came into force on June 10, 1964, 30 days after Britain became the 22nd nation to ratify it.

While the title of this convention refers only to the continental shelf, the right it acknowledges extends much farther. According to this convention, a coastal nation has the right to the submerged seabed resources at any distance off its shores, wherever it can manage to exploit them, limited only by similar claims from other countries. In other words, we are talking about seabeds that exist not merely three miles, not merely twelve miles and not merely to the limit of our straight base lines but outside and beyond our continental shelves or as far as new technology will permit mankind to exploit and develop the resources which lie under the sea. This immense territory reaches far into the Atlantic ocean and far out into the Pacific, and it is of major importance to this country as well as many other countries.

Canada as a nation, Ottawa, that is, has passed legislation bearing on the exploration for oil and gas off our shores. Regulations were issued in 1960 under the Public Lands Grants Act and the Territorial Lands Act. The first major permit was granted by the previous government on June 29, 1960 to the Richfield Oil Corporation for 1.1 million acres. This was off the coast of British Columbia. One might say that this act set in train the arguments which have followed and precipitated what one might loosely refer to as the offshore mineral dispute between the government of British Columbia and the government of Canada.

In December 1962, the then mines and petroleum resources minister of British Columbia, Mr. Kiernan, made a statement which was widely quoted to the effect that it was the intent of his government to make a reference to the provincial court of appeal of British Columbia to decide the issue as between provincial and federal jurisdiction. On June 12, 1964 there was a meeting here in Ottawa between the subsequent minister of mines of British Columbia, the Hon. Donald Brothers, and the federal minister then responsible for natural resources, the present Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources (Mr. Laing). They had a lengthy discussion on this subject and on the same day they agreed to release to the press a statement which reads in part as follows:

> The two ministers emphasized that both governments wished to avoid any delay in exploration. After a review of the possibility of administrative arrangements and a review also of their respective legal positions, both ministers were of the view that the only way the matter could be reconciled was by a reference to the Supreme Court of Canada.

So as at June 12, 1964, at least one minister of the Crown in the right of the province of British Columbia was in agreement with the steps which have subsequently been taken by the federal government and in fact in agreement with the reference which is presently placed with the Supreme Court of Canada.

There was a federal-provincial conference held later in that year on October 14, 1964. The then Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources presented the federal point of view regarding our offshore mineral rights. He pointed out that it was necessary to refer the offshore problem to the Supreme Court of Canada in order that the legal positions of the parties concerned could be established.

• (6:30 p.m.)

Later on December 11, 1964, the Prime Minister sent a letter to all the provincial premiers indicating that Ottawa wished to refer the various aspects of the problem to the Supreme Court. All the premiers replied and on December 31, 1964, the Prime Minister issued a press release setting out the position of the federal government.

On March 17, 1965, the Prime Minister sent a letter to each of the provincial premiers stating the main considerations that led the federal government to decide to refer the offshore problem to the Supreme Court and saying that this decision had not been altered by the replies received from the premiers. On April 26, 1965, the question of the jurisdiction and ownership of the submerged resources off the west coast of Canada was finally referred to the Supreme Court of Canada by Order in Council 1965-750. This was tabled in the House of Commons on April 29, 1965, and is a public document.

Since then there has been some correspondence emanating from the government of Canada and directed to the province of British Columbia. Little if anything has been heard from the province. For a government which was on previous occasions extremely vocal on this subject, this is indeed surprising. The question now is how the reference will proceed, and of course it will proceed, without a submission from the province of British Columbia outlining the facts and the argument upon which its position is based. It would be a shame if the province of British