

*Biafran Relief*

adequate numbers. We need far more information than the Secretary of State for External Affairs has given us regarding the response. What is the actual state of these proposals put forward? To what extent are they being received? What action in fact is being taken? All we have heard from the Secretary of State for External Affairs are general assurances about the willingness of the government of Canada to do certain things. We want to know what is going on. We want action and not only pious declarations.

At the conclusion of the comments on the statement made by the Secretary of State for External Affairs I will seek the unanimous consent of the House to have the House give instructions to the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence with regard to the continuing surveillance of the government's program.

**Mr. Andrew Brewin (Greenwood):** Mr. Speaker, it has now become clear that the military operations in Nigeria and Biafra are coming to an end, but that does not necessarily mean that the immense tragedy that has taken place there cannot be compounded and continued unless there is urgent and immediate action within a matter of hours. I want to reinforce what the Leader of the Opposition has said, that this is a question of hours, not of days or weeks. Something must be done right away.

• (2:20 p.m.)

The present method of feeding four million people in this unhappy country by airlift has necessarily been disrupted for the time being. Many people are on a knife-edge; threatened daily and hourly by death through starvation. In these circumstances it will be necessary not only to mount a massive international effort in the long run but to use the existing facilities provided by the people who are already there, the people who are operating the feeding centres, in the short run, which means within the next day or two. I put it to the Secretary of State for External Affairs that if there was ever a need for urgent and immediate action it is now.

I wish to pay tribute on this occasion to those gallant people who fought so tenaciously for independence and survival, as they saw it, against heavy odds. I wish to pay tribute also to all those who planned, executed and carried through the magnificent, imaginative and heroic air operation which, as I said ear-

lier, has saved up to two million people from starvation despite immense hazards and difficulties. I refer to the operations under Joint Church Aid and, initially, the International Red Cross.

It seems to me the new situation imposes heavy obligations on the international community which permitted this situation to develop. There is need not only for an expanded military observer team, as the Secretary of State for External Affairs indicated, but for a substantially expanded team whose membership would not be confined to the military alone. There is an obligation on the international community to ensure that the fear of genocide does not turn into one of the tragic facts of this generation.

There is also a long term need to organize an international community which would be able to intervene even in civil wars to preserve human rights and lives. We cannot afford in this world to experience tragedies like Biafra.

In view of the large number of questions which still arise despite the statement of the Secretary of State for External Affairs, and the immense concern of the Canadian people, I shall put forward, when the occasion arises, a motion that this matter be debated further today.

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Dumont (Frontenac):** Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of 1970, we have gone through very tragic hours and very dark days. The Ralliement créditiste has been calling the attention of the government to the problems of Biafra and Nigeria for the past two years.

We note, following the minister's statement, that the government can act quickly when it wants to. It is unfortunate that this action has not been taken without any political consideration, in order to prevent the starvation of Biafrans and Nigerians. The genocide of Biafrans is really an unfortunate event.

We cannot understand why Canada did not intervene before today. I think that love of lucre was stronger than Christian charity. Unfortunately, pressures to prevent England from selling arms to Nigeria failed. We have rendered valuable services to that country in the past and stronger pressures from us would surely have brought results.

Finally, since the tragedy is now over, I would suggest to the Secretary of State for External Affairs that we could send to Nigeria,