SECTION 3

INTERVIEWER: We're pleased to welcome Dr Martin Merrywhether of the Antarctic

Centre in Christchurch, New Zealand who has come along to talk to

us today about the role of the Centre and the Antarctic Treaty.

INTERVIEWER: Now my first question is about the choice of location for the centre.

Why Christchurch? Was it because of the climate?

Tapescripts

DOCTOR: Well actually New Zealand is the second closest country to Antarctica and Christchurch is often used on Antarctic expeditions. Right, so it's because of where we are . . . coupled with our historical INTERVIEWER: role. So tell us – what is the main purpose of the centre? Well . . . we have two complementary roles. One is as a scientific base DOCTOR: for expeditions and research and the other is as an information centre. Tell us something about the role as a scientific base. INTERVIEWER: We're able to provide information about what scientists should take DOCTOR: 022 with them to the South Pole – for example, the centre contains a clothing warehouse where expeditions are supplied with suitable clothing for the extreme conditions. I suppose you need a bit more than your normal winter coat! INTERVIEWER: Yes, exactly and then there's also the specialist library and mapping DOCTOR: services. Right. And which countries are actually located at the centre? INTERVIEWER: Well . . . the centre houses research programmes for New Zealand, for DOCTOR: The United States as well as for Italy . . . there's even a US post office at the American airforce base here. Really? And what does the visitor's centre offer? INTERVIEWER: Well, since very few people will ever experience the Antarctic first DOCTOR: hand, the visitors' centre aims to recreate the atmosphere of Q23 Antarctica. There's a mock camp site where you can see inside an Antarctic tent and imagine yourself sleeping there. And the centre also acts as a showcase for the unique international co-operation which exists in Antarctica today. What is it actually like at the South Pole? I know you've been there on INTERVIEWER: a number of occasions. 024 DOCTOR: Yes, I have and each time I'm struck by the awesome beauty of the place. It's magnificent but you can really only visit it in the summer months. October to March. INTERVIEWER: DOCTOR: Yes, because it's completely dark for four months of the year (pause) ... and in addition it has to be the coldest place on earth. INTERVIEWER: Colder than the North Pole? Why's that? Well, unlike the North Pole, which is actually a frozen sea, Antarctica DOCTOR: is a land mass shaped like a dome, with the result that the winds blow 025 down the slopes at speeds of up to 150 km an hour and that's what makes it so cold. And one other interesting thing is that Antarctica is the driest continent on earth, surprisingly, and so you have to drink large amounts of water when you're there. INTERVIEWER: How old is Antarctica? We're pretty sure it was part of a larger land mass but it broke away DOCTOR: from the rest of the continent 170 million years ago. How can you be certain of this? INTERVIEWER: