

Simultaneously, with the definition of an outer limit of national rights over offshore minerals, the powers of the proposed International Seabed Authority must be defined.

The developing nations would like to see all mineral-resource exploration and exploitation activities in the international area, including scientific research, to be carried out by the International Seabed Authority and not by individual states. However, many now recognize that the high cost of seabed exploration and exploitation would be beyond both the financial and technical means of the Authority alone, at least at first. Accordingly, some are coming around to the view that joint ventures and other forms of collaboration between the Authority and individual contracting states may be necessary. Several developed countries, on the other hand, want a simple licensing scheme, allowing them to go ahead on their own with the Authority's role largely confined to issuing and registering the necessary licences. I can, however, foresee Canada playing an important role in the building up of the technical resources of the Authority.

Once again, Canada advocates an accommodation of national interests on this delicate but highly important issue. The role of the International Authority must be defined in a way that helps narrow the gap between the "have" and "have-not" countries. In the Canadian view, there should be a "mix" of licensing and sub-contracting by the Authority, as well as direct exploitation by the Authority itself when it acquires the means and know-how. It would seem illogical, however, for Canada, with its program of development assistance, which is among the most extensive of any, not to give the Authority every support so that it could in time become an important source of material and financial assistance to the developing countries.

Some developed countries will soon have the technological capability to extract and process certain mineral resources of the seabed for commercial purposes -- the much-publicized manganese nodules. Indeed, a number of U.S. and other companies are said to be ready to move to the exploitation stage within two or three years. This possibility arouses strong concern on the part of developing nations.

Canada, along with most developed countries, was unable to vote in favour of a moratorium resolution put forward in 1969 by the developing countries, believing that it would unduly restrict technological progress and cause an unacceptable delay in making these resources available to all.