

A Development in Polar Education

Although a remarkably large number of organizations exist which are devoted to research in polar regions and/or to the collection and dissemination of knowledge about them, very few of them are "polar" institutions, or even "arctic" institutions in the sense of being interested in *everything* polar, or arctic. The majority of institutions which have been listed by, for example, Lloyd¹, Stanka² and Wood³ are more or less specialized either academically, regionally, or in both ways. The major exceptions are the Arctic Institute of North America, the Scott Polar Research Institute in England and, to some extent, the Arctic and Antarctic Scientific Research Institute in Leningrad, with their large diversified libraries⁴.

Many of the existing polar and arctic institutions offer seminar lecture and film programmes on a regular or irregular basis, but perform their teaching roles, if any, principally through the involvement of their staffs in the academic departments of the universities with which they are most closely associated. As institutions, they appear to stimulate teaching rather than act as centres of it. This situation is illustrated in the case of Canada where a report by Kupsch and Caillol⁵ shows that virtually all teaching about the Arctic is being carried on within specialist academic departments — of history, anthropology, biology, geography, geology, etc. This is, however, a natural and healthy reflection of the difficulties of sustaining multi-disciplinary expertise and library support for polar studies in the wider sense.

Some polar institutions appear to have stimulated more teaching than have others over the years. In Canada, again, the relatively recent upsurge of courses dealing with aspects of the Arctic at the Universities of Saskatchewan and Alberta, including very successful extension courses conducted at locations in the Arctic, are a reflection of the efforts of the Institute for Northern Studies, Saskatoon⁶, and the Boreal Institute, Edmonton, respectively⁷. Similarly, it would appear that the Centre d'Etudes Nordiques has greatly stimulated teaching about the Arctic at Université Laval, Québec⁸. In the United States, Dartmouth College at Hanover, New Hampshire, with its Stefansson Collection has been a focus for teaching about the Arctic; and the Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research of the University of Colorado, Boulder, and the Ohio State Institute of Polar Studies are other centres which are currently active

in the field.

The development of universities at high latitudes has, of course, provided a fine opportunity for students to pursue their studies within normal academic disciplines while gaining real experience of the Arctic. Developments in the U.S.S.R. (Syktyvkar⁹ and Yakutsk), Sweden (Luleå), Norway (Tromsø) and Finland (Oulu) are clearly of great significance in this regard. In the English-speaking world, the University of Alaska is still the only institution of university status located in the Arctic. It offers an academic programme in northern studies at the undergraduate level in which a student selects a set of specialist courses which are relevant to the Arctic¹⁰.

It would appear, however, that the first formal programme leading to a postgraduate qualification in polar studies — outside the U.S.S.R. at least — will be inaugurated in October 1975 by the Scott Polar Research Institute (SPRI) of Cambridge, England. The University of Cambridge is traditionally associated with the teaching of polar studies at undergraduate level. The late Sir Raymond Priestley, a founder member of the SPRI, gave numerous and popular lecture courses in the nineteen twenties and thirties on the history and scientific aspects of polar exploration. Since 1957, members of the academic staff have given regular courses of lectures to undergraduates within the Geographical and Natural Sciences triposes, covering such fields as economic geography, geology, glaciology, history, social anthropology and international problems. A new development will be the commencement in October 1975 of a one-year postgraduate course, for graduates of any discipline, leading to a Diploma in Polar Studies of the University of Cambridge¹¹. The objects of this course are to provide a broad background of polar knowledge and to offer to each candidate a topic of his or her choice to investigate in depth. Lectures and seminars will cover the following subjects in their relation to both the Arctic and Antarctic: natural environment, peoples, history, resources and problems of development, government and social relations. As no such course is given elsewhere in the world, this is an experiment which will be observed with much interest.

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