

Editorial

Brief reports have recently been received from the Arctic Coast regarding the sinking of the Hudson's Bay Company vessel "Fort James", and the rescue of the crew by the R.C.M. Police Schooner "St. Roch", near Bernard Harbour, N.W.T., on August 5th. Apparently the "Fort James" had become ice-bound on July 27th while proceeding westward to Tuktoyaktuk, N.W.T., and had drifted in the ice-pack until August 5th, to a distance approximately three miles north of Chantrey Island near Bernard Harbour. The R.C.M. Police Schooner "St. Roch" was in close proximity to the "Fort James" being en route to the same destination.

Tremendous ice pressure was resisted by both vessels with the result that the "Fort James" was eventually lifted half-way out of the water and turned on her side, the ice meanwhile shearing away the keel and splitting the rudder. The vessel filled rapidly and settled down until her decks were awash, there being only just time to get the crew and an Eskimo family of seven individuals from below decks. In the meantime, the R.C.M. Police personnel on the "St. Roch" had rushed over the ice to assist in the rescue. The "Fort James" remained in her dangerous position for approximately four hours when, on the ice pressure being released, the vessel sank immediately in ten fathoms of water.

The crew of the "Fort James" having been taken aboard the "St. Roch", everything possible was done to make them comfortable. The "St. Roch" then drifted eastward in the grip of the ice pack and at the mercy of a heavy north-west gale, finally breaking loose and proceeding to Coppermine, arriving at that point on August 7th. An examination of the vessel showed that the only noticeable damage sustained by the "St. Roch" was a small split in the rudder. After the gale subsided and ice conditions became more favourable the "St. Roch" left Coppermine, on August 9th, for Tuktoyaktuk, but was again held up by ice near Cape Krusenstern until August 16th, when, conditions having improved, comparatively good progress was made for the remainder of the passage.

As an indication of the severe ice conditions experienced this year it may be of interest to add that the "Fort James", besides having previously proved her value on the Arctic Coast, was the only vessel that had completely circumnavigated the North American Continent. Congratulations therefore are certainly deserved by Sergeant H. A. Larsen, the navigator of the R.C.M. Police vessel, Sergeant J. U. Eddy (I/C Detachment) and by the remainder of the personnel on board, not only for saving the "St. Roch" under exceedingly difficult circumstances, but also for rendering ready assistance to the crew of the "Fort James" under conditions which may, without exaggeration, be described as having been decidedly precarious.

