

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NORTH STAR'S VISIT--PITCAIRN ISLAND

The Executive Committee of the Antarctic Service announced today that the United States Motor Ship NORTH STAR visited Pitcairn Island on December 14 and reported that the two hundred inhabitants of lonely Pitcairn Island driven by the second World War to primitive means of subsistence are suffering from food shortage and lack of medical attention. The plight of the islanders, many of whom are direct descendants of nine mutineers from the ill-fated H.M.S. BOUNTY, was disclosed today when the NORTH STAR, flagship of the United States Antarctic Expedition, landed shore parties on the South Sea Isle. The NORTH STAR, commanded by Captain Isak Lysted, is carrying Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd, Commanding Officer, and forty-four members of the United States Antarctic Service to Antarctica.

The islanders were found in no danger of starvation but sorely in need of flour, sugar, lard, potatoes, matches and medical supplies of all kinds. Those boarding the vessel were virtually in rags. Curtailment of regular ship service to the island as a result of hostilities in Europe, explained Chief Magistrate Richard E. Christian, had deprived the community of its sole livelihood--trading of fruits and produce to passing vessels.

Breakdown of the island's only radio transmitter, Christian added, had made it impossible to advise British authorities of their plight. The magistrate asked that the expedition's radio be used to communicate with the British High Commissioner at Suva, Fiji.

Following a survey of conditions in the village, Admiral Byrd and Captain Lysted ordered immediate issuance of such emergency supplies as could be spared. By agreement the supplies will be replaced in New Zealand when the ship docks about December 25. The list included 4,000 pounds of flour, 3,700 pounds of sugar, 10 crates of potatoes, 10 gross of matches, 10 cases of lard, and 55 gallons of gasoline for the island's radio power plant.

The expedition's medical officers, Drs. Russell C. Frazer and Alfred D. Geyer spent a busy day. Each treated between fifteen and twenty patients for ailments ranging from cuts and toothaches to diseases in advanced stages. The island is without medical officer or dentist. Departure of the NORTH STAR was delayed to allow time for preparation of badly needed medicines. Additional assistance was given the islanders by Chief Machinist Vernon D. Boyd, First Assistant Engineer Thomas E. Holland, and Radio Operators Felix Ferranto and W. R. Giles. While Giles and Ferranto overhauled the island's radio receiver, Boyd and Holland repaired the community's disabled generator. The radio transmitter already is undergoing repairs at Panama.

The last vessel to visit Pitcairn, Christian informed Admiral Byrd, was the CITY OF GLASGOW, last October 24. She stayed only twenty-five minutes. The islanders' elected leader repeatedly emphasized that no criticism of British authorities was intended. Only disruption of sailing schedules because of the war, he said, and failure of the island's radio were to blame.

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