

The original wealth of the north was in fur, in search of which traders became explorers and explorers became traders. It was fur which saved the north from limbo after the search for the Northwest Passage became, commercially at least, a hopeless quest. But by the Second World War white fox was falling behind minerals and the main export of the two northern Territories. In 1898 the whole world heard of gold in the Klondike and raced to find elusive fortune. When most of the adventurers returned from the Yukon they left in their wake a sense of anti-climax but they had formed the foundations of the future development of the Territory.

Great Mineral Potential

Today gold still comes from creeks which half a century ago were lined by men with hopeful pans, but now the operation is carried out by dredges on a scale typical of the new approach to northern mining. Gold is no longer as important to the Yukon as lead, zinc and silver. Production in the leading mine, which only nine years ago was less than half a million dollars, now approaches 14 million dollars. The potential, however, is undoubtedly greater than the realization. Other highly promising deposits of lead-zinc, of silver-lead, of nickel-copper, and of asbestos have been found. An area of 12,500 square miles in the northern Yukon is under active exploration by a private company seeking oil and natural gas.

The importance of these mineral deposits is heightened by a staggering potential of water power, part of whose benefits will be available to the Yukon. Present plans for the upper Yukon River and its tributaries envisage the production of 4,500,000 horsepower, that is, one quarter of the present developed capacity in all of Canada.

The Yukon has some good merchantable timber, not enough for significant export, but useful for local needs. In agriculture, too, production may be expected to satisfy part of the requirements of the population. Now between 500 and 1,000 acres are under cultivation, less than one-fifth of one per cent of the estimated arable land.

Less in detail is known of the Northwest Territories whose tremendous expanse, though completely mapped, has known detailed geological exploration only in very small part. The present mining industry is centered around Yellowknife on Great Slave Lake where gold production (based on ore of extraordinary high grade) increased five fold from 1939 to \$10 million in 1954. Gold was not the first important mineral development. Uranium was produced on Great Bear Lake in 1933, and since the War this area has been one of the world's most important sources of uranium. Oil was first extracted on a commercial scale from Norman Wells on the Mackenzie River in 1920; after a greatly increased production during the War, this field is now used to serve the needs of the Mackenzie Valley.

The record of mineral production in the Northwest Territories is less spectacular than its future. The first big name is Pine Point on the south shore of Great Slave Lake where there is an indicated zinc-lead ore potential of something over 60 million tons. Much of it would be available by open-cut methods, all of it is easy to treat. A list of other promising areas reads like a minor gazeteer of the Northwest Territories. Proved mineral deposits within the