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CANADA BACKS "MANHATTAN" VENTURE

In August 1969, the Canadian Coast Guard Ship *John A. Macdonald* assumed her role in a daring venture which may profoundly affect the future development of the Canadian Arctic.

This tough veteran of Arctic ice is accompanying the tanker *S.S. Manhattan*, a powerful giant displacing nearly 150,000 tons specially reinforced for the purpose, in an assault on the formidable Northwest Passage which, as a result, may some day welcome the trading fleets of many nations, as do the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the Seaway.

Owing to economic, geographic, climatic and ice conditions, the so-called "passage" has never become an international waterway. Only a few ships, of which the *John A. Macdonald* is one, ever have traversed the passage; sponsors of *S.S. Manhattan* hope to prove that great tankers - at least twice the size of the *Manhattan* - can break their way through the ice-choked passage all year round.

Navigation in Arctic waters is infinitely more difficult and hazardous than in other latitudes. Ice on the surface of the water is the chief obstacle, but other Arctic features are also a great hindrance, such as almost continuous overcast, fog, extremely cold air and water, the need for navigational aids such as beacons, buoys, electronic positioning systems, supply and rescue services, etc., low-lying, featureless land masses that offer few distinctive landmarks, magnetic disturbances and deviations (the magnetic compass is useless for navigation over much of the Arctic, and gyro compasses are much less reliable). To this must be added a psychological effect, namely, boredom for the seaman, which conflicts with the need to be especially alert

CONTENTS

Canada Backs "Manhattan" Venture	1
Regina Trade Office	4
Grasslands Research	4
Extra Gift to World Food Program	5
New Arctic School	5
Telephone Paging Service	5
Diplomatic Appointments	6
Visitors From France	6
Monthly Index	7

in these dangerous passages. Ships must be especially built and equipped for Arctic navigation; they must also carry extra supplies and life-saving equipment. If a ship were to go down, life jackets and rafts would prove useless, since men can survive for only a few minutes in extremely cold water. In winter, 24-hour darkness adds to the perils.

THE PRIZE

The nature and value of the prize are far beyond the dreams of Cabot, Frobisher, Hudson and other early adventurers who sought the elusive route to Cathay and India. Even when it was known, the Northwest Passage proved virtually impassable to ships of an earlier day. The task of the *Manhattan* is to test the economic feasibility of creating, through modern technology, a regular sea-route to the frozen frontier where nature has cached one of the world's largest deposits of oil.

Prudhoe Bay is on the north Alaska coast. Here, exploratory drilling has revealed a reservoir containing, by one estimate, between five and 10 billion barrels of oil.

Getting oil out of Alaska - or Melville Island, where Canada's Panarctic venture expects to make a good strike - appears neither easy nor inexpensive. Pipelines are difficult to install and maintain over frozen but occasionally thawing tundra, but