

The Address—Mr. Trudeau

it will improve the situation of the French-speaking Canadians throughout the country and not in a way that might contribute to divide our country. It is because that matter is of fundamental importance and not only a matter of protocol that the government feels that it has the right to be informed, consulted by the French government about activities such as those which made front page news these last few days. The government of Canada has made its position known to the French government.

But before ending my remarks on international matters, I would like to say a few words about the way many Canadians react at times of crisis in international affairs. Whether it is about Viet Nam, Nigeria or Czechoslovakia, Canadians have been less concerned with the political or military consequences of the events than by their impact on the human being. Canadians somewhat identified their interests with those of wretched people in each of those countries. It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that such a concern shown by individuals for individuals is a very noble characteristic of Canadian opinion today.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Trudeau: This generous concern is certainly the supporting strength for a great many activities in university circles, for instance, and in other spheres, when they protest against the use of force or violence.

Those who want to find excuses are greatly tempted, at the time of a conflict, to hide the sufferings of peoples and individuals behind a surface of patriotism or pride. Reasons of state are often invoked and it is to the credit of all Canadians, especially the young, Mr. Speaker, to have shown that they do not accept automatically reasons of state as an excuse for suffering and death. They think of war in terms of human beings; they think of it in terms of women, children and innocent persons, victims of events. They ask questions which, until now, were primarily a subject of concern for philosophers or poets. Let us recall Pascal who said: "It is a fine kind of justice that has a river for its boundary". One remembers these remarks of a man who told another: "Since your prince is at war with mine, I must kill you".

But nowadays our youth, all our Canadian people are concerned about those problems, are acting as our conscience and for that we are grateful to them. I am deeply encouraged

in seeing that in Canada such a sense of compassion was shown towards the starving people of Biafra, towards the refugees from Czechoslovakia and the village inhabitants in Viet Nam. That indicates the very deep human qualities of the Canadian people. On the other hand, I acknowledge the feelings of anger, futility, frustration, on the part of many Canadians, on account of our apparent inability to reduce such suffering. I acknowledge those feelings of frustration and anger as I believe we all have a share in them. They were expressed in this house last Friday, by the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) when, having been asked about our efforts to assist the refugees from Biafra, he indicated the difficulties holding back the efforts of Canadians to assist the parties in the conflict.

[English]

It is generally agreed that the most feasible channel of food aid and medical assistance to all the people of Nigeria is provided by the international relief agencies. We have accordingly supplied considerable quantities of food and other relief items to the International Red Cross which is co-ordinating these activities, and have promised additional help, such as the provision of cargo aircraft, wherever and whenever that help can be used. The difficulties which stand in the way of these humanitarian efforts come not only from the federal government of Nigeria, however; they come as well from the authorities in Biafra. The airlift relief supplies organized by the Red Cross and agreed to by the Nigerian government could not proceed because of a refusal of landing rights from Biafra.

• (5:10 p.m.)

I also want to speak about our humanitarian response to the events in Czechoslovakia. Our efforts are concentrated on assisting Czechoslovak refugees to settle in Canada. I think we can be justifiably proud of our record in this respect. Over the week end 280 refugees arrived, 267 of them on government sponsorship.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Trudeau: On Tuesday and Thursday of this week two more flights will arrive, totaling 266 persons. We are continuing to process applications. Our embassy in Vienna is conducting 150 interviews per day. As of Friday last the number of inquiries from Czechs