

This new preoccupation with the North, as it happened, coincided with the discovery that, on a long-term basis, new sources of raw materials were a prime necessity to the whole civilized world. This was particularly true of minerals. Old sources of supply were being depleted, and the rate of that depletion was accelerated by two major wars.

As eyes turned to the North, it became evident that the grounds for interest there extended beyond the realm of the economic. Living in that frozen land were 25,000 Canadians—native Indians and Eskimos, fur traders, missionaries, fishermen, miners, scientists and government officials. The majority of these people had a permanent stake in the North and were raising their families there. Their experiments in such fields as education, health and welfare and political organization could hardly help but have significance for the rest of the country. Furthermore, many of them were living what might be called a frontier way of life, with all its implied virtues of sturdiness, self-reliance, hospitality and social responsibility. Clearly, any investment in the enlargement of this frontier would pay ample dividends through the freshening influence of these virtues on the whole national life.

Another factor that directed the attention of Canadians to their Northland was its geopolitical position. Geopolitics, defined as the politics of a country as determined by its geographical position, is a term that has been used increasingly since recent advances in transportation and communication techniques have caused such a 'shrinkage' in the size of the world. Only a generation ago there were many places which, because of their isolation, had no political significance internationally. To-day, that is not so. Any place on land or sea can be reached from any other place in a matter of hours. Distance, if the incentive is great enough, is no longer a barrier. That is why the Yukon and Northwest Territories have assumed an added significance in world affairs. The shortest route by air between the leaders of the two major and opposing ideologies, the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, is over the Canadian North. In view of this, it is not surprising that defence is a major aspect of the Canadian Government's interest in that area.

In the long-term view, however, it is in its economic importance that the Northland acts as a permanent magnet; in its role as a supplier of mineral wealth. It is the development of this wealth that constitutes the real challenge of the North to Canada.

Is it, then, a question of merely developing the Canadian North as other parts of the country have been developed in the past? Unhappily, it is not quite that simple. The whole key to the economic development of the Yukon and Northwest Territories is adequate transportation, without which much of the wealth is inaccessible. Admittedly transportation has been a problem in developing other parts of the country, but in those high latitudes there are two unusual factors that come into play and magnify the problem many times. These factors are climate and distance. They have made a nightmare of transportation problems in the Canadian North. They loom up behind every difficulty.

When the Canadian Pacific and Canadian National railways were built they traversed long stretches of unsettled land. But they were built with the firm hope that the vacant land would soon be covered with prosperous farms, each contributing to the revenue of the railways. But a railway or any other form of transportation in the Canadian North cannot count on such revenue. The unsettled land it traverses is unable to support an agricultural industry. The winters are too long and the soil is too poor. The railway, lacking revenue from intermediate