

*Alleged Failure to Aid Biafrans*

organizations, people who were working with refugees and those in medical centres.

During our tour we visited refugee camps. We saw people from Biafra and Nigeria who were starving and suffering from many diseases. We toured feeding centres. We saw feeding centre after feeding centre where small children were being fed a bowl of soup, a glass of milk or maybe an iron pill. We visited hospitals where we saw babies dying of starvation. You also see other effects of the war. You could see many young people who had been to university, had started work and who are now suffering in hospitals because of the war. We had an opportunity to talk to people involved in relief work. We spent some time with government officials and the military.

We went to Nigeria the next week and compared notes. Biafra is a nation torn by death, suffering and fear. This is apparent everywhere. I shall give one example of a feeding centre we visited; I believe it was run by the Catholic Church. We arrived at six o'clock in the morning. The reason they were being fed at that hour in the morning was that they were afraid of being attacked afterwards. I remember the church people telling us that a couple of weeks before we arrived they were feeding 4,000 or 5,000 children when a Nigerian jet flew over, bombed the centre and killed some people. It was clearly not a military target. About half a mile away they were feeding 3,500 pregnant and nursing women iron pills and stockfish. This is what you see. This is what these people are going through every day of their lives.

The Biafran people are very determined. Life to them is a fight for survival. They will continue the war despite the starvation in their country, because they feel they have to. They will continue despite their inferior weapons. All this adds up to the possibility of a very long war. That is why we as Canadians and as parliamentarians must be concerned about it and try to help in the situation.

The churches are involved. They are getting food into Biafra tonight, tomorrow night and every night of the week. They are getting food into Biafra regardless of many of the technicalities and complexities that so many parliamentarians throughout the world are talking about. They say, "people are dying so we are flying." They have been doing this for approximately the last year and they are getting food into Biafra. The Red Cross has not flown since last June. This country still

refuses to contribute funds to Canairelief. We try to hide behind protocol and many legalities and technicalities. The Prime Minister again outlined many of these things today. He documented excuse after excuse. He said that all of us as individual members can get involved if we want to, but he refuses to involve the government of Canada in contributing to Canairelief. I suppose we could say the refusal of the Prime Minister of this country to act is similar to that of a hesitant virgin.

He is asking us to send money to Canairelief but will not commit the government of Canada to doing the same thing. He knows there is a great moral injustice happening over there. At least he should know it. However, he still refuses to act. I believe one of the real handicaps of the Prime Minister is that he tries to parallel Biafra with Quebec. I think this is one of the hang-ups he has because of his concept of federalism. I suggest this is a very idiotic comparison. You cannot compare the two situations at all. He has chosen starvation in preference to contributing money to Canairelief.

Let us look at what has happened in the whole relief picture. It has already been mentioned that the Red Cross has not flown into Biafra since last June. When I was there the Canadian Hercules plane had just ceased flying. We are told that it made only 10 or 11 flights and flew about 200 tons of food into Biafra. Let us look at the other operations. Joint Church Aid, of which Canairelief is a part, up until October 31 of this year had flown 4,183 flights into Biafra with a total of over 45,000 tons of food. This is what the people of Biafra are existing on today. The need there is great. They are not getting enough food into Biafra.

Many people have stated that a minimum of 500 tons of food a day is required to keep the people of Biafra alive. I believe that today the churches are getting in somewhere between 100 and 200 tons of food, depending on what sort of night it is. What kind of solution is necessary? The Prime Minister talks about day flights and night flights and all the pros and cons of each. I suggest that we need both day and night flights. It is necessary to fly both night and day to get enough food into Biafra.

It is necessary to have some kind of overland corridor from either Port Harcourt or Calabar, or perhaps even a river corridor up the Niger River. Many members have spoken

[Mr. Nystrom.]