

Supply—Northern Affairs

do so, but I remind the committee that the report should be tabled when the Speaker is in the chair.

Mr. Hamilton (Qu'Appelle): I will read this report subject to the proviso that this is a privileged document, and it does not set a precedent for tabling a privileged document in future. But I understand it is the privilege of a minister to bring such a document into committee and read it if he so wishes.

The memorandum is dated Baker Lake, April 26, 1958, and it is addressed to the chief, arctic division.

Garry Lake Eskimos

On April 24 I sent the following message to your office:

Visited Garry and Pelly with Corporal Wilson April 24. Eskimos interviewed report food shortage throughout area all people one camp plus three others died starvation after building at Pelly containing relief supplies burned down February. R.C.M.P. Otter flying food supplies Pelly April 25 will accompany in my plane full report on return.

Since this message was sent the R.C.M.P. Otter has come from Churchill to Baker Lake. On April 25 it made an attempt to fly to Garry and Pelly lake but was forced to turn back because of poor visibility. As this memorandum is being written the plane is making a second attempt and probably will reach Pelly lake although flying conditions are far from ideal. The R.C.M.P. plane is taking in relief food supplies to be left at Pelly lake and, if possible, it will make a search of the area for Eskimo camps. Due to poor visibility on April 25 and high winds on April 25 I have been unable to leave Baker Lake in my plane. Corporal Wilson is with the R.C.A.F. plane. I have remained at Baker Lake in order to allow the R.C.M.P. aircraft to take my equivalent weight in aviation gas for my plane to Pelly lake. This will enable me to fly to Garry and Pelly and give me ample gas in that area if it becomes necessary to use my plane to search for camps. I expect the R.C.M.P. plane will return to Baker Lake this afternoon and take off for Churchill. I will send this preliminary report on the plane.

On February 20, in a memorandum to your office (File 205-4/159) I outlined the position of the Garry lake group of Eskimos as it was known to us at that time. Subsequent to this memorandum I discussed the situation of the group with Mr. Rudnicki and Mr. Stevenson while in Churchill at the end of February. So far as I can ascertain at this time the evaluation of the situation at Garry as outlined in my memorandum and in the conversations at Churchill was correct except for one unknown, and very important, fact. At the time I wrote the memorandum I did not know that the building at Pelly lake containing all the relief supplies as well as the trade goods for the Eskimo (which had been taken to Pelly lake by Corporal Wilson) had been burned to the ground early in February with the loss of everything inside. The loss of these goods changed what would have been a 'hard' winter into one of tragedy. The following is a chronological arrangement of events relating to the Garry lake group starting from the summer of 1957:

In midsummer, 1957, the northern service officer at Baker Lake received a wireless message from the Roman Catholic priest at Garry lake to the effect that the group of Eskimos in that area were in danger of starvation. Upon investigation by the

Baker Lake R.C.M.P. detachment O.C. this report proved to be without foundation. The Eskimos were concentrated on one small island by the Roman Catholic mission and were unable to exist as a large group at that point. Immediate dispersal of the Eskimos into small groups on the land throughout the Garry lake area brought food in plenty to all camps. The R.C.M.P. N.C.O. arranged to fly in to Garry lake a large quantity of family allowance food and relief food supplies to be stored in the area in case of emergency. (At this time the northern service officer Baker Lake had departed for posting at Churchill). In mid August the R.C.M.P. N.C.O. Baker Lake spent a week at Garry lake visiting all the Eskimos at their camps. Caribou were being taken in small numbers and fishing was adequate. With Spartan Airways personnel at the Pelly lake airstrip he arranged for the use of an unheated building as a warehouse for the food supplies brought in by plane. The local Eskimos were instructed to use the relief supplies in the building in case of emergency. Under the direction of the Roman Catholic priest at Garry lake, one of the Garry lake Eskimos, Maneeralik W1-207 who had recently returned from hospital in southern Canada, was asked to supervise the distribution of the food supplies as required. The R.C.M.P. N.C.O. encourage the Eskimos to set traps during the coming winter and to bring the furs to Maneeralik who would issue goods to them in return. Arrangements would be made to transport trade goods from Baker Lake to Pelly lake in the R.C.M.P. plane. The R.C.M.P. N.C.O. also urged the people to put up good caches of fish before freeze up. Early in December the Roman Catholic priest from Garry lake, with the Eskimo Maneeralik, came to Baker Lake by sled. He reported to the R.C.M.P. N.C.O. (the northern service officer was in Ottawa) that food was in short supply throughout the Garry lake area. Few caribou had been seen and the people were existing on fish. The R.C.M.P. N.C.O. requested that the R.C.M.P. Otter come to Baker Lake in order to fly in additional food supplies to Garry lake. These supplies would be in the form of family allowance goods and trade goods. Maneeralik had reported that the Eskimos had a number of fox and wolf skins with which to trade for food and other supplies. These skins had been left in the building at the Pelly lake airstrip. (The airstrip is ten miles from the Roman Catholic mission at Garry lake) Maneeralik had kept records of the numbers of foxes brought to Pelly lake by the Eskimos and of the goods he had issued to them in return from the supplies on hand. The R.C.M.P. Otter came to Baker Lake and took the additional supplies to Pelly lake. I arrived back in Baker Lake just in time to accompany this flight. I reported on this trip to the effect that the additional supplies had been taken to Pelly lake and stored in the building. I also reported that a good portion of the goods and food taken in last fall was still in the building which indicated that no serious food problems existed at that time. The Baker Lake R.C.M.P. N.C.O. planned to make a dog sled patrol to Garry and Pelly lake in late February. I reported on this in my memo of February 20. At the time I was dubious that this patrol would actually take place and discussed this matter with Messrs. Rudnicki and Stevenson in Churchill. As a result of these discussions I sent a wire to the Baker Lake R.C.M.P. N.C.O. suggesting that, if he was unable to make this patrol Messrs. Stevenson and Rudnicki could come to Baker Lake from Eskimo Point in the R.C.M.P. Otter and then fly in to Garry lake in order to ascertain conditions. Following my

[The Chairman.]