

COMPUTER FOR RCAF

The first large-scale electronic computer to be installed by a Canadian military organization came into action on November 4, when Mr. George R. Pearkes, Minister of National Defence, pushed a button at Air Materiel Command Headquarters, RCAF Station Rockcliffe, Ontario.

The huge computer, an IBM 705 Mark III, is actually a group of machines installed in a special annex that has been built at AMHeadquarters. Capable of making thousands of logical decisions a second, it is the latest development in large-scale "electronic brains" for business purposes.

Air Materiel Command directs material support for the whole RCAF and the new computer will be used to maintain better control over the total process than now is possible by manual and electro-mechanical means. It will be used initially for stock control, but will progressively be applied to management of the cataloguing, re-provisioning, reporting of technical failures, and fiscal and budgetary control programmes.

Keeping 300,000 different catalogue items flowing as quickly and economically as possible to RCAF units, spread over three continents, has become an increasingly complex problem. With the help of this new electronic servant the Command will be in a better position to maintain efficient control over the total process than is now possible.

Slogan of the Command is: "The right thing in the right place at the right time -- with utmost economy".

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BIOGRAPHY OF INDIAN CHIEF

"When my time comes," said Piapot, the great chieftain of the Cree, "don't bury me in the earth. Don't let them put me in the ground." Soon Piapot was dead, but his people were not able to obey his last command, for the white man's laws forbade the Indian custom of tree burial. So Piapot was laid to rest in a grave six inches deep, in a coffin of ripped-up floorboards and wagonboxes, overlooking the valley of the Qu'Appelle. It was a compromise with changed times and ways - a strangely symbolic end to an era.

Piapot, who led his people to their present home in the Qu'Appelle valley, as skilfully led them through the painful time of transition from the nomadic life of the buffalo-hunt to that of the reservation. Largely due to him, the change was made without strife.

The story of this leader and his tribe, has been told in a new book, "Payepot and his People" (the Cree spelling), by Abel Watetch as told to Blowden Davies, and published by the Saskatchewan History and Folklore Society.

Watetch, a nephew of Piapot, and a veteran of World War 1, has spent years accumulating

the history and folklore of the chief and his people. As a small boy, he recalled recently, he sometimes fell asleep, listening to the Chief tell stories of the Buffalo days. Then Piapot would shake him and say, "Nephew wake up! - I'm telling you a story!" It has been Watetch's objective to present the story of his people from their viewpoint and so to remove some of the misunderstandings that surround them.

The book provides both historical accounts and colourful legends. It tells the history of the Cree, in the days when they were moving toward the reservation, as well as picturesque legends such as that of the last buffalo herd, driving across the prairie sky to the Happy Hunting Grounds. The book successfully captures the atmosphere of prairie life before the white man, with its teepee encampments, and rumbling herds, and eager hunting parties. It describes Piapot's life - his capture as a child by a Sioux party from Dakota; his return to the Cree; his part in helping them to adjust to change. Ceremonies and methods are detailed, depicting a people close to nature and deeply reverent of its majesty. There is an undertone of wry amusement at the self-importance of the newcomers who came to this ancient people, intent on showing them the errors of their ways.

The book touches on Piapot's part in keeping his people at peace during the tense days of the Riel rebellion - an influence which brought him a personal letter of thanks from Sir John A. McDonald.

An appendix, compiled by the editorial committee of the History and Folklore Society, under the direction of Allan R. Turner, Saskatchewan Government Archives Office, contains extracts from official documents of the time. These are useful in presenting other viewpoints, and in some cases other versions, of incidents described.

"Payepot and his People" is the History and Folklore Society's first publication. The main objective of the society is to discover material, and to make it available to the public. This is a notable contribution to the programme.

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ESKIMO POWER OPERATORS

An Eskimo background may not seem the ideal soil for the growth of mechanical skills. Yet more than one instructor has been impressed by the way Eskimo trainees have tackled the problem of learning to operate machines. Now they're to try their hands in a more unlikely field still - power-plant operation. Few skills are more in demand in the north than the ability to handle the equipment that provides light and power.

The opportunity has come through the co-operation of the Departments of National Defence and Northern Affairs. About twenty