

Co-operation on the Seven Seas

Canada has a special interest in the work of organs and agencies of the United Nations which are concerned with the sea. Through the courtesy of the *United Nations Review, External Affairs* presents Part I of a two-part article, "A Chart for all the Oceans", which appeared in the *Review* earlier this year. The article presents aspects of the ocean which may be unfamiliar to many, and outlines how the United Nations and several of its Specialized Agencies help to foster international co-operation on the seas. Part II of this article will appear in the October issue.

A Chart for All the Nations

Part I

PUSHING forward across the unknown, primitive man came, again and again, upon the sea, a still greater unknown. To him it was a mystery and an obstacle. Beyond it, all unsuspected, lay the great empty lands. There were others, too, inhabited by men like himself but, because of the sea, his descendants might not hear of them until scores of centuries had passed.

Paradoxically, this same ocean, which for so long kept men apart, has come to symbolize the concept of one world. It is not only that men have found in the oceans a highway by which they can exchange their goods for those of distant peoples. Something in man's relation to the sea itself has affected his attitude. All men, irrespective of their origin, must be on guard against its violence and ready, as they seldom are on land, to help one another. "Faithful to no race after the manner of the kindly earth," wrote Joseph Conrad, "receiving no impress from valor and toil and self-sacrifice, recognizing no finality of domination, the sea has never adopted the cause of its masters like the land." It was inevitable that a feeling of solidarity, a kind of international understanding, should arise among sailors of all nations. Launching out upon the deep, men have recognized the need for a higher loyalty and a common discipline.

"All vessels must answer all calls of distress at sea and must render assistance to every person, even though an enemy, who is found at sea in danger of being lost."

That is one of certain rules of the sea, now generally accepted throughout the world, on which the International Law Commission of the United Nations is to report to the 1956 General Assembly. The commission consists of fifteen international jurists chosen by the Assembly. Every summer in Geneva, it meets to continue its task of developing and codifying a body of international law. Its session in 1955 was mainly concerned with the regime of the high seas and of the territorial sea. The distinguished lawyers have commented, one by one, on various points in international maritime law. It is an interesting fact that many rules of the sea which have won considerable, if not general, acceptance express a standard of conduct not related so much to the laws of individual states, as to the conscience or interests of mankind. Thus