister's first suggestion, that our first Hercules left Canada for use in Nigeria. It was another 18 days before the first flight actually arrived in Biafra.

This is a bitter record. The Canadian people and the members of this house had been waiting for the Canadian government to act. We welcomed the Prime Minister's tardy but hope-giving message that flights would be taking place. We became angry and, yes, bitter, at the delay of 18 days while our planes remained sitting useless on scattered tropical airports. By November 16, the day one Hercules left Nigeria to return to Canada, our anger was replaced by shame at the inability or unwillingness to take the really bold action which the situation demanded. The Prime Minister's repeated attempts to put all the blame on Biafran shoulders only increased the burden of this shame.

Then, Mr. Speaker, came the government's final exercise in futility. Caribou planes were offered for use in Nigeria. The Red Cross predictably shunted this offer to one side. A simple telephone call to Canadian officials and agencies involved in relief operations would have confirmed the unsuitability of this lighter aircraft. We recognize, sir, that all causes for the failure of the government's reluctant

[Mr. Fairweather.]

attempts to do noble deeds were not within the control of the treasury benches. But surely the degree to which Canada felt obliged to get permission from those who were giving *de facto* permission for flights was within the government's control. The decision to use only the Red Cross was also within the control of the ministry. The vigour with which our government implemented the policy of contacting the authorities left much to be desired. I cite as an example the minister's declaration in the house on October 22 that the flights were held up pending approval from officials of Equatorial Guinea who, he mirthfully explained, could not be found.

Members of this house and the people of this country have been left with the distinct impression that the government has used official channels and procedures in a way that has not facilitated but rather has hindered the object of getting food to the starving. Abstract concepts have been allowed to get in the way of filling concrete needs. The poignant and bitter sketch of the emaciated Biafran child holding in his hands a bowl filled with what is labelled "red tape" is too real to be funny.

I should like now to draw a contrast between the government's actions and what has been done by private individuals and organizations in this country. The most dramatic actions have been the trips by four members of this house and one member of the legislature of Ontario to the beleaguered regions. The first of these trips was 56 days ago. The trips of Canadian newsmen to both Nigeria and Biafra have been of prime importance in giving Canadians hard information rather than propaganda as a base for opinion. Churchmen of all denominations have been at the forefront of Canada's concern for the starving. They have been working actively to raise funds and to channel them in the most effective manner. Many of them have visited Biafra, while others have been moved to go to Nigeria and Biafra to work directly with the relief organizations.

In spite of the Prime Minister's suggestions to the contrary, Canadians have been generous toward Biafra. About \$600,000 has been donated already for the relief of those in need. Almost any newspaper in this nation that comes to hand gives details of imaginative schemes, such as walks and so on, organized by young people who are concerned about the need of that country. Canada has been unique in the intensity of its interest in these circumstances. This intensity and the