

Alleged Failure to Aid Biafrans

by all stages of item No. 26, the Income Tax Act Amendments. On Friday of next week we will call first the report stage and third reading of Bill C-8 with respect to Children of War Dead Assistance Act, to be followed by Order No. 39 providing provisional payments for unthreshed grain.

PUBLIC SERVICE**POLICY AS TO WORKING LANGUAGE—
SPEECH BY SECRETARY OF STATE**

Mr. J. P. Nowlan (Annapolis Valley): Mr. Speaker, since the Secretary of State will not be in the House tomorrow may I now raise a point of privilege. A week ago today he said he would make available to me a copy of the speech on which I based a question. I understand there are translation difficulties. I wonder if I could expect a copy of that speech in the near future.

[Translation]

Hon. Gérard Pelletier (Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, I regret that the member has not received it, but I have already sent it.

[English]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY****ALLOTTED DAY S.O. 58—NIGERIA-BIAFRA—
ALLEGED FAILURE TO TAKE MEASURES
TO RELIEVE STARVATION**

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood) moved:

That this House regrets that the government has failed to take adequate measures to relieve massive starvation in Nigeria-Biafra and, particularly, regrets its repeated refusal to assist Joint Church Aid and Canair relief operations which have continued to deliver substantial relief despite great hazards, and urgently requests the government to change its policy in this respect.

He said: Mr. Speaker, first of all may I express my regret at the absence, through illness, of the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp). We had hoped he could participate in this debate and hope he will have a speedy recovery from his illness.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Brewin: As hon. members of the House are aware, this day has designated "Peace in Biafra Day". Across Canada many Canadians are considering the plight of their fellow human beings in Nigeria and Biafra who, as

[Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale).]

the House well knows, as a result of a stalemated war are threatened with mass starvation. It seems to me entirely appropriate that this House, representing as it does all the people of Canada, should devote its time in an effort to determine whether more can be done to aid the prospective victims of starvation in those unfortunate areas.

There are two points on which I think all members of the House will agree. First, that the security of all of us depends on the creation of a world community in which basic human rights, and the most fundamental of all, the right to life, are respected. Second, that though Nigeria and Biafra seem remote to many Canadians, we are right to be concerned about the tragic fate facing many innocent victims of the war and right to do all within our power to relieve their plight. Where we differ is on what can be done and how it should be done. The motion which Your Honour put to the House contends that the government has not done enough in this field.

I ask these questions: What has it done, what has it left undone; what has it failed to do that in our opinions should have been done; and what can be done in future? I intend to be entirely specific in the answers I give those questions. Indeed, the motion itself is specific.

The government could have assisted the Joint Church Aid operations by providing aircraft and/or supplies and/or money. It has failed to do so. The motion urges that it do so in future.

First, Mr. Speaker, let us review what the government has done. On October 24, as indicated at page 37 of *Hansard*, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) said that the government had contributed \$3 million towards food and relief supplies to be distributed in Biafra. If the Prime Minister takes part in this debate I shall be interested in hearing how that \$3 million was divided. How much was spent on the federal side of the lines, and how much on the other side.

In October, 1968, the hon. member for Egmont (Mr. MacDonald) and I returned from a brief visit to Biafra. We pleaded with the government at that time to make Canadian Hercules aircraft available both to the International Red Cross, which was operating an airlift from Fernando Po to Uli airport, Biafra, and to the church operations which later became known as Joint Church Aid, which had aircraft operating to the same airstrip at Uli from the island of Sao Tome. If