

The main topographical features of the Atlantic marginal sea floor are attributed to glacial origin but land erosion is an important factor. Eroded materials are carried seaward by rivers, ice and wind, and wave action against cliffs and shore banks washes away enormous masses that are deposited over the surrounding sea floor. The topography of the continental sea floor is therefore constantly changing and navigation charts of Canada's eastern seaboard must be continuously revised.

Hudson Bay and Hudson Strait bite deeply into the Continent. Hudson Bay is an inland sea 250,000 sq. miles in area having an average depth of about 70 fathoms; the greatest charted depth in the centre of the Bay is 141 fathoms.

Hudson Strait separates Baffin Island from the continental coast and connects Hudson Bay with the Atlantic Ocean. It is 430 miles long and from 37 to 120 miles wide and its greatest charted depth of 481 fathoms is close inside the Atlantic entrance. Great irregularities of the sea floor are indicated but, except in inshore waters, few navigation hazards have been located.

Arctic.—The submerged plateau extending from the northern coast of North America is a major part of the great continental shelf surrounding the Arctic Ocean, on which lie all the Arctic islands of Canada, Greenland, and most of the Arctic islands of Europe and Asia. This shelf is most uniformly developed north of Siberia, where it is about 500 miles wide; north of North America it surrounds the western islands of the Archipelago and extends 50 to 300 miles seaward from the outermost islands.

The topography of the floor of the submerged part of this continental margin is only partly explored but sufficient has been charted to indicate, in common with continental shelves throughout the world, an abrupt break at the oceanward edge to the relatively steep declivity of the continental slope. This slope borders the western side of the Queen Elizabeth Islands and, from it, deep well-developed troughs enter between the groups of islands. Sills across Davis Strait, Barrow Strait and other channels, on which the depth is about 200 fathoms, interrupt the network of deep troughs and separate the Arctic basin from the Atlantic.

That part of the continental shelf bordering the Arctic Ocean in the vicinity of the Queen Elizabeth Islands (see p. 16) is the subject of extensive study. Since 1959 a party based at the joint Canadian-United States weather station at Isachsen on Ellef Ringnes Island has been investigating the oceanography, hydrography, submarine geology, gravity, geomagnetic features and crustal seismic properties of the continental shelf area, carrying out physiographic, hydrological, permafrost and glaciological studies on the islands of the region, mapping the nature, distribution and movement of the sea ice, and running basic topographic control surveys. This work is continuing, with a party in the field from March to September each year, and should eventually cover all of the unmapped parts of the shelf between Greenland and Alaska. The investigations should yield detailed and accurate information on the physical and chemical composition and dynamic characteristics of the Arctic oceanic waters; the bathymetry of the continental shelf and slope and the straits and sounds of the Archipelago; the topography and structure of the shelf and the nature of its sediments, its underlying rocks and possible mineral resources; the structure and physical characteristics of the northern edge of the North American continental platform and its contact with the Arctic Ocean basin; the factors controlling the development of the Arctic landscape and the evolution of the islands; and the changes in sea level, glaciers, sea ice and climate in the recent geological past.

Pacific.—The marginal sea of the Pacific differs strikingly from the other marine zones of Canada. The hydrography of British Columbia is characterized by bold, abrupt relief—a repetition of the mountainous landscape. Numerous inlets penetrate the mountainous coast for distances of 50 to 75 miles. They are usually a mile or two in width and of considerable depth, with steep canyon-like sides. From the islet-strewn coast, the continental shelf extends from 50 to 100 sea miles to its oceanward limit where depths of about 200 fathoms are found. There the sea floor drops rapidly to the Pacific deeps, parts of the western slopes of Vancouver Island and the Queen Charlotte Islands lying