

## NORTH OF SEVENTY-FOUR

*(This is the second of two articles on activities in the Canadian North written by a member of the Department of External Affairs who visited the Arctic during the Spring Air Lift to the Arctic weather station. The first article dealt with the facilities and the men in the Canadian Arctic. The article which follows is a narrative of a journey down north.)*

The departure of thirty men to this Ultima Thule is an event in the lives of each, whether he is going for a full year's term of duty or whether he will be back again in Montreal in a fortnight's time. It is an occasion for celebration. In the course of the festivities at Dorval on the eve of departure, if there were any regrets at what was to come and what was to be left behind they were not expressed. Perhaps there would be time enough later to reflect, and to discuss endlessly the luxuries of civilization to the south. Now the talk was of the north. The veterans—mostly old-timers who had reached the age of 20 or 25—sat in the constant flow of questions from the newcomers. They exchanged news on what they had done during their leave in the south, they talked about the work which they would be doing in the north, and, as is the custom among men of such select coteries, they dwelt long on news of absent brethren. They recounted the more famous of their Arctic experiences. And they made their complaints. Apart from that seemingly universal grievance among employees of all kinds — pay, perhaps their main concern was that they were the forgotten men. They were not seeking fame beyond their due, but they knew that they were doing an important and difficult job. They would like people to know of their existence. But it is a strange thing that if you press the men of the Arctic to list every complaint or criticism about their life and living conditions you would probably never hear a mention of the weather.

The cargo which was loaded on to the North Star Aircraft 512 early on the April morning of departure was as diverse as the passenger list. There were heavy cases of maintenance equipment, construction material, cylinders of helium and endless cartons of food, each marked with the name of some Arctic post. There were oddly-shaped pieces of scientific equipment — the theodolites, gravity meters, delicate balances, batteries, a trap for catching sea mollusks. Each was jealously watched by a scientist whose year's work might depend upon the safe passage of some small gadget.

The blanketing roar of engines deadened the conversation which had continued with such spirit throughout the weekend. On the long monotonous flight above the clouds to Churchill, life settled into drowsy inactivity. The usual determined souls gesticulated about a cribbage board on the center of the floor, but for most the long hours between Montreal and Churchill were a hiatus.

The overnight stay at Churchill was but an annoying interruption. Now that the south was left behind, everyone was anxious to get on with the job and the greatest fear was that weather might delay it.

### Arrival at Resolute

The next morning's flight was more exciting because there was an objective at the end. To see the little cluster of man-made buildings at Resolute, after hours of flying over an amorphous nothing, gave that same sense of shock and excitement that you might have on emerging from a cloud 2,000 feet from the Empire State Building. We arrived early in the afternoon. The airstrip was bitterly windswept and bathed in the brilliant fluorescent light of the Arctic, intense and glaring but seemingly heatless. A lifetime of misconceptions about the Arctic made the cold seem almost disappointingly temperate. The wind bit cruelly at the face or ungloved hand. The sun at first stung eyes too long accustomed to gloom. But the initial reaction was: "The Arctic is not so bad".