

EXPEDITION STANDS TO LOSE BY SHIP LEAKING

DOUBTS about whether New Zealand's Antarctic expedition ship H.M.N.Z.S. Endeavour is the right vessel for the job ("Truth," March 1956) have not been allayed by the salt-water damage done to her cargo on the way to New Zealand immediately after a two months' refit.

ENDEAVOUR, ex John Coe, ex Prettext, was built at St. Louis in 1944 for boom defence duties. The latest available Lloyd's classification still fails to state whether she has been specially strengthened for navigation in ice.

The Navy Secretary, Mr. D. A. Wright, has assured "Truth," however, that "Lloyd's surveyors told the ship as seaworthy for navigating pack ice subject to the completion of work which was already in hand in the normal course of her refit. The survey

of £5000 worth of damage has been done to the specially prepared food and the radio, electrical and other technical equipment Endeavour loaded in Britain. Spokesmen for the Ross Sea Committee at first minimised the damage and then announced comfortingly that the cargo was insured.

Assuming that full insurance is paid, the expedition still stands to lose considerably more than £5000.

The cost of airfreighting new equipment 12,000 miles to New Zealand will see to that. In many cases the cost of the airfreight, at from 22/8 to 44/3 per 2 1/5 lbs., will be greater than the cost of the article transported.

There is no alternative to flying out replacements if Endeavour is to leave for Antarctica about December 20 as scheduled. And it seems unlikely that the insurers will meet these costs.

Basically, the damage was done because the ship's dry wooden sheathing had not closed up. When water seeped through the ship's pumps were unable to deal with it for two days. They were blocked.

This "unpredictable fault" developed during a gale and water damage was accentuated by the rolling of the ship. "At no time," says the navy, "did water give any anxiety for the safety of the ship."

Even so, it is surprising that an emergency pump was not rigged up to deal with the situation.

From the Navy Secretary's statement to "Truth," it is clear that water was expected to enter the ship through dry wooden sheathing which had not closed up. But it has not

explained why no action was taken to close up the ship's timbers before they were laden with costly and difficult-to-replace cargo. Temporary flooding would have closed them.

Now that the damage has been done the navy intimates that "a careful examination has disclosed that the 'closing up' process is complete and Endeavour's condition is satisfactory. This is shown by the fact that the ship has been at sea for 52 days after the incident without a recurrence."

And the Navy Board has assured the Ross Sea Committee that there will not be a recurrence of water damage while Endeavour is on the way south.

In spite of these assurances there is a strong feeling in some quarters that members of New Zealand's expedition may be put to unnecessary discomfort and unnecessary risk because of the rigid Government limits placed on their budget.

AIR SUPPORT SKIMPED

INADEQUATE air support may greatly hinder, if not prevent, much of the work Sir Edmund Hillary and his party hope to do in Antarctica. An accident could mean that dogs would have to do the work of the expedition's planes.

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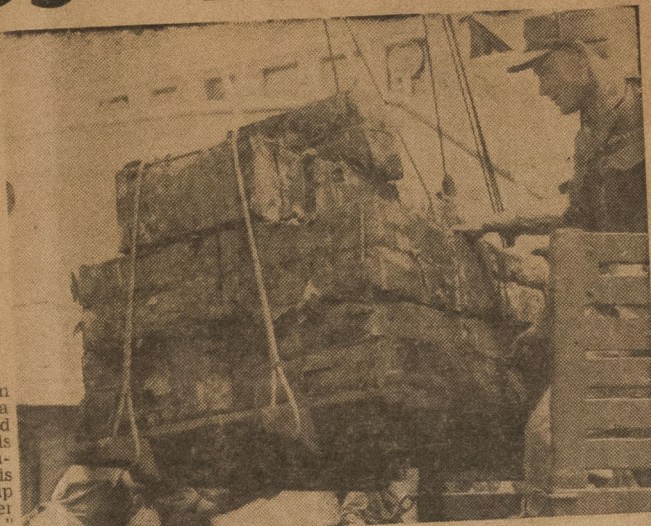
and an Auster. The aircraft will be used for aerial reconnaissance and supply dropping.

The Auster would meet its point of no return from the base at about the 150-mile depot. Thus, in the event of a mishap to the Beaver between the 150 and 300-mile depots, the Auster would have a sufficient range to be able to

plane could be damaged while being unloaded on to the ice—dogs will have to do all the work of getting supplies to the depots.

By the time that is done work will have to be concentrated on setting up a scientific base for New Zealand operations during the International Geophysical Year.

An accident to one of the aircraft could mean that present plans to explore a mountain range near the New Zealand base would have to be scrapped. At present the party plans to "geologise, explore and map" the area, about which there is very sparse information. But the party would be dependent on air-dropped supplies.



DAMAGED CARGO being landed from H.M.N.Z.S. Endeavour at Petone Wharf. Clothing, technical books, cameras, kerosene lamps, cutlery and kitchen utensils, batteries, fire extinguishers, expensive radio and electrical equipment, foodstuffs and other Antarctic Expedition gear was still dripping water when unpacked at the R.N.Z.A.F. store at Gracefield. An eighth of an inch of water or more lay in the bottoms of some of the wooden boxes after they had been unpacked. Cardboard cartons of the food in the cargo had been reduced to a sodden pulp. A substantial proportion of the food in the cargo was given to New Zealand. It comprised food for 16 months, plus emergency rations for 12.

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