

Fisheries

The freedom of fishing on the high seas embodied in the 1958 Convention on Fishing and the Conservation of the Living Resources of the High Seas is bound to be drastically amended by the Conference where three divergent points of view on fisheries will come to a head.

In the context of their economic zone concept, the majority of developing nations have supported a proposal that coastal states should have exclusive sovereignty over the living resources in an area 200 miles wide off their coast.

The distant fishing nations (e.g. Japan, USSR) intent upon preserving the status quo are ready to see it slightly modified in favour of developing nations who would have preferential rights over the living resources in ^a twenty-four mile area adjacent to their coast. According to the Japanese and Soviet proposals, the other developed nations would have to accept the present freedom of foreign vessels to fish beyond the narrow belt of their territorial waters as has been the case heretofore.

Canada has shared the general position of the developing countries while advocating an approach which would grant coastal states different degrees according to their species. One particularly difficult problem will be to determine the extent of the preferential rights coastal states may have over those coastal species which are found beyond the 200-mile limit.

The ultimate solution attained by the Conference will certainly have to provide coastal states with powers much broader than those they now enjoy over living resources, although it is not clear now what the modalities of the final solution will be.