

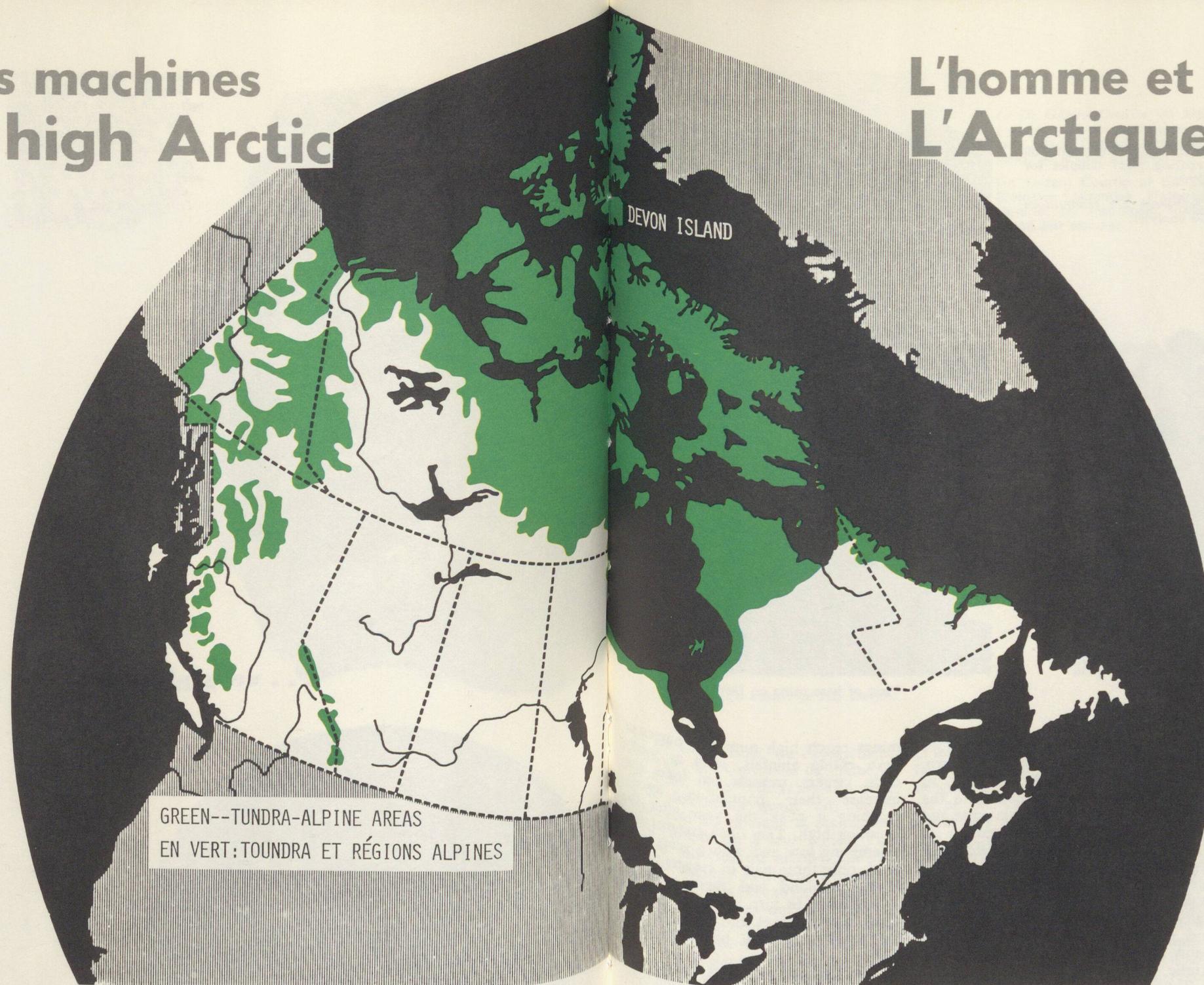
Man and his machines Threat to high Arctic

Canada's high Arctic has received a great deal of attention during the last 18 months as a result of the discovery of oil on Atkinson Point in the Mackenzie River delta, the discovery of gas by Panarctic on Melville Island and King Christian Island and the voyages of the Manhattan super tanker. These initial oil and gas discoveries have brought into focus the need to maintain the culture and economic independence of native people and the need to understand and maintain environmental quality. Both are threatened by man and his machines.

Canada's Arctic tundra, the largest and most diverse in the world, consists of a thin layer of plant life surviving on the underlying permafrost. Over the centuries it has reached a delicate equilibrium, thawing to different depths in summer and freezing in winter, but the plants and underlying formation have survived. When track or heavy vehicles travel over this terrain, the thin plant layer is damaged and its insulating value lessened. Thawing takes place to a greater than normal depth causing further destruction of plant life. More thawing occurs, surface water accumulates, freezes and the surface insulation disappears. Sunken trenches several feet in depth can occur in a year or two and may make transverse movement impossible for vehicles and even animals.

Knowledge of the tundra is limited because of the sparse population of the high Arctic, the harsh environment, long distances and the high cost of research in this area of the world. Knowledge of the basic biological productivity of the high Arctic is required to formulate regulations to prevent as much damage as possible to the tundra. To obtain this knowledge Canada has launched a comprehensive ecological study on Devon Island, one of the Queen Elizabeth Islands, some 1,800 miles north of Winnipeg.

The research is being conducted by scientists from five Canadian universities under the auspices of the Canadian Committee for the International Biological Program, which is made up of senior university and government biologists appointed by the National Research Council of Canada. This is one of a number of research projects being sponsored by the Committee



within the framework of the International Biological Program (IBP), a 60-nation program of research into problems of biological productivity and human survival in a world undergoing rapid technological change. Through this international program the information obtained from studies on similar Arctic sites in Alaska, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia and elsewhere, will be exchanged and compared.

Financial support for the project at the Federal Government level is being provided by the National Research

Council, the Canadian Wildlife Service, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, the Polar Continental Shelf Project of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Meteorological Branch of the Department of Environment. Other support is being provided by Imperial Oil, Elf Oil, Mobil Oil, Gulf Oil, King Resources, Panarctic Oil, Atlas Aviation and the Universities of Alberta, Calgary, Camrose, Laurentian and Manitoba. Of a total budget of \$184,545 for 1970-71, some \$75,000 was provided by NRC. The NRC grant

L'homme et ses machines L'Arctique menacée

tale, ni sous forme microbienne. Bientôt, la circulation y est impossible même pour les animaux.

On connaît mal la toundra à cause de la faible densité de la population de l'Arctique, de la rigueur du milieu, des grandes distances et du coût élevé de la recherche dans cette région. Pour se documenter sur la biologie arctique, afin de formuler des lois de préservation de la toundra, le Canada a lancé un programme complet d'études écologiques sur l'île Devon, l'une des îles Reine-Elizabeth situées à quelque 1 800 miles au nord de Winnipeg.

L'étude est faite par des chercheurs de cinq universités canadiennes sous les auspices du Comité canadien du Programme biologique international. Ce Comité est formé de biologistes venus des milieux gouvernementaux et universitaires et ils sont nommés par le Conseil national de recherches du Canada. Ce projet d'études est seulement l'un des nombreux programmes commandités par le Comité dans le cadre du Programme biologique international (PBI) auquel soixante pays participent dont la Norvège, la Suède, la Finlande et l'URSS. Les informations recueillies seront échangées.

L'aide financière au niveau gouvernemental est assurée par le Conseil national de recherches du Canada, le Service canadien de la faune, le Ministère des Affaires indiennes et du Nord canadien, le Ministère de l'énergie, des mines et des ressources avec son programme d'étude du plateau continental polaire et le Service météorologique relevant du Ministère de l'environnement. Les compagnies Imperial Oil, Elf Oil, Mobil Oil, Gulf Oil, King Resources, Panarctic Oil, Atlas Aviation et les universités de l'Alberta, de Calgary, de Camrose et du Manitoba et la Laurentian University accordent aussi leur appui financier. Le CNRC a fourni 75 000 dollars environ sur les 184 545 dollars du budget de l'année 1970-1971. En 1971-1972, il y consacrera 100 000 dollars.

Le camp situé sur l'île Devon a été installé par l'Institut nord-américain de l'Arctique en 1960. Pour les études qui ont débuté au mois de mai 1970, on l'a aménagé afin de pouvoir loger de 30 à 35 chercheurs durant l'été. Six d'entre eux ont l'intention d'y passer l'hiver de 1971-1972.