

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

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RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CANADIAN NORTH

Based on an alumni lecture delivered by Dr. H.L. Keenleyside, Deputy Minister of Mines and Resources, at McMaster University, Hamilton, Ont., on May 14, 1949.

For many years modern interest in polar areas was largely concentrated on the frozen regions of the Southern Hemisphere. The international race for the South Pole and its discovery by Amundsen, the dramatic exploits and death of Captain Scott and the quiet heroes who accompanied him, the development of commercial whaling in Antarctic seas, the establishment of Little America and the introduction of aircraft to the polar continent by Admiral Byrd, all attracted attention to the bottom of the world.

But there has been a sudden switch of interest. Today little is heard of the Antarctic while never, even in the early days of the search for a northwest passage to the riches of the Indies, has there been so great a concentration on the problems of the north polar regions.

It is not difficult to identify the reasons for this change. Canadians and other northern people are being forced by the bitter facts of international life to free their minds from the shackles imposed by the flat distortions of the Mercator map, and to realize that the political, economic and military powers of the modern world are grouped about the Arctic Sea. Above the equator is to be found every modern state of major influence in the world, including those two great national concentrations of strength and concept, the United States of America and the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics. These nations stretch their claims of national sovereignty to the shores of their respective continents and thence, in most cases, across the ice-bound waters to the northern pole.

Under the leadership of the United States and the Soviet Union the nations of the world are again denying the truth - though without altering the fact - that humanity is inextricably united in One World. This heresy has been revised at the very time that science has placed in our hands an unexampled power of destruction. But whether we choose peace or war, whether we exchange trade or bombs, whether we compete in destruction or cooperate in the extension of human knowledge and the control of nature - including that dubious natural character man himself - the basic international problems of this generation will be faced, as for the most part they have been created, by the peoples of the North.

What the Aegean Sea was to classical antiquity, what the Mediterranean was to the Roman world, what the Atlantic Ocean was to the expanding Europe of Renaissance days, the Arctic Ocean is becoming to the world of aircraft and atomic power.

Relating the simple facts of physical and human geography to the political fears and tensions of this chilled and nervous world, it is not surprising that political and military experts are to-day looking with increasing frequency and increasing disquiet at the short air routes across