

(October 15, 1928)

## Canada's Arctic Islands

BY MR. GEORGE P. MACKENZIE.

THE CHAIRMAN:—Gentlemen, probably at no time during the past few years has there been the interest concerning Canada's northland in the Arctic that there has been during the past twelve or eighteen months. Your committee feel we are particularly fortunate in having as our guest today for the second regular meeting George P. Mackenzie. The attendance here bears that out and shows, sir, that your visit of two years ago has not been forgotten. It was in the last month that Mr. Mackenzie returned from his fourth voyage. During that voyage a point as far north as within ten degrees of the pole was reached. During the voyage a number of moving pictures were taken. These have only now been printed and we shall have an opportunity today of seeing them for the first time. I have much pleasure in calling on Mr. Mackenzie whose subject will be "Canada's Arctic Islands."

MR. MACKENZIE:—Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, I feel indeed greatly honored in being your guest today. As your chairman has said some of you will remember that I was here two years ago and in the brief time at my disposal I have tried to bring you information on Northern matters up to that time. I informed your Secretary that we had moving pictures and stills and that we could use either one or both or neither as your committee decided. The decision having been left to me, I decided instead of talking to show you the pictures. So, in the time at our disposal my remarks will be confined almost entirely to a description of the pictures as they are screened. They are not titled and as the chairman has told you this is the first time they are shown. They were just recently developed in Toronto.

Very briefly, let me tell you the purpose of the expedition. As I think you know, Canada claims all the islands lying north of the mainland between the 141st meridian on the west (the boundary between Alaska and Yukon) and a line drawn midway between Greenland and Ellesmere to the intersection of the 60th, which is the eastern boundary. This is an Empire in itself, the land area comprising more than 500,000 square miles. Now it is recognized, I think, as a principle of international law today that if you are going to hold a country you must govern it. This situation appealed to the Government as far back as 1922. In that year the first of these expeditions started north and since that time posts have been established as on the map, commencing at the eastern seaboard; and this year's expedition was one of the annual patrols of these points. We have, of course, varied the voyage and each year endeavored to penetrate some new area and secure information upon which the policy of the government will be based. If the operator will now throw on the pictures!

(Mr. Mackenzie thereupon explained the details of each picture in a series of delightfully interesting Arctic scenes, taken from the time the vessel left Nova Scotia on the 19th of July to the 2nd of September when it returned, with all on board safe and sound. The pictures presented not only many of the white officials living far up in the northland, but also many of the natives. And there were scenic views of drifting ice, huge ice-bergs and rocky mainland, all of which held the audience in close attention. An Eskimo native stalking a walrus, and a close-up of two musk-oxen in battle formation defending themselves against a dog, added greatly to the interest of the moving picture presentation.)

After the pictures were shown, Mr. Mackenzie proceeded:—

My time is about up; just a word in conclusion. Many people ask me this question; is it worth while spending all this effort on this territory; is the hazard to life and property worth while, and are these frozen islands worth bothering about? I have learned today something that I knew in a general way before. Sir Frederick Stupart tells me that the information which is now being secured daily

from the stations in that north land is invaluable to his department in charting the weather in advance. He feels so strongly on that point that he told me just now if we didn't maintain these stations he was quite satisfied other governments would establish stations there for the same purpose. Well, that only adds one more argument to many sound arguments as to why Canada should develop and hold each one of these islands. And the only way we can hope to do so is to exercise jurisdiction over them, to govern them.

My own view of it is that in addition to the value of the islands to Canada, in dollars and cents, there is also a great sentimental value. As you know, all these islands, or practically all of them, were placed on the map by British explorers many years ago in their efforts to make what was known as the North West passage. It is a very absorbing story and I commend it to your attention. Historians have said it is one of the grandest pages of British history. However that may be it is unquestionably a romance without parallel. For centuries these undaunted sailors, inadequately equipped as they were, dared the dangers of these uncharted seas. Nothing that has ever happened in pursuit of an ideal can surpass what they accomplished in the search for the northwest passage. Expedition after expedition suffered death in part or whole but through their bravery those who followed them were able to push on. With dying hands they placed on the blank spaces of the polar seas the geography of the northern archipelago. They were first in the gift of their treasure and of themselves and I think it would be a very sad commentary if for any reason Canada failed to hold these islands secured at such a great sacrifice.