

Most things become exhausted with promiscuous use. This is not the case with the sea. It can be exhausted neither by fishing nor by navigation, that is to say, in the two ways in which it can be used.

THE Dutchman Grotius, author of the doctrine of the freedom of the high seas, wrote that in 1609.

He was wrong.

There are a lot of reasons but one of them can be summed up in the word "oil".

Take the supertanker Shaughnessy. She's big...as long as three football fields. So long the crew pedal about on bicycles to save time. She's over a quarter of a million tons, one of the biggest ships ever to enter a Canadian port. The Shaughnessy can enter fewer than a dozen harbours in the whole world.

Hundreds of ships register under a flag of convenience, adopt a foreign flag of state. By registering in a foreign country, the owners have taken advantage of that country's lenient tax laws. And if they are American or Canadian, they don't have to ship a North American crew, the highest paid seamen in the world. The only Canadian aboard the Shaughnessy when she edges into dock somewhere along the Nova Scotia coast is the pilot. He went on board and took control when she was about 15 miles offshore. Ships like this, that require 11 miles of open sea to stop, need careful handling. It takes four hours for the tugs to bring her to the dock along a sealane that is under constant surveillance and control from a command point ashore. It's a new approach, similar to air

traffic control. It's the only such set-up in North America.

Oil is the big cargo on the sea these days. More of it is shipped in and out of Canadian ports than any other commodity. Tankers even bigger than the Shaughnessy ply the sea and more are under construction in Japan. They're as safe as modern science and skilled craftsmen can make them.

WHO OWNS THE SEA?

But what about the hundreds of other ships that enter coastal waters? Not all dockings are as smooth and flawless as the Shaughnessy's. People naturally get nervous when they consider what would happen if a big tanker like the Shaughnessy were to be wrecked off the coast.

Canada wants to ensure that any passing tankers will comply with Canadian regulations. Whether they're Americans, British, Liberian, Greek or whatever, we want to be sure that they're absolutely safe when they enter Canadian waters. In international law nobody can touch a ship on the high seas except the flag state, which means the country where it was registered. Canada sees no reason why this restriction should be absolutely sacrosanct right up to the moment of disaster. Because at the time of a disaster, here's what happens: the flag goes down, and the flag state jurisdiction mysteriously disappears. And it's left to the coastal state to clean up the mess.

The record shows that in the second half of 1969 tanker losses in accidents on the sea totalled 600,000 tons. That's the equivalent of 33 average-sized ships. When the Liberian tanker Arrow Rock foundered off the coast of Nova Scotia 190 miles of shoreline were contaminated with oil. Forty-eight hundred seabirds perished. Canada had to lay out more than \$3 million to clean up. Here's an extract from the report of the task force which handled the job:

Mr Minister, we would like to stress that we have recovered and put into shore tanks only 1.3 millions gallons of the Arrow's cargo and we have placed in approved dump sites perhaps another half-million gallons. The rest is on the shores of Chedabucto Bay, polluting the Atlantic ocean or being eaten by microbes.