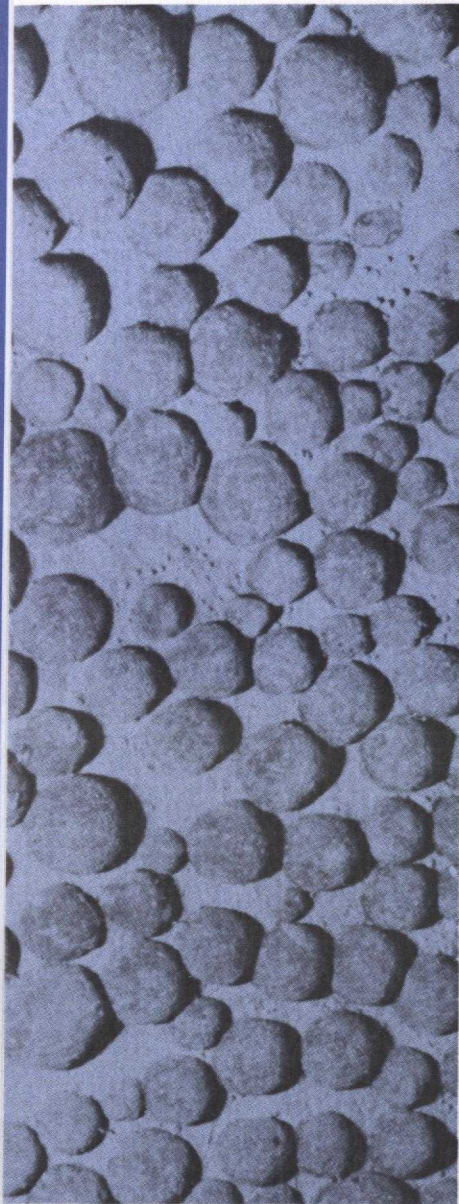




*Manganese nodules on the floor of the South Pacific Ocean have a high content of nickel and copper as well as significant amounts of cobalt and other metals. Photograph courtesy of Lamont-Doherty Geological Observatory.*

(assuming that decisions at the Conference will be taken by a two-thirds majority).

At the same time, some proponents of a wide economic zone concept would nevertheless limit a coastal state's continental shelf rights to 200 miles. In their view, the retention of existing coastal states' rights beyond that limit would deprive the proposed International Seabed Authority of too great a part of the accessible resources, thus leaving fewer benefits for the "common heritage of mankind" to be distributed among the international community and the developing countries in particular.

It should be noted that a 200-mile economic zone would give the great majority of coastal states the whole of their continental margin. Only Canada and a handful of other wide-shelf states would be asked to sacrifice areas of their continental margin.

Canada's continental margin is only about 40 miles wide on its west coast but, as mentioned earlier, well over 400 miles in places off its east coast.

Simultaneously with the definition of an outer limit of national rights over offshore minerals, the powers of an International Seabed Authority must be defined.

The developing nations want all mineral resource exploration and exploitation activities in the international area, including scientific research, to be carried out by the International Seabed Authority and not by individual states. However, many now recognize that the high cost of seabed exploration and exploitation would be beyond the means of the Authority alone, at least at first. Accordingly, some are concluding that joint ventures and other forms of collaboration between the Authority and individual contracting states may be necessary. Several developed countries, on the other hand, want a simple licensing scheme, allowing them to go ahead on their own with the Authority's role largely confined to issuing and registering the necessary licenses.

Canada advocates an accommodation of national interests on this delicate but high-

ly important issue. The role of the International Authority must be defined in a way that helps narrow the gap between the "have" and "have not" countries, rather than widening it. In the Canadian view there should be a mix of licensing and sub-contracting by the Authority, as well as direct exploitation by the Authority itself when it acquires the means and know-how.

This approach attempts to satisfy both the long-term needs of the developing countries and the short-term demands of technologically advanced, resource-hungry nations.

Some developed countries will soon have the technological capability to extract and process the manganese nodules for commercial purposes. Indeed, a number of U.S. and other companies are said to be ready to move to the exploitation stage within two or three years. This possibility arouses strong concern on the part of developing nations. They argue that several technologically advanced countries have ignored the 1969 United Nations resolution calling for a "moratorium" on exploitation of the international seabed, by undertaking research and experimental activities in the area with a view to ultimate exploitation. Canada, along with most developed countries, was unable to vote in favour of the moratorium resolution, believing that it would unduly restrict technological progress and cause an unacceptable delay in making these resources available to all.

Of special concern to Canada is the high nickel content of the manganese nodules. Canada is the world's largest producer and exporter of nickel, and also exports copper and cobalt. It cannot ignore the impact that mining of the nodules could have on its economy. Canada is not alone in this position; for example Chile, with its enormous copper output, has a comparable interest. Therefore, Canada is pressing for an orderly regime for the development of the international seabed area, under which the law will keep up with technology, and the abyssal seabed resources will benefit all mankind.