

GENERAL SCIENCE

Arctic Floating Islands

Air Force investigating possibility of using floating islands in Arctic as military bases. Discovered by weather observers on routine flights.

► THE ARCTIC Ocean may be studded with large floating "islands" up to 25 miles wide—islands of ice that could be strategically as well as scientifically useful.

Three of them were discovered last year merely by cursory observation as a sideline to weather flights to the North Pole. None had been seen before because no one knew what to look for until last year. However, Air Force observers speculate that, if three were so easily discovered, it is a statistical probability that there are many more.

The islands were discovered because weather observers of the 375th Weather Reconnaissance Squadron—stationed in Alaska—reasoned that they might exist, reasoned what they might look like and told men travelling on North Pole-bound planes to look for them.

A report by Lieut. Col. Joseph C. Fletcher and Capt. Lawrence S. Koenig of the 375th tells how research in the writings of Arctic explorers showed that these islands might exist and even what they looked like. It was believed that the ice on the islands, up to 1,000 feet thick, might have been piled up over long years by the winds on the shores of Alaska and the islands to the north of the continent.

Vilhjalmar Stefansson, in 1921, told how these large masses might break off from the shore. He saw masses of ice along the west coast of Banks Island which, if broken off, could form these islands.

Drs. Kenneth O. Emery and Roger Revelle at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, La Jolla, Calif., speculate that the islands might have been formed from ice that originated in the Ice Age which ended 10,000 to 15,000 years ago. However, they say that there are serious objections to these speculations and they should be checked.

The islands are solid enough and long lasting enough so that bases could be established on them with little fear for the safety of the personnel. Smoothing of the pressure ridges so that landing strips could be built would be relatively simple, the Air Force officers believe.

Right now, crews of seven to ten men are spending a week each on a large ice floe off Alaska to test survival equipment. However, these ice floes are seldom more than 10 feet thick and are subject to cracking and collision with other floes. The islands might solve this problem.

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PSYCHOLOGY

Tilting Affects Perception

► WHICH WAY is up?

The question, so important to airplane pilots, of which direction is perpendicular, is affected by the tilt of the body and also by spinning. These effects on perception were reported to the Eastern Psychological Association meeting, Brooklyn, N. Y.

When you are sitting perfectly erect, you see a glowing perpendicular rod, shining in the dark, as tilting a little in a clockwise direction. If your body is tilted in a specially constructed chair, you have the same leaning to the right in your perception. But when you hold yourself in a tilted position, you are not so deceived.

The finding was reported by Drs. K. A. Chandler and H. Werner, of Clark University, as a result of tests on 40 students.

Your idea of which way is up is also changed when you are spinning around, Drs. R. B. Morant and S. Wapner, also of Clark University, told the meeting.

These investigators let 28 students look at a glowing rod in the dark. While they looked, they were spun around in a chair

which turned over and over at a rate of 25 r.p.m. The glowing rod was turned until the spinning student reported that it looked straight up and down.

What they thought was vertical was changed not only by the spinning and its direction, but also by whether their movement was being accelerated or whether it was dying down. A vertical rod appears to be tipped toward the side of rotation when you are speeding up and away from that side when you are slowing down.

Speeding up in one direction affects your perception the same way as slowing down in the opposite direction.

The angle at which a pole is tipped will make it look longer or shorter, Drs. W. T. Pollock and A. Chapanis, of the Johns Hopkins University reported.

It has long been known that a door lying on its side on the ground looks as though it would not fit the doorway. Now these investigators have found that the upright line is not the one which appears

taller. The line tipped at an angle of 60 degrees.

Your watch hand, for example, would not look longest when pointed at 12 o'clock, but at 10 o'clock, when compared with hands indicating a quarter of three.

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