

*The Address—Mr. Stanfield*

confirmed the very widely held view among Canadians that this government has not been exerting itself and is not willing to do so in the face of this great tragedy.

The suggestion by the minister that the Organization for African Unity should be the sponsor of any appeal to the United Nations is completely inadequate, a lame excuse by a lame government. Thousands of members of the commonwealth are dying daily. The O.A.U. nations are not anxious to bring this question to the United Nations. They feel, I suppose, that it would be an admission of the ineffectiveness of their organization.

The O.A.U. opened its sessions on Friday. The Biafran war was the sixth item on its agenda. Four African nations appear anxious to discuss the question. In any case, how can a Canadian minister argue, in effect, that the Biafran question is a strictly African matter when Britain and the U.S.S.R. are so deeply implicated? The statement by the minister that no government is more active in providing pressure for a settlement, or more generous in providing relief, is a typical bureaucratic dodge. Surely Canada's performance is not to be judged by the performance of others but rather by the effectiveness of what we are doing.

I am told that women and children are dying at the rate of some 6,000 a day. They cannot live on comparisons. I say that Canada must lead. Canada must lead where others have failed to lead or are unable to lead. Britain, the U.S.S.R., France and the United States are either implicated or unable to act. We in Canada have a special responsibility. The commonwealth still exists, despite what some people think, and these people are brothers of the commonwealth.

The government of Canada should stop sitting back, trying to avoid its responsibilities, and should get to work. The government of Canada will have the people of Canada fully behind it if, even at this late hour, it bestirs itself to act. The casual attitude of the government has left a bad taste in the mouths of our people and certainly makes us look pretty cold.

There are many items which we will be discussing at another time, matters relating to NATO, NORAD and the whole field of foreign policy. It must be clear by now why we on this side of the house wanted an earlier sitting of parliament. We wanted it in order to get to work and to get the government to work on the backlog of legislation. We wanted to try to stir the government out of its casualness, to wake it up and get it moving.

In judging a government one has to be realistic. It would be nonsense for me or anybody else to attack the Prime Minister and his colleagues for not solving in five months all the problems of this country, many of which have been around for a long time. I can certainly be this generous: I will not even attempt to emphasize the legacy of failure they left the country under a former and different government in which 16 of them served, 7 since 1963.

However, I want to make the point that the present and future failures of this government cannot be attributed to inexperience. When the election was over, Canadians hoped that the government would achieve the expectations it had aroused and would begin to deal with these problems that have been too long ignored. The throne speech is not merely a disappointment of high expectations. That would be bad enough. The speech signifies a failure of responsibility to deal with problems which cannot be delayed and are not academic.

The excuse has been made that this is the first throne speech of a four-year parliament and therefore the government can be excused for concentrating on old promises and proposing nothing new. That is a very empty excuse. Surely this government is not so isolated from the real problems of the country as to think that the only backlog they have to worry about is on the registers of parliament. If they think there is a backlog of business here, let them look at the backlog of business in the country.

The effect of this throne speech is to commit parliament for at least another session to the priorities of the former administration, priorities which were inadequate even in their own day and which it would be very wrong to continue today. It would be rather as though the late President Kennedy had chosen in his inaugural speech to announce that Harry Truman had left a few things undone and he had a list of them right there. President Kennedy did not do that because his was a government of genuine commitment, a government of the heart as well as the head.

• (4:30 p.m.)

All around us there is accumulated in the country frustration, dissatisfaction, dissent and protest that has often descended to violence—protests against the failure of society to eradicate poverty, overcome prejudice and discrimination, and to find ways of living at peace rather than in conflict and war. Does this government really think that time is on its side, that it can plod its way mechanically