

Photo: Dept. of Transport

The new Eastern Arctic Patrol Ship, *C. D. Howe*, at Levis, P.Q.

## NORTHERN NEWS

### Vessels for the Canadian Arctic

Recently there have been important developments in the two major vessels under construction for use in the Canadian Arctic, and the Department of Transport has announced that a new twin-screw icebreaker will be built for its Service.

#### *New icebreaker for the Department of Transport*

The main task of the new icebreaker will be the supplying of far northern stations during the summer; the rest of the year she will be employed icebreaking in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and in the St. Lawrence River.

Details of the plans for the ship have not been announced, but it is reported

that the icebreaker will be the largest in North America. She will be specially equipped for carrying and landing supplies and will have a large refrigerated storage capacity. In addition to all the most recent navigation aids it is anticipated that she will normally carry two helicopters for reconnaissance work.

#### *Launching of the Eastern Arctic Patrol Ship*

The new Eastern Arctic Patrol Ship, the *C. D. Howe*, was launched from the Davie Shipbuilding and Repairing Company's yards at Levis, Quebec, on September 7. Owing to delays in construction she was not ready for the 1949 northern patrol as originally intended. An account of this ship, which will be

operated by the Department of Transport, was given in *Arctic* Vol. I, No. 2, (1948) p. 121.

During the summer months the *C. D. Howe* will carry the Government freight and personnel for the Eastern Arctic, formerly carried by the Hudson's Bay Company's *R.M.S. Nascope*; the rest of the year she will be assigned to Department of Transport duties on the East Coast and the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Her appearance is workmanlike, but modern, with a raked stem and a cruiser stern, two continuous decks and three cargo holds which have steel covers on their weather deck hatches. Her overall length is 294 ft. 6 ins. and her draft fully loaded 18 ft. 6 ins., not 18 ft. as previously announced. The *C. D. Howe* will be registered in Ottawa.

#### *Laying of the keel of the new Royal Canadian Navy icebreaker*

The keel of the new R.C.N. icebreaker was laid at a ceremony on November 18. This vessel, which is under construction at the Marine Industries Yards at Sorel, Quebec, was described in *Arctic*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1949) p. 75. It is expected that the icebreaker, which is similar in some respects to the U.S. Wind Class, will be completed in the summer of 1952.

In Canada there are at present only four ships operating which were built as icebreakers: the *N. B. McLean*, *Ernest Lapointe*, *Lady Grey*, and *Saurel*.

#### **Archaeological work on Cornwallis Island**

Last summer, Dr. H. B. Collins, of the Smithsonian Institution, and his assistant, Mr. J. P. Michea, of the National Museum of Canada, excavated old Eskimo sites in the region of Resolute Bay, Cornwallis Island, in the Canadian Arctic Archipelago. The project was a joint one between the National Museum of Canada and the Smithsonian Institution. These excavations are of particular interest as the first to be made in the northern part of the Canadian Archipelago. All the sites excavated appeared to be pure Thule culture with no signs of Dorset influence.

Ruins of four villages, of from 6 to 14 houses, were found. The houses were of the usual Thule type, being made of stones, whale bones, and turf. Excava-

tions in the houses and adjacent middens yielded a considerable quantity of cultural material, all of it representative of the Thule culture. Several examples of pictographic art were found, including one showing a whale being harpooned from a umiak.

Very few examples of pictographic art have been found at Thule sites in Canada or Greenland, and this one showing a typical Eskimo umiak, with the steersman in the stern, three paddlers and the harpooner in the act of hurling a harpoon at a whale is a fine example. The Thule people were primarily whale hunters, and from skulls and other evidence the Bow Head whale appeared to be abundant in their time. Today there are none in the region.

A composite stone and pottery lamp found is unique in arctic excavation. It has a flat limestone slab for a base and a built-up side of pottery.

#### **The death of Nukashook<sup>1</sup>**

At Cambridge Bay on September 2 and 3, two 21-year old Netsilik Eskimo from Boothia Peninsula, Eeriyykoot and Ishakak, were tried before Stipendiary Magistrate A. H. Gibson with a six-man jury on charges of assisting the suicide of a 45-year old Eskimo woman, Nukashook, the mother of Eeriyykoot.

The evidence showed that Nukashook, who was in an advanced state of tuberculosis and in pain, had repeatedly requested her son to help her to die, in accordance with an old Eskimo custom whereby it is the duty of the children to assist old or sick Eskimo who desire to kill themselves. Last summer Eeriyykoot asked his friend Ishakak to help him in this task. They went to Nukashook's tent and arranged a loop of sealskin line from the ridge-pole. Nukashook placed her head through the loop, requesting her son to hurry the procedure. Eeriyykoot then pressed down on the back of her head until she was dead. No attempt was made to conceal the act and the neighbours were informed and assisted with the burial.

Both Eeriyykoot and Ishakak are intelligent men, able to read and write in

<sup>1</sup>Reprinted from the *Arctic Circular*, Vol. II, No. 6 (1949) pp. 71-2.

syllabics. At the trial Eeriykoot said that he would have considered it wrong not to help his mother when she asked him. Apparently realizing that the white man might object to their action, both men were reluctant to take part and only agreed on the insistence of Nukashook.

Eeriykoot was found guilty and was sentenced to one year's imprisonment, while Ishakak, who took only a minor part, and was to some extent under the domination of Eeriykoot, was acquitted. Eeriykoot will serve his sentence at Cambridge Bay, apparently not in close confinement and his punishment will in fact lie in his isolation from the rest of his own people in Boothia Peninsula.

It is hoped the trial will have the desired effect of bringing home to the Eskimo that assisted suicides are forbidden. The comparatively light sentence given Eeriykoot avoided, however, any unnecessary harshness toward an individual whose sense of filial duty and adherence to Eskimo custom led him to contravene the Criminal Code.

This trial illustrates well the difficulty of applying laws based on the usages of civilization to a people as remote as the Netsilik, to whom tribal custom must still appear a more immediate obligation.

#### **New U.S. vehicle for arctic transportation**

On 3 November 1949 the U.S. Transportation Corps announced that it had sent two modified half-track vehicles north for testing. They hope that in the Arctic these half-tracks, modified from the type used by Tank Destroyer units in 1942, may be able to take the place of the 2½ ton truck farther south.

Mr. A. Stayer, an automotive engineer with the Transportation Corps Board, has been responsible for the modification work. This included redesigning the conventional track to give a greatly reduced low-ground pressure, and devising front traction plates, which when secured between the dual-wheel gives the latter the same basic characteristics as the half-track pattern. These half-track vehicles will be capable of carrying up to 6,000 lbs. and tests made, some of which were carried out in sand, indicated that there would be 7.3 lb. ground pressure per sq. inch. It is hoped that these

half-tracks will be capable of travelling over ice and snow at speeds in excess of 15 miles an hour.

#### **Greenland News from Denmark**

Through the kindness of Capt. Ejnar Mikkelsen and Mr. Gert Andersen we have received the following information about Greenland affairs.

##### *Fund for increasing cultural relations*

The Danish Government has recently established a fund, with a capital of 750,000 Kr. (\$108,000 U.S.), for the purpose of increasing cultural relations between Greenland and Denmark. The fund will be used for such things as making grants or loans to young Greenlanders for the purpose of studying in Denmark, for encouraging the exchange of Greenlandic and Danish literature, and for providing books for public libraries. In addition the Greenland Administration, under a different scheme, provides the funds for training a number of craftsmen and technicians for professions in Greenland. In September 1949 40 such persons were being trained.

##### *Population statistics*

The latest population figures for Greenland, published by the Greenland Administration in Copenhagen, date from 1947. Between 31 December 1946 and 31 December 1947 the native population increased by about 2 per cent, from 21,379 to 21,825. In 1947 20,403 natives lived in West Greenland, including Thule, the most northern district. The district of Julianehaab had the greatest population, 4,280, and Godthaab, with 1,994, the next. In the two Eastern Colonies, Angmagssalik and Scoresbysund, there were only 1,422 inhabitants.

In 1947 the birthrate for the whole of Greenland was 43.7 per thousand and the death-rate 22.5 per thousand. The excess of births over deaths, 21.2 per thousand, is nearly twice as great as in Denmark.

At the beginning of this century the population in East Greenland was definitely decreasing. Since that time there has been a steady increase, and a provisional estimate suggests that between 1947 and 1970 the population should increase by as much as 50 per cent.

*Air communications*

In 1949, for the first time there has been well-established air communication between Greenland and Denmark. The usual boats were not able to satisfy the large demands for transport to Greenland, so the Greenland Administration chartered an aircraft from the Scandinavian Airline System. The aircraft has primarily been used for the transport of experts and workers engaged in an extensive building program being carried out in Greenland. The need for increased communication with Denmark is a sign of the modernization of Greenland and of the movement away from cultural isolation.

*Vacation homes for Greenlandic children*

Following an appeal to the Danish Red Barnet (Save the Children Fund), that Greenlandic children might be included in the scheme for Dutch, French and

other foreign children who have been convalescing in Denmark, Red Barnet has announced that a number of vacation homes will be established in Greenland for local children. It was considered that it would not be right to bring Greenlandic children to Denmark on account of the grave risk of their catching tuberculosis or children's diseases which might prove fatal. The first camp in Greenland has already been established this year in Tasermiut fjord, south of Julianehaab.

*Distribution of fresh vegetables*

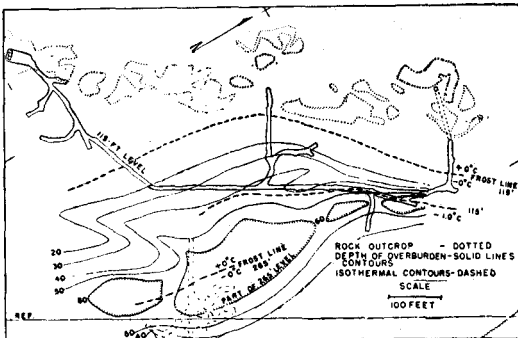
This year Danish market gardeners made a gift to the Greenlanders of a large amount of fresh vegetables. Free distribution was arranged in Greenland and it was hoped that by the enjoyment of the vegetables the Greenlanders would be encouraged to start growing some for themselves.

## CORRESPONDENCE

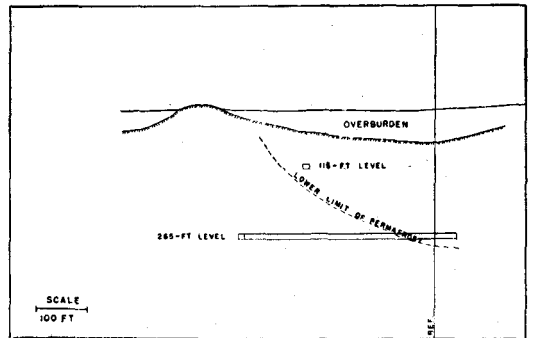
*To the Editor:*

The paper "Permafrost in Canada" by John L. Jenness appearing in the May, 1949, issue of *Arctic* is a valuable contribution to the knowledge of permafrost in Canada. Although widespread observations on permafrost have been made in this country, the published record of collected data is very limited.

At Giant Yellowknife (see abstracts Royal Society of Canada, Section iv, Halifax meeting, June, 1949), considerable evidence has been accumulated to show that the depth of permafrost in bedrock is a function of the thickness (allowing for insulating qualities) of overburden, as indicated in the accompanying plan and section.



Composite plan of permafrost zone at Giant Yellowknife Mine.



Vertical section showing permafrost profile at Giant Yellowknife Mine.