

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

negotiations are presently under way to establish a competitive transport rate for the potash. Considering however that it is bulk potash that is to be transported, it is difficult to perceive any transportation method other than rail being used. It is the hope of the Department of Transport that an agreement will be reached by the railways and the mining companies in the very near future.

UNITED NATIONS—BIAFRA—FAILURE TO
BRING MATTER BEFORE GENERAL
ASSEMBLY

Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, the question I asked this afternoon and did not quite succeed in fielding dealt with a matter of great importance. The people of Canada are asking what is being done about the Biafra situation, and they are asking particularly why the United Nations is not dealing with the matter in some way.

I note that the minister referred to the danger of divisive action if this matter were dealt with in general terms, and I noticed that the Secretary General used similar phraseology. I want again in passing to note that the United Nations does deal with a good many divisive items and it would be somewhat unrealistic to confine the attention of the United Nations only to those questions on which there was harmony.

Surely in a matter of burning concern and deep anxiety to our people, and to thoughtful, sensitive people throughout the world, we should not be fearful of lack of unanimous support for the suggestions we might make. It is my contention that the question should have been on the provisional agenda of the General Assembly long ago. If the government had thought it wise, it could have been directed to one of the non-political committees, and the second and third committees come into my mind immediately. At this juncture I would agree that the Security Council is not the avenue for discussion at this time.

The UN does not deal only with political questions. There is a wide range of interests and debate, as anybody who has been there knows. The field is literally the world, and the agenda is immense. This session the General Assembly has 90 items on the provisional agenda. Surely it is not a cardinal point in Canada's foreign policies that we must be universally loved and have unanimous support for our eternal endeavours. If any effort to have the UN general assembly deal with

the humanitarian aspects of the Biafra situation, with the starvation and suffering of thousands of people, should put us in a minority position in the assembly—and this seems to be part of the government's thinking—then I say that on such an issue this would be an honoured position and a noble posture for this country to be in.

While the minister knows, I am not sure that the public know the procedure in respect of the General Assembly agenda. It is not as difficult as we have been led to believe. Rule 13 of the rules and procedures of the General Assembly lists the ways in which the provisional agenda is formed and what it shall include. Rule 13(e) says that the provisional agenda of the regular session shall include all items proposed by any member of the United Nations. Had this item been proposed any time during the summer, when the government had this matter very much in mind, as we were told, the UN could have been seized of it at any time, and thus this technical hurdle would have been overcome. Hopefully, had the whole situation been resolved by the O.A.U.,—and that would have been a lot to expect,—there would be no great difficulty in the United Nations dropping that item from the agenda.

Nor is it terribly difficult to recall situations where items are not in fact reached. In other words, the fact that the question may have been dealt with in another milieu was no excuse for the delegation of Canada not having this item placed upon the General Assembly agenda. Thus could the General Assembly mobilize world opinion to ameliorate the suffering of the Biafrans.

I note that the secretary general in his letter mentions insufficient financial support as a reason for the failure of voluntary organizations to bring about the amount of relief required to the population suffering in Biafra. Of course he is right. But the General Assembly, surely, would be the forum in which world interest could be stimulated and a measure of world relief and sacrifice, in financial terms, could be encouraged.

It is regrettable that among all the items in the 90-item agenda, this is not included. There are so many ways in which an item could have been constructed. I see here item No. 45: Multilateral food aid. Item No. 46 is: Increase in the production and use of edible protein. There are many, many items which are not political items and would not raise the spectre of these divisive repercussions which have been mentioned. But alas, that

[Mr. Forest.]