

As Minister of Resources and Development, I have a responsibility for, and perhaps a special interest in, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon. We are discovering that the north country is something of a storehouse of resources. With the rest of Canada it is sharing in the intensified search for this country's natural wealth. It is good to know that misconceptions about the North are gradually disappearing. The romance remains, however, though different from the romance of the Trail of '98. Today the joint population of the Northwest Territories and the Yukon is about 24,000 people.

It seems to me that resource development north of the 60th parallel holds special interest not only for itself but because of the special problems and difficulties to be overcome. These problems appear in some of the other parts of Canada, but usually, in less imposing form. Let us look at them for a moment.

First, the problem of climate. The range of temperatures in the North is remarkable - and sometimes fearsome. In February 1947, the thermometer at Snag in the western Yukon dropped to 81 degrees below zero, the lowest temperature ever recorded in Canada. In summer, on the other hand, the mercury at Dawson has been known to register 90 degrees above, or better. Temperature variations can pose their own special problems. For example, the base metal mine operating in the Keno Hill district of the Yukon faces unusual difficulties in trucking its products and supplies over the 250-mile highway linking it with Whitehorse to the south. In winter, frequent and excessive variations in temperature over the route, ranging as much as from 25 below to 65 below zero on a single trip, make it hard to keep the trucks in operation, and have required the adoption of a convoy system in order to safeguard the lives of any drivers who may be stranded in the colder weather ... I don't believe anybody has devised any such effective protection against the concerted efforts in the summer months of what seem to be the world's most determined flies.

Another set of problems is associated with the factors of distance and accessibility. Even as the crow flies, the Yellowknife gold-mining centre is more than 600 miles north of Edmonton, and 400 miles north of railhead at Waterways, Alberta. The Eldorado mine at Port Radium on Great Bear Lake is hardly more than 25 miles from the Arctic Circle. The uranium concentrates are shipped out to Port Hope, Ontario, to be refined - a straightline distance of 2,100 miles - and they do not move in a straight line.

The great stretches of virgin territory separating northern communities from the settled areas naturally pose a considerable transportation problem. During the summer, freight can move along the principal rivers. Since 1948, when the Province of Alberta joined with the Federal Government in building the Mackenzie Highway, there has been an all-weather road link between railhead and Hay River on the south shore of Great Slave Lake. In the Yukon, there is now a similar road between the Alaska Highway at Whitehorse and the mining district of Mayo, 250 miles to the north, and surveys are being made of a prospective road between Mayo and historic Dawson City. Aircraft are continuing to hold an important place in northern transportation.

Reduced to terms of cost, the problems I have mentioned lay a special burden on northern development. The tempo of