

External Aid

group of 5,000 children. This same morning we saw a camp composed of 3,500 women who were either pregnant or nursing, who came there for their iron pill and for a little bit of stock fish. My colleague mentioned this as well. I think, in the light of the suffering and death of the people of this area and the short term of relief supplies, the necessary solution must be political. This is where Canada can make a real contribution to the world on the humanitarian side.

I should like to offer a few recommendations to the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp). First of all, I would say that these recommendations are the result of our findings. I feel that Canada should offer herself as the mediator in a ceasefire. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), himself, could make this offer on behalf of Canada. Second, because of Britain's involvement in the war and the influence the commonwealth could have in motivating a ceasefire and settlement, Canada must make every effort to have the situation fully discussed as the first priority at the commonwealth conference in London in January. This will be especially important if nothing is done between now and January. I cannot help but emphasize the fact we have to act now because if we do not, by the beginning of January people will probably be dying by the tens of thousands.

The third recommendation I should like to make is that, even though past efforts have in a large measure been futile in moving the United Nations to act, I think we have to continue to pressure the United Nations into seeing this as an international problem which demands immediate action by the world community. Fourth, because of the anticipated shortage of carbohydrates, Canada must do all in her power to provide relief supplies for Biafra. The problem is not so much one of food or money or people, but one of transportation. I feel therefore we should lend at least two more Hercules aircraft to the people who would take these supplies into this country.

As a final recommendation, I say the government should encourage private citizens, especially medical personnel and volunteers, to help in relief work, to help alleviate the suffering in the desperate areas of Nigeria and Biafra. I do not want to take up too much of the time of the house, so I should like to conclude by saying that, as a member of the international community and the human race, I sincerely feel Canada has a moral obligation to take the initiative in solving this great human tragedy. This conflict is an international problem; it has to be an international

[Mr. Nystrom.]

problem. Canada cannot afford to lock it away in a closet and forget about it. If we do, then this terrible tragedy will become a scar upon the conscience of a nation that had the opportunity to act, but failed to do so. Mr. Speaker, I beg the government not to allow this to happen, but to help as much as we can immediately.

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, in rising to speak as this debate nears an end I should like to reassure the members of the house that I do not intend to go again in detail over ground that has been covered by other speakers. May I congratulate all of those on all sides of this house who have taken part in this debate upon the very high level of the contributions they have made. If any evidence were needed of the concern of the people of Canada about this tragic war in Nigeria, that evidence is to be found in the speeches made by the representatives of the Canadian people in parliament. We have no reason to apologize, it seems to me, for spending a day talking about this tragic situation.

The civil war in Nigeria has presented both human and political problems of a high order. The humanitarian problem has been one of amassing vast quantities of food and other assistance for those in need as a result of the hostilities. A great effort, and I think this will be agreed upon on all sides, has been made by the International Red Cross and by other International and national bodies to alleviate the suffering. It is seldom that people of the world have gathered so much in a voluntary way, and amongst governments, for relief of the suffering in a country which has been torn by civil war. But more will be needed as long as the war continues. I can assure the house that Canada will continue to play an important part in this effort.

The political problem is more delicate because, as has been made clear, this is a civil war. There will have to be a readiness by all parties to compromise if a negotiated settlement is to be reached. We in Canada would of course be ready to facilitate the peace keeping if there were any indication whatever that this would help bring an end to the war. Let us be frank about this. What has been missing so far is not more mediators—there are lots of those—but an indication from both sides that they are willing to participate in meaningful negotiations. The Commonwealth Secretary General, the Organization for African Unity, both stand ready at a