

I hardly need say more to establish the ancientness of Canada's maritime orientation, which has led the Canadian Government to play a leading rôle in current attempts, sponsored by the United Nations, to reform, revamp and modernize the Law of the Sea. I hardly need explain why a Canadian foreign minister from Nova Scotia would take a most active interest in the sessions of Caracas, Geneva, and the third one scheduled to take place next March in New York.

But Canadian interests in the Law of the Sea are far more than historical. The exhibits before us show that Canada's coastline stretches for some 150,000 miles - almost 24 times the length of Scotland's, itself one of the longest and most ragged in Europe. We face, in our Arctic regions, environmental problems unique in the world; we contend that Canada must be given management of the fisheries within and beyond the so-called economic zone we share with a few other nations - among which Scotland - special responsibilities for the preservation of the salmon which spawns in such rivers as the Tweed, the Fraser and the Matapedia; and I should not even remind Scots, benefitting as they are from the North Sea oil boom, of the need for an international legal régime which facilitates, rather than hinders, the exploitation of the oceans' mineral resources.

The economic stakes for both Britain and Canada in a thorough reform of the Law of the Sea are therefore considerable; and this is why our two governments have worked in close cooperation at Caracas and Geneva and will continue to do so in New York. Of course, we all have our national interests - I just mentioned some of Canada's; but I am well aware of Britain's own imperatives to preserve access, for example, as a great shipping nation, to the traditional sea lanes of the world. To a certain extent, every country's case is a special case: the landlocked, the islands, those with and without a continental margin. Somehow, all of these special cases have to be accommodated in the new international agreement for which we strive; and this can only be done if the Law of the Sea Conference proceeds by consensus. Such a process is inevitably slow; but unquestionable progress is embodied in the single negotiating text issued at the end of the Geneva Conference.

Nevertheless, as I pointed out to the General Assembly of the United Nations last month, the search for consensus, past a certain point in time, becomes procrastination; and after a further point in time, procrastination becomes failure. I reiterate, however, that only if the multilateral approach fails to produce an international agreement will the Canadian Government resort to other solutions to protect its fundamental national interests. I hasten to add, however, that I have been much encouraged by the ability of the members of the United Nations - developing as well as developed - to adopt by consensus the historical resolution on international economic relations which concluded the Seventh Special Session of the General Assembly. I was also heartened by