

External Aid

and what action should it take so that both parties in this conflict may come to a fair solution? That is what the committee should have told the government.

As regards aid, concerning food and medicine, we have seen, that the government did not wait for the committee's report, which was wise. Pressures from all sides, not only from political circles but also and chiefly from social and religious quarters, that were exerted upon the government indicated a desire on the part of the Canadian people to do something to relieve the suffering.

[*English*]

Mr. Smerchanski: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): The hon. member for Provencher on a point of order.

Mr. Smerchanski: Mr. Speaker, are speeches to be limited to 20 minutes?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): I do not believe that the time of the hon. member has expired yet. I am advised that there has been no order recognized by the Chair limiting speeches to 20 minutes.

• (5:30 p.m.)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Laprise: I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I was just saying that representations were made to the government, indicating a desire on the part of the Canadian people to do something in order to relieve these sufferings. I will not submit any opinion as to whether or not our aid was sufficient, but I say that we started too late.

As a matter of fact, the report includes the following statement:

The Committee recommends that, in order to avoid this problem in the future, the Canadian government take an initiative in developing international machinery to meet this need—

—such as the one facing us.

Mr. Speaker, I objected to that recommendation of the committee, since international agencies have already worked to this end since the outset of the Biafran crisis, as they have indeed in any other part of the world. I wish to refer particularly to the International Red Cross, Caritas Internationalis, the World Council of Churches and other agencies. I believe those international agencies are the most suitable and the most

willing to dispense necessary services in conditions such as those.

So, Mr. Speaker, I do not believe in the need to create a new international agency that would perhaps be more political and might generate difficulties rather than solve the problem. As regards this second recommendation, I would rather suggest that the Canadian government, like any other world government, make available to those agencies the necessary funds or materials to enable them to relieve distress where it is and in whatever form it may occur.

We received this week an urgent appeal from the Red Cross, asking for supplementary funds to keep on relieving misery during the last few weeks of the current year and the beginning of the new one.

We know, Mr. Speaker, from the evidence given to the committee, that even if the war ended today, it would still be necessary to help the starving and the sick and to rebuild what has been destroyed in that country. It means that still more funds will have to be made available to the organizations ready to help that country get back on its feet.

The committee also recommended to take Biafran children elsewhere, even to Canada. That is what the Prime Minister suggested also. Such a recommendation would be acceptable as long as the immigration of the children were directed to African countries where the customs are practically the same as where they were born. On the other hand, bringing young Biafrans to Canada where the climate and the way of life are so different would probably not give good results. Besides, that idea was criticized very strongly by the president of the Canadian Welfare Council, Mr. Baetz, as well as by Father Roger Tessier, of the White Fathers who do missionary work in Africa.

In a statement dated November 15, the Canadian Welfare Council said, and I quote:

Well-meaning Canadians who wish to adopt Biafran children, members of parliament of various political parties who support those projects have not pondered all the implications of such decisions, according to Mr. Reuben C. Baetz, general director of the Canadian Welfare Council.

"Any such project would likely come to nothing and would only divert Canadian vital resources meant for local action," said Mr. Baetz.

"Moreover, I am opposed to these projects of Biafran adoption under the policy statement made by the Canadian Welfare Council on inter-countries adoptions and after having discussed this particular question with the main children aid agencies operating in Canada and abroad."