

NEW ZEALANDER AMONG THE ESKIMOS

Dr. Jenness Talks on Anthropology, the Future of the Arctic, and the Classics

HAVING an interview with Dr. Diamond Jenness in mind, we asked a friend what the average New Zealander knew about the Dominion of Canada, where this eminent anthropologist has worked for the last 35 years. "That the Canadian Mounted Police get their man," he replied. Well, we learned from Dr. Jenness a lot about Canada we didn't know, but he mentioned police only once, and that in passing, and did not refer specifically to the Mounties. Crime was not spoken of at all in a talk about Indians and Eskimos, their past, present and future; the limits of Canadian land production; life in the Arctic and its future (how would you like to get mail and supplies once a year, which up to now has been the lot of many Hudson's Bay Company agents?); a slight change in the flow of the Gulf Stream and its consequences; and the importance to navigation and agriculture of magnetic and weather observation in the Arctic wastes. They don't know yet just where the North Magnetic Pole is. There may be two of them.

Bows and Arrows

How did Diamond Jenness, born in Wellington and educated at Wellington College and Victoria College, with classics as his speciality, come to be Consulting Anthropologist to the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Canada (a Federal Department) and Chief of the Division of Anthropology of the National Museum? He was one of Professor

Rankine Brown's early students, and Brown advised him to continue his classics at Oxford. He was a Balliol man, and took "Greats." But his interest in anthropology had already been aroused by two things—the Maori, and the marriage of his sister to a missionary in New Guinea. At Oxford there was a Diploma in Anthropology, and he took it. But what was a classic to do except teach? However, the offer came of an anthropological mission to New Guinea, and he spent a year there. Back in New Zealand, he was cabled an offer from Ottawa to go on an expedition with the famous explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson to the Eskimos. When Stefansson had visited Oxford, he had heard of young Jenness as a student of anthropology.

They went up to Coronation Gulf on the Arctic Coast and, travelling by ship through the Behring Sea, it took them 18 months to get there. To-day you can reach Coronation Gulf from Eastern Canada in two days by plane via the west, or one day if you fly direct. "The Eskimos were using bows and arrows to hunt their game, and some of them had never seen a white man," said Dr. Jenness.

The Indian Tribes

With a hand on the map of Canada, Dr. Jenness talked about the Indians and Eskimos and the enormous proportion of Canada that cannot be cultivated. There are about 125,000 Indians and Eskimos, so far as can be ascertained, the Eskimos being a section of the Indians. The Indians are counted by

their connection with their reservations; there may be more outside those tribal homes. Unlike the Maori, the Indian and the Eskimo are legally minors, wards of the State. The Indian is free to leave his reservation to get work, and some of them are employed in city factories. The Indian is mechanically-minded. He can lease the mining or timber rights of his reservation land to Europeans, but only with the consent of the Government. Sometimes there isn't enough land in a reservation for the Indians themselves. In every large reservation there is an official agent who acts as go-between with the Government. There are some 50 Indian tribes, who speak 11 languages, and numerous dialects. One tribe may not be able to understand another tribe. Two tribes may speak the same language but differ in customs. Another two may have the

same customs but differ in language.

"You have to realise how much of Canada is not cultivable," said Dr. Jenness. "There is a belt of usable land right across Canada, narrow in the east and wide in the west, but always narrow in relation to the immense size of the country. Generally speaking, it does not extend beyond the east-and-west railways, though here and there are pockets outside the belt. Beyond this belt are areas of country whose products are timber, minerals, and fur-bearing animals, but when you get away north you lose the timber. Beyond a certain line (he traced it on the map, following roughly the contour of the Arctic Ocean and Hudson Bay) you get timberless country—the 'Barren Lands.'

Fuel? The Eskimo used blubber in the old days; now kerosene. Up on the Arctic coast is the Eskimo country. Along that coast the Eskimo is to be found from Siberia to Greenland. There are approximately 3000 in Siberia, 16,000 in Alaska, 7500 in Canada, and 21,000 under Danish rule in Greenland. Are they increasing? We don't know about Siberia, or about Canada, because owing to the isolation we weren't able to take a real census till 1940, but American and Danish figures show that the numbers are going up.

Disturbed Economy

"The coming of the white man has seriously disturbed the Eskimo economy. In the old days he lived to a strict routine. In the winter he hunted the seal for food and clothing, and in the summer the caribou, a kind of deer, and fished in the lakes and rivers. He had to make all his own implements, without the aid of metals. He did not hunt the fox at all. Then the white trader came and induced him to hunt the fox in the winter, when its fur was at its best. That meant that his seasonal routine was upset, and that he had money to spend and fur to barter with. He acquired a rifle in place of his home-made bow and arrow. Now he may even use an outboard motor. He often wears European clothes and eats European food. European disease is apt to be fatal in Eskimo communities, especially influenza and tuberculosis.

"The Americans have looked after the Eskimos in Alaska, but they maintain it is useless to try to keep them away from European influence. In Greenland the Danes have done a fine job, based on just the opposite policy. The Eskimo has been taught in his own language.



VILHJALMUR STEFANSSON
A one-day air-trip took 18 months by sea

There are Eskimo teachers and doctors, and newspapers in Eskimo. The Danes are coming to realise, however, that with the world moving the way it is, you cannot fence off a people."

The Most Cheerful People

We said something about apparently backward peoples. "The Eskimos are only backward economically. They are as intelligent as Europeans. An Eskimo served as a major in the American army in the last war. Despite the hardships of their life, they are the most cheerful people on earth. The Eskimo prefers his own country, inhospitable though it may seem to us, to any other. If he goes away, he wants to come back. Such a people need special treatment, but this must fit in with the general development of the country. It is the same with the Maori in New Zealand."

Dr. Jenness served with the Canadians in France in the first world war, but at its opening he was still living with the Eskimos. He couldn't explain the war to them. They just couldn't understand why white men wanted to shoot each other. Like the Chinese mandarin who was asked what he thought of that war, they were not interested in "the tribal quarrels of Western barbarians."

Science in the Arctic

The future of the Eskimo is bound up with the future of the Arctic. What is to be done with these vast wastes? They contain valuable minerals, including perhaps oil, but men have to be taken there and maintained to work these deposits. The Hudson's Bay Company, known to so many through memories of *Ungava* has been sending a ship round some of its stations once a year with

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Spencer Digby photograph

DR. DIAMOND JENNESS
The classics were a fine stand-by