

*Biafran Relief*

Now that hostilities have ended we hope that it will be possible to open up land supply routes. We have also asked our High Commissioner in Lagos to reiterate to the Nigerian government our willingness to mount an air drop operation without delay if this is the only means whereby relatively large stocks of food can be delivered quickly to otherwise inaccessible areas.

As announced on Friday, the government is providing \$500,000 to the Nigerian Red Cross, \$500,000 to the Nigerian Rehabilitation Commission and \$250,000 to the International Committee of the Red Cross to aid in the delivery of food and other relief operations. Immediate steps are being taken to make these funds available and the government is exploring ways in which additional funds might effectively be used. As and when it should be required, we are prepared to provide aircraft for an airlift. Canadian Armed Forces Hercules are standing by for these operations. These should be regarded as essential interim measures because, in the long run, supplies in the quantities needed must be delivered by surface transport.

To assist our High Commission to deal with a vastly increased work load and with the special requirements that will be placed upon it, we are sending a small group of experts in relief, transportation and other fields to Lagos.

I am sure that members on all sides of the House will agree with me that we must spare no effort in co-operation with other interested nations to ensure that the tragic war in Nigeria is not followed by disastrous famine and unnecessary suffering.

**Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, this is certainly not a time for recriminations about government policy touching on this very tragic situation. Nevertheless we must say that the maladroitness and ineffectiveness of the government's policies with regard to the Nigerian-Biafran difficulty to date have created a feeling of uneasiness on the part of all those in this country who are concerned about what may happen there now. After a very bitter and bloody war there is bound to be a legacy of bitterness which one can only hope will be overcome by appropriate arrangements. There has also been a very genuine fear of genocide on the part of the Biafrans, and it is not merely confined to the Biafrans because His

[Mr. Sharp.]

Holiness the Pope and others have expressed concern about the possibility of genocide, either actively or through starvation.

The government of Canada is now offering to supply additional military observers, but the Secretary of State for External Affairs has not indicated the extent to which Canada is pressing for this; neither has he indicated acceptance of the government's proposal or where that proposal stands. It is vitally important not only that the team of observers be enlarged but that it should have freedom of movement. It should have not only the theoretical right to go to various parts of the country but the ability to get there. There has been a terrible loss of life, sir, and we must do all we can to keep any further loss of life to a minimum.

We, like the government, welcome the willingness expressed by the governments of Britain, United States, France and other countries to participate in measures to bring relief, but surely this has to be considered in its totality. The government should not simply offer to make observers available but should take the initiative to ensure that such a team is at work in the field to report on what is actually going on there. Furthermore, the relief that is needed should be in a forward position.

The Secretary of State for External Affairs stated that a lot of supplies were available nearby. Can he assure us that the supplies that are immediately required are available? For example, will additional truck transportation be required immediately to make this relief available to the various parts of the country? Is the government now using Hercules aircraft and is it doing its part to ensure that trucks are being put in a forward position to be able to respond when required?

I agree with what the Secretary of State for External Affairs has said about the importance of co-ordination. Obviously it is of vital importance; otherwise relief efforts could degenerate into chaos. The minister has said that Canada has made a proposal, but what response has the government of Canada received? Time is of the essence. It is not a matter for long discussions with the government of Nigeria and personal emissaries going to Lagos. There must not be the sort of delay there has been in the past. Time and vigour are of the essence.

We want more than just a general statement of intentions. We want to know what is going on. We need to send observers there in