

LIFE

A black and white photograph of Jim Farley, a middle-aged man with a receding hairline, looking upwards and to the right. He is wearing a light-colored, long-sleeved button-down shirt and a dark belt. The background is dark and out of focus.

JIM FARLEY

SEPTEMBER 19, 1938

GOLD

GREATEST BOOM IN THE WORLD'S HISTORY

BRINGS A RUSH TO CANADA'S NORTHWEST



The world is living today in the midst of the greatest gold boom it has ever known. Since 1932, more gold has been taken from the earth than has been taken in any other half-dozen years in history. The cause is nothing romantic like the chance discovery of a nugget in a California millstream or panning of rich gravel in the Klondike. The cause lies in the uninspiring manipulations of international currencies. In 1932 gold was worth \$20 an ounce. Today, after devaluation, it is worth \$35 an ounce. This makes gold mining far more profitable than ever before. Operators have started mining low-grade ore and sent prospectors out into regions they had always thought too unpromising or inaccessible.

Such a far-off place is the town of Yellowknife, a jumble of wood houses and tents sprawled deep in the desolate "bush" of Canada's Northwest Territories, 200 miles south of the Arctic Circle and almost due north of Salt Lake City. To this sub-Arctic town, the secretive agents of mining interests of U. S., Britain, France, Holland, Germany

have been flying all summer to stake gold claims. Miners knew years ago that there was gold around Yellowknife but it was too remote. In September 1936 an English prospector named Payne, grubstaked by two Americans, staked a claim two miles from Yellowknife. Last year Consolidated Mining & Smelting Co., one of Canada's most important mining companies, paid \$500,000 for a 60% interest in the Payne claim. The biggest gold rush on the continent focused on Yellowknife.

Before this, Yellowknife had been no more than a huddled way station on the air route to Radium City, then the excited center of new gold and radium strikes. Now the boom and the prospectors have deserted Radium City, have settled on Yellowknife bringing its population quickly up to 800. During the brief summer months, life seems good in Yellowknife. There are pretty, pleasant, decent women in town. Work and fun goes on in the balmy outdoors. There is a pervading air of camping out, which makes the hard, uncertain life of prospecting seem a sort of roughing-it vacation, with pay or profit to boot.



The water supply in Yellowknife is right out where anyone can get it. In winter, however, ice must be chopped away.



Society in Yellowknife includes the local laundress and her daughter who dresses up in sailor clothes on Sundays.



The week's wash is all done out-of-doors. Ladies' fashions are functional, pants and shirts being always in style.

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BOOMING YELLOWKNIFE OFFERS MANY MODERN CONVENIENCES

As a typical boom town and an outpost of a new frontier, Yellowknife would be a grievous disappointment to Robert W. Service, bard of the old gold rushes. So far, no Dan McGrew has been shot in Yellowknife, no lady known as Lou has disrupted night life.

Life there is rough, lusty and loud but it is also businesslike. The prospector doesn't have to mush in by dog sled. He can fly in by airplane. Often enough he is a specialist, hired by a big mining company. At Yellowknife, he finds conveniences—a bank, a bakery, a dry cleaner, a hot spot called Cafe Wildcat and a jeweler to fix his broken watch. A dance hall is going up, a movie palace is planned and there is civic agitation for a public school. A hotel room costs only \$2, a meal can be bought anywhere for \$1, a haircut costs 75¢. Whisky is \$12 a bottle but drinking is nevertheless hearty. Social life is gay, democratic and intense. Any time anyone arrives or departs someone else seizes the occasion as an excuse for a party.

But despite this easy friendship, the air of greedy secretiveness that hangs over any gold-rush town hangs heavily over Yellowknife—the furtive suspicion that even your best friend is always trying to find out where you expect to make your big strike.

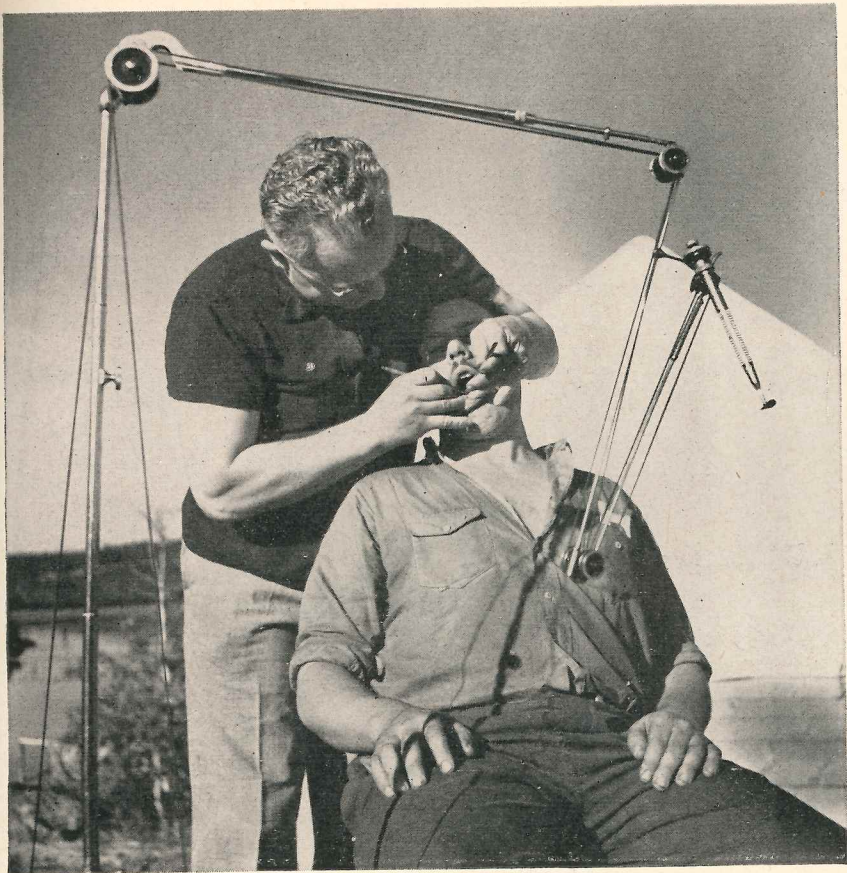


Planning a house is as much fun in rough Yellowknife, where log-cabin architecture prevails, as it is in any cosy U. S. suburb.



The laundry business does very well. Watt's is the newer of Yellowknife's two laundries but it finds plenty of shirts to wash.

Camping out in the bush: prospectors at dinner



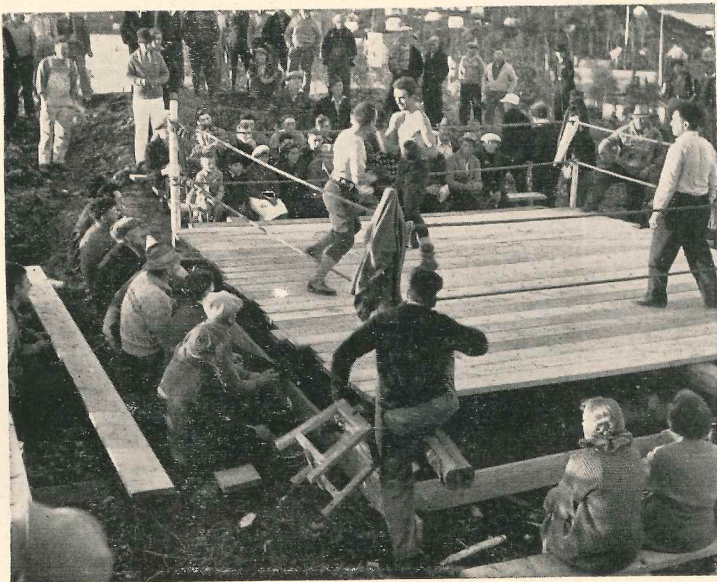
The dentist is Dr. Dodds of Edmonton, Alberta, who spends the summer flying around the Northwest with his equipment. To fill teeth, he uses gold his prospector-patients bring him.



The barber at Yellowknife bought the business and the big chair from the town's original barber who turned prospector. Business is only fair, as most of the miners shave each other.



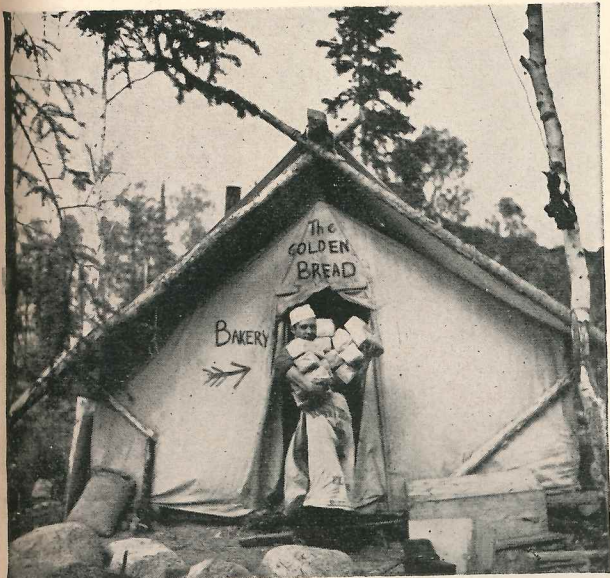
The chores of boom-town living are no hardship to this lady who is the enterprising owner of a prospering lunch counter.



Major sporting event in any mining town is boxing. Mounted Police permit bouts in Yellowknife, on condition that no knockouts occur. Admission is \$1.



Housebuilding booms in a desperate rush to replace tents with log cabins before cold winter closes in.



The baker, a frustrated prospector, bakes 150 loaves a day in an oven made of a 46-gallon oil drum. He charges 35¢ a loaf.



The cobbler frequently forgets to stick to his last, sneaks off into the bush to prospect. Everyone in Yellowknife has the gold fever.



The bank, a branch of Canada's third largest banking chain, is on the main street facing the lake where the planes land.

A PROSPECTOR STAKES A CLAIM

Having found a 40-acre plot he thinks promising, a prospector chops short a tree at each corner, splits it into a post (left), marks his claim on it. He must record his claim, work it 30 days during the next three months and at least 40 days a year for five years before the government will sell it to him.



DRILLERS GET MORE SAMPLES

If the assay looks good, next step may be to take more comprehensive samples by drilling into the lode. Neatly lined up below and being examined minutely at left are cores of rock brought up by the diamond drill. Most of the ore around Yellowknife is low-grade, profitably worked only by big-scale mining.



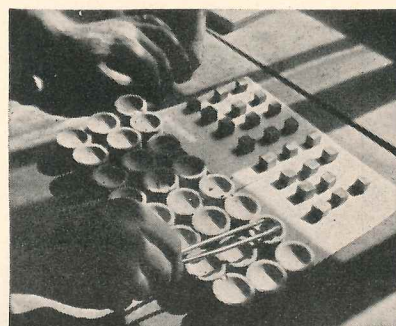
HE TAKES SAMPLES FOR ASSAY

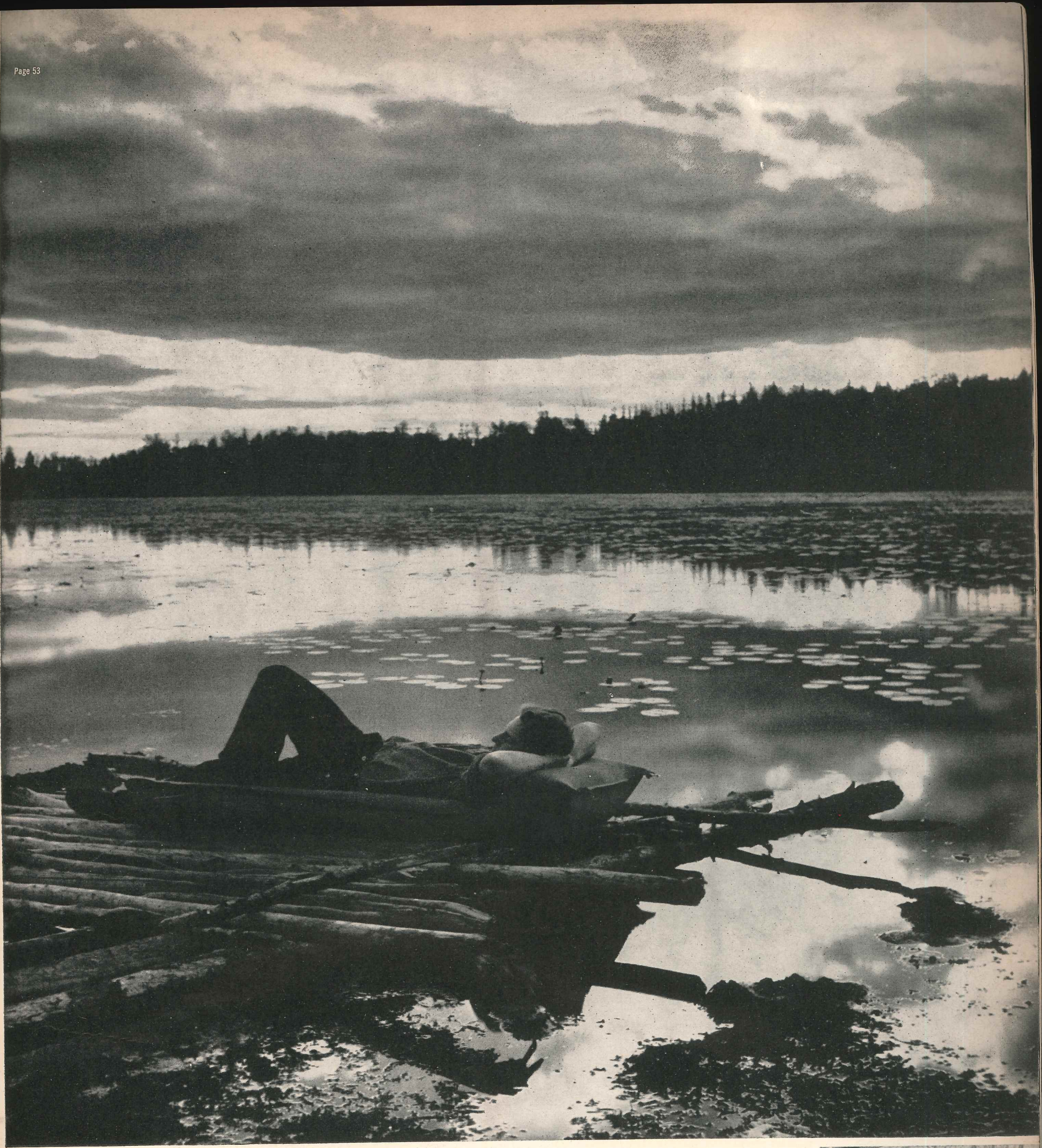
The man at left looks like an Egyptologist examining a scarab but he is actually a prospector out in the Yellowknife bush, peering at a rock that he has chipped from a claim to get samples for assay. The veil (below) is essential bush costume, protection against teeming hordes of mosquitoes, flies.



THEN THE MINER COMES IN

The mining of gold is only just now assuming commercial proportions in Yellowknife. On Sept. 5, the first gold brick, a \$28,000 block of metal, was poured off at the Consolidated mine. Until then, the ore had usually been melted down into little cubes like those at left, used only in laboratory tests.





**THE MIDNIGHT SUN HANGS
DAY AND NIGHT OVER THE
PROSPECTOR IN THE BUSH**

Up in the Northwest Territories, the land is a wilderness of stubby trees and tangled shrubs called the "bush." The bush is dotted with lakes, some huge like Great Slave Lake on which Yellowknife lies, others small like the lily-padded pond which makes such a pretty picture above. To bush prospectors, the lakes are invaluable landing places for the planes they use to explore new fields.

The prospector above is not taking a lazy

afternoon nap. He is getting a good night's sleep. The time is actually 11:30 p.m. but the midnight sun has not gone down. In Yellowknife, the unending summer daylight disrupts all routine, results in a general lack of sleep. But out in the bush, hard-working prospectors need their rest. Most of them barricade themselves with netting (*right*) but the hardy fellow above has put his trust in smelly oil to keep hard-biting bugs away.



GOLD (continued)

FINANCIERS FOLLOW PROSPECTORS IN GOLD RUSH TO YELLOWKNIFE



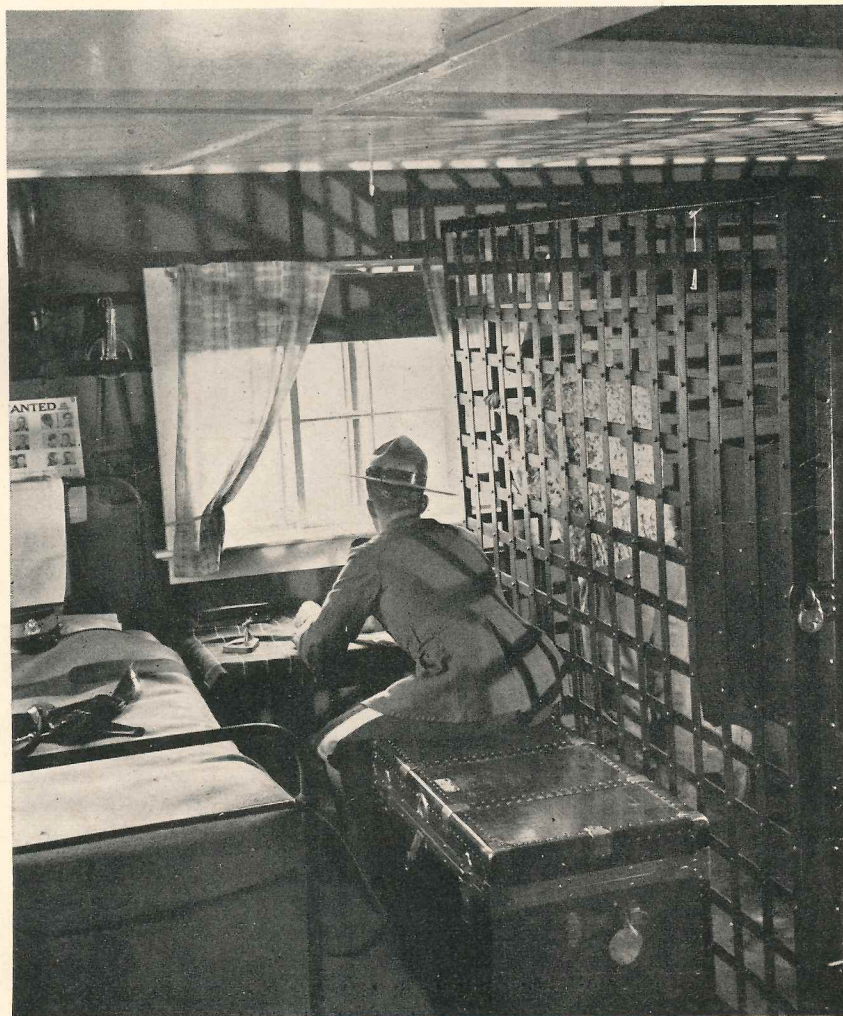
Out in the bush, a surface worker totes provisions from lake, where his plane landed, to camp. He works for Consolidated Mining & Smelting, Yellowknife's biggest mining company which owns five planes, keeps prospecting parties out in the field from June through September



Two famous visitors to Yellowknife in August were Mitchell Hepburn, premier of Ontario, and Bernard E. "Sell 'em Ben" Smith (*left*), New York capitalist who can usually be found wherever gold is being found. Smith is interested in gold mining at Yellowknife.



Plans for prospecting are carefully laid by Myles Flynn (*right*). Below him lies the plane landing. Yellowknife has regular daily plane service from Edmonton, six flying hours away. A round trip costs \$175. For prospectors flying into the bush, the rates are 60¢ a mile.



Mounties keep law and order in Yellowknife but have very little trouble. Most common criminals are Indians who steal gasoline. As punishment, they must sleep in jail, chop wood for the Mounties. Yellowknife's jail isn't built yet. This one is at Port Radium.



Company headquarters of the Chan Yellowknife Gold Mines Ltd. looks more like a grocery than a mining office because big stocks of food are always on hand. Here President Flynn views aerial photographs through a stereoscope to get a three-dimensional look at the land.



Yellowknife taxis are rowboats which ferry passengers from mainland to islands. This is owned by the lady. At right is the prettiest girl in Yellowknife, Mrs. Lilian MacDermitt who came as a waitress last spring, quit in summer to marry the caretaker of a gold camp.

