

Close to the point of origin of one of the principal roads now being planned is Dawson—perhaps the most famous place in the entire Canadian north. After the discovery of gold on the Klondike in 1898, it grew within three years to be a city of twenty-seven thousand people—the fourth largest city in Canada west of Toronto. Today Dawson's glory is a thing of the past. It is a town of perhaps five or six hundred people, with buildings that bear witness to its former greatness, and memories that call them back. However, Dawson is far from dead. Gold is still mined by hydraulic means and through the use of some of the largest dredges in the world—dredges that stand as high as seven or eight storey buildings. West of Dawson a new discovery of asbestos is being investigated and may shortly come into production. But by far the most interesting thing lies north of Dawson—an area quite unsettled and almost unknown where there are prospects that there may well be a very large and very rich oil and gas area. It is into this region that the government now plans to construct one of its new development roads.

Speaking of this area in Edmonton on September 17th Mr. Hamilton said:

The world's greatest search for oil and gas, in terms of the area involved, is right now under way in the Yukon and the Mackenzie district of the Northwest Territories. Conducted by ground parties, helicopters and other aircraft, it covers more than 70,000,000 acres, or about half the area of this province of Alberta and extends from the 60th parallel to the delta of the Mackenzie river on the Arctic coast. This exploration has been gaining momentum for the past eight years, and most recently the area covered by oil exploration permits has doubled in just one year. Expenditures on exploration now total several million dollars annually and will mount substantially higher in the future.

The road to reach the central part of this area would begin about twenty-five miles east of Dawson and go straight north from there to cross the Arctic Circle. I flew over it at low altitude—up the valley of the North Klondike river across the height of land to the Blackstone and Peel rivers and over the high barren plateau that is the Eagle plain. The entire route has been surveyed and much will soon be cleared. With its completion the costs of exploration and development will come down sharply and the prospects of early operation will greatly increase.

From the Eagle plain it is only a skip and a jump—as things go in the north—across the Richardson mountains to Fort McPherson which lies at the edge of the Mackenzie delta. It will be a rugged route to put a road through, but one day it may be worthwhile to carry the transportation link across from Eagle plain. When and if that day comes, the northern part of the Yukon will have two channels of access—one from the Pacific and the southern Yukon—and the other by way of the Mackenzie river from the north.

At Fort McPherson it was my privilege on behalf of the Minister of Northern Affairs to open one of the new hostels that the government is building to provide for the education of Eskimo and Indian children who until now have not had adequate opportunity for the training that will enable them to face the future. Our failure to educate these children was not perhaps too serious as long as they could live adequately in their traditional way by hunting and fishing. Those days, unfortunately are past, and the people must be adjusted to something new. Speaking of them in Edmonton on September 18, the commissioner of the Northwest Territories, Mr. Gordon Robertson, had this to say:

The standard of living of the northern Indians and of our Canadian Eskimos is far below the national average—indeed below what is regarded as poverty anywhere else. For many of them life has become precarious because of the drastic decline in the supply of caribou, the