

# Canada Weekly

Volume 3, No. 12

March 19, 1975



Ottawa, Canada.

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## Canada's aims at the Geneva conference on Law of the Sea

*In a recent address to the Halifax Board of Trade, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Allan J. MacEachen, described the fundamental objects of the Canadian delegation at the continued session of the Law of the Sea Conference which opened in Geneva on March 17.*

*The External Affairs Minister, Environment Minister Jeanne Sauvé and other federal ministers will attend some of the meetings that continue till May 10, which, said Mr. MacEachen, indicated "the importance we all attach to this next round of international negotiations. Passages from his address follow:*

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There was, as you all know, a first substantive session of the Law of the Sea Conference, last summer in Caracas. For ten weeks, 138 sovereign nations — each with one vote, let me stress — attempted to draft an all-encompassing convention to regulate all of man's activities in, below, and above the sea, that is, 70 per cent of the earth's surface. Little wonder that they could not finish their immense task, even though preparations had been going on for six years in the United Nations Seabed Committee. Some observers were quick to conclude that Caracas had been a failure for the simple reason that not a single text was approved. That is, in my view, a simplistic judgment. It ignores the real nature of the conference — its methods of work, its over-all objectives and, in a very real sense, the substantial progress made.

The conference has more than 100 major items and sub-items on its agenda. It must legislate on matters relating to the security and sovereignty of states, fisheries, mineral resources, both hydrocarbons and hard minerals, marine pollution, marine scientific research, navigation, both commercial and military, international straits, archipelagoes and islands, off-shore installations, land-locked and geographically disadvantaged states, to name but the more important questions. All of these questions are inter-related and the balance of interests within the 138 participating states is such that final resolution of one particular issue must of necessity await progress on all other issues. This is usually referred to as the "package approach".

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There is a clear trend towards the acceptance of a three-tier concept: that is, an economic zone out to 200 miles; an international area beyond the economic zone reserved for the benefit of all mankind; and the application throughout the oceanic space of sound management principles for the use and preservation of the sea.

### Economic zone

First, the economic zone, that is certainly the area where progress was most evident at Caracas. I believe I can safely say that whether or not the conference is altogether successful, the economic-zone concept is here to stay. That is to say that within 200 miles of its coasts, a coastal state will have very substantial rights over the mineral and living resources of that zone and more extensive rights over the mineral and living resources of that zone and more extensive rights than it now possesses over marine pollution and scientific research.

For Nova Scotians and Canadians in general, that is a most encouraging development. It means that in the very near future Canada will be able to exercise full control over the most important economic activities now taking place or that may take place in the future in our off-shore waters. To be realistic, I must point out that this does not amount to an automatic remedy to all the economic ills of our coastal areas. Such a panacea does not exist. But it does mean that we will have the legal means and the necessary tools to put into effect sound management and conservation practices for the benefit of our own citizens, a power we have not had.

Let us consider for a moment what a 200-mile zone would do for Canada as