

Canada's whole policy towards African and other newly emerging countries in recent years has been built on a spirit of co-operation rather than intervention. African history is ripe with examples of domination and intervention by peoples from other continents, and Africans are rightly sensitive about their hard-won sovereignty and their right to manage their own affairs.

Canada has earned a good name in Africa. Many speakers have mentioned this. They have said that Canada has a good reputation. Why do we have a good reputation? - Because we observe these principles of co-operation and non-intervention. We have been able to make a positive contribution to developments on that continent. We have been welcome in the Commonwealth countries of Africa, and we have been welcome in the *francophone* countries of Africa. We have been welcome because our policy has been to assist Africans and not to tell them how to run their affairs.

Canada's policy has therefore been recognized as sympathetic and disinterested. This Government does not intend to change that policy regardless of emotional appeals, however well-intentioned they may be, because I believe, and so I believe do all Hon. Members of this House, that if we were to abandon that policy we would become unacceptable and ineffective in the vast task that remains on that continent to overcome the problems of underdevelopment and to create viable political societies on that continent.

I am confident, Mr. Speaker, that the Government will have the support not only of a majority of the Members of this House - I hope of all Hon. Members - but of the overwhelming majority of the people of Canada in pursuing this course.

The Government's responsibilities on the international scene are different from those of private organizations. In saying this I am not criticizing non-governmental groups operating in Nigeria or in other areas. The churches and other groups have done commendable work in bringing aid to the needy, and I join with many of the Members who have spoken in praising their work. I support it. I hope that everybody in this House and that all Canadians will support the work of the churches. What I am saying is that governments must act as governments. For example, the Canadian Government has chosen to funnel its food and transport aid in the Nigerian situation through the International Committee of the Red Cross, the traditional organization for the assembly and distribution of assistance in difficult situations of this sort.

The International Committee of the Red Cross has maintained working relations with the federal Nigerian authorities and with those in charge on the rebel side. It has the necessary support staff and organization on both sides. It has proven worthy of our support and continued co-operation, and I am quite sure that Hon. Members who spoke would not wish to reflect in any way on the excellent work done over years and years by the International Red Cross, and which is working so effectively in Nigeria.