

# The Yukon Is a Many Splendored Place

[AFTER SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS IT'S STILL GROWING]

The Yukon Territory lies east of Alaska like a wedge of cold pie. In January it's frozen, by June it's begun to thaw; Frances Lake has gone from snow white to brilliant blue, the valleys and basins are green with moss and the dog tooth mountains are dark with the white spruce and black, alpine fir and lodgepole pine. There are 80,000 square miles of trees and hidden among them are black bears, brown bears, grizzly bears, caribou, deer, moose and timber wolves. Above the forests are the mountain goats and mountain sheep and along the lakes and rivers are grouse, ptarmigan, geese, swans and ducks, muskrats, mink, marten, lynx, weasels, foxes, fishers and

squirrels. There are mountains of pure limestone which gleam white all year long and beneath the mountain slopes and in the running waters are gold, lead, zinc, silver and asbestos.

There are few people — some 20,000 in 207,000 square miles — so few it is possible to see them as individuals, each separate and apart: Alan Innes-Taylor, Grahame Keast, Edith Josie, Ida May Burkholder, Anton Money, Charlie Peter Charlie and his sons — some of them young, some older than the Territory.

The Territory was seventy-five years old last year. The Gold Rush began in 1898 and the White Pass and Yukon Railroad was built to

## How to Build a Good Road Cheap

If one wishes to get from Edzo in the Northwest Territories to the silver mining community of Echo Bay on Great Bear Lake, it is best to go between late January and March on the straight and splendid winter road built by Pacific Western Trucking.

Winter roads in the Yukon and N.W.T. are made of hard packed snow and one travels by tractor.

The Echo Bay road is about 350 miles long and the swiftest transit is across the frozen lakes — Faber, Rae, Hardisty and Hottah.

Road construction begins in the first week of January and takes three weeks to complete. It is built as straight as possible on "portages" and lakes and the designers try to avoid steep grades, areas which require blasting and clearing, and portages across sandy depressions. In such portages water seeps up and forms layers of ice several feet thick, called "icings", over the road surface.

A D-4 Caterpillar tractor equipped with a 'dozer blade begins the road building. It is followed by a Bombardier also equipped with a 'dozer blade. The Bombardier pulls two drags; the first, heavy logging chains twenty to thirty

feet in length, forces the air out of the snow, the second, a heavy steel plate with an expanded metal base, levels the surface and compresses the snow. After the drags comes a tractor-trailer and the finishing touches are applied; vehicle ruts are graded and redragged, depressions are filled and compacted and the lake approaches to the portages may have to be reworked.

The road once ready must be maintained. Three Versatile tractors equipped with large vee-plows keep it in repair.

Freight tractors, which can push a ten-foot vee-plow and tow 40,000 pounds at the same time, average twenty-five miles an hour on the road and they can exceed fifty miles an hour across the open lakes. There is some danger — since 1965 four tractor-trailer units have dropped through the frozen lake surfaces but no operators have been lost. Twenty operators were employed during 1973 and they averaged two round trips a week.

Construction costs are very cheap, less than \$200 a mile, but maintenance costs, wages and the housing of operators are very high.