

Alleged Failure to Aid Biafrans

take cognizance of the suffering on both sides of the line in Nigeria and that they will give to the Red Cross and to other organizations attempting to assist in the alleviation of suffering. Hopefully the Canadian government, on behalf of the Canadian people, will be able before the Christmas season to establish aid in a way which will be meaningful to the people living in this area.

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, however entertaining it might be to engage in a debate with my hon. friend from Burnaby-Seymour (Mr. Perrault), I prefer rather to deal with the issue before the House today.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): Certainly in respect of the suggestion of the hon. member, that no one has done more than this country in resolving the conflict, I suggest that no one will be more surprised to hear this than the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp), because he along with others in the government will know of the uncertainty with which he and this government has approached this grave crisis. I mentioned earlier that I was concerned that a major part of this debate might develop into more of a monologue than a dialogue. It is unfortunate that this proceeding in the House should not provide for a better exchange in respect of the matter under consideration.

I hope in the next few minutes to deal with the specific areas because I was disappointed that the remarks of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) this afternoon really contributed nothing new to what is a very complex and difficult situation. I think it is perhaps unfortunate the Prime Minister did not choose to more adequately inform the House on questions that he himself has raised, questions with regard to the conditions which have been attached to daylight flights. This has been a preoccupation of the government. Then there are the questions with regard to the activities of the combatants with regard to their own security in respect of establishing effective daylight relief flights. One thing, however, that bore in on me again this afternoon and evening is that there is still a willingness, apparently, on the part of the government to discuss but not to act. There never seems to be any action.

I recall the remarks of the Prime Minister in the House at the opening of the debate on

[Mr. Perrault.]

the Speech from the Throne, with reference to getting relief to both sides. He said:

—we are prepared to make further funds available when once the delivery blockage is removed. If it is not quickly removed, we shall take other appropriate steps.

Since then I have asked him to define what he means by “quickly”. Five weeks have gone by. I shall not engage in a numbers game in respect of guessing how many more people have succumbed to starvation in Biafra, but I should like to know whether the government really intends to act quickly and when it finally plans to take some specific action in assisting the one organization which has continued to carry relief to the Biafran people. I am speaking of Canair relief.

I find it a bit incredible that we should now, all of a sudden, be hearing a suggestion from the government that it is considering an air-drop. I maintain that this would be a great deal more difficult than the problems in respect of daylight relief flights. I think it would be difficult to even conceive of an acceptable format for any kind of effective air-drop operation. I have come to the view, not willingly, that even the suggestion of an air drop is some form of subterfuge. There is a means open to us now. This is the operation, an international ecumenical operation, which has operated as often as there have been resources available to move the planes. There is a new element, however, this fall, and I should like to mention it at the outset. We might even consider it the fall offensive because I have detected in this Parliament, from the lips of the Prime Minister and in other places, a new offensive this fall.

• (8:30 p.m.)

It is an offensive in general against the Biafran regime but, more particularly, against General Ojukwu and the Biafran authorities. I ask myself, why has our Prime Minister taken this new offensive against the Biafran authorities? Then I look a little farther and I note—and of course the Prime Minister himself said this in the House—that the United States government has also substantially altered its own position in recent weeks, and I wonder why. Then I notice that in the United Kingdom the minister for foreign affairs, Mr. Stewart, has indicated an increase of some 15 per cent to 20 per cent in arms shipments to Nigeria, and I wonder why, knowing about the opposition from his own party. I know that there is a kind of coalition—I will not