

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

WGM-12
The Middle North at Wingspread;
More of a Distillate

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Dear Dick,

My last letter to you was aimed really at the participants of the Middle North Symposium held at the Johnson Foundation's "Wingspread". It therefore assumed familiarity with what transpired at Racine during the April meetings. I devoted little time to background material and too much space to defining the Middle North.

With the risk of redundancy, I will spend some more time on the Middle North. I'll attempt to refine the subjective distillate which was WGM-11 (if such a brew be palatable!) and include a few maps of better scale. I must also try in some way to capture for others the unique milieu of the Johnson Foundation headquarters, Wingspread, where the Middle North Symposium gathered in late April.

The Middle North Symposium was, in effect, a very casual gathering. It had no official capacity, demanded no concrete results. A group of men met to consider the developing Middle North as an area of promise. Several organizations cooperated with the sponsor, Arctic Institute of North America: ICWA, Johnson Foundation, and Ford Foundation. I suspect the reason was no more than "because it was a good idea". Of the 31 men present, roughly one half were "southerners"--from academic life, foundations (US Steel, Ford, Rockefeller, Johnson, and ICWA), and business. The "northern" wing from Arctic Institute of North America, Scott Polar Research Institute, and various organizations in Norway, Finland, Denmark, and Alaska, also included business leaders active in northern development. The mix was solid and by no means fortuitous; the meeting locale serene and peaceful. The architect's influence pervaded the very heart of the place and, no doubt, many of the ideas kicked around behind its walls.

Why was the meeting held? Other than being a good idea to bring together men from various backgrounds to examine a particular problem, I saw the Symposium as a means of hearing what is happening in the North around the world; an international approach really can foster objectivity where it would otherwise be lacking. It is difficult to speak objectively about areas one lives in (like it or not), but with the vast improvement in being able to get about the world, no place is today completely isolated and therefore the possibility exists for rigorous examination of places and problems from many angles by men from all points of the compass.

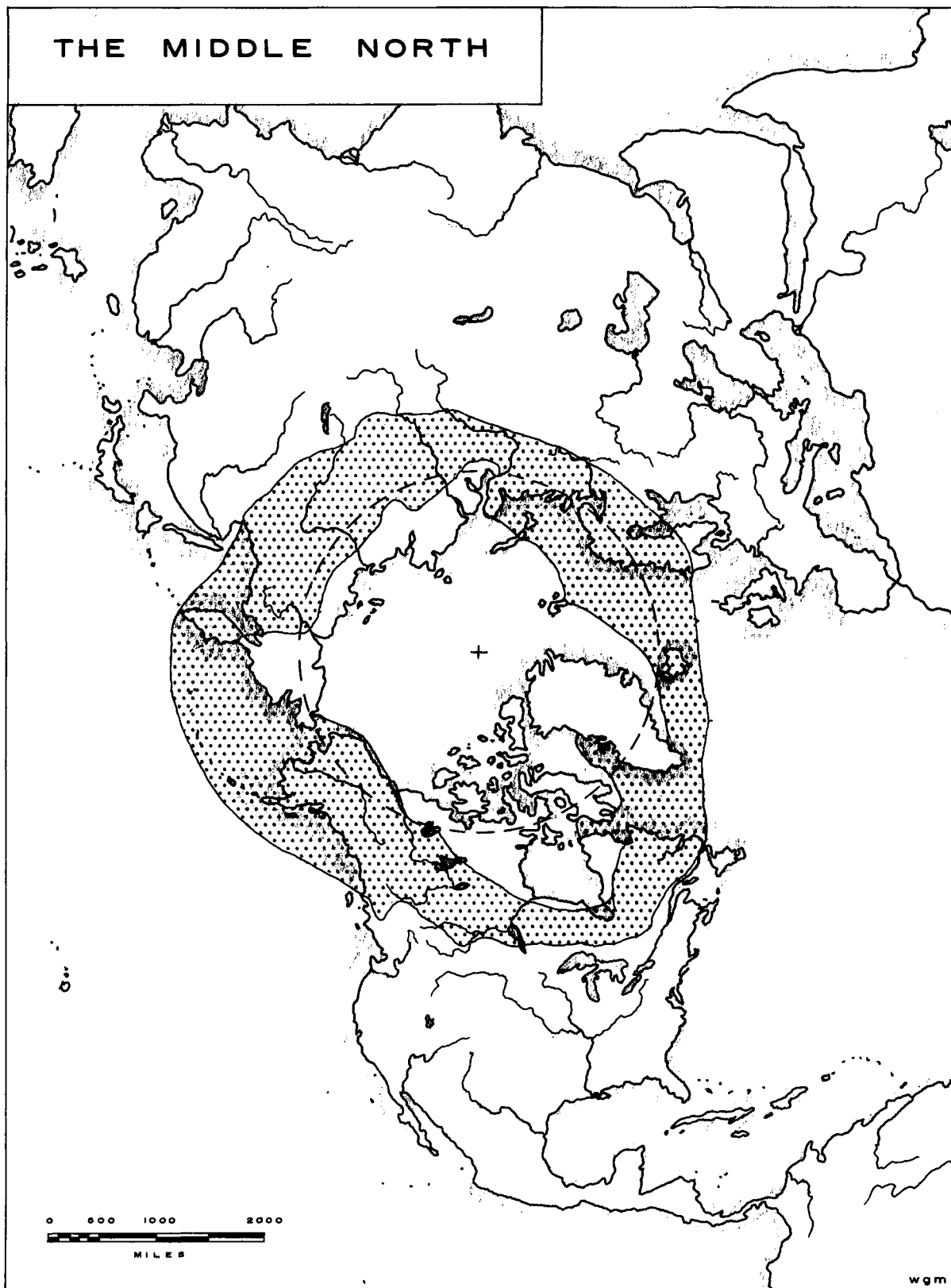
The meetings, from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon, considered the Middle North in seven sessions: The Middle North as Future, Exploration and Definition of the Subject Area, Development in Greenland, Aspects of Social Change and Development, Modern Development in the Soviet Union, Next Steps and Lines of Action, and Loose Ends and Whole Cloth: a Conference Summary. Although most of the discussions were round-table type, shorn of trappings and preliminary remarks, several more lengthy presentations gave much-needed detail and fact: George Rogers (Alaska), Eske Brun (Greenland), Terence Armstrong (Soviet Union), Ilmari Hustich (Finland), and Asbjorn Austvik (Norway).

What is the Middle North and why should it be considered? To go back a bit, the farthest-north competition, which raged for many years and consumed the whole of men's lives (some before their time), skipped an entire region because it was either known or not far enough north. The race to complete gaps in our maps sent men ever northwards leaving a wide ring to the north of more settled areas which today is all but unknown and little explored. After the North Pole was reached and the last land discoveries recorded, the adventure-and-hardship club still had sufficient membership to concentrate a majority of manpower on the high Arctic. At a time when this trend might have been altered, the Second World War broke out, so that little effort could be expended on anything non-military. The post-war advent of the cold war reinforced an interest in the Far North, although efforts during World War II gave a sharp impetus to the area below the high Arctic: the air staging routes, Alaska Highway, Canol project, and various military occupations in Iceland, Norway, Finland and the like.

Post-war research in the North was dependent upon the whims and requirements of the military. The concentration on radar warning lines, Arctic Basin studies, North Greenland research and the recent expansion by Canada into her high Arctic all were at the expense of the Middle North. But changing strategy, improved technology and perhaps even a thawing in international relations have released a bit of the pressure to study the high Arctic. Indications of this can be seen in Greenland, where the US effort near Thule is in definite decline. The Air Force also seems to have lost most of its research interests in the far North. The explorers will persist in the high Arctic, for the North Pole still has fascination for some reason, but these efforts will be on a small scale by a few groups despite the drama and publicity (and money) they will stimulate.

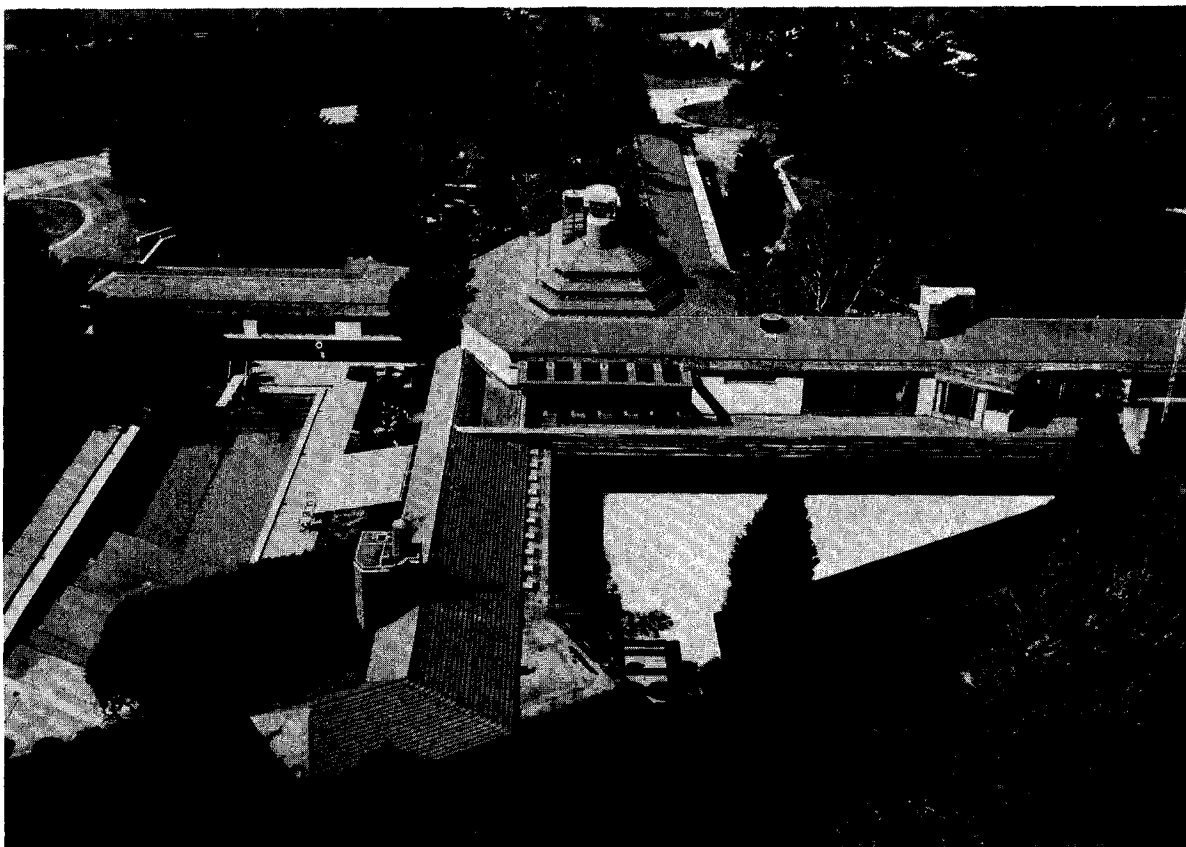
What would be more natural, therefore, than for men of action and vision to realize that a stretch of country of international extent is today on the threshold of discovery and development? Should not rapidly improving technology, transportation, and changing resource needs mean something to this area in a world with severe problems to solve in both the economic and political spheres? Might not this Middle North offer something of real international significance in our world of 1966? This is the crux of the problem: not narrow development along national lines, but, through a problem child which is international in extent, an attempt to arrive at international solutions by close teamwork and information pooling. If the problems of the area are circumpolar, should not their solution have an international flavor as well?

THE MIDDLE NORTH



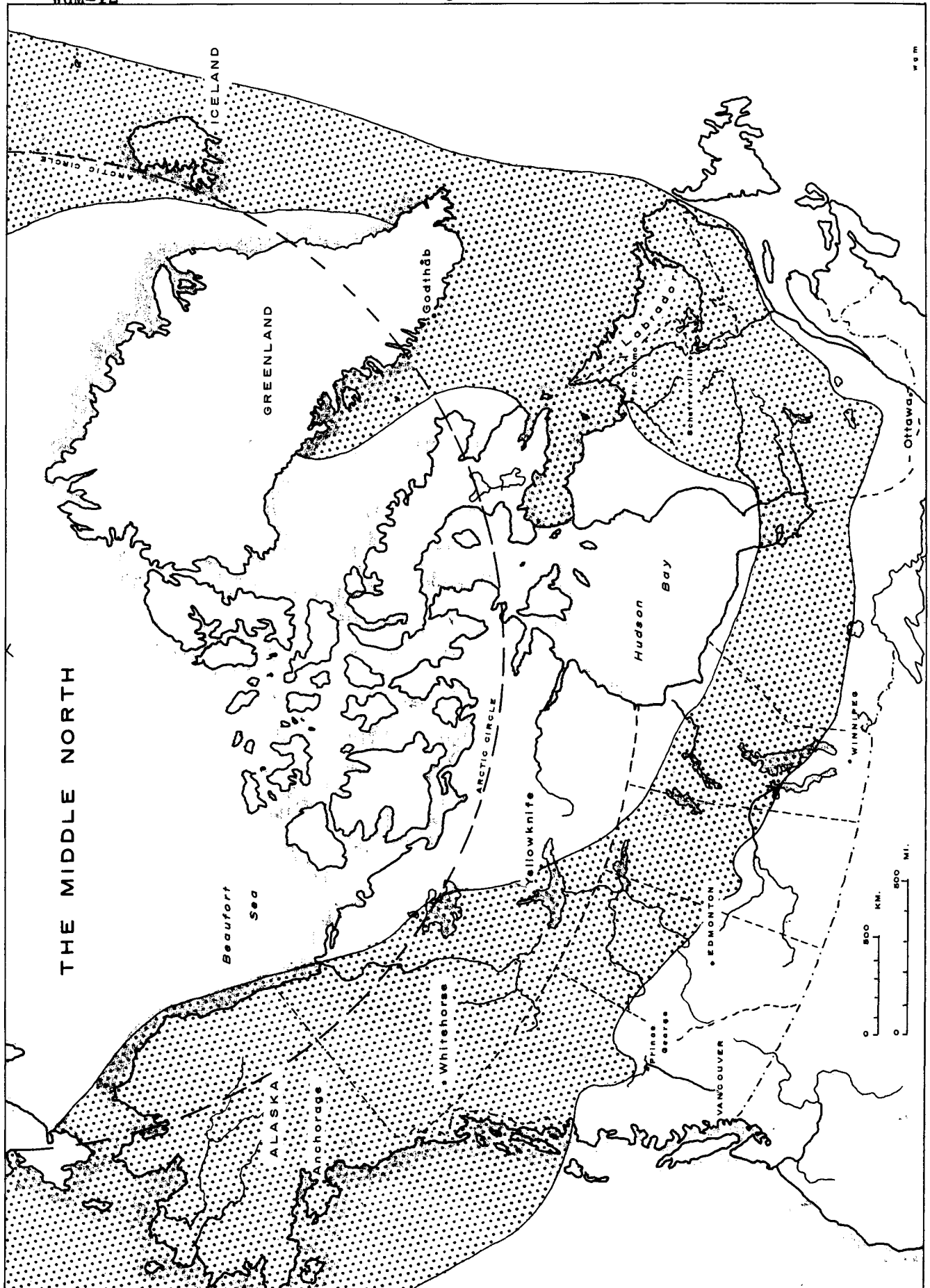
The map on page 3 shows the area under consideration. The boundaries are difficult to draw; indeed it is not vital that they be drawn at all, except as a basis for discussion. There is nothing sacred about the lines. They should probably be drawn with a wide brush in an area where a hundred miles or so makes little difference.

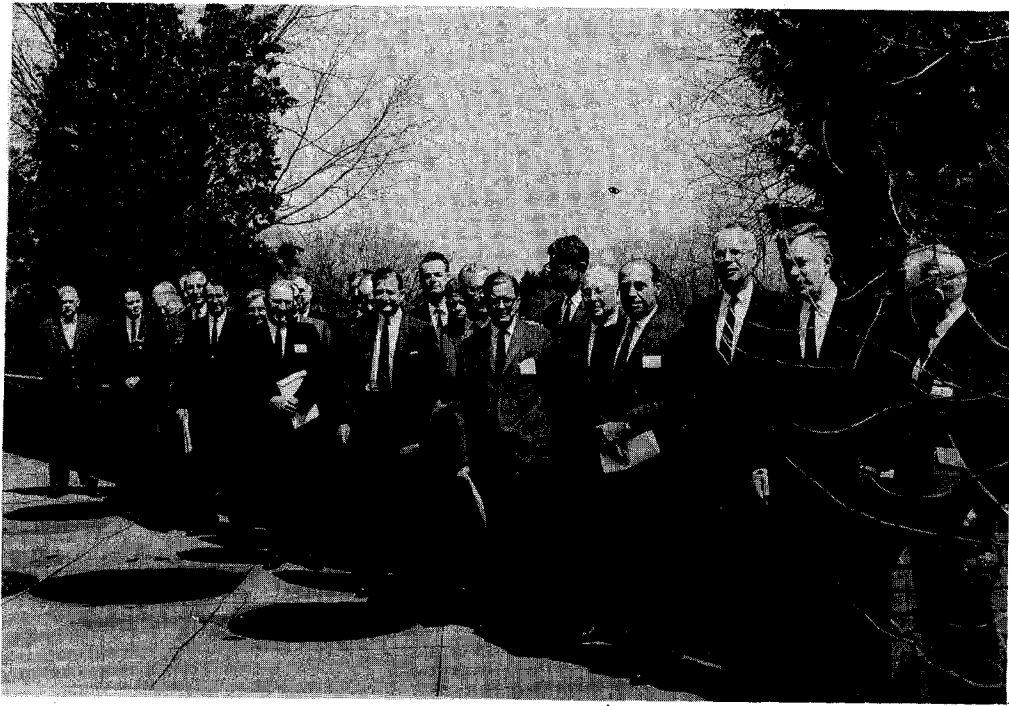
To compound what is a problem in definition and to enlarge a map which should be drawn in general lines, I have divided the world in two, along meridians 0 and 180, in the two maps that follow on pages 5 and 7.



Johnson Foundation's Wingspread from the air -
site of the Middle North Symposium

(photograph provided by George Richard, courtesy of the Johnson
Foundation, Racine, Wisconsin)

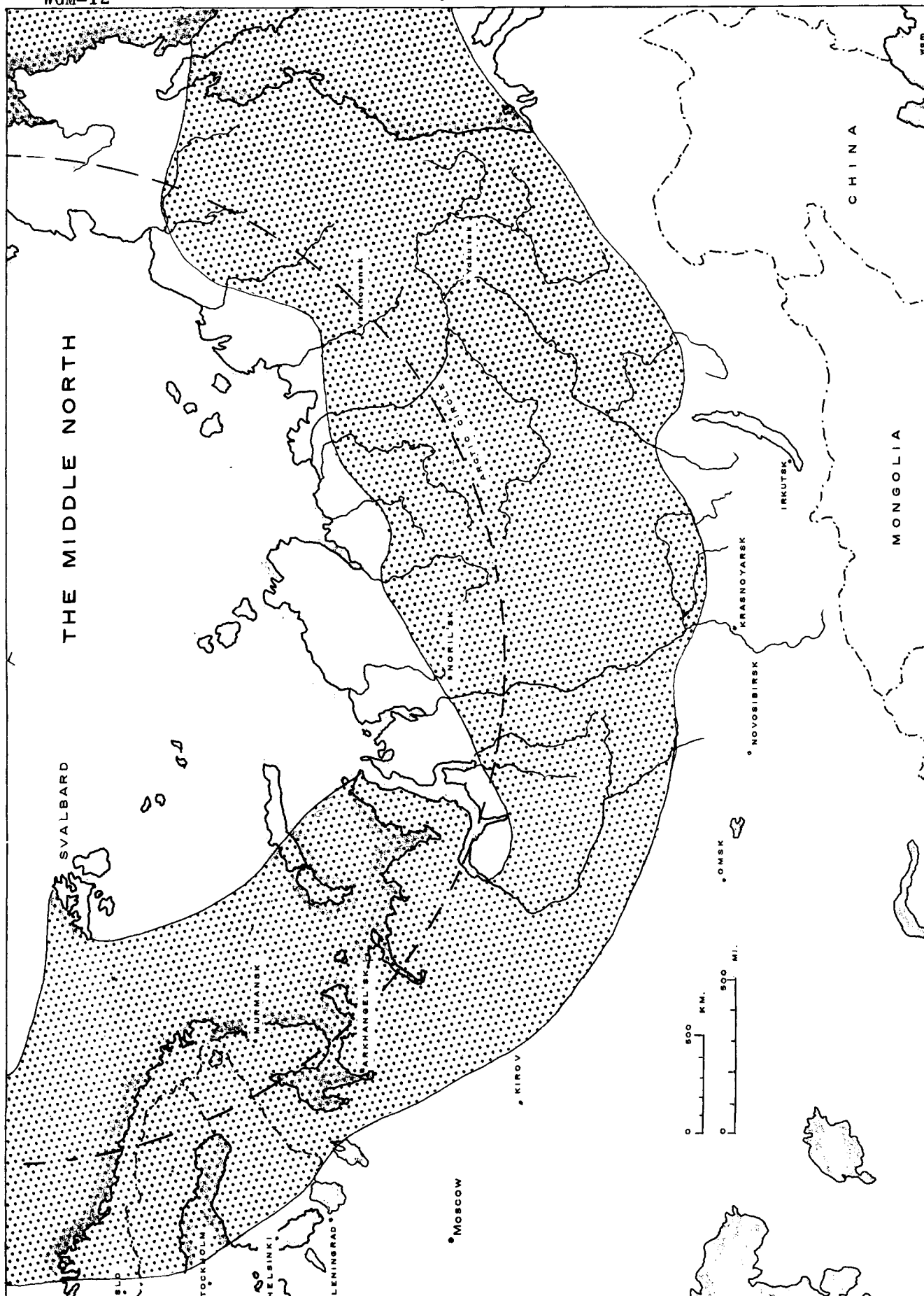




The men who met at Wingspread

These maps should, with the general one on page 3, reinforce the idea that the world is indeed round, although much of our thinking in the past reflects our continuing belief that our planet is really more cylindrical or even flat. The Soviet Union, therefore, is not to the east or west of us, but due north. Perhaps also we should begin viewing the world through Russian eyes by inverting the polar projections--such exercises can be valuable to combat our oft-times distorted ideas of directions and spatial relations between the continents.

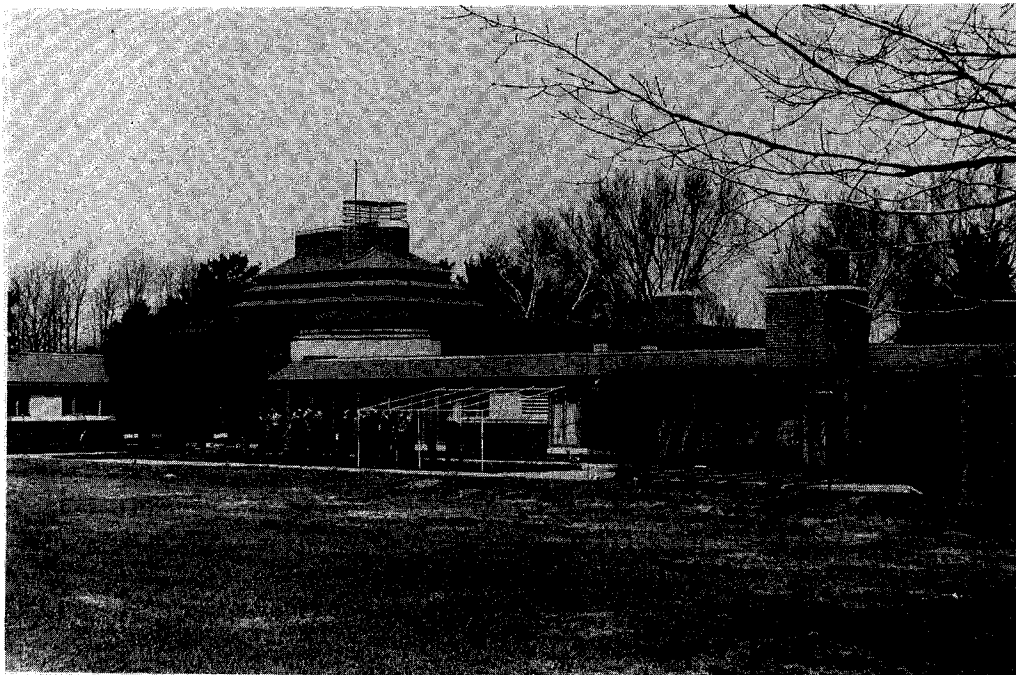
The position papers by you, Dick, and Trevor Lloyd set the stage for the Symposium and gave some needed starting points for discussion. They brought out many new facts of the current trends in northern development and what might possibly be those of the future. I suspect, as well, that a lot of behind-the-scenes thinking by AINA's Development Committee was crystallized at Racine. The seventeen questions posed at the end of Professor Lloyd's paper would be worth considering by all northern specialists. Space must exclude them here, but a random sampling of these questions (which themselves were forwarded as a random sampling) would ask: What form should the new northern urban community take? Is there at present a retreat from the northern frontier that may defeat any



attempt to expand it? Is a new form of developmental enterprise needed for the vast area of the north? Should certain conservation and wilderness areas be set aside in the north and protected from development? Is there any real hope of general demilitarization of the far north--along the lines of the Spitsbergen and Antarctic treaties? Would serious study of the possibility improve the likelihood of peace elsewhere?

The big point emerging from these questions and the discussion they stimulated at Wingspread is that we have come very far in hard science research in the North, but a pitifully short way in the social sciences. Should not an effort be made to focus on the social sciences in the Middle North using the type of research, discussion, university training and government and private support which was so rewarding to the natural sciences? Everyone agrees that a solid groundwork must first be established in the natural sciences before any significant decisions and planning efforts can be made. Perhaps it is now time for the social sciences to get their innings--for the now and future problems may well be solved by how well this research is planned, supported and carried out.

A good start in this process was made at Wingspread. What is this Wingspread? It is the home of the Johnson Foundation of Racine, Wisconsin and serves as an educational conference center. Set in an idyllic location, it is in constant use for the exchange of experiences and development of ideas. The house was designed in 1938 by Frank Lloyd Wright and is one of his famous prairie houses. It was built as a residence for



Wingspread



A work session begins at the Middle North Symposium

H. F. Johnson, Chairman of the S. C. Johnson and Son Company (formerly Johnson Wax Company) and named Wingspread by Wright as "a symbol of soaring inspiration".

Five years ago Wingspread was turned over to the Johnson Foundation for its headquarters. It is indeed a fitting home for the foundation, whose work concentrates in five areas:

"international understanding, educational excellence, intellectual and cultural growth of the individual, improvement of human environment, and scholarship support."

The beauty and serenity of Wingspread is difficult to portray--perhaps the photographs will help. But it is this very atmosphere which fosters the thought-developing meetings and conferences held there constantly.

Staffed by a cordial and efficient group of seven professionals, Wingspread is the nerve center for world-wide activity which is not immediately evident when one attends a meeting at the peaceful headquarters itself. Leslie Paffrath, President of the Johnson Foundation,

was unable to be present at our Middle North Symposium. His duties at another conference indicate some of the other types of work the Foundation is doing. He was chairman of a conference the Johnson Foundation held at Lawrence University on "Students and Poverty - A Workshop to Examine the Opportunities for Service to the Underprivileged". A sampling of other work and support includes: a concert by the New York Woodwind Quintet, an experimental school in northeastern Brazil, conferences on China and Southeast Asia, and informal talks by 30 Americans and Russians in a "People to People" program.

The Johnson Foundation's statement of purpose tells the whole story and, not surprisingly, falls right in line with what I felt was the main quality of the Middle North Symposium--a concern for man. In shortened form, this statement says: The Foundation shall be an instrument for creative programs which serve man; with the individual and the development of his highest powers of mind and spirit as the main concern. The well-being of man in a world society through skillful use of his productive capacity, his constant growth in mind and spirit, is vital to the Foundation's purpose.



An atmosphere for thought and ideas

One participant at the Middle North Symposium at Wingspread, while addressing another audience half-way around the world just one week before coming to Wingspread, had a lot to say about development in his own country (Finland) which could not be more to the point. Professor Ilmari Hustich said on that occasion:

"One thing is clear, and that is that if we wish to develop this country we need a fair-sized contribution of active optimism, otherwise nothing will come out of this wish. No frontier country can live without an immense belief in the future and it would be good if this picture of active optimism in our country should be spread far beyond our boundaries. We should, all of us, try to 'feel nationally and think internationally'." +

I believe that the meetings at Wingspread promoted this idea. It is reassuring to know that there are others around the world with similar thoughts.

Sincerely,



W. G. Mattox

+ from a lecture in the "Finland in Focus" series delivered at the Helsinki School of Economics and Business Administration on 16-17 April 1966.