# S., to the NEWS

Release: April 4

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UN CONFERENCE ON THE SEA

The sorry record of international conferences over the last 40 years shows that America's property interests, political influence, and ilitary prestige usually come off second best. All the way from Teheran, Yalta and Potsdam, to the SALT Agreements in Moscow and Vladivostok, the Vietnam Agreement in Paris, and the Canal Zone Agree ment in Panama, U.S. diplomats have usually not succeeded in defend ing American interests.·

This track record requires us to look with apprehension at this spring's United Nations Conference in Geneva on the Law of the Sea.

The oceans are generally recognized as the earth's largest area of untapped resources, including oil, gas, minerals, and seafood. There are three conflicting approaches to use of the ocean. Major maritime nations want the sea to remain free for navigation; coastal nations want to establish jurisdiction over their continental shelves; and landlocked nations want the ocean's treasures to be internation alized.

In 1958 the United Nations agreed that coastal nations could con trol the non-renewable resources on their own continental shelveso In 1970 the UN tried to limit this coastal jurisdiction by what it called the "common heritage of mankind0 11 This has resulted in the dispute between the landlocked nations which want the "common" area to start 40 miles from shore, and Canada and the Western Hemisphere coastal nations whose continental shelves extend 200 to 300 miles from the shore.

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In the last several years, tremendous oil and gas reserves have been discovered in the sea. That ownership md use may depend on who has the relevant military power is shown by the way the Soviets have arrogantly demanded to share the rights to the oil and gas re cently found off the northern coast of Norway•

. Scientists today believe that the ocean floor has layers of potato-sized nodules which can provide a virtually perpetual supply of certain minerals: enough copper to supply the world for 1,000 years, enough nickel for 23,000 years, enough manganese for 34,000 years, and enough cobalt for 260,000 years. Most of the nodules of minerals lie beyond the continental shelves, and the question of who will reap the harvest is unresolved.

An international crisis is already upon us in regard to seafood. Modern fishing fleets, equipped with electronic gear, fish with such concentrated fury that some fishing grounds are depleted in a single season. The Soviet Union has been the leading offender in overfish ing until a species is endangered or eliminated, but other nations have been guilty, too.

The record of our government in permitting the Soviets and others to steal our fish raises the question as to whether our diplomats in Geneva will be equally careless in regard to our rights to the oceans' oil, gas, and minerals.

The stakes in the sea are valuable enough that we need skilled U.S. negotiators resolved to defend our interests. Based on past per formance, we would all be better off if we let our State Department diplomats t.ake a sabbatical, and instead bring in a team of labor union negotiators led by George Meany.

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