

Mr. Speaker: Apparently he has.

Mr. Mackasey: Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member's reputation, aside from partisan debate, for being a very fair individual. He asked where the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) was at the moment. Knowing the calibre of the hon. gentleman as an orator, and the right hon. gentleman who preceded him, nothing would have kept the Prime Minister from the House other than the fact that he had a very important meeting at five o'clock with a representative of Canairelief, which he felt was more important than listening to the eloquence of both hon. gentlemen.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Why did the Prime Minister not follow the usual parliamentary course of saying, "I have an appointment; you will excuse me"?

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): I rise on a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Egmont (Mr. MacDonald) has a question of privilege. The hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis) has the floor and he has only four minutes to go. Perhaps the hon. member for Egmont would indicate his question of privilege.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): Perhaps as a question of privilege I might again raise the point I raised this afternoon and, through the Minister of Labour (Mr. Mackasey), ask whether we could be assured that in order for this debate to be productive the Prime Minister will be here this evening to report on the meeting with Canairelief as well as to listen to the remainder of the debate.

Mr. Mackasey: Mr. Speaker, we will have the privilege of hearing one of our representatives who has just returned from the United Nations.

An hon. Member: Who is he?

Mr. Mackasey: I am only speaking to the point of privilege. I am sure the hon. gentleman—

Mr. Woolliams: Do you mean the observer?

Mr. Speaker: I have to rule that there is no question of privilege and I invite the hon. member for York South to continue his remarks.

Mr. Lewis: May I say to the Minister of Labour (Mr. Mackasey) that I did not ask a

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question. I said that I assumed. Without reservation I think I said—

Mr. Mackasey: Mr. Speaker, may I ask the hon. member a question? Did he know where the Prime Minister was?

Mr. Lewis: No, I did not, but I said in my speech that I assumed he left because he had an unimportant appointment. I am glad to hear that the appointment was as important as the minister states. I can only hope that Ted Johnson and the others who are with him and who are seeing the Prime Minister will get much more satisfactory answers than this House has received.

I am not going to abuse the kindness of the House, Mr. Speaker. I say this to the Prime Minister, through the minister, through the parliamentary secretary, through the Secretary of State for External Affairs, even through the member for Burnaby-Seymour who has just returned from the United Nations and therefore will have, of course, unlimited wisdom to impart to us. I say it without having to consult my colleagues or the members of the official opposition. If the Prime Minister will come to this House and tell us, not that he has intervened in the struggle, made any political judgment or taken steps which he believes quite sincerely are wrong, that since no food is reaching the Biafrans except that flown in through the joint church organizations the government of Canada will assist Canairelief for that purpose, he will have the blessing of all who sit on this side of the House.

● (5:40 p.m.)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Lewis: That is all this motion is about and that is all it asks the government to do. It does not attempt to settle the differences between Nigeria and Biafra. There is not a word in it about going to the United Nations or anywhere else. It is simply what French speaking hon. members would call a *cri du cœur*, a cry for the heart, which is made to the government of Canada. That cry asks the government to stop using protocol and excuses for inaction which help no one because the government's action, without its intending it, condemns tens of thousands of human beings to starvation. It is the starvation that we intend to end by this motion.

There is still time for the Prime Minister to say, on behalf of the government, that he accepts this reasonable proposition and that