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THE CANADIAN LANDSCAPE THROUGH POETRY

VOLUM I

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N E L A B U R E U i R A M O S

the Canadian prairie may also favour the expansion of the spirit and the imagination because, as Lionel Stevenson remarks, "the poetic mind placed in the midst of a natural grandeur, can scarcely avoid mysticism".(*52) The poetry of Miriam Waddington illustrates the latter clearly and beautifully.

THE PRAIRIE : CHAPTER FOUR. NOTES

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PART TWO

THE NORTH

CHAPTER ONE

SOME GEOGRAPHICAL DEFINITIONS

The first image that is likely to come to our mind when thinking about the north of Canada is that of a permanently frozen and almost deserted land only enlivened by some polar bears, seals, penguins, walrus and Eskimo and, perhaps, a few research scientists living in distant, isolated posts. The reason for this widespread conception of northern Canada is that, for many people, the term 'north' has a specific connotation meaning only the Arctic part of the country. However, as we shall see now, the Canadian North is a much wider and physically

varied area with no definite southern limits as Farley Mowat observes:

> *The first difficulty that must be mastered in understanding the northern reality is to decide just where the North begins and to ascertain its boundaries. Ask a scientist for a definition of "North" and you are instantly ears deep in boreal subarctic and arctic zones, in isotherms, degree days and permafrost limits. The truth is that the region has no arbitrary southern boundary except insofar as one exists in us as a state of mind. The situation is akin to that of an astronaut shot up in a rocket. At what level does he enter space? At no specific level, but at the moment he becomes aware he has entered a different world. (*1)*

According to Kenneth Coates, northern Canada is formed by the Yukon and Northwest Territories which also include the Arctic islands.(See next page). It is a huge area of 4.000.000 square kilometres, about eight times the size of Spain, that occupies 40% of Canada's total extension. This description is political rather than geographical and does not include northern Labrador in Newfoundland, Arctic Quebec, which was added to this province in 1912, or the thousands of square kilometers of water between the Arctic islands. Kenneth Coates admits

ELIZABETH ISLANDS
QUEEN
Ellef Ringnes Island
North Magnetic Pole
Prince Gustaf Adolf Sea
Axel Heiberg Island
SVERDRUP ISLANDS
Amund Ringnes I.
Norwegian Bay
Nansen Sd.
Yelverton Bay
Barbeau Peak 2604
Cape Columbia
Alert
Greely Fiord
Eureka
ELLESMERE ISLAND
Kane Basin
Kap Alexander
Qaanaaq (Thule)
Savissivik
Smith Bay
Grise Fiord
Jones Sound
Devon Island
Lancaster Sound
Borden I.
Mackenzie King I.
Prince Patrick Island
PARRY ISLANDS
Melville Island
Bathurst Island
Cornwallis I.
Resolute
M'Clure Strait
Viscount Melville Sound
Banks Island
Sachs Harbour
Cape Kellett
Prince of Wales Str.
VICTORIA ISLAND
Holman
Amundsen Gulf
Prince of Wales Island
M'Clintock Channel
Somerset Island
Brodeur Peninsula
Arctic Bay
Bylot I.
Pond Inlet
BAFFIN BAY
Upernavik
Uummannaq
Qeqertarsuaq (Disko)
Ilulissat
Aasiaat
Sisimiut
Maniitsoq
Nuuk (Godthåb)
Paamiut
Narsaq
Qaqortoq
Nanortalik
DAVIS STRAIT
BAFFIN ISLAND
Clyde River
Home Bay
Broughton Island
Cape Dyer
Cumberland Pen.
Pangnirtung
Cumberland Sd.
Hall Peninsula
Iqaluit
Resolution I.
Prince Charles I.
Igloolik
Foxe Basin
Melville Pen.
Boothia Pen.
Gulf of Boothia
King William I.
Gjoa Haven
Spence Bay
Queen Maud Gulf
Cambridge Bay
Coronation G.
Coppermine
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
Repulse Bay
Foxe Channel
Southampton Island
Foxe Pen.
Cape Dorset
Hudson Strait
Kangiqsujuaq
Cratère du Nouveau-Québec (Chubb Crater) 657
Povungnituk
Ungava Bay
Mont D'Iberville 1652
LABRADOR SEA
MID-OCEAN CANYON
BEAUFORT SEA
Mackenzie Bay
Tuktoyaktuk
Inuvik
Aklavik
Kaktovik
Prudhoe Bay
Mt. Isto 2761
North Slope
Brooks Range 2262
Barrow
Pt. Barrow
Wainwright
Ostrov Herald
Ostrov Vrangelya
Monday
Sunday
CHUKCHI SEA
CHUKCHI PLATEAU
80°
Point Hope
U.S.S.R.
U.S.
Kotzebue Sound
Kotzebue
ARCTIC CIRCLE
Seward Pen.
Nome
Norton Sd.
Yukon
Kuskokwim
Iliamna L.
ALASKA
Galena
Mt. McKinley (Denali) 6194
Fairbanks
Fort Yukon
Porcupine
YUKON
Ogilvie Mts. 2362
Dawson
TERRITORY
2972
Mackenzie Mts.
Alaska Range
Anchorage
Palmer
Valdez
Cordova
Kenai
Seward
Kenai Pen.
Homer
Cook Inlet
Kodiak
Kodiak I.
Gulf of Alaska
Mt. Blackburn 4996
Mt. Logan 5951
Mt. Fairweather 4663
Whitehorse
Skagway
Juneau
Sitka
Stikine
Kates Needle 3055
Alexander Archipelago
Ketchikan
Dixon Entrance
Prince Rupert
Kitimat
Queen Charlotte Islands
Hecate Strait
Queen Charlotte Sound
Mt. Waddington 3994
Vancouver I.
Watson Lake
Fort Simpson
2773
Liard
Ft. Nelson
Mt. Roosevelt 2972
Ft. St. John
Williston L.
BRITISH COLUMBIA
Terrace
Prince George
Mt. Robson 3954
Kamloops
Kelowna
Fraser
Columbia
Coast Mts.
ROCKY MOUNTAINS
Fort Good Hope
Great Bear Lake
Norman Wells
Ft. Franklin
Mackenzie
Great Slave Lake
Rae
Yellowknife
Hay River
Ft. Smith
Ft. Chipewyan
Peace
Peace River
Dawson Creek
Grande Prairie
ALBERTA
Edmonton
Athabasca
Ft. McMurray
Lloydminster
Red Deer
Calgary
Medicine Hat
Lethbridge
Swift Current
Moose Jaw
Regina
Weyburn
Yorkton
Saskatoon
Prince Albert
N. Battleford
SASKATCHEWAN
La Ronge
Reindeer L.
Churchill
Uranium City
L. Athabasca
Lupin
Contwoyto Lake
MacKay Lake
Dubawnt Lake
Kasba L.
Nueltin L.
CANADA
Garry Lake
Baker Lake
Rankin Inlet
Eskimo Point
Churchill
HUDSON BAY
Coats I.
Mansel I.
Ottawa Is.
Inukjuak
Belcher Islands
Kuujjuaq
Lac Minto
Lynn Lake
Nelson
Thompson
Flin Flon
MANITOBA
The Pas
L. Winnipeg
Dauphin
Portage la Prairie
Winnipeg
Brandon
L. of the Woods
Kenora
Fort Frances
Sioux Lookout
ONTARIO
Severn
C. Henrietta Maria
Akimiski I.
Fort Albany
Moosonee
James Bay
Chisasibi
Res. Caniapiscau
Schefferville
Smallwood Res.
Nain
Hopedale
LABRADOR
Happy Valley-Goose Bay
Labrador City
NEWFOUNDLAND
Hamilton Inlet
QUEBEC
Lourdes-de-Blanc-Sablon
Strait of Belle Isle
Notre Dame Bay
Gander
Corner Brook
ISLAND OF NEWFOUNDLAND
St. John's
Avalon Pen.
St. Pierre & Miquelon Is. France
Anticosti I.
Sept-Îles
Chibougamau
Baie-Comeau
Gaspé
Gulf of St. Lawrence
Chicoutimi
Jonquière
Val-d'Or
Rouyn
Kapuskasing
L. Nipigon
Thunder Bay
Timmins
Sudbury
L. Superior
Sault Sainte Marie
Trois-Rivières
Québec
Montréal
Ottawa
St. Lawrence
N.B.
Fredericton
P.E.I.
Charlottetown
Saint John
Baddeck
Sydney
Cape Breton I.
NOVA SCOTIA
Halifax
Sable Island Nova Scotia
Bay of Fundy
Yarmouth
ME.
Augusta
Portland
Montpelier
1917
N.H.
VT.
Concord, N.H.
Boston, MASS.
Providence, R.I.
Hartford, CONN.
New York
Trenton, N.J.
Philadelphia
Dover, DEL.
Annapolis, MD.
Washington, D.C.
Baltimore
Harrisburg
PA.
Richmond
VA.
Norfolk
Cape Hatteras
N.C.
Raleigh
Greensboro
Charlotte
Columbia
S.C.
Charleston
Savannah
Jacksonville
Tallahassee
FLA.
Cape Canaveral
Orlando
Tampa
Miami
Grand Bahama I.
Abaco I.
Nassau
Bermuda Islands U.K.
-5578
ATLANTIC
Appalachian Mts.
2037
Albany
N.Y.
Rochester
Buffalo
L. Ontario
L. Erie
Toronto
Lake Huron
Cleveland
Pittsburgh
Columbus
OHIO
Cincinnati
W. VA.
Charleston
KY.
Frankfort
Louisville
Lansing
Detroit
L. Michigan
MICH.
IND.
Indianapolis
ILL.
Chicago
Springfield
St. Louis
Jefferson City
MO.
Kansas City
Nashville
TENN.
Knoxville
Memphis
Birmingham
Atlanta
GA.
ALA.
Montgomery
MISS.
Jackson
Mississippi
Baton Rouge
Mobile
New Orleans
LA.
Shreveport
ARK.
Little Rock
Beaumont
Galveston
Houston
Austin
Waco
Dallas
Ft. Worth
Abilene
Odessa
TEXAS
San Antonio
Corpus Christi
Laredo
Nuevo Laredo
Brownsville
Matamoros
GULF OF
Lubbock
Amarillo
OKLA.
Oklahoma City
Tulsa
KANS.
Wichita
Topeka
Lincoln
Omaha
NEBR.
Des Moines
IOWA
Madison
Milwaukee
WIS.
Green Bay
Minneapolis
St. Paul
MINN.
Duluth
Fargo
Grand Forks
N. DAK.
Bismarck
Minot
Aberdeen
S. DAK.
Pierre
Sioux Falls
Sioux City
Rapid City
Black Hills 2207
Gillette
WYO.
Casper
Cheyenne
Denver
Boulder
Colorado Sprs.
Pueblo
COLO.
Pikes Pk. 4301
4399
Wheeler Peak 4011
Santa Fe
N. MEX.
Albuquerque
El Paso
Rio Grande
Ciudad Juárez
Chihuahua
Torreón 3170
Sierra Madre Occidental
Hermosillo
Gulf of California
Baja California
Isla de Guadalupe 1298 Mexico
Isla Cedros
Punta Eugenia
Tucson
Phoenix
ARIZ.
Flagstaff
Grand Canyon
Colorado
Yuma
Mexicali
3000
Tijuana
San Diego
Los Angeles
Riverside
Bakersfield
Fresno
Mt. Whitney 4418
-86
Las Vegas
Sierra Nevada
San Jose
San Francisco
Sacramento
CALIF.
Cape Mendocino
3187
Lassen Peak
Mt. Shasta 4317
Reno
Carson City
NEV.
UTAH
Salt Lake City
Great Salt Lake
Provo
Pocatello
Snake
Idaho Falls
4207
Boise
IDA.
Borah Pk. 3859
Medford
Eugene
Bend
OREG.
Salem
Portland
Mt. St. Helens 2550
Baker
Olympia
Mt. Rainier 4392
Tacoma
Seattle
Victoria
Vancouver
WASH.
Richland
Spokane
Missoula
Helena
MONT.
Great Falls
Butte
Billings
Missouri
2000
4000
6000
200

that the geography and the living conditions in the Territories are similar to those in the upper reaches of Newfoundland, Quebec and the western provinces, namely, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. However, he justifies his definition of Canada's North saying that:

> ***The Territories suffer the further difficulty of being shackled by Canada's colonial system. The distinction is an important one, for the history of Canada's colonial north follows a very different constitutional and political path from that of the provincial "norths".(*2)***

Coates clearly refers to the inferior status of the Territories compared to that of the provinces which have always enjoyed wider political autonomy. The inhabitants of the Yukon and Northwest Territories, especially the Indians and Inuit, have repeatedly blamed the Canadian authorities for adopting a colonial policy towards their land, ignoring their claims for aboriginal rights and self-government.

A second way of mapping out Canada's North is to say that it begins above the 60th parallel

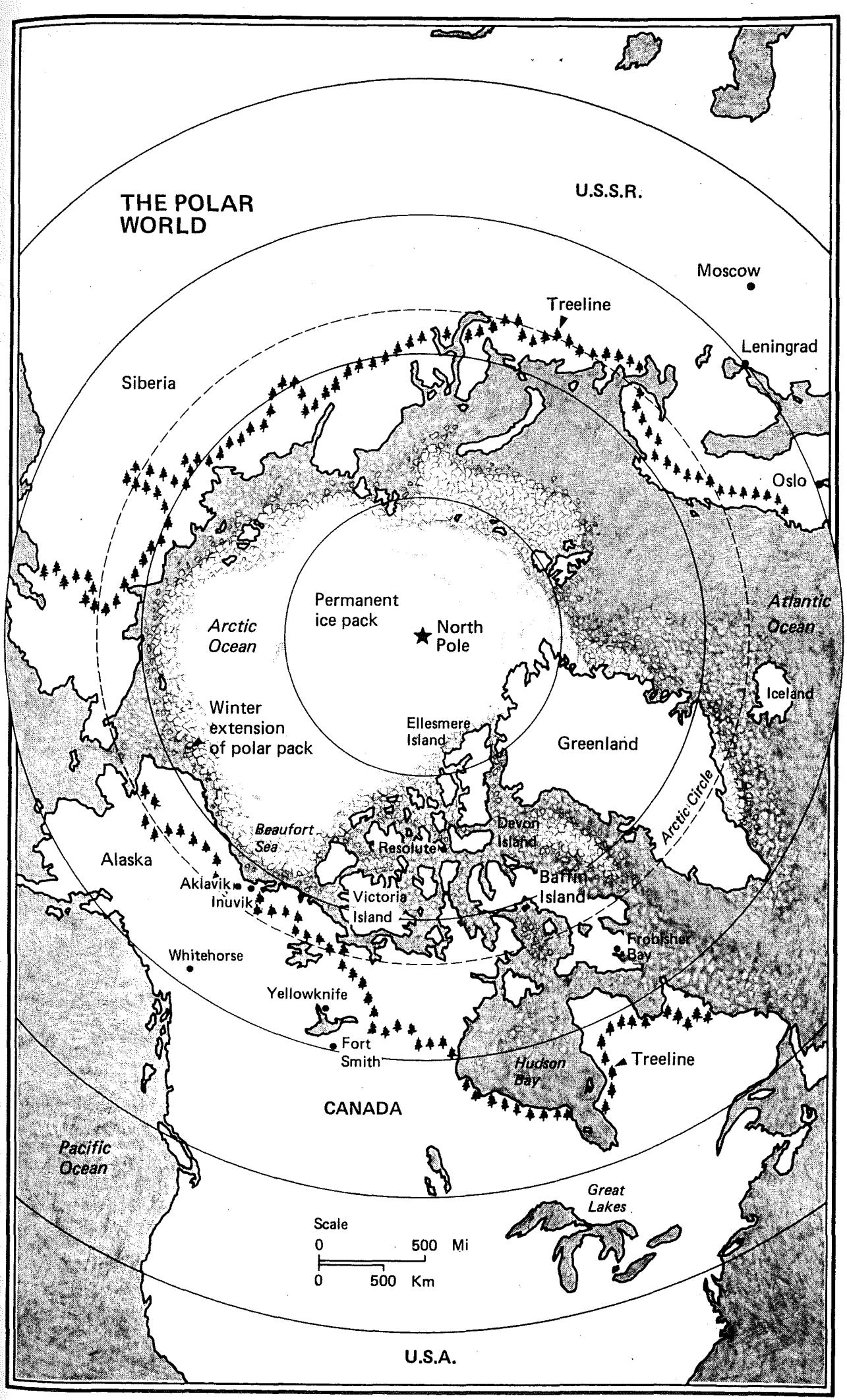
which marks the northern boundaries of the four western provinces. This definition differs from the first one in that it includes the Ungava peninsula in northern Quebec and the tip of Labrador in Newfoundland.

Objections to these two definitions can be made on the grounds that, from a strictly geographical perspective, the southern boundaries of Canada's North are less precise because, as has already been pointed out, the northern parts of the four western provinces are similar in several ways to the Subarctic lands that lie immediately above their boundaries. The Mackenzie Basin, for example, with its forested regions and vast areas of potential agricultural land is an extension of the prairie provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta. In the same way, the scenery in southern Yukon does not differ from that in British Columbia with its glaciers, lakes and valleys, its tall mountain ranges, impressive waterfalls and abysmal canyons. Thus, there is no definite physical separation between the lands that lie above and below the 60th parallel since

the landscape and the climate on both sides of this imaginary line are similar.

A third possible definition of the Canadian North is to limit it to the Arctic part of the country and to consider the band of coniferous forest that sweeps across northern Canada as a natural separation between the Arctic and Subarctic zones. (See next page)

This treeline, also known as the taiga, follows an irregular diagonal line that goes from the north eastern tip of Alaska down to Churchill on the southern shores of Hudson Bay in Manitoba and angles up again through northern Quebec until the tip of Labrador. To the north, the vegetation of the taiga, mainly black and white spruce, larch, birch and poplar, grows sparser and more stunted until it fades out in the vast open plains of the tundra also known as the Barrens or the Arctic Desert. The tundra is characterized by bare and frozen soils and a low and sparse vegetation which is nevertheless sufficient to support herds of migrating caribou which, to use Mowat's words,


THE POLAR WORLD
U.S.S.R.
Moscow
Treeline
Leningrad
Siberia
Oslo
Permanent ice pack
North Pole
Arctic Ocean
Atlantic Ocean
Iceland
Winter extension of polar pack
Ellesmere Island
Greenland
Arctic Circle
Beaufort Sea
Devon Island
Resolute
Alaska
Baffin Island
Aklavik
Inuvik
Victoria Island
Frobisher Bay
Whitehorse
Yellowknife
Fort Smith
Hudson Bay
Treeline
CANADA
Pacific Ocean
Great Lakes
Scale
0 500 Mi
0 500 Km
U.S.A.

"have literally been the lifeblood of the human residents of the northern plains and of the adjacent taiga since time immemorial".(*3) There is no definite line of demarcation between taiga and tundra for the two regions merge. There are oases of trees far out on the sweeps of the Barrens and treeles areas deep inside the forest.

Perhaps, as Alistan Horne suggests in his book Canada and the Canadians, the most satisfactory definition is that "the North is what lies beyond the limits of Canadian commercial agriculture and beyond easy reach from the major centres".(*4) Horne goes on to say that, by this definition, the Canadian North may be divided into six separate physical regions. The first one includes the northernmost portion of the western provinces, namely, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Even Ontario, to the south of Hudson Bay, has a slice of the North in the "forlorn, uninhabited muskeg and taiga" adjacent to the Great Bay.(*5) This first region constitutes a transitional zone between southern Canada where the majority of the population

concentrates and the most northerly and thinly settled part of the country.

Northern Quebec and Labrador, that lie to the north-east of Hudson Bay, form the second region described by Alistan Horne. He refers to this area as "one of the most forbidding parts of the Canadian North"(*6) but also "one of the world's largest high-grade iron ore deposits".(*7) Thirdly, the Barrens of Keewatin on the other side of the Bay above the province of Manitoba are equally desolate but less wealthy whereas the Mackenzie Basin, to the north of Saskatchewan and Alberta, which is the fourth region in Horne's list, is rich in minerals, timber and potential arable lands.

The fifth division proposed by Horne is the Yukon Territory that lies north of British Columbia and west of the Mackenzie River. The gold rush in 1896 brought wealth and prosperity to this Territory that has continued to yield riches such as oil, basic metals and asbestos during this century. Finally, the Arctic islands constitute

the most northerly Canadian region and one that brings Canada close to Asia and northern Europe. The Arctic archipelago, the largest island group on earth, can be considered a huge land mass because most of the frozen channels that join these islands never break up except for narrow open water strips along the shores.

Apart from being useful to create a sense of place, these definitions confirm Farley Mowat's suggestion that in a country where people have a strong feeling of being northerners, the term 'north' is not easy to define. The notion that Canada's northern lands begin abruptly above the 60th parallel may suit prairie dwellers, whereas for the inhabitants of the southern fringe along the USA border the North is probably all the land that lies immediately above this area. Similarly, the idea of north cannot be the same for the Inuit, who are the chief inhabitants of the treeless Arctic region, and for the Indians, who have traditionally lived below the treeline in the forested Subarctic lands.

These different conceptions of the North also remind us that northern Canada is a huge area with a wide range and variety of environmental conditions. The Subarctic northwest with its mountains, lakes and forests and the Arctic islands with their long fiords and enormous glaciers offer a scenery of stupefying beauty whereas the district of Keewatin, to the north of Manitoba, and the Ungava peninsula, in northern Quebec, are some of the most barren and desolate stretches of land in the world though not devoid of beauty in their vastness, nakedness and solitude.

From a climatic point of view, the North is also a land of paradoxes. Contrary to what we might have expected, slightly colder temperatures have been recorded in the northern part of the prairie provinces than have ever been recorded in Arctic Canada and it seems that the winter blizzards on the western prairie can match the worst weather the Arctic produces. It is precisely the length and severity of the cold season together with the scarcity of potential arable

land that explain the scanty population in the Northwest Territories. The climate in this part of Canada has been particulary repellent to potential settlers and, for this reason, this area is mainly occupied by its original inhabitants, the Indians and the Inuit.

THE NORTH : CHAPTER ONE. NOTES

1. Farley Mowat, Canada North Now. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, (1967), 1976, p.17.

2. Kenneth Coates, Canada's Colonies. Toronto: James Lorimer, 1985, p.11.

3. Farley Mowat, Canada North Now, op. cit., p.89.

4. Alistan Horne, Canada and the Canadians. Toronto: MacMillan, 1961, p.157.

5. Ibid., p.157.

6. Ibid., p.157.

7. Ibid., p.158.

CHAPTER TWO

A HISTORICAL APPROACH

2.1.- THE NATIVES

Since the Northwest Territories is the only Canadian region to have a larger native population than non-native, it would be a mistake to begin this chapter on the history of northern Canada without a reference to the arrival and settlement of its earliest inhabitants, the Indians and the Inuit.

In his book Native Peoples and Cultures of Canada, Alan MacMillan provides a comprehensive account of the origins, history and ways of life of the different native groups that once lived in Canada and of those who still inhabit the country. According to this author, most anthropologists believe that native North Americans are of Asiatic origin and that their ancestors entered the land by way of the Bering Strait which, at its narrowest, is only 90 km. wide. However, it seems that these same experts do not agree on the dates of the first human presence on the American continent:

> ***Several schools of thought have emerged. The "early man" advocates maintain that initial entry occurred at least 30.000 years ago and possibly even earlier (a few speculate as early as 100.000 or more years ago). At the other end of the argument, the considerable view is that there is no convincing evidence for human presence in North America prior to about 12.000 years ago, when the distinctive projectile points of big game hunters known to archaeologists as "Paleo-Indians" first appeared.(*1)***

Be that as it may, the first human beings that ever set foot on the American continent were

the ancestors of the people we generally call 'Indians'. The Inuit arrived in Canada much later and were called 'Eskimos', meaning 'eaters of raw meat', by the Indians. However, the natives of Arctic Canada prefer the term Inuit which means 'the people' as it is how they refer to themselves in their own language.

The Inuit entered the land about 4.000 years ago and were part of a Mongoloid circumpolar dispersion unrelated to Indian populations. They spread thinly across Arctic Canada in search of game and sea mammals and reached western Greenland before 1000 AD, about the same time as the Norse reached the coasts of North America. The Indians moved south to warmer areas, although some tribes such as the Beothuk, the original 'Red Indians', (*2) remained on the North Atlantic coast and, together with the Inuit, were the first native people to come into continuous contact with Europeans.

The Norse colonists established settlements in Greenland from where they continued to explore

to the south and west of this island. They made no distinctions between the Indians and Inuit and referred to them as 'savages'. However, archeological deposits reveal that there were trading links between these groups though they did not last long due to the natives' continuous raids on the invaders. As Alan MacMillan explains:

> ***Interaction with the natives of the area was hostile and Norse attempts to occupy the lands seem to have been frustrated by the native defence of their territory, forestalling European Colonisation for another five centuries.(*3)***

The second wave of Europeans arrived on the coast of Newfoundland at the end of the 15th Century. In 1497, the Venetian sailor John Cabot in the service of the King of England, Henry VII, reached the North Atlantic coast. Unlike the Norse who had retreated in the face of hostilities, the Europeans did not give up the exploitation of the rich fishing banks that lie off the eastern coast of Nova Scotia south of Newfoundland. This early exploitation laid the foundations of Canada's

valuable fishing industry. The fur trade was to be the next step.

In 1534, two French vessels set sail from St. Malo, a seaport on the British Channel. They were commanded by Jacques Cartier, an experienced sea-captain under the patronage of the King of France, Francis I. Cartier passed through the Strait of Belle Isle, between Newfoundland and Labrador, and explored the Gulf of St. Lawrence. On his second and third voyages in 1535 and 1541, Cartier navigated the St. Lawrence River as far inland as the Indian villages of Stadacona (Quebec) and Hochelaga (Montreal). Cartier's voyages were not followed up by permanent settlements, but they served to lay the basis for later French claims to Canada and to establish trading links with some Indians who were ready to exchange pelts for small ornaments and cheap manufactured goods.

Unable to contend for the control of their territory against the armed ambition of Renaissance Europe, the Indians either became involved in the fur trade and the conflicts

between the French and the English, which added tension to existing tribal rivalries, or were forced to move west and south in search of new hunting grounds. In any case, their population plummeted dramatically due to continuous warfare and the diseases introduced by Europeans against which the natives had no immunity. The Indians' progressive displacement from traditional lands and eventual confinement to reserves also decimated the population of a people who were not physically or psychologically prepared to be confined to a territory and deprived of their freedom to move and exploit the resources outside the boundaries of their reserve. This process of segregation was generally sanctioned by treaties the natives signed without full knowledge of either the terms involved or the immediate and future consequences of these agreements. As MacMillan remarks:

> ***It appears that there were great differences between what the Indians were told they were signing and the actual written words of the treaties. Gifts such as flags and medals enhanced the illusion that these were pacts of friendship and natural assistance, when they in fact were primarily deeds of sale. Indians today want the treaties interpreted in the broadest***

*possible way reflecting the spirit in which they were signed.(*4)*

After almost five centuries of contact with Europeans, the lifestyle of most Indians has undergone extensive acculturization although both the Indians and the Inuit have traditionally stood for their rights and have succeeded in maintaining their culture and separate identity through long and sometimes frustrating negotiations. However, conflicts with the Canadian government continue to arise because the benefits the natives have won fall short of what they still hope to achieve. Land claims, federal grants, aboriginal rights and self-government are some of the issues that are still under negotiation.

The Inuit did not suffer the impact of European presence in the same measure as the Indians because sustained Euro-Canadian presence in the Arctic came much later due to extreme weather conditions and problems of accessibility. The eastern groups were the first to establish contact with the White man, first with the Norse

colonists and, centuries later, with explorers, whalers, traders and missionaries who introduced diseases and eroded traditional Inuit culture and customs by making them economically dependent on the fur trade and emotionally subservient to the religious zeal of missionaries. However, education and medical assistance were on the credit side of these first Europeans, especially the missionaries who organized the welfare of the natives until the 1950s when the Canadian government took a more active role in Inuit administration. Hospitals, schools, hotels and stores were built in the North and these facilities improved the quality and standard of living of the Inuit. However, the natives' exposure to modern ways of life proved to be more destructive to their culture than previous centuries of contact with explorers, whalers and traders.

No Inuit now depends solely on local animal resources for food and clothing and young Inuit have less interest in hunting economy as they are increasingly aware of the attractions of southern Canada. In spite of this, the Inuit, like the

Indians, have succeeded in achieving a considerable degree of autonomy that allows them to maintain their separate identity and take control of their own affairs. Very recently, on the 30th October 1992, Inuit leaders signed an agreement with the federal government whereby an Inuit territory named Nunavunt (Our Land) was to be created out of the Northwest Territories. Nunavunt will have an extension of 2.2 million square kilometers which is about a fifth of Canada's total extension.

2.2.- EUROPEAN PRESENCE IN THE NORTH

Modern Canadian history begins with the arrival of the Viking frontiersmen in Greenland and on the coasts of Newfoundland in search of new harbours, fisheries and hay meadows. Although they established some colonies on what is now Canadian soil, these Icelandic warrior-farmers did not make any permanent settlements in the northern part of

the American continent because of the inhospitable conditions of the land and the hostility of the natives.

After the withdrawal of the Norse explorers, Canada remained, as Kenneth MacNaught puts it, "shrouded in the midst of medieval legend for 500 years".(*5) The northern part of the country retained this mythical aureole much longer because the second wave of Europeans who arrived in Canada explored the coasts of Newfoundland and the Saint Lawrence and Great Lakes region where some of the first settlements were established before turning their eyes to the North as a possible home.

2.2.1.- THE QUEST FOR THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE

Up to the end of the 19th Century, the White man's interest in northern Canada, especially the Arctic region, was related to the search for the fabled Northwest Passage and the riches the land

might hide. The desire to open sea routes for trade with the Orient through North America became especially strong during the century following Columbus' discovery because overland journeys were too dangerous and the ships of Spain and Portugal policed the seas all the way from Spain to the Strait of Magellan.

The quest for the Northwest Passage began with the first of Martin Frobisher's three voyages in 1576. Frobisher sailed from England and reached Labrador and Baffin Island to return to his country with reports of mineral wealth and the belief that he might have discovered a route to Cathay. Two further expeditions to the same area followed in 1577 and 1578, but Frobisher found no gold and his attempts to establish a colony were unsuccessful.

Subsequent surveys of the area during the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries proved that there was no quick route to the Orient through the Arctic Ocean. In 1610, Henry Hudson tried to reach the Far East through Hudson Strait but he soon

realized that he had run into a blind alley and that the bay was land locked.

In 1769, more than a century after Hudson's discovery of Canada's great inland sea, the Governor of Hudson's Bay Company sent a young man called Samuel Hearne from port Churchill in northern Manitoba to investigate reports of a rich copper mine far to the northwest of the Bay. Hearne reached the Arctic Ocean and turned south to Great Slave Lake and then south east again to return to Churchill. He did not find much copper, but he became the first European to break through the coast of the western Arctic and to discover Great Slave Lake. Hearne's voyage also strengthened the belief that there could be no northwest passage from Hudson Bay to the Pacific, an idea confirmed a decade later by James Cook who sailed up the coast of British Columbia and passed the Bering Strait where he found a wall of ice that made further advance impossible. Cook concluded that any passage from the Pacific to the Atlantic was so far north that it would be blocked by ice and, therefore, useless to ships.