

Supply—Northern Affairs

that area, why leave the people there? Move them to an area where they can live. If there are no caribou and they cannot live off the land, move them to where there is something on which they can live, namely fish or white whale or whatever it might be. But do something about this vision and do something for the poor people of the country so that they will not die from starvation, cold and lack of clothing or because the caribou have not come.

Just imagine yourself out a thousand miles from nowhere, with no food, and building a snow house and nothing in it to eat, no light, nothing. Put yourself in their position. Finally, you have to start eating the caribou hide that you have to lie on and your parka that you have to wear in order to live. This, Mr. Chairman, is a serious matter. It is a matter that should be looked into. It should have been looked into before. The minister knows that I have read speeches of his in which he has talked about the decline of the caribou. As I said before, we have to plan to look after not only the material development of our north country but also the human development.

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle): Mr. Chairman, I think the remarks of the hon. member for Mackenzie River express what has been said on several occasions before by various members of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources about the seriousness of adjusting the few hundred Eskimos who live in this vast area of Keewatin to the fact that the caribou supply has almost finished, if it is not finished for all practical purposes.

Just three weeks ago, at the opening of the Northwest Territories council meeting here in Ottawa, the commissioner of the Northwest Territories told this whole sombre story to the members of that council and outlined to them some of the things that we had in action and some of the things that we would have to do. I think the committee will be pleased to learn that this matter has not gone on without full awareness and heart-burning on the part of the members of the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources. I think I made very clear to the members of the committee on mines, forests and waters that the human resources of the north must be preserved not only for the material advantage that would come from their proper use but also because we are dealing with our fellowmen.

When I look over the story of what has been accomplished I know it is but a small beginning, but I will let the committee judge whether this matter of the starvation of people, which is a recurring thing in the north, has gone unnoticed. I might add a personal note. If any person wants to read

the diaries of Samuel Hearne, the first white man who went through this area, of his three trips to Coppermine, he will find the same story of privation and starvation is told there.

Mr. Hardie: I hope the government has done something since Hearne's time.

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle): The hon. member for Mackenzie River made a very moving speech, and I sat here and made no interruptions. The whole committee listened attentively because their hearts were moved by the story he told. I would like a chance just to say something, without any appeal to the emotions, on what has been done. Last year the department set up a team of biologists and wild life experts to follow the remaining caribou herds, for several reasons. One was to let the Indians and the Eskimos know where the migrations were moving, which would give them a better chance to intercept them at the crossing places over the rivers and other places where they go. Second, they are trying to find out what is the cause of the drop in the number of calves each year as opposed to the normal drop.

Then there is a second type of activity which was carried on last year, and which is still continuing. The three prairie provinces, the government of the Northwest Territories and the federal government have been meeting and working out some form of co-ordinated program to make certain that what is left of the caribou herds is reserved as much as possible and, as well we can possibly manage, for the use of those who rely entirely on the caribou. These are the two things that were started by the department last year for dealing with the shortage of caribou at the present time.

There is a list of six or seven things that I should like to mention. I think everybody in the committee realizes that the area dealt with by the hon. member for Mackenzie River, generally speaking, concerns the Keewatin area, which is the area west of Hudson bay and extending through the tundra to the forest lands close to the Mackenzie. In this area there are only a few hundred Eskimos, who are nomadic people, and who have existed and survived there with the greatest of difficulty for many centuries. Only a few have survived, and it is one of the great stories of mankind that the human mind and the human body can stand what they have stood. But they are there. Their traditional food, which is caribou, is disappearing.

These are some of the things that we are doing to meet the situation as outlined by and which is inherent in the remarks of the hon. member for Mackenzie River. The first thing