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NORTHERN RESOURCES AND CANADA'S FUTURE

In a recent speech to the National Hardwood Lumber Association in Toronto, Mr. Arthur Laing, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, described the special disadvantages of life in Canada's North but was confident that, as "technical capabilities" improved, hardships such as extreme cold and transportation difficulties would be eliminated or at least "reduced in importance".

Of the spectacular increase in the production of lead and zinc in the Northwest Territories, Mr. Laing observed that it accounted for "most of Canada's mineral output at this time".

Stressing the importance of new international markets for Canadian exports, Mr. Laing urged that these be sought "globally, not just continentally". "We should continue in our objective of world wide freer trade," he said, "and not be satisfied with anything less."

The following is a partial text of the Minister's remarks:

...Northern exploration and the subsequent development of the North has posed a challenge to adventurous men for several centuries. It brings to the mind pictures of hardy explorers braving the harsh elements to make known a new land and new routes to riches. We are even told that the Vikings may have been the first from Europe to set foot on the shores of North America. Whether or not this can be substantiated by the evidence available, one thing is certain - that most of the explorations were undertaken in response to economic stimulus, though the leaders and men who made up the various expeditions were certainly meeting a challenge to themselves as much as seeking a profitable opportunity for those financing the undertaking.

Men were attracted into the Far North in their search for the produce of the sea and today one can hear many tales of the visits of the whaling-ships to remote communities. It is well known, however, that probably the greatest stimulus to exploration and that which resulted in the discovery of the North American continent by Columbus was the desire to find a westerly sea-route to the riches of the Orient. Undeniably the search for a northwest passage was the main factor leading to the discovery and identification of many of the Arctic islands.

To what extent these early explorers thought the land over which they travelled or the islands they passed in their ships would one day provide a rich source of natural resources one cannot be sure, but they were keen observers and reported on their findings. For example, Mackenzie saw the oil-seeps of what is now the oil-field at Norman Wells, and Bernier reported the existence of coal plus a tar-like substance which was chewed by the Eskimos from Melville Island. Today, the Norman Wells oil-field supplies petroleum products throughout the Mackenzie Valley and the Melville Islands oil-sands are one of the most important proofs of the existence of hydrocarbons in that vast region. The most extensive voyages of discovery were made during the latter part of the twentieth century, but, during this time, another attraction was luring men from their homes half way round the world. I refer here to the gold-rushes in Australia, California, British Columbia, and, finally, the Yukon. Gold on the Klondike was responsible for the establishment of a community located in a remote corner of Canada where access was difficult and the climate extreme. Nevertheless, within a few years from the original discovery in