

The Nigerian Conflict

The Canadian people and their Government have viewed the tragic events of the last 2½ years in Nigeria with the utmost distress and concern. The suffering and starvation of the non-combattant population is inevitable in war and is compounded by the narrow margin of subsistence that exists at the best of times in that area.

Canada cannot intervene politically or militarily in this conflict but, as a responsible member of the international community, has sought out every possible opportunity to urge the parties to meet and settle the dispute peacefully. Canada has also supported the initiatives of third parties aimed at the same ends.

Cessation of Hostilities

In accordance with the provisions of the United Nations Charter, the Organization of African Unity has asserted responsibility for encouraging a peaceful settlement, and has insisted that the Nigerian conflict must be settled in Africa and by Africans. This view is supported by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and an overwhelming majority of member nations, who agree that the United Nations is not the proper forum for discussion of the Nigerian conflict. The peace initiatives of His Holiness the Pope, the Emperor of Ethiopia and the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth have so far met with failure. These facts demonstrate that it does not lie within Canada's power to solve the problem by unilateral action or by introducing the question at the United Nations.

Canada has tried to help in ways acceptable to the African nations: by participating as a member of the International Military Observer Team and by offering to provide assistance that might be called for by the Emperor of Ethiopia or the Organization of African Unity in bringing about peace talks or in implementing a peaceful settlement. In addition, Canada has repeatedly urged upon the Nigerian Government the advantages of a negotiated settlement and publicly opposed the shipment of arms to either side. Strong representations to nations shipping arms have been made on every possible occasion.

Relief

The suffering of the innocent in Nigeria can only be brought to an end when the conflict ceases, but it can be alleviated by the provision of medical services