

In 1974, world fish production exceeded 60 million tons. About 90 per cent of the catch came from areas of the "High Seas" which may one day become "economic zones" under the exclusive jurisdiction of coastal States. For many countries fishing is a major food resource. Among them is Sri Lanka whose fishing fleet numbers the graceful catamarans seen in photo right on the beach at Negombo, near Colombo, the capital.

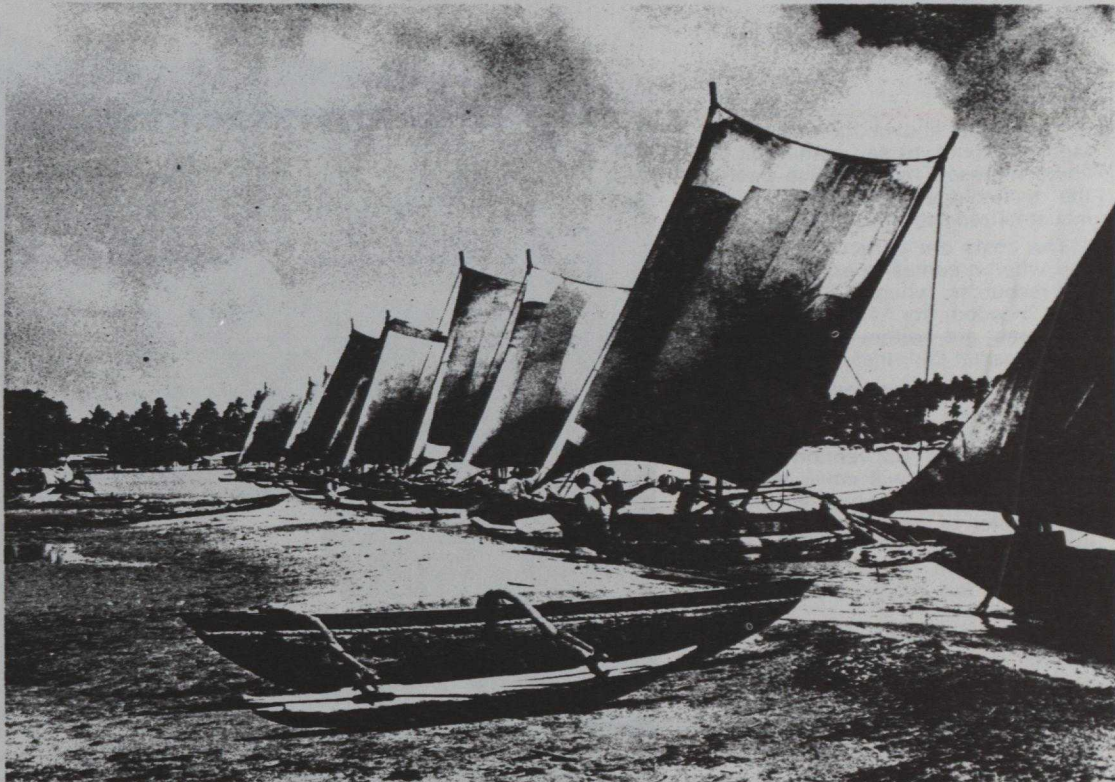


Photo David Holden © Panimage, Paris

from exercising their new rights.

This new legal order of the seas would be part and parcel of the effort to establish a New International Economic Order based on international co-operation and mutual respect and designed to reduce the present inequalities between developing countries and those of the industrialized world.

In seeking to include the law of the sea in the New International Economic Order, the Third Conference came up against another major issue in addition to the question of giving priority to the developing countries. This was the problem of landlocked countries and those which are at a disadvantage because of the smallness of their coastline.

These countries are struggling to achieve recognition of special rights giving them access to the economic zones of coastal States in their region, as well as the right to exploit under favourable conditions the resources of these zones, or at least to have preferential access to the unused surpluses of coastal States.

As for the protection of the marine environment, especially against pollution, the extension of the jurisdiction of the coastal States to 200 miles makes it necessary to redefine their competence in this field and harmonize their control standards with those adopted regionally or internationally.

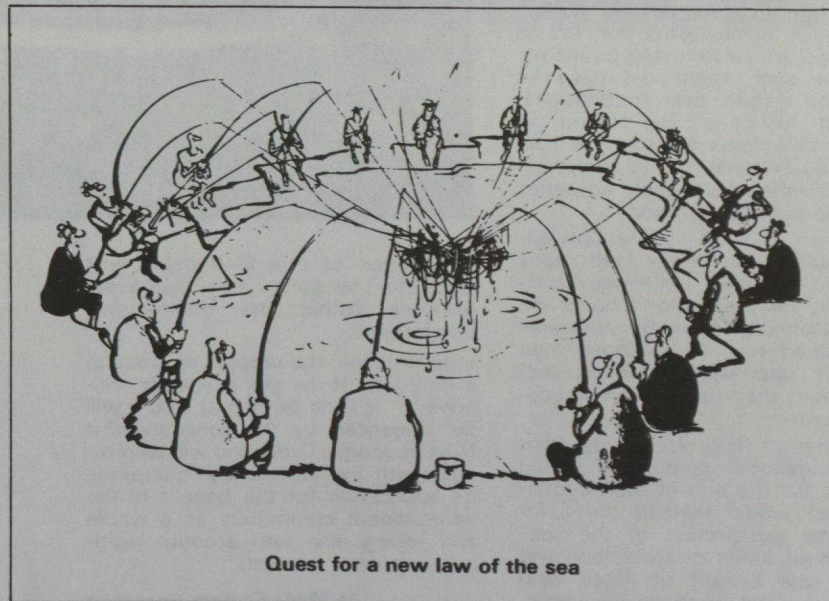
The aim is to prevent pollution caused by oil tankers and other vessels or due to operations involving the discharge of pollutants, and to prevent or reduce damage to health and to living resources, and at least ensure that accidents in one area do not have repercussions in other

parts of the ocean.

The developing coastal States also seek recognition of the right to control oceanographic research by ships and organizations from other countries in their coastal waters and to have such research placed under their jurisdiction. They are also demanding that their consent should be required in cases where the results of this research have a direct impact on their own marine resources, or are aimed at practical applications. It is claimed that the coastal States should thus have the right to take part in formulating research programmes and to participate in their execution, and have access to the results and their analysis.

However, the major powers still champion the principle of complete freedom of (non-applied) research, and view control by the coastal States as a threat to science and the acquisition of new knowledge. It is clear that regional and global bodies such as the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission could play an important role in promoting agreement between the countries concerned.

Generally speaking, the developing countries hope to benefit from the new regime for the oceans as a means of hastening their economic and social development. However, they are hampered by the lack of adequate infrastructures, of scientific



Quest for a new law of the sea

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