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THE PROBLEM OF RELIEF FOR SECESSIONIST NIGERIA - II

Statement by Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau
in the House of Commons, November 27, 1969.

...Any armed conflict is terrible. But when events conspire to make children the principal victims, then the horror of all persons turns to revulsion. We should be less than human if we did not attempt to alleviate that suffering. The debate today asks if Government attempts in that respect have been correct, if Canadian policy should be measured by one criterion — contributing or not contributing to a single charitable operation.

Canadians possess no secret formula for concluding wars; they are not gifted with any divine guidance into the rights and wrongs of the arguments of strangers. Canadians do believe, however, that political quarrels cannot be successfully concluded on a battlefield. The complex human relations which must somehow be repaired and restored, the confidence which must be created in the place of fear — these difficult and sensitive tasks cannot be performed in an atmosphere of war. They can only be the product of consultation and negotiation.

Canada has repeated these views again and again to the combatants in this war and it has expressed publicly its attitude with respect to the supply of arms from outside. We have stated, as well, that we are anxious to do whatever we can to assist in such consultations or negotiations. Just as we made available senior and experienced Canadian military personnel to serve on the international observer team in Nigeria, we are ready to make available talented Canadian diplomats to contribute to the process of peaceful settlement.

To intervene when not asked, however, would not be an act of courage; it would be an act of stupidity. There are some 30 countries in Africa south of the Sahara that have achieved independence since 1957. Every one of these emerged into nationhood following a lengthy and anguished colonial history. No single act would be regarded with more hostility by any of them than the unilateral intervention of a non-African state into their affairs.

I say this not from surmise but because it was made very clear on at least two occasions by the Organization of African Unity. They have said that this is an African problem, and that outside interference in this conflict would not be welcome. Certainly, it is presumptuous on our part to think that we, white