

*External Aid***EXTERNAL AID****MOTION FOR CONCURRENCE IN SECOND REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND NATIONAL DEFENCE**

Mr. Speaker: Pursuant to special order of the house made on November 6 a motion is now before the house, as follows:

That the second report of the standing committee on external affairs and national defence, presented to the house on Wednesday, November 6, be concurred in.

Right Hon. P.-E. Trudeau (Prime Minister):

One of the strengths of Canada, Mr. Speaker, one of the qualities of the Canadian people that makes me proud to be a Canadian, is the interest which Canadians take in the welfare of others less fortunate than themselves. We are, I think it is fair to say, human beings first and citizens second. Successive Canadian governments have received full public support for measures which have been designed to relieve the suffering of persons elsewhere. In addition to our programmed external aid, Canada has again and again provided emergency food and relief supplies in generous measure to victims of famine and natural disasters. We have on several occasions welcomed to our midst in large numbers the unfortunate victims of wars and disruption.

We all stand taller as a result of our sympathies for human beings and our efforts to assist them. We stand taller not because we are seeking to mollify our own consciences, nor because we need to boast to others of our humanitarian motivation; we stand taller because we have chosen the right path of conduct and have been effective in the help we have tendered.

And this to me, Mr. Speaker, is what this entire debate today is about. It is unnecessary to discuss whether Canadians actively wish to assist the unfortunate victims of the civil war in Nigeria. They do. It is irrelevant to discuss whether a Canadian government can properly involve itself in a relief effort abroad. It can. The single point in issue is whether this government has acted correctly and wisely in doing what it has done.

In this respect correctness is not measured in red tape or technicalities and I shall not therefore make any attempt to suggest these considerations as an explanation for Canadian policies. But in this same respect, Mr. Speaker, neither is wisdom measured in the volume of our own voices raised in international arenas.

If we are truly and honestly committed to assisting the peoples of Nigeria, both correctness and wisdom must be measured in

[Mr. Davis.]

terms of the effectiveness of our efforts to help. Victims of war are not helped by grandiose speeches in the General Assembly; starving children are not nourished by acts which prolong hostilities.

[Translation]

For several weeks, Mr. Speaker, the Canadian people have shown much concern and sympathy for the problem now being discussed. Opinions, comments and questions about it have increased. A standing committee has considered that matter.

The civil war in Nigeria is a particularly complex matter. Its outbreak is linked to various factors and its roots go back quite far in the history of that great country and it is possible that only those who are engaged in that conflict can measure its intensity and understand its full meaning. In any case, Canadians as individuals have been deeply moved by the stories and pictures describing the suffering of the people of that country and they have felt involved. It is necessary however to grasp a fundamental point, namely that it is a civil war and that the solution of the conflict can be arrived at only by the belligerents themselves. Of course, those from outside can offer their services, but they cannot impose a settlement which would be contrary to the will of either side. In that connection, the good offices of the secretary general of the commonwealth as well as those of the Organization for African Unity have been and will always be available, and I hope that they will continue to be used.

The fact is that during all the hostilities, there have been periodic discussions between Nigerian authorities and the rebels, some of them extending over several weeks. But it appears that it is not enough to have the belligerents talk things over, or even declare the urgency of a cease-fire. They must also be willing to make concessions leading to a peaceful settlement, and this is exactly this conciliatory spirit which cannot be imposed from the outside.

We have expressed on several occasions the earnest hope of this government to see the opponents in this tragic war show at least the good-will necessary to negotiate a lasting peace.

In testifying before the committee, the secretary general of the commonwealth, Mr. Arnold Smith, helped us to understand some of the implications of the problem. He explained, for example, that on several occasions during the past 18 months, certain compromises which he, as an outsider, thought