SYNOPSIS

The region about Great Slave Lake is no longer the unknown north which the explorer Alexander Mackenzie visited in 1789. Today the aeroplane and the new Mackenzie Highway bring the advantages of modern technology to its very shores. It is not the land alone, however, which supplies the wealth of this northern world, for the lake itself now supports a profitable year-round fishing industry.

OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

As the film opens we hear that portion of Alexander Mackenzie's journal in which he relates his first view of Great Slave Lake. The advance of modern civilization has, however, wrought many changes. Striking evidence of this can be seen in the gold-mining town of Yellowknife, in the aeroplane which long ago replaced the canoes and York boats, and in the Mackenzie Highway to the south shore.

A new wealth is developing in the lake itself in the form of a two-million-dollar fishing industry. Extensive investigations were started in 1914 by a team of scientists from the Fisheries Research Board of Canada. Information on water, animal and vegetable life, as well as on the fish themselves, was collected and classified. By 1954 it was known for certain that Great Slave Lake contained some of the finest whitefish and lake trout in the world.

We join the crew of a fishing boat belonging to one of the nine independent companies which fish the lake. We visit the fishing ground and watch the preparation, setting and marking of the nets. As the nets are raised and the fish brought into the boats, we learn that an average day's catch for two men amounts to about 3,000 pounds.

Winter's onset does not bring an end to fishing because the adaptable snowmobile has made Great Slave fishing a year-round proposition. More mobile than in the summer months, the fishermen reconnoitre the frozen surface of the lake to pick the best spots. We watch them chop through nearly four feet of ice and lay their nets beneath. This is accomplished with aid of a jigger -- a device which literally walks along the under-side of the ice, drawing the net beneath it. When it has run its course, another hole is made so the net can be secured and anchored at both ends. The following day sees the fish cleaned and ready for shipping to a market which may be 3,000 miles away.

In this new industry is one more indication of the great commercial possibilities of a region which is just beginning to make its impact on the Canadian economy.
SUGGESTED CLASS PREPARATION

a) Introduction:
Show pictures of some of the more common equipment used by commercial fishermen. This should serve as a focus for class attention unless a few of the actual objects themselves are available. By questioning, establish the fact that commercial fishing is carried on in fresh as well as salt water. Most pupils will know that fresh-water fishing is done in such waters as the Great Lakes and Lake Winnipeg. Since they are probably unaware of this type of activity in the northwest, it could be noted that, in a northern lake larger than Lake Erie, a flourishing fishing industry has been established in the last ten years.

b) Words Which May Cause Difficulty:
turbulent pre-Cambrian rock York boats per capita initiative migrants

c) Directive Questions Answered in the Film:
1. How did Great Slave Lake get its name? Who was the first explorer to see it?
2. Why did a team of scientists from the Fisheries Research Board of Canada come to Great Slave Lake in 1944? What tests were carried out?
3. During what portion of the year is the lake navigable?
4. How often are the fishing grounds visited? How many men make up the crew of each boat? What is the advantage of a gill net with 5-inch mesh?
5. What are the principal fish caught? What is the weight of an average day's catch for two men?
6. Where are the fish cleaned — in winter? in summer?
7. What methods of transport are used to get the fish to market?
8. What has made commercial fishing possible in winter? How are the nets laid under the ice?

SUGGESTED FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

1. Take up and discuss the directive questions.
2. Draw a map of Great Slave Lake. Show the general area around it and mark the location of Yellowknife, the town of Hay River, the Mackenzie Highway and Grimshaw, Alberta.
3. Compare this type of ice fishing with that done from fish huts.
4. Investigate the life history and habits of whitefish and trout.
5. Make a sketch of the appearance of a gill net when set and anchored beneath the ice.
6. On a map of Canada indicate the principal fresh-water commercial fishing areas.
7. Prepare an imaginative account of a journey taken by lake trout from the time it is caught until it reaches the consumer.

RELATED VISUAL MATERIAL

Films:
CANADA'S AWAKENING NORTH (NFB 1952)
THE NEW NORTH (NFB 1946)
YELLOWKNIFE, CANADA (NFB 1949)
LAND FOR PIONEERS (NFB 1944)

Filmstrips:
OUR RESOURCES -- FISHERIES (3 PARTS) (NFB 1952)
OUR LAND -- PART VI: BRITISH COLUMBIA, YUKON & THE NORTHEAST TERRITORIES (NFB 1949)

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