

DUTCH HOUSING EXPERTS VISIT

The Minister of Housing and Physical Planning in the Government of the Netherlands, Mr. W.F. Schut, visited Canada from September 21 to 28 to take part in a study of Canadian timber-frame construction methods. Mr. Schut's visit coincided with the second week of a 14-day examination of the Canadian technique by nine Netherlands housing experts brought to Canada by the federal Department of Trade and Commerce. A growing need for more housing in the Netherlands prompted Canada's trade department to suggest the mission as a means of exposing the Netherlands officials to the operational efficiency, economy, speed of construction, flexibility and variety of design of the Canadian timber-frame technique.

The group arrived in Canada on September 13 and spent the first five days of its tour in Vancouver, British Columbia, and on Vancouver Island observing logging, lumber and plywood manufacture and house construction. Before going on to Ottawa, the visitors made a stop in Calgary, Alberta, to study medium-density housing developments. In Ottawa, Mr. Schut met the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce. The Netherlands experts joined him in discussions with officials of the Departments of Trade and Commerce and Industry, the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the National Research Council, and housing specialists in the fields of insurance, on-site construction and mortgage-lending.

Visits were made to both Montreal and Toronto for further examination of timber-frame housing, town-planning and rapid transit.

As a result of a previous mission and the promotional efforts by Canadian wood-product industry associations, several projects employing the timber-frame technique are under way or have been completed in the Netherlands. This growing interest in the Canadian building technique has led to increased export sales of forest products to the Netherlands. Recent statistics show that the export sales of lumber and plywood to the Netherlands in 1964 totalled \$3.2 million, while in 1967 the total reached \$5.1 million.

ARCTIC TRAILS OF ICE-PLOW SUCCESSFUL

Mr. Jean Chrétien, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, in conjunction with Panarctic Oils Limited, has announced the completion of trials of the *Alexbow* ice-plow, which were undertaken for the first time in Arctic waters. The Minister said he was most encouraged with the preliminary reports of these tests, which indicated that the latest version of the *Alexbow*, mounted on a barge and pushed by a tug, had easily penetrated ice up to four feet thick and had been able to handle ice between five and six feet thick. It had also sliced through a pressure-ridge some 20 feet high without any difficulty and gave indications that it could be used on ice with a thick snowcover. Generally, operating under such conditions is difficult for a conventional ice-breaker because the snow freezes to the sides of the ship and slows the momentum.

Not only was it the first time that the *Alexbow* was employed in Arctic waters but it was the first time that a tug-and-barge operation had been used to supply the far northern islands of the Queen Elizabeth group. The barge with the *Alexbow* device was first used to good effect to plow a way through shore-ice to a temporary wharf built on the west coast of Melville Island. Had a conventional ship been used, it would have been impossible to unload the cargo at its destination and this would have added considerably to the logistics problem of drilling the first well in the Panarctic exploration programme. The Government owns 45 per cent of Panarctic, which, in turn, has acquired a 51 percent interest in the *Alexbow* device.

Mr. Chrétien cautioned that the results of the *Alexbow* trials had still to be analyzed technically in order to determine the actual efficiency achieved, but he confirmed that the device performed beyond expectations and that he hoped next year a similar device could be mounted on a larger ship for further trials. He said suggestions had already been made that an *Alexbow* device attached to a super oil tanker, because of the size and weight involved, could perhaps push through the frozen Arctic seas at all times of the year.