

In economic relations generally, discouragement at some current tendencies would be justified. There is still an inadequate international framework within which to adjust the trading relations of the developed with the developing economies, and the market with the socialist economies. Among the major trading nations, there are distressing tendencies towards protectionism, associated in part with the growth of trading blocs. International monetary machinery labours under extraordinary strains and requires urgent strengthening.

Yet all these problems are recognized. They are under repeated attack, in ECOSOC, UNCTAD, in the IMF and the GATT, in the regional economic commissions and elsewhere. And not without success; in the last analysis, a sense of common purpose leads gradually to overcoming national differences. If we wish to measure our progress, we have only to recall the economic chaos of the period between the two world wars. Then rampant nationalism combined with economic ignorance to bring the world economic system down in ruins. How many of the political failures of that period can be traced to economic failure! For all its faults, the present world economic structure, and the institutional framework for economic co-operation which has grown up under the United Nations, is an infinite improvement.

But perhaps the most dramatic example of the rapid development of an international conscience and sense of international responsibility concerns the protection of the environment. Even ten years ago, threats to the balance of nature were a matter for specialists. The public generally, and governments generally, were hardly aware that problems existed. In a matter of a few years, we have awakened to the risk that we may be doing irreversible harm to the natural order that sustains life upon the planet.

The Stockholm Conference was the world community's first response to this challenge. It will undoubtedly take its place as one of the major conferences in United Nations history. Through the declaration of the conference, it has established a kind of "environmental charter", providing a sound basis for the development of international environmental law and other co-operative measures for the protection and enhancement of the human environment. The recommendations for action agreed to by the conference demonstrate the willingness of governments to work towards this goal. The endorsement of these recommendations consistent with the spirit and sense of purpose displayed by the declaration will, in the Canadian view, be one of the major achievements of this Assembly.

The Stockholm Conference declared fundamental principles of international environmental law. The international community now has an opportunity to make a further advance in strengthening the international legal regime as it affects the environment. This is in relation to the law of the sea.

Canada, like many other countries, is in favour of convening the third Law of the Sea Conference in 1973, but only if preparations are adequate. This will be possible if the Seabed Committee is able to hold two further sessions during 1973. Then the Conference could be formally launched with an organizational meeting in the fall of 1973.