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Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

One of the strengths of Canada, Mr. Speaker, one of the qualities of the Canadian people that makes me proud to be a Canadian, is the interest which Canadians take in the welfare of others less fortunate than themselves. We are, I think it is fair to say, human beings first and citizens second. Successive Canadian Governments have received full public support for measures which have been designed to relieve the suffering of persons elsewhere. In addition to our programmed external aid, Canada has again and again provided emergency food and relief supplies in generous measure to victims of famine and natural disasters. We have on several occasions welcomed to our midst in large numbers the unfortunate victims of wars and disruption.

We all stand taller as a result of our sympathies for human beings and our efforts to assist them. We stand taller not because we are seeking to mollify our own consciences, nor because we need to boast to others of our humanitarian motivation; we stand taller because we have chosen the right path of conduct and have been effective in the help we have tendered.

And this to me, Mr. Speaker, is what this entire debate today is about. It is unnecessary to discuss whether Canadians actively wish to assist the unfortunate victims of the civil war in Nigeria. They do. It is irrelevant to discuss whether a Canadian Government can properly involve itself in a relief effort abroad. It can. The single point at issue is whether this Government has acted correctly and wisely in doing what it has done.

In this respect correctness is not measured in red tape or technicalities and I shall not therefore make any attempt to suggest these considerations as an explanation for Canadian policies. But in this same respect, Mr. Speaker, neither is wisdom measured in the volume of our own voices raised in international arenas.

If we are truly and honestly committed to assisting the peoples of Nigeria, both correctness and wisdom must be measured in terms of the effectiveness of our efforts to help. Victims of war are not helped by grandiose speeches in the General Assembly; starving children are not nourished by acts which prolong hostilities.

For several weeks, Mr. Speaker, the Canadian people have shown much concern and sympathy for the problem now being discussed. Opinions, comments and questions about it have increased. A standing committee (the Standing Committee on External Affairs and National Defence) has considered that matter.

The civil war in Nigeria is a particularly complex matter. Its outbreak is linked to various factors and its roots go back quite far in the history of that great country and it is possible that only those who are engaged in that conflict can measure its intensity and understand its full meaning. In any case, Canadians as individuals have been deeply moved by the stories and pictures describing the suffering of the people of that country and they have felt involved. It is necessary however to grasp a fundamental point, namely that it is a civil war and that the solution of the conflict can be arrived at only by the belligerents themselves. Of course, those from outside can offer their services, but they cannot impose a settlement which would be contrary to the will of either side. In that connection, the good offices of the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, as well as those of the Organization for African Unity, have been and will always be available, and I hope that they will continue to be used.

The fact is that, during all the hostilities, there have been periodic discussions between Nigerian authorities and the rebels, some of them extending over several weeks. But it appears that it is not enough to have the belligerents talk things over, or even declare the urgency of a cease-fire. They must also be willing to make concessions leading to a peaceful settlement, and this is exactly this conciliatory spirit which cannot be imposed from the outside.

We have expressed on several occasions the earnest hope of this Government to see the opponents in this tragic war show at least the goodwill necessary to negotiate a lasting peace.

In testifying before the Committee, the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Mr. Arnold Smith, helped us to understand some of the implications of the problem. He explained, for example, that on several occasions during the past 18 months, certain compromises which he, as an outsider, thought quite acceptable, might have been found. However, Mr. Smith then added that there was no hope of a settlement unless the two sides themselves made some compromises. I quote some of his words:

"The Biafrans will have to make concessions with regard to sovereignty, and Lagos will have to make concessions with regard to physical security and economic viability."

I bring up that statement again, Mr. Speaker, to make clear that those who were in a position to offer their good offices made a close study of the question and that it is up to the belligerents to find within themselves the true spirit of conciliation which is the prerequisite of any compromise. Above all, we must not think that we, in Canada, were the first to become aware of that war, and that we have all the answers. We do not have them.

If Canada attempted, in one way or another, to impose any solution whatever to the conflict, that effort would constitute an intervention in the internal affairs of another country.

The policy which my Government has followed in this situation has been motivated, as is proper, by humanitarian considerations. But what a government

cannot do in this or in any other situation is to depart from the broad context of its foreign policy or its general and carefully formulated outlook on the world. Thus our policy involves our attitudes toward the aspirations of the developing countries; it touches on our position in the Commonwealth and the United Nations; it urges us to be realistic in our continuing desire to play a useful, responsible role on the world scene. I emphasize this concept of responsibility in foreign policy both because it is particularly relevant to the question of Nigeria, and because it is our belief that in the increasing complexities we have to face in international affairs it is steadily more important that countries like Canada play their parts responsibly.

We see in Nigeria a tragic and bloody civil war taking place in a Commonwealth country with which Canada has developed strong ties of friendship. I am not now talking about red tape or protocol or diplomatic technicalities. I am talking about a real issue. Contemporary international practice recognizes a fundamental legal obligation not to interfere in the internal affairs of another state. The United Nations General Assembly's unanimous declaration on non-intervention in 1965 describes this duty in no uncertain terms:

"No state has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever, in the internal or external affairs of any other state."

Certainly, world concern for the promotion and protection of basic human rights has enabled the Assembly effectively to overcome past objections that even the mere discussion of these rights constituted a form of intervention. However, in this particular instance, there was no general desire to have the item discussed at the United Nations. Moreover, in so far as actual intervention is concerned, that is, action by the United Nations within the territory of a state without its consent, it should be realized that only in the most extreme circumstances involving the maintenance or restoration of international peace and security can the appropriate United Nations organ authorize or approve such intervention.

I emphasize that to many of the states of the world -- those which have only recently gained independence -- the principle of non-intervention is a dominant consideration. As an example, I need only recall that, for all of the concern of the countries of Africa for the plight of the native population in the Republic of South Africa, there has never been a proposal from an African country that the United Nations possesses the right to violate the territorial integrity of South Africa. The question of South West Africa because of its mandate is distinct and not to be confused. If, therefore, the Africans, for fear of creating a precedent which might be used against themselves later, have not raised the argument of intervention on humanitarian grounds in South Africa, it is not likely that any Canadian effort to intervene in Nigeria would be met with other than outraged opposition.

There have been persistent proposals in this House and in the press that Canada raise this issue at the United Nations. Notwithstanding what I have just said, I should like to assure the people of Canada that we have gone into this deeply. There have been intensive consultations with other delegations in New York; the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) sought the views of the United Nations Secretary-General in an exchange of messages in September; our missions abroad have sought advice; I talked personally

with the Secretary-General about this and other matters. As a result of all this, of my own talks with the Secretary-General, of continuing inquiries made at the official level at the United Nations and in a number of foreign capitals, I remain convinced that an attempt to inscribe the Nigerian conflict on the agenda of the General Assembly would not only be bitterly resented by the Nigerian Government and the member states of the Organization of African Unity but would also be totally unsuccessful because of the procedural requirement of support of 63 other members. In view of the OAU resolution, there is not a chance that even a small fraction of that number would agree. And Hon. Members should not forget that of the 126 United Nations' members, 42 are from the continent of Africa.

There is an alternative to the General Assembly, we are told. A committee. Should we attempt to employ a General Assembly committee for such a discussion, conceding for the moment that we could do so, which is not entirely clear, our efforts would prove not only divisive but totally counter-productive. The soundings to which I have referred and others revealed the following probable consequences of any such attempts: First, hostility and opposition from almost all African states. Canada's long-term relations with these countries, which we now find amiable and productive, would be prejudiced for some years to come, both on a bilateral and a multilateral basis. Any doubts in this respect should have been resolved by the OAU vote of 33-4 against intervention. Second, Nigeria would demand that we cease participating in relief assistance to any part of that country. Third, we should be asked to withdraw from the international observer team in Nigeria.

I need only add that, in the view of the Government, such a policy by Canada would be completely irresponsible and indefensible.

However much it might salve the feelings of concerned Canadians, it would be wrong. For these reasons I am reluctant to strain the very real and very meaningful ties of friendship which Canada enjoys with Nigeria and with other African states. I have accordingly assured General Gowon of our continuing support for his government as the government of all Nigeria. I have at the same time informed him of our desire to see an early conclusion of the hostilities in Nigeria on terms permitting Nigerians to live within a federal structure which provides adequate guarantees of personal and economic security to all persons. General Gowon has for his part assured us of his intention to provide such guarantees and has welcomed the understanding and interest of the Canadian people.

What I have said about action through the United Nations applies also to proposals that initiatives be mounted through the Commonwealth. Like the United Nations, the Commonwealth is an association of sovereign states, admittedly bound by special ties of affection but also bound by tradition not to intervene in each other's affairs or to discuss them at Commonwealth meetings. The Commonwealth does offer the unique facility of the good offices function of the Secretary-General which I mentioned earlier. Members who are familiar with Mr. Arnold Smith's testimony before the Standing Committee are aware of the untiring efforts which Mr. Smith has lent to the search for a solution. These efforts have not met with success but they have served to keep open a channel of communications between the disputants.

Recently there have been proposals that Canada attempt to arrange a cease-fire. It is argued that this would not involve making a political or moral judgement on the merits of either side's case, and the advocates see it in terms of "let the fighting cease and peace will prevail". I agree with the theory but the practice is

more complicated, as shown by reports of discussions already held by the Nigerian parties about a possible cease-fire. It is clear that this question has been surrounded by political conditions. For example, at one point the rebel proposals for a cease-fire stipulated a withdrawal of federal troops behind the pre-war boundaries, an action which the Nigerians claim would place some five and a half million non-Ibos under Ibo rule without their being able to make a choice. This one example illustrates that in this situation a cease-fire is not a simple proposition to be seen in isolation from the political factors. In present circumstances, any cease-fire inevitably involves a major concession of principle by one side or the other. I am not suggesting that a cease-fire is undesirable or that it is impossible; I am saying that it will be difficult to accomplish.

What I have been attempting to make clear, Mr. Speaker, is the legal, moral and political framework in which the Government has viewed this human crisis in a friendly country. It has been clear to me throughout that the concern of the Canadian people in this situation is that their Government should act to help relieve human suffering without interfering in the politics of the situation or being used to advance the political aspirations of one side over the other.

This challenge we have accepted; this concern of the Canadian people we have attempted to meet, I should like nothing more than to be able to stand here today and to announce that the Nigerian civil war has been concluded. It is of little consequence to me whether that conclusion is reached as a result of any special Canadian intervention. It is a solution that I seek, not necessarily a "made in Canada" solution. What is important is that the war cease, that the unnecessary deaths be avoided, and that the record of Canadians and their Government be an honourable one. I think that the record to date is honourable and I should like to recount briefly some of the actions the Government has taken.

The Government's concern with the Nigerian situation was engaged long before the Canadian people became aware of the problem and Hon. Gentlemen opposite began to ask questions. Our ties with Nigeria have been strong, affectionate and mutually advantageous, and because of this we watched with deepening anxiety as the situation deteriorated in 1966 and 1967. When the secession occurred and the fighting broke out we became increasingly concerned that this conflict would tear irreparably the fabric of this fellow Commonwealth country. We told the Lagos Government that we believed a peaceful rather than a military settlement should be found. We supported the Commonwealth Secretary-General in his efforts to bring about negotiations. Later we supported the initiative of the Organization of African Unity in the same direction. And we have repeatedly urged the Nigerian Government, which we continue to recognize as the government of all Nigeria, to seek a peaceful negotiated settlement.

In terms of action, the Canadian Government has concentrated on humanitarian assistance to those in need. We were involved in this well before the human problem reached its acute and well publicized stage. As early as February of this year, we made representations to the Federal Nigerian Government urging greater co-operation with the International Red Cross in its mercy flights into rebel-held territory. Since then we have spoken frequently with the Nigerian authorities on related subjects and have always been given a cordial hearing and explanation of their position. These explanations have made clear, for example, their long-standing willingness to open land and water corridors for the movement of relief supplies, a willingness which is not shared, I should emphasize, by the rebels.

In May, long before this unfortunate war was the subject of constant questions in the House, the International Committee of the Red Cross asked Canada for urgent financial help in their operations in Nigeria. We responded with a substantial cash grant. In July we allocated half a million dollars in food aid for Nigeria and sent an initial food shipment to Lagos by Hercules aircraft. At that time we decided in principle to provide Hercules aircraft for an airlift under Red Cross auspices if the agreement of the two sides could be obtained.

In August we lent the services of a Canadian expert to the International Red Cross to assist that organization in studying the feasibility of increased and improved airlift operations.

In September another allocation was made of half a million dollars in food aid. The large sea shipment of food sent under these allocations arrived in the area early this month and we have reports of it reaching the forward centres from which the Red Cross distributes it to needy civilians. These are significant contributions being made by the Government in the name of the Canadian people, and they have been acknowledged warmly by the Nigerian authorities. But the story does not end there. Further food aid in large amounts will continue to move forward from Canada.

Private Canadian organizations have also made significant contributions, and their work should be praised and encouraged. I would pay special tribute to the efforts of the Canadian Red Cross Society, which has been in this situation from the beginning, working patiently and hard to bring aid and comfort to the suffering in all parts of Nigeria affected by the fighting.

Mr. Speaker, the most acute problem was that of transportation. The House is well aware of the sincere and sustained efforts the Government made in this regard. Generally, attention was concentrated only on air transport into the rebel zone. But, in fact, it was a second choice, for using the ground corridors into the Eastern area would allow the transportation of far greater quantities of supplies. The situation could be met far better through their use instead of hazardous flights in an air corridor over the jungle, close to aircraft transporting arms. Still, the rebels have constantly opposed the proposals of the Red Cross and Nigeria with regard to the use of the ground corridors, and although one can understand their military concern, one can certainly question the merits of such priorities. As the food supplies decrease, it becomes obvious that even the most efficient and best organized airlift will not be sufficient. Ground transportation therefore remains the only adequate solution. And this requires the approval of Colonel Ojukwu.

With regard to air transport, let us look first at the fact that the Red Cross asked us for Hercules aircraft because of their exceptional capacity and other features which made them particularly suitable for that type of work. Now, that request involved the use of Canadian armed forces airplanes and, consequently, we had to get beforehand the authorization of the Nigerian authorities. Such authorization was required not only for the flights over rebel territory, since these territories were under Nigerian sovereignty. It was then that Nigeria made it clear that any flights over rebel territory not previously authorized by it would be considered as "acts of hostility". As a friendly and responsible government, we were not going to ignore that warning. Therefore, the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp) attempted to get from the Nigerian Government permission to fly over the rebel territory. Through painstaking and persevering efforts, such permission was granted on October 8. The sole condition

stipulated by the Nigerian authorities was that Canadian airplanes should operate their mission under the auspices of the Red Cross. We were also advised that this permission would not continue if transport operations were made under the auspices of other organizations, such as the churches for instance. Therefore, it was with the authorization of the Nigerian government that our Hercules airplanes went to Lagos last summer.

I should like to pause briefly at this juncture to recall what I said a moment ago about the inviolability of territory and about the principles of international law which support non-intervention. Much as we may argue that in this instance or that such principles may or should be bent, we must remember that we cannot take unto ourselves such a decision. To do so means that we are setting ourselves above the law, as judges in our own cause. Rules of international conduct are not perfect but they are designed to ensure order. Breaking these rules because we think it is right only leads to chaos.

Following the agreement reached between the Secretary of State for External Affairs and the Nigerian Commissioner General for External Affairs, a Canadian Hercules aircraft did operate on the Red Cross night airlift from Fernando Po into the rebel area for some days. During that period it made a most significant contribution to the effort, carrying 20 tons of food each trip. Our experience quickly showed, however, that daylight flights by relief aircraft would be better; more flights could be made more safely, and much greater quantities of food could be delivered to those in need. We could see no reason why the rebel authorities should refuse to allow daylight flights if they were really interested in receiving food for their people in the quantities required.

It was about this time that I decided, in constant consultation with the Secretary of State for External Affairs and based on the continuous stream of information available to the Government from its missions in Africa and elsewhere, that it would be appropriate to send to Lagos a personal representative of the Prime Minister of Canada to discuss with the Nigerian Head of State the Canadian interest in an early settlement of the war. Accordingly I asked my legislative assistant, Professor Ivan Head, who had previously been in Nigeria, to fly to Lagos and speak on my behalf to General Gowon. This initiative was taken not because we thought that Canada possessed any wisdom not available to the Nigerians nor because we possessed some magic key which could solve the deadlock. I sent Mr. Head with instructions to explore the most effective avenues of Canadian relief assistance. And I sent him to assure General Gowon of our interest in a conclusion of hostilities in Nigeria and the establishment of a federal structure on terms which would guarantee the political and economic security of all minorities in Nigeria.

That initiative was successful. It was during Professor Head's discussion with General Gowon that it emerged that the Nigerians would have no objection to daylight relief flights by the Red Cross. I regard this statement as one of the most meaningful to date in this entire sequence of events, and one which is evidence of the good faith of the Federal Military Government in Lagos.

I therefore issued my appeal on November 4 to the rebel authorities to permit these relief planes to land by day in their territory. Shortly

thereafter we learned that the Nigerians would no longer agree to the continuation of night flights into the rebel area. It was evident that the Federal Government intended to step up military action against the shipments of arms which were going in at night, evidently in increasing quantities.

As I have reported to the House, my appeal was conveyed to the rebel authorities by the International Committee of the Red Cross, and although many days have passed we have received no clearcut reply. We are seeking every means possible to commence the daylight operation. Hon. Members will understand the reason why we cannot accept at face value every statement attributed to some self-claimed rebel spokesmen. These statements have proved again and again to be contradictory. At the same time I stress that we do not reject these statements out of hand. In each case, as with the message conveyed to me yesterday by the Hon. Member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin), we attempt through the Red Cross channel to determine the authenticity of the communication. The Red Cross has served in this fashion as a channel of communication for decades, and with great honour. We see no reason to doubt either the integrity or the effectiveness of the Red Cross in these respects.

Our aircraft stationed on Fernando Po has not been without work. It has been able to perform several useful assignments for the Red Cross related to their work in the Nigerian area, but if it remains unable to participate in the airlift into the rebel area the responsibility rests squarely with the Ojukwu regime.

We have of course also offered aircraft to fly relief supplies into the federal-held regions of Eastern Nigeria. A Hercules flew to Lagos for this purpose in October. Accompanying that aircraft were reconnaissance officers whose task it was to ascertain landing sites. To the distress of all concerned it was learned that the forward airports were incapable of utilization for relief flights by this size of aircraft for prolonged periods without permanent runway damage. The foundation of the runway at Enugu had been weakened by severe and prolonged rains, the heaviest in the history of Nigeria; the runway at Calabar was not well constructed and was in addition damaged as a result of the fighting in that area.

While Mr. Head was in Lagos he therefore discussed with General Gowon and his officials the provision of other, lighter aircraft which could replace the Hercules. The Nigerian Government expressed a desire to receive Canadian Caribou aircraft and my Government stated it was willing to supply them. However, as I repeated in the House yesterday, the policy of the Canadian Government throughout has been to make our relief assistance available, not to the Nigerian Government nor to the rebel authorities but to the Red Cross for impartial administration and distribution according to civilian need. We have been informed by the Nigerian Red Cross that that body is not now able to utilize efficiently the Caribou. We have been asked to delay the dispatch of these airplanes, and we have done so.

Before concluding, Mr. Speaker, I should touch on another important aspect of the Nigerian problem. Canadian participation in the international team of observers has been studied at length by the Committee and I need not comment in detail. I would like to say, however, that it has seemed most worth while for Canada to participate. We are pleased to continue to participate in the extended work of the team. There was much loose talk at an earlier stage

accusing the Federal Nigerian Government of genocide, and I think that that Government acted wisely in inviting observers from a number of countries and organizations to assess the situation independently. The reports of the observer team have refuted these glib charges. For our part, we take this operation very seriously and expect our observers to move about freely, observe and report fully and frankly. They have done so. So has the United Nations observer.

May I pay a personal tribute to the Canadian officers involved, as well as to the officers and crews of the Canadian aircraft involved in our relief contribution, for the spirit and competence with which they have been performing duties which are somewhat out of their regular line. We are proud of them all.

With respect to our aircrew, Mr. Speaker, I have great pleasure in informing the House that the ICRC has communicated to the Canadian Red Cross its praise for the efficiency and conduct of the Canadian Hercules crew presently stationed in Fernando Po. The National Commissioner for the Canadian Red Cross states that this heartwarming message is of particular significance because no similar message had been received by the ICRC in Switzerland from its official in Africa with respect to any other aircrew.

There are many facets to the Nigerian problem. Much information has been brought out in the Standing Committee, and I believe the Canadian people are now better informed about its complexities and better able to understand the position of the Canadian Government. I should like to put that position briefly again in conclusion. The Government shares the deep concern of the people of this country with the suffering that is going on in Nigeria, and is anxious to help relieve it. It is doing so in a generous and responsible manner. We will continue to afford assistance and to increase it, if that is feasible, in order that human suffering can be alleviated. We will, moreover, continue to encourage in whatever way possible the peaceful settlement of the Nigerian dispute. We measure any suggested action against a single standard: Will it be effective?

Canada intends to remain friendly with all the peoples of Nigeria long after this dispute is settled, and to be in a position where we can play a useful role in assisting the African states to meet their problems. Our policies to this date have been designed to ensure that possibility. All information that reaches us from both parts of Nigeria indicates that we are successful to date.

The torment of the Nigerian peoples must be concluded as soon as possible. At the same time, the future welfare of the Nigerian peoples must be protected and assured. We must not permit our anxiety to achieve the first objective so to foul our reputation and hinder our effectiveness that we will not be given by the parties the opportunity to assist in the long-term recovery of Nigeria.