

Canadian Action on Nigeria-Biafra

It is said that Canadians unilaterally should have convened a meeting, a conference or a peace session to arrange a settlement. This is part of the popular mythology about Biafra-Nigeria. Canadians have been urged to bring about some sort of peace conference or understanding between the factions. People who say this really exist in dismal ignorance. If before their eloquent speeches they had consulted with the black nations of Africa, they would have found out how anxious they are to have white intervention.

The hon. member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom), who is a sincere, dedicated young man, says we are entering a new world. That is exactly what they told us at the United Nations. But the world of 1970 is different from the paternalistic pre-war days. Non-whites in other parts of the world have come to resent white interference whether or not it is well motivated or even well-justified. A new generation of capable African leaders say to us. "Keep out. This is an African dispute and Africans will resolve African problems." They say they need no do-gooding, white paternalists. This may be hard news but it is the news of new Africa. They welcome Canadian initiatives to feed the hungry but they say they will not tolerate outside interference in their political problems from any quarter.

I ask hon. members how much outside interference they would be prepared to tolerate in the internal problems of Canada. These may be hard words for those motivated by a sincere desire to impose on others their white humanitarianism, but it is a fact which Canadians in the realm of international relations have come to know all too well. Anyone serving abroad knows that these are the facts of the changing world referred to by the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville.

It is in the face of these tough realities that Canada has acted in the Nigerian civil war. Now that it has concluded, our efforts must again proceed in the face of these realities. Our efforts should come through recognized and established channels. This may not be very dramatic or as dramatic as Canadian planes flying through Nigerian and Biafran flak, unilaterally dropping aid to these people, but those who fought on either side of this struggle have to be helped and we must find channels which can and will bring aid to all of them. We must find non-political initiatives which will not give rise to hostility and resentment, which in turn might serve to

[Mr. Perrault.]

retard our humanitarian efforts. We want efforts which will result in the maximum amount of aid being provided.

Many things could be said in a situation of this kind which would get headlines in the newspapers and make a great story, but which might effectively cut off aid to the people who need it most. Happily, at this time when aid must be brought to the starving of the Biafran region, Canada enjoys good working relations with the International Committee of the Red Cross and with other nations which have worked with us toward a common goal, such as the Scandinavian countries and the Nigerian federal government. This is an important consideration at this time.

I conclude with this thought: Co-operation is the key; Canadian co-operation with effective international agencies, co-operation with the government of Nigeria and co-operation to assure that the people who have suffered so much will be the recipients of the aid that Canadians in all parties are so anxious to bestow.

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, in rising to speak again about the terrible tragedy that has been occurring for many months in the territory known as Nigeria-Biafra I find myself following the hon. member for Burnaby-Seymour (Mr. Perrault). When he began his remarks he seemed to be making eminently more sense than often in the past with regard to this subject, but he reverted to type and added a primarily irrelevant comment.

When the suggestion was made earlier today that we might have an emergency debate, I was somewhat reluctant about the idea in the belief that the situation was so confused that little by way of worth-while debate on the subject could be achieved. As events have transpired this afternoon and this evening in the House, I think it has become abundantly apparent that this debate of all the many discussions we have had in this House may indeed be the most important in terms of the possibility of what Canada can do.

The minister suggested to us that we should not be too surprised that we have not completed plans and have not yet made arrangements for transport facilities, and that there are still a number of questions to be resolved before relief can be resumed. If members on this side of the House express concern—and I