

EDITOR'S NOTE

Not for the first time ever, but certainly for a long time, *Polar Record* sports full colour illustrations. Unfortunately such extravagance cannot be a regular feature of the journal, and grateful thanks must go to the United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration for making financially possible the reproduction of their splendid false-colour images in an article by H. Jay Zwally and Per Gloersen on passive microwave images of the polar regions. These images have become a valuable new source of polar information, one of their most important features being that they can be obtained through clouds and the polar night. Thus continuous temporal, as well as spatial, coverage of the polar regions can be obtained. The authors discuss the significance of the glaciological, oceanographic and meteorological observations that have or could be made from these images, and review the physical basis for the interpretation of the data received.

US satellite pictures from various satellite series have enabled Charles Swithinbank, Paul McClain and Patricia Little to chart the drift tracks of 38 Antarctic icebergs over periods of up to nine years. Perhaps the most remarkable iceberg in terms of size, distance travelled and publicity received, is the one which calved from Fimbulisen in longitude 1°W in 1967. By October 1976 it had reached a position off Snow Hill Island in latitude 65°S. Its recent progress has caused alarm in the world's press: described as 'larger than Luxembourg', it has been suggested that, should it break out of the Weddell Sea into the open ocean, it might pose a serious threat to the supertanker traffic moving around Cape Horn. Perhaps the Arabs or the Australians would consider towing it away to their parched lands.

The history of the Royal Greenland Trade Department makes welcome and unusual reading. In many ways Greenland represented the ultimate in colonialism; even trade was a government monopoly controlled by, and in fact forming part of, the administration in Copenhagen. But it was a benevolent administration devoted to gradual development on the one hand, and protection from exploitation on the other. The trade monopoly lasted for nearly 200 years, during which the Greenland population increased by a factor of four, at a time when Eskimo populations elsewhere were declining. World War II abruptly cut off Greenland from Denmark, and it was then that the Greenlanders learned that they could survive without complete dependence on the mother country. Since the war Greenland has seen a period of rapid modernization based on the fishing industry, accompanied by an increasingly strong demand for greater local control. On 1 May 1979 she will be given Home Rule status. The story of how the Royal Greenland Trade Department carried out its heavy responsibilities is told by the late Aage V. Strøm Tejsen, and is one that deserves the length of telling.

The far-reaching effects of decisions concerning the development of British and other European estuaries and wetlands is illustrated by Guy Morrison in his article on the migration of Arctic waders wintering in Europe. These estuaries are the wintering grounds for many species of waders; here they lay down fat before their northward migration to the breeding grounds in Arctic Canada, Greenland, and Siberia. Should current proposals for major water storage schemes, drainage of wetlands or recreational facilities be allowed to proceed, the survival of large numbers of waders would be threatened since it is unlikely that they would reach the breeding grounds in a fit state to breed, if at all. The author stresses the effectiveness of co-ordinated research on an international scale and urges the continuation of such programmes in order that decisions based on adequate scientific knowledge may be taken concerning the conservation of these birds.