

# "C Q Polar Net"

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**About a hobby which has done much toward reducing the isolation of service in the North.**

**T**O MANY people amateur radio and "hamming" as it is called, is a virtually unknown phase of our 20th century life. In the Canadian Arctic, the advantages and rewards of amateur radio are well known.

Across the frozen wastes of our vast northland are scattered a few isolated and semi-isolated settlements, inhabited by a few white men who occupy the Hudson's Bay and government posts, together with the missionaries of several faiths. Communication with the outside world is made by radio and by aircraft which occasionally venture north and take mail from the posts for delivery at far distant centres. Mail deliveries in most instances are infrequent, and during the Spring break-up and Fall freeze-up, northern residents are without mail service of any kind. This is accepted as one of the exigencies of service in the North, but many outsiders are not aware of this and berate us for lackadaisical habits of writing.

Another factor of northern life which must be taken into consideration, is the extra time northerners find on their hands during the long Winter evenings. To overcome the communications problem, as well as find something to occupy spare minutes, many residents of the Arctic turn to amateur radio. This hobby contributes much to the individual as well as his or her associates, in many ways. Firstly, as a means of sending messages to distant relatives or friends; secondly, a way to fill spare hours during the evenings; thirdly, a means by which to meet neighbors in the North and gather news of happenings in the area as well as news of the outside world; fourthly, it provides the operator with a certain amount of

electrical and radio knowledge which is quite useful for anyone to know.

Every evening one can turn on the radio to one of the amateur bands and hear the "hams" calling "CO". This phrase denotes that the "ham" wishes to talk to another station. Each "ham" has his own call sign, which has been designated to him by the Department of Transport when his "licence to operate an Amateur Radio Station" is issued by the Department. There are "hams" throughout the world and many are heard on the different amateur bands set aside expressly for them by an agreement among the governments of many countries.

Listening to the different radio stations in the North may provide diversion, but one may wish to speak to a particular station, or send a message home. This may take some time, because of reception conditions, and the fact that the transmitter may not be strong enough to carry over the miles. In order that some sort of system could be arranged, so that certain disadvantages could be overcome, the "hams" of the North formed what is now known as the "Polar Net".

This network of stations includes "hams" from the western Arctic at Akla-vik to the eastern side at Pangnirtung, as far north as Alert Bay, 520 miles from the North Pole, and all through the interior of the Northwest Territories. It was decided to meet each night on the airwaves, at a designated time, on a preset frequency. And so the Polar Net was formed. Each night the control station calls the roll and the member stations call in, either with traffic, or standing by to take traffic. Stations in several of the provinces and in the United States com-