

people who are far away in North America, know more about Africa than the 30-odd countries, the members of the Organization of African Unity, which made the statement.

Because of that, it would be wrong for the Canadian Government to assist the Nigerian Government militarily, but it would be equally wrong for the Canadian Government to assist the rebel régime politically. Each is an act of intervention. Each would be a presumptuous step, an arrogant step, I would say, for a country so distant as Canada.

What Canada can do, and what it must do, however, is to attempt to feed the children who will starve to death without help. A starving child prompts an emotional response, and properly so. But that emotion must serve to assist the children, and not the reverse. It has been said by some...that this is the greatest human tragedy of our time. It may be, but I doubt it. The nature of man is so perverse that in the past few years there have taken place tragedies of indescribable proportions in several developing countries — the mass slaughters during the partition of India, the atrocities in Algeria, the massacres in Indonesia. Even while the Nigerian war continues, there have been bloody conflicts in the southern Sudan and in Chad. The Canadian Government did not intervene, and is not intervening in these sad situations. No Canadian Government did so, and no Canadian opposition party criticized those decisions, because of the inescapable limitations upon the effective actions which Canada can take.

The Nigerian tragedy does not become different from these others simply because some persons employ superlatives, or repeat accusations of genocide when these allegations have been proved demonstrably incorrect, or relate highly-inflated death-rate figures. Nigeria is only different because we know more about it and because it is children who are the principal sufferers.

I suggest that there are several points on which there is no dispute among Hon. Members. We share a common revulsion to the suffering which has been brought about by this war. We share a common desire to aid the victims. We all recognize the fragile and inadequate nature of a night relief airlift which must share a single runway and surrounding air-space with competitive arms flights.

Where we differ is in our judgment of the best means to increase the flow of relief. On the basis of careful evaluations of reports received from qualified observers from many sources, the Government has concluded that the only truly effective way of delivering adequate supplies of relief to Biafra is by way of daylight flights. Not only is a daylight airlift safer but, because of the different flying conditions, many more airplanes could be accommodated in any one day than in any one night. When one adds to these facts the additional fact that the airport would not be used for arms deliveries in the daytime, then the flow of relief would increase severalfold.

These facts, which are indisputable, prompted the Canadian Government to do whatever it could to persuade the parties to permit daylight relief flights to occur. In making these efforts, we attempted to understand and to meet the objections which were raised by one side or the other to the principle of daylight relief flights.

I related to this House on November 4, 1968, and again two days ago, the Canadian initiative which exacted from the Lagos authorities a guarantee