

"No State may endanger the safety of life at sea by issuing any regulations which are inconsistent with the regulations approved by a majority of seafaring States."

And again there is much support for the principle that ships without flag—or with more than one flag—may be boarded and searched by the public vessels of all states and, if suspected of piracy, may be forcibly brought to port for investigation.

The Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations, a part of the Secretariat, co-operates with the International Law Commission in this task of codifying international law, including maritime law. Many intricate problems are involved, but a broad background of co-operation and understanding already exists. Certain navigational rules are universally accepted. The Plimsoll line might be called a worldwide acknowledgment of human rights at sea, since it lays down the principle of responsibility on the part of ship-owners for the lives and safety of those who travel under their flag. The greed of owners can no longer cause ships to be overloaded and so become death-traps for crews and passengers. When danger threatens, the captain of any vessel knows that his S.O.S. will be answered without thought of his ship's nationality or origin. Every day, some small ship with a case of sickness or injury on board, and no doctor, uses radio to seek medical advice from another. Very many lives must have been saved in this way not only across the waters, but across the so-called barriers of race. Every evening, as the advancing fringe of darkness brings the world's lighthouses and buoys into operation, each flashes a message which is independent of the trammels of language that separate man from man. The charts to which seamen entrust their lives embody the lessons of many generations and of many races. Their symbols convey to every seaman a warning without words. They are fruits of human experience, wrung from danger and made available to all.

And so the sea, unlike the land with its passionate local loyalties and associations, speaks to man in universal terms. We have come to recognize in what was once the principle obstacle keeping mankind apart one of the major instruments working to bring the human family together and to emphasize its inter-dependence.

This co-operation of the human family at sea has already been the means of saving several hundred lives in the North Atlantic through the work of a specialized agency. Those saved were the crews and passengers of more than half a dozen ships. The specialized agency concerned, the International Civil Aviation Organization, co-ordinated an agreement by which fifteen nations maintain nine floating ocean stations for weather reporting to countries on both sides of the Atlantic. For ICAO, life-saving at sea is quite subsidiary to its main work in civil aviation. Nevertheless, in a few years, these ships have built up an enviable, if obscure, search and rescue record in addition to the daily weather observations at sea level and by stratospheric balloons which are their crews' main function. The personnel of several aircraft in distress have also been rescued by the same means from Atlantic waters.

### Weather Casualties

As little known, although it operates on a much wider scale, is the voluntary weather observation carried out internationally by the world's merchant