

Yukon Territory.—North and slightly west of British Columbia lies Yukon Territory, a 207,076-sq. mile triangular area of plateaus and mountain ranges, cut off from the Pacific by the Coast and St. Elias Mountains, bounded on the northeast by the Northwest Territories and on the west by the United States State of Alaska, its only seacoast extending for a hundred miles along the Arctic Ocean west of the Mackenzie River delta. Between the Coast Range on the west and the Mackenzie Mountains Range on the east lies a plateau of rough, irregularly rolling upland having an average elevation of 4,000 feet but with higher areas. Cutting through mountains and plateaus are numerous river valleys. The highest points are in the southwestern corner where many peaks of the St. Elias Mountains reach heights of over 10,000 feet. Mount Logan, the highest in Canada, has an elevation of 19,850 feet.

The whole region is north of latitude 60° and part is beyond the Arctic Circle. In winter, even in the south, the days are short with no effective sunshine but in summer long hours of daylight promote rapid growth where suitable soil is available. Although the area is subject to wide variations in temperature, winters are remarkably mild and periods of intense cold are of short duration.

The major production of this area comes from its mines in the west-central region—gold in the Dawson area and silver, lead, zinc and cadmium in the Mayo district. Nickel and copper are known to exist at Kluane Lake and in the Pelly Mountains, and large iron ore deposits recently discovered in the Snake River area not far from the potentially oil-and-gas-rich Peel Plateau make the Yukon a potentially rich territory. The construction of the Alaska Highway across the southern part of the Territory and its later northward extension now provides a transport route through the central region linked with British Columbia and Alberta distribution centres.

The Yukon is fairly well forested in the valleys of the mountainous areas but cutting is for local use only. There are extensive water power resources on the Yukon River and several small installations are of particular importance in the development of the mining areas.

The population of the Yukon numbered 14,628 in 1961, 5,031 of them living in Whitehorse, the main urban centre, 881 in Dawson and 342 in Mayo.

Northwest Territories.—The Northwest Territories comprise all Canadian territory north of the 60th parallel of latitude with the exception of Yukon Territory and the northwestern tip of Quebec, an area of 1,304,903 sq. miles. Politically, the Territories are divided into three Districts—the Mackenzie District, which includes all the mainland from the Mackenzie River valley on the west to a north-south line following the boundary line between Saskatchewan and Manitoba; the Keewatin District, including the remainder of the mainland and the islands at the mouth of Hudson Bay; and the District of Franklin, including all the Arctic Islands north of the mainland. This vast area, which is more than one third of the total area of Canada, is one of contrast and extremes in topographical characteristics, flora and fauna, and climate. East of the mountain fringe along the Yukon Territory boundary, the mainland portion consists of plains, high in the west and sloping gently to Hudson Bay on the east and to the Arctic Archipelago on the northeast. In the Archipelago, a high mountain range lies in a general north-south direction across Baffin, Devon and Ellesmere Islands with peaks rising above 9,000 feet.

The Interior Plains of the central Continent extend northeastward through the Northwest Territories to the Arctic Ocean and beyond throughout the western islands of the Archipelago with scattered remnants eastward. Across the whole of the low-lying mainland area flows the great Mackenzie River, draining Great Slave Lake and emptying into the Arctic Ocean, a distance of 2,635 miles. The northern limit of tree growth follows a line running from the mouth of the Mackenzie River diagonally southeast to Hudson Bay in northern Manitoba so that the whole northeastern portion of the mainland is treeless tundra studded with countless lakes, swamps and muskeg and having no major drainage system.