

External Aid

And to Mr. Cousins' list I add, shame for Canada whose government has fiddled and fooled about an appropriate role and has allowed itself to be hobbled and hamstrung by principles of non-intervention.

To paraphrase Mr. Cousins, the real issue here is not intervention but whether Canada has a double standard. Do we become innovative and are we courageous only when our national interest is involved? Is it not conceivable that the greatest thing we could do for our national interest would be to commit ourselves to a human interest? Canadians want to make a commitment to the people of Nigeria and Biafra, to those who have felt the effects of this evil war.

I do not need to outline in very great detail the ties which have found Canada to Nigeria and to Biafra. The strong relationships based on personal experience in these countries of missionaries, businessmen, educators and students have been a fact of Canadian life for many years. May I add here that the committee had eloquent testimony of this type of contact from a Canadian student, Mr. Keith Bezanson who, I thought, gave one of the most comprehensive pieces of evidence, far superior to those of many people who appeared before the committee and were considerably senior to him. It is this closeness of Canada to Nigeria and Biafra which has caused us to take such a deep and almost personal interest in the war. This interest has been reflected in our periodicals which as early as last March were calling on the Canadian government to take initiatives to end the shipment of arms to Nigeria and Biafra. It was in March too that the external affairs committee of this house first heard testimony outlining the background to the Nigeria-Biafra war.

The enormity of the tragedy weighs on us all, although I do hear in the corridors of this building those who wonder why we spend a day on such an issue. I will leave it to others to comment on this attitude. I fail to see why in a time of international tragedy some response would not be expected from the parliament of a great nation. How many have died as a result of the war and the malnutrition is difficult to say, but we all know that these deaths were largely unnecessary and were the result of a war that could have been stopped or made less serious had the governments of the world taken the appropriate action at the appropriate time.

I am going to undertake today, in a speech that will be longer than most I have made in

my time here, a review of the government's response to this international tragedy. We must remember that in the first months following March, when Canadians called on the government to act, the government benches were preoccupied with electing the present Prime Minister to the leadership of his party and were unable to think much about affairs beyond Canada's borders. Shortly after we were all preoccupied with the federal election, and as late as early August the Prime Minister still felt able to feign ignorance in asking reporters "where's Biafra?" Awareness among the ranks of the ministers was slow to become a reality.

● (4:00 p.m.)

In fairness, however, let me say that the government did give grants for Biafran relief. On July 11, \$60,000 was granted to the Red Cross. On July 30, \$500,000 was granted in goods. On September 19 a further \$500,000 was granted. But Canada has no cause to be smug or self-satisfied on account of these gifts. The United States government, quietly and without pressure from the public, had given as of November 8, \$12 million, with the United States people donating a further \$5 million in voluntary gifts. European governments, with equal discreetness, have been supporting aid to Biafran war victims. Canada has no claim to consider its actions in any way exceptional.

These gifts are in some ways a cause for sadness. What percentage of our goods have reached those in need? How much of our salt cod actually will go into the cooking pots of mothers with protein deficient children? Are our drugs actually being used in the war area? How much of our generosity has been lost in chaos and deteriorated in usefulness because there were no adequate means of transporting this food to the needy? These questions have not been answered and perhaps never can be. Because of the poor follow-up by the government, doubts remain as to how much satisfaction we are entitled to draw from the gifts that the government has made.

I am going to pass now, sir, to the dismal, shameful story of our failure to do the job we were perhaps best fitted to do. From the beginning of summer everyone connected with aid to Biafra recognized that the greatest need was for adequate air transport facilities. From the beginning, too, the Hercules has been recognized as the best plane available. Canada's air transport command has more