

Inquiries of the Ministry

attempted to ask questions of ministers in their capacity as alleged ministers for a province, and I suggested that questions could be asked of a minister only in his own purview. What is being suggested now is that questions be asked of acting ministers. This has always been accepted in the 100 years of Canadian parliamentary procedure, and from a procedural standpoint I see no difficulty in accepting that proposition.

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond): May I say, with all due respect, Mr. Speaker, that I do recall a ruling with regard to asking questions—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have made my ruling. The hon. member may not agree with it, but I am afraid he has to accept it.

Mr. MacInnis (Cape Breton-East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, a question of privilege will come up later.

EXTERNAL AID**NIGERIA—REPORTED RESTRICTION ON USE OF CANADIAN PLANES**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, I must ask this question of the right hon. Prime Minister because today is not the day for the Secretary of State for External Affairs to be here, and this is a matter which I suggest cannot be delayed until Tuesday. It arises out of a report that the Hercules planes which the Canadian government is now making available are to fly only from Lagos in Nigeria and not from any other base from which relief might be flown into the areas of suffering; that is, they are to fly only between Lagos and Enugu, both of which are in the federal military government occupied area. My question to the Prime Minister is whether this is the condition under which the Hercules planes will be available to the International Red Cross, and whether that condition was laid down by the Nigerian authorities.

Right Hon. P.-E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): I have seen such a report, Mr. Speaker, but apparently it is a news report from a source which we have not been able to verify. It does not correspond to the facts as we see them.

Mr. Lewis: I have a supplementary question. As the right hon. gentleman knows, this report allegedly comes from the international committee of the Red Cross in Geneva. May I ask the Prime Minister if he knows whether

[Mr. Speaker.]

the Department of External Affairs is making direct inquiries to ascertain whether those limitations are to apply with regard to our aircraft.

Mr. Trudeau: We had notice of this report yesterday through the ordinary news wire. We are continuing to make the arrangements, about which we told the house yesterday, to organize flights from Fernando Po to the rebellious parts of Nigeria. Consideration is being given to the possibility of making these flights with the greatest safety. We are not affected by this report, and it is not our understanding that this is the way in which the arrangements will be made.

Mr. Forrestall: I wonder if they are not rebels with cause.

Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood): The Prime Minister referred to flights from Fernando Po. Did he intend to exclude from the arrangements flights from San Tome, the Portuguese island?

Mr. Trudeau: No, Mr. Speaker. I was simply indicating that now that we have the agreement of the Lagos government that flights by our aircraft under the authority of the International Red Cross will not be considered a hostile act, we are placing our aircraft at the disposal of the International Red Cross so that that organization can fly these planes as best they see fit.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT**REPORTED INCREASE IN VOLUME OF THIRD CLASS MAIL**

On the orders of the day:

Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough): I have a question for the Postmaster General, based on reports that post offices are being flooded with third class mail from companies trying to avoid the government's rate increases. Can he tell the house what measures his department is taking to prevent possible consequent delays in the deliveries of other classes of mail as a result of these floods?

Hon. Eric W. Kierans (Postmaster General): I do not believe that poses any particular problem. There is a great deal of third class mail going through, as there will be until November 1. I imagine it is normal for such companies to try to avoid cost increases, but so far this has caused no deterioration in the delivery of other mail.