

Alleged Failure to Aid Biafrans

about daylight flights. Both sides must in principle agree with the concept of daylight flights. The difficulty is in trying to get both sides to agree to the same conditions. Previous speakers talked about the agreement between Biafra and the International Red Cross that was signed on August 27. A few days ago the Prime Minister was trying to say that Biafra had not signed an agreement with the International Red Cross.

Then there is the agreement between Nigeria and the International Committee of the Red Cross. This has also been commented on at great length by many people. The Biafrans would have been fools if they had accepted this agreement, because they would have been cutting their own throats. Basically, it was an agreement that was to last for only three weeks. They were supposed to fly only between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., which is a very short time; indeed, it is much shorter than the flying time now being used by the churches in providing relief from Sao Tomé. Even those flights were to be controlled by the federal army and air force. The Biafrans would have been foolish to have accepted an agreement of that sort.

• (9:10 p.m.)

This is an issue in connection with which many of the complexities of international law arise. We get hung up deciding whether it is a civil war and whether genocide is being committed. The question of the sovereignty of Nigeria is raised. There are many complexities. But it is not a civil war as far as the sale of guns is concerned. Many countries are contributing guns and other arms to either side. Both the hon. member and I were in a bombing raid carried out by a Russian jet which dropped what were probably British bombs and the plane was probably piloted by a Japanese.

The hon. member for Egmont (Mr. MacDonald) mentioned oil. I suspect that the desire for oil is one of the main reasons the war is continuing. A British Member of Parliament told me, "We don't want de Gaulle to have the oil. We want it. That is the reason we are involved in the war." It is ironic that oil profits should receive priority over human lives, but this is what is happening in Biafra today.

Many distinguished authorities on international law say we do have the right to intervene in this war on humanitarian grounds by supplying food and medical aid. If we allow ourselves to become bogged-down in legalistic

arguments, a lot of time can be wasted because both sides can produce convincing expert opinion to support their views. Let us not be carried away in debating technicalities of this sort while people are dying. What we should be considering is the course we should follow as a Parliament and as Canadians. What should the government be doing?

Basically our motion asks for just one thing: Since the Red Cross has failed to negotiate conditions acceptable to both sides, we should support Canarelief because that organization is getting food into Biafra, the only one which is doing so. In other words, we should join with the Netherlands, Sweden and many other countries which directly or indirectly have been supporting Canarelief or Joint Church Aid. This does not involve any infringement of the sovereignty of Nigeria as a whole. There are a number of further recommendations I would make.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Before the hon. member pursues his remarks I should draw to his attention that his time has expired. He may continue with the unanimous consent of the House.

Is that agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Nystrom: I thank the House very much. I shall take only one or two minutes. We should think of other contributions we can make as parliamentarians. The war must be stopped. As long as the war continues, people will die of starvation or for military reasons. First, the Prime Minister should send one of his personal representatives to see Colonel Ojukwu in Biafra so that we can get the story straight, so that information is not received second-hand. We do not recognize communist China but we still trade with them. The Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) was talking with Biafrans in New York, so there seems no reason why someone should not talk with them in Biafra.

Second, we ought to put pressure on Britain, the Soviet Union and France, countries which are supplying weapons to both sides, in an effort to prevent them doing so. If the supply of weapons is cut off, the war will stop. Third, Canada must do everything possible to mediate in this war. When we were there we noticed that Canada is among the more respected nations in the world. If we do not undertake mediation ourselves, we should encourage nations like Switzerland, Sweden and Yugoslavia to do so.