

FOREWORD

The past months have been of particular interest to Antarctic exploration. There is first the question of international sovereignty which has played so large a part in the recent development of Antarctic exploration. Proposals made by the United States Government to place the Antarctic continent under some form of international control sponsored by those nations with reasonable claim to participation in such control have been dropped through lack of adequate support. Meanwhile, the field may be briefly surveyed. The British, Argentine and Chilean Governments have been able to agree to a short-term suspension of naval demonstrations in the Graham Land sector. The United States Government is reported to be planning an expedition on almost as ambitious a scale as Operation "Highjump" of 1946-47. The Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey is continuing work from a number of bases in the South Orkneys, the South Shetlands and Graham Land. The Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition, despite set-backs, has now had bases in full operation in the inhospitable climate of Heard Island and of Macquarie Island for two years. The New Zealand Government has shown continuing interest in the Ross Dependency. The French Antarctic Expedition under Monsieur André Liotard, unable to find a way through the pack ice to Terre Adélie this year, is to make another attempt during the coming season. Even Russia has not been backward in putting forward Bellingshausen's voyage as indication of her interest in Antarctica.

A hopeful sign of what may be achieved by international co-operation is the Norwegian-British-Swedish Antarctic Expedition, which is expected to leave for Dronning Maud Land in November 1949 under the leadership of Captain John Gæver. In planning this expedition, the fullest use is being made of the experience and knowledge available in the three participating countries, both in regard to the scientific programme and in equipping the expedition to the best advantage. The biggest problem may be the difficulty of establishing the wintering party of fourteen men at a base on the mainland of Dronning Maud Land. Not much is known of the state of the pack ice along this coast, but such information as is available gives reasonable grounds for hoping that the expedition's ship may be able to find a suitable base.

The season 1948-49 in the Antarctic has been a thoroughly adverse ice year. Not only was the French expedition unable to reach its objective, but on the other side of the continent H.M.S. *Sparrow* was ice-bound for a fortnight in Admiralty Bay, South Shetland Islands, and the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey ship *John Biscoe* was unable to penetrate the pack ice to relieve the party of eleven men at the most southerly base, on Stonington Island in Marguerite Bay. This base, under the leadership of Dr V. E. Fuchs, has adequate reserves of food and fuel and the party is in good spirits.

During the last 6 months popular attention has been drawn to the Antarctic by the two films: "Scott of the Antarctic", produced by Ealing Studios, of

which Professor Debenham writes a review in this number of the *Polar Record*, and "The Secret Land", a brilliant photographic record of Operation "High-jump", the large American expedition to the Antarctic in 1946-47 under the command of Rear-Admirals Cruzen and Byrd.

It is a hundred years since Sir John Richardson and Sir James Ross returned from their search for the missing Franklin Expedition of 1845. In commemoration of this centenary we have chosen as frontispiece a drawing of H.M. Ships *Erebus* and *Terror* at the Whalefish Islands, West Greenland. It was drawn by James Fitzjames, Commander on board H.M.S. *Erebus*, for Lady Franklin, and has come into the possession of the Institute by the bequest of Miss Jessie Lefroy. Sir John Franklin sent home many letters from the Whalefish Islands, one of which, to Sir John Richardson, hitherto so far as we know unpublished, is reproduced on p. 348 of this issue.

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