

ment must also allow for these differences—either through narrowing the focus of recruitment or, preferably, through redesigning some aspects of the jobs being offered. ♦

Expo designer turns north

Moshe Safdie, the Montreal architect who designed Habitat for Expo 67, has come up with a novel answer to the problem of finding accommodation appropriate to the northern climate in the post-igloo age. Commissioned by the Northwest Territories Government to provide government staff housing in the chilly Baffin Island town of Frobisher Bay, Mr. Safdie has come up with an octagonal housing unit featuring a domed central living space. The translucent domes admit about 10 to 15 per cent of daylight during summer; during winter they shed a soft glow onto the dark landscape.

Relieving isolation

With this project, his first in Canada since Expo, Mr. Safdie has said he hopes to alleviate some of the social problems that afflict northern communities. He feels that the pressures of isolation and social fragmentation can be relieved by homes that give a feeling of stability, homes where people can spend a great deal of time during the winter.

Inside the houses, living quarters are grouped around the domed living room on the top floor. Under the main part of the house is room for workshops and a cold-storage locker which will keep fish and meat frozen with little or no assistance.

Early in the design stage a request from the local housing association brought the total number of units on order up to 141. It is planned to arrange them in continuous chains conforming to the hills in the town, so that each has a view of the bay and the hills beyond. The individual units are attached to each other, but strategically arranged to give a feeling of privacy.

The novelty of this type of housing lies in its appearance and grouping. Construction techniques are standard. Wood and plywood materials are expected to keep costs roughly in line with those of other dwellings in the north. Once the prototypes are approved, it is planned to set up a factory to build the units in Frobisher Bay itself. This will be a source of employment and training for local people and could eventually mean pre-fabricated homes for all Baffin Island and the Northern region. ♦

Emigrants who travelled out the hard way

By Roy Turman

The appeal listed 86 names. All came from County Sligo in the Republic of Ireland, and described themselves as "poor Irish" people. Their petition went to Irish landowner Lord Monteagle in Britain's House of Lords, and said in part:

"Distress stares us in the face, more grim than ever, for we have no sign of employment... so we hope ye will be so charitable as to send us to America, and give us land according to our Families, and anything else ye will give us..."

That was in 1847, the Plague Year. Over that period more than 100,000 people from the United Kingdom and Ireland emigrated to British North America, the Irish fleeing absentee landlords and two successive potato famines, the English escaping slums and destitution. If what they fled was awful, what many of them endured was if anything worse—voyages in inadequate, overcrowded ships, ravaged by seasickness and fever, with little or no food or water,

Herded like cattle, dying in droves, they streamed across the Atlantic from Liverpool to New York and Quebec. In that one year 1847, according to official figures, of more than 106,000 emigrants embarking for British North America, some 6,000 died on the voyage, another 4,000 in quarantine above Quebec City and some 7,000 in hospitals.

"This means 17,465 emigrants to British North America died in 1847, or one in six of all who sailed," writes British journalist Terry Coleman in "Passage to America," (Penguin Books) a carefully documented 308-page account of emigration from Britain and Ireland to North America in the years 1846-55.

Shipboard horrors

It is a horrifying story, told by Coleman mostly through extracts from letters and diaries of the miserable people who made the trip or died on the way. Shipboard conditions were frightful. Disease, including typhus and cholera, took a terrible toll of undernourished and frightened passengers huddled together in steerage-class accommodation

Mr. Coleman quotes a diary kept by a passenger from Dublin, Robert Whyte, who said he and his fellow passengers had been induced to emigrate, believing they were bound for a land of milk and honey. One passenger told Whyte:

"Ah! Sir, we thought we couldn't be

worse off, but now to our sorrow we know the *differ*; for sure supposin' we were dying of starvation, or if the sickness *overtuk* us, we had a chance of a doctor, and if he could do no good for our bodies, sure the priest could do for our souls; and then we'd be buried along with our own people, in the ould churchyard, with the green sod over us; instead of dying like rotten sheep thrown into a pit, and the *minit* the breath is out of our bodies, flung into the sea to be eaten up by them horrid sharks."

Over the 10-year period of exodus chronicled by Mr. Coleman, more than 2,300,000 emigrated to the New World, ranging from Ellen Keane, aged four years three months, who was the first to die of fever at the quarantine centre near Quebec City in 1847, to Hibbert Ware, a barrister from London's Middle Temple who found female domestics hard to keep in Canada and went home.

Improvement with steam

In 1847, typhus was the great killer disease. One emigrant's account read: "This is a complaint which comes on when many persons are crowded together in a small space. Recollect that this, like all fevers, is a complaint that will last its own time; there is no such thing as cutting it short; and that the game you have to play is to get the patient to live on until the fever leaves him."

The medical superintendent at Grosse Isle wrote urging accommodation for sick people at Montreal and Quebec, he said immigrants were arriving half dead from starvation and want. "I never saw people so indifferent to life," he wrote. "They would continue in the same berth with a dead person until the seamen or captain dragged out the corpse with boat-hooks."

Of several memorials in the Quebec area to the emigrants of 1847, one has this inscription:

"In this secluded spot lie the mortal remains of 5,424 persons who flying from Pestilence and Famine in Ireland in the year 1847 found in America but a grave,"

Conditions improved by 1855 with travel mainly by steamship instead of in big American sailing packets. But as Mr. Coleman comments, "it was the steamship, and not the reforming, humanitarian or self-interested motives of any government, which made the Atlantic passage in steerage for the first time tolerable." ♦