Exploration or exploitation of hydrocarbons seems likely to be technically feasible at some time, but estimates of the likely time scale vary and there was wide divergence of views in the Expert Group. No delegation believed that exploratory drilling would begin in less than five years and most of the experts considered that it was unlikely in less than ten years. The timetable for exploitation is even more uncertain, but in the much less exacting conditions of the North Sea ten years elapsed between exploratory drilling and the commencement of exploitation. (Final Report of the Ninth Consultative Meeting. 1977. Annex 5/II.35)

The above statement has been used to illustrate a time scale for Oil and Gas exploration and exploitation as officially evaluated by the treaty partners. What it sets out to say is that at the moment such things are not feasible. Commercial scale drilling may not commence for twenty years or more and exploration might not begin in earnest for five years, ten years or even longer. What the Expert Group did not say, for in the light of such long-term predictions it probably seemed unnecessary, was who would be doing the exploration and who, or what, should control that activity.

And, what if a country feels itself capable of commencing exploratory work in the shortest time, ie five years, how might it most satisfactorily go about it and be sure that it reaps the benefit?

This is not a hypothetical situation or question, it is very important and the present meeting has a singular bearing on the answer.

If the present marine living resources meeting comes up with the framework of a ‘regime’ and this regime is accepted by the rest of the world, then the next step is only a few years off. (Or even less.)

A NON-LIVING RESOURCES REGIME

With even the most remote possibility of exploration beginning in a few years (ten years is not a long time) and with most countries opposed to ‘free non-discriminatory access’ nations will be determined to develop and protect their interests and the most probable method of achieving this will be through the formulation of another regime.

Regardless of moratoriums desired by some countries, (to give them time to catch up or establish their claims?), other states, low on energy reserves but high on technology will want to be developing Antarctic deposits around 1990— the time world oil production is expected to take a downturn.

For this reason most Treaty nations will desire that some sort of rationalisation is achieved, to protect their own positions and to obviate a ‘gold rush’ situation. It is only logical to assume that a regime is the answer.

For this reason too, it is quite likely that some countries at present committed to an ideal of ‘conservation’ will be tempted to capitulate to the exploitation demands of other countries.

If this present regime cannot be set up by then the probability of an oil and minerals regime being formed would be low. Most countries recognise this and will undoubtedly compromise to make certain this meeting is successful as their future interests are at stake.

Therefore we will be surprised if a Marine Living Resources Regime is not set up. We won’t be surprised if conservation becomes a word of forgotten meaning.

The answer, and this regime is accepted by the rest of the world, then the next step is only a few years off. (Or even less.)

ANTARCTIC OIL NEXT

CONSERVATION ‘CON’

Were the opening statements on conservation no more than confidence tricks?

The Canberra Special Consultative Meeting to set up an Antarctic Marine Living Resources Regime is going against the ‘eco-system’ approach sought by some states.

It is reliably reported to ICE that the situation at the meeting is difficult and that conservation countries will probably be forced to compromise.

One delegate told us, ‘There are certain countries which wish to exploit far more than they wish to conserve. These countries are intractable at present and it will probably be we who give way.’

Another delegate said that there was grave concern among biologists and environmentalists that the ecosystem could be broken down if these countries had their way.

We asked delegates if they thought that the desire by some nations to soon begin exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbons (oil and gas) could have something to do with them compromising to the fishing states on this regime.

We were told that it was a grave possibility. ‘It will certainly be in the back of the mind of most negotiators,’ we were told.

Friends of the Earth on Monday handed letters to delegates asking again that Antarctica be declared an International Wilderness Area. Many delegates stopped and spoke to ‘the Fourteenth Delegation’ but most seemed to think that the situation had gone too far already—that exploitation was inevitable.

FOE denies this. We believe it can be halted now. If it is not, irreversible damage to the environment will result.
THE DETERIORATION OF BIOLOGICAL SYSTEMS

'Resources' from the Antarctic are not the answer to the world's food problem.

The problem is one of redistribution of food and rehabilitation of biological systems which have degenerated through over-exploitation by humans.

These problems should be solved, rather than exploiting yet another biological system to satisfy the interests of short-term gain.

Below we reprint extracts from Worldwatch Paper 14 'Sustaining National Security' by Lester R. Brown. Although 'Antarctic resources' are not mentioned this paper sounds a sober warning which all must heed.

Pressures on the earth's principal biological systems are mounting rapidly as population expands and as incomes climb. Stress is evident in each of the four major biological systems—ocean fisheries, grasslands, forests and croplands—on which humanity depends for food and industrial raw materials. Except for croplands, all are essentially natural systems, little modified by humans.

Discussions of long-term economic growth prospects in recent years have been concentrated on non-renewable resources, especially minerals and fossil fuels. They have been underpinned by the implicit assumption that because biological resources are renewable, they are of little concern. In fact, both the renewable and nonrenewable resource bases have been shrinking. In addition to food, biological systems provide virtually all the raw materials for industry except petroleum-derived synthetics and minerals such as iron ore, bauxite and copper.

The current world population of four billion humans is putting great pressure on these biological systems, often more than they can endure over the long term. The productivity of scores of oceanic fisheries is falling as the catch exceeds their regenerative capacities. In a protein-hungry world, overfishing has recently become the rule, not the exception. Forests are shrinking before the onslaught of the firewood gatherer, the land-hungry farmer and the international timber interests.

The oceanic food chain, yielding some seven million tons of fish per year, is humanity's principal source of high-quality protein. Not only do fish provide animal protein for direct consumption, but the less palatable species are converted into fishmeal and fed to poultry that produce meat and eggs. Fisheries also yield fish oil and other specialised by-products used by industry.

Overfishing is not new, but its scale and rate of acceleration are unprecedented. Deterioration that once took centuries is now being compressed into years by inexcusable population growth. Populations are, in effect, out-growing the biological systems that sustain them.

Humanity depends on the earth's forests for firewood, lumber, newsprint and a host of less essential products. The proportionate contribution of cultivated crops to the global economy is far greater than the one-tenth of the earth's land surface that they occupy.

As world population gradually expanded after the development of agriculture, farming spread from valley to valley and from continent to continent until by the mid-twentieth century the frontiers had virtually disappeared. While the amount of new land awaiting the plow shrank, the growth of demand for food was expanding at a record pace. Coupled with the uneven distribution of land in many countries these trends have engendered a land hunger that is driving millions of farmers onto soils of marginal quality—lands subject to low and unreliable rainfall, lands with inherently low fertility, lands too steep to support cultivation.

One need not be a trained agronomist nor a prophet to see the grim future in store if the abuse of the earth's meager soil resources continues.

The mantle of topsoil covering the earth ranges in depth from a few inches to a few hundred feet. Over much of the earth's surface it is only inches deep, usually less than a foot. Nature produces new soil very slowly, much more slowly than the rate at which humans are now removing it. Thus, once topsoil is lost, a vital capacity to sustain life is diminished. With soil as with many other resources, humanity is beginning to ask more of the earth than it can give.

More and more the "carrying capacities" of biological systems are being ignored and exceeded. In many ways the natural biological systems on which humanity depends function like a philanthropic foundation operating on a fixed endowment. With $100 million that earns 6% yearly a foundation can safely disburse $6 million per year indefinitely. If, however, overly enthusiastic project officers begin disbursing the foundation's resources at $10 million per year, the foundation of financial assets would gradually be consumed. Eventually, the foundation would lose its productive assets and close its doors. So, too, with biological systems. In neither case can the off-take exceed the regenerative capacity for long.

In many Third World countries population growth is now acting as a double-edged sword, simultaneously expanding demands on the biological systems while destroying the resource bases. As long as the demand for fish is less than the sustainable yield of the fishery, population growth has no impact on production. But once the demand exceeds the sustainable yield, then population growth begins to eat away the productive resource base. In some cases, this process can continue until the biological resource is entirely destroyed.

History has recorded a few instances of such abuse. North Africa was once the granary of the Roman Empire. Today, the fertility of the region's badly eroded soils has fallen so low that the area imports most of its food. Accounts of the collapse of the early Middle Eastern civilizations attributed the downfall of these societies to invaders from the north, but more recent investigations link their decline to the waterlogging and salting of their irrigation systems and to the collapse of their food supplies. For some countries, encroaching desert poses a far greater threat than invading armies.

Efforts to preserve the biological systems on which humanity depends must ultimately involve constraints on global consumption. Negotiating limits on the consumption of tuna or newsprint will bring national interests into conflict, putting great pressure on the international political system. Resolving such problems will tax the skills of diplomats.
WHO'S UNDER F.O.E. ATTACK?

Many people, including delegates, may have gained the impression that in the last issue of ICE we were singing out the Australian government for attack. We want to make it plain that we are not picketing on any one single country. What we want is to make our position clear and advise as many people as possible of what we believe is happening in the conference.

All the 'public' has had to go so far has been diplomatic rhetoric and government propaganda. That is why, for instance, we chose to publish the E.H.C.D. paper last week. Not to embarrass the Australian delegation, (all delegates would be embarrassed if we published similar revelations regarding their stand) but because it evaluated the Australian position from the government viewpoint and gave us some idea of what other states were proposing. This is information, we feel, the public are entitled to have.

We abhor the secrecy which has been a feature of this and previous consultative meetings and dispute the belief, endemic to governments, that they only have a right to know.

The 'public', in the future, may or may not be affected by whatever decision is reached at this meeting - Antarctica certainly will but at least the opportunity should be afforded to them to evaluate the facts for themselves.

We are aware that some countries did move to have the meeting made more 'open' but this was not agreed to by others. We would like to know why those countries disagreed and what they want to remain undisclosed.

We said in our last edition that 'it is exploitation'. The fact that the meeting is still closed and information is still restricted has done nothing to dispel that belief.

Perhaps we will be given copies of the various drafts so that we might reconsider our statement but until then we can see no reason to think anything to the contrary.

It has been stated above that we are not singling out particular governments or delegations, but, until secrecy and mystery are removed from 'treaty' meetings we can evaluate situations only with whatever information is available to us.

WHY CLAIMS?

Before progress can be achieved in the formulation of a 'conservation' regime the question of Antarctic claims must be solved. And not only for this present regime do these claims represent an obstacle but future ambitions in the area will necessitate their clarification and acceptance or rejection by treaty partners.

But the claims themselves must be an embarrassment to those governments who will be unable to realistically, legally or historically justify them.

As far as we are concerned too, these claims are absurd. But for us it is not a matter of international all prestige (for the claimants) or annoyance (for non-claimants). The claims are meaningless, simply lines on a map with the legend 'ours'.

Antarctica is part of the world, not part of a country or group of countries. If Antarctica is to be protected, that protection is the obligation of the entire world.

We call on the Australian, British, New Zealand, Chilian, Argentinean and French governments to show an enlightened attitude and give up their claims and declare the whole of Antarctica a wilderness area and heritage of the world.

COMMON HERITAGE

REGENCY IGNORES ISSUE

"In recent years there has been growing international interest in the exploration and exploitation of the living and non-living resources of Antarctica. Apart from fisheries, which are believed to be rich, it is the prospect of mineral deposits (especially off-shore oil) which is attracting new interest. But the Antarctic Treaty makes no provision for this situation."

The present Special Antarctic Consultative Meeting on Marine Living Resources is aimed at establishing a Regime to conserve such resources (see ICE 1). We believe that such a Regime is doomed because:

1/ claims to territory will take precedence over true conservation (ie not rational-use which is the Treaty's definition of conservation) and claimant states will opt for the Regime that best protects these, irrespective of conservation matters.

and 2/ countries interested in exploiting mineral resources will make concessions to other countries intent on exploiting marine resources.

In its attempt to cater for the management of Antarctic Marine Living Resources we fear that a very destructive exploitation regime will be created.

"The eventual aim should be the dissolution of the Treaty into internationalisation of the Antarctic, with the control of it vested in the U.N., as part of the common heritage of mankind. However, instead of the common heritage being seen as yet another area for exploitation, it should be preserved as a natural wilderness area, thereby excluding the exploitation of the Antarctic for its living and non-living resources, as well as excluding the Antarctic's development as a tourist attraction."

"The Antarctic is not yet a major political issue in any country and so Non-Governmental Organisations (eg Friends of the Earth, Sierra Club, ACF, Environment Centres, etc) will have less of a struggle against other domestic lobby groups. The Antarctic is not yet a major source of revenue for any country and so it would be easier now, rather than in the next few years, to get governmental agreement to preserve it as a wilderness."

Quotes are from a paper entitled "The International Law Environment of the Antarctic" by K. Suter of the University of NSW. This paper is shortly to be publish by F.O.E.
WHAT FOTHER INANTS WANTS

Friends of the Earth believe that there should be no exploitation in the Antarctic area. They do agree, however, that there is a need for a body to control scientific and other activities in the Antarctic (eg Tourism). We feel that history has shown that the Antarctic Treaty has worked in a (mostly) responsible and co-operative way and the countries involved have been successful in maintaining it. However, with the potential for exploitation now being realised, it is unlikely that this situation will continue. Therefore we feel that it is time a new approach is taken to Antarctic preservation.

Specifically the framework of the present treaty could form the basis of a larger and more representative organisation. This could be done by modifying the treaty as follows:

a) Asserting that Antarctica is a Natural Wilderness Area and a World Heritage, and that it should remain so forever. This would mean that all sea and land within the Antarctic Convergence, the region that marks the boundary between warm surface waters and cold sub-surface waters, should be a no-go zone for any put of it.

b) The deletion of all sea and land within the Antarctic Convention. The deletion of references to accession (as per article IX-2) and other alterations which are necessary to facilitate membership by interested states.

c) The admittance of non-governmental and non-governmental organisations to the treaty with the same rights and privileges as states.

ANTARCTIC SUPERMARKET

There are more than a few Treaty and non Treaty nations who look upon "the last continent" as a form of glorified self-service frozen pantry. They are desperately turning their attention to the Antarctic supermarket for the ethical bargain at "never to be repeated" prices. "Why worry about the future?" they say. With the world plundered and ruined the buyers are lining up at the turnstiles to exploit Antarctica as if it were a bottomless bulk freezer.

In order to guide the bargain hunters, Prime Ministers, Presidents and multinational corporations, the Editors of ICE present

A CONSUMERS’ GUIDE TO ANTARCTICA.

WHALES

A product that's been getting a lot of attention lately, although its scarcity places it in the gourmet section. Facilitated by the International Whaling Commission, a controversial producer-oriented group, whales come in two basic types, Baleen (filter feeding on krill etc.) and Toothed. They are used for cattle feed, perfume and oiling industrial machinery. A traditional Antarctic product, whales have been in on the shelf since the 1800's with best production between 1950 and 1963 when an average kill of 36,523 whales was made. However, whales don't grow on trees and it seems a certainty that this product will be increasingly relegated to the back shelves and "out of stock" sections. Current buyers include Australasian, Chilk and of course those bulk shoppers Russia and Japan.

PENGUINS

Heavily bought early in the century penguins have since gone out of fashion. Processing is messy, involving boiling and defecating but with a yield of one pint of oil per penguin this discontinued line may witness a revival.

FISH

Antarctica has enough varieties available to warm the heart of any long distance fishing nation with a fleet or two to spare. Blue Whiting, Patagonian Hake and Antarctic Cod are currently sought after but no accurate form of stock taking has been done. Once again that crafty shopper from the Steppes has got in early by bulk buying for over ten years. In 1970 they went home with over 40,000 tonnes from South Georgia. Other countries now intend to get in for their "piece of the action".

SEALS

Another traditional product, seals come in six varieties - Weddel Ross, Crabeater, Leopard, Fur and Elephant. It is marketed by the dubiously named "Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals" which recently announced that shortages have caused the withdrawal of Fur Elephant, and Ross seals from stock. Fur seals almost permanently disappeared from the South Orkney and Falkland Islands by 1830. The Crabeater and Leopard varieties are still the only "supercaliber" seal and are still in plentiful supply but will they last with several eager buyers around?

SEAWeed

Inclined to give off bad odours if left dehydrated, this product nevertheless can be used for food, industrial chemistry and pharmaceuticals. Even with this myriad of uses no definite buyers have yet come forward.

ROCK LOBSTER

A delicately known for their fine tastes in food, the French are the sole buyers of this governing right. They alone have bought around 1,500 tonnes annually, almost equal to the maximum productivity of the stocks. They obviously want to keep their iced lobster to themselves.

SQUID

It looks funny and feels even worse but squid promises to be a big seller in the future - if Japan, the main buyer, can figure out a way to catch these deep swimmers.

KRILL

SUPER BUY OF THE DECADE

Attractively packaged in a 45 - 50 mm size, Krill has previously been "wasted" as food for whales, seals, fish and penguins. But no longer!! Like these tiny animals in their summer feeding frenzy, shoppers are swarming in to get their share of a possible yearly supply of 50 -150 million tonnes. Krill is small (shoppers will have to buy in huge bulk), shrimp-like and very good for the economy even if it doesn't taste the best. Now that whales and other animals afford no competition the big bulk buyers are ready to descend.

Of course stocks of Krill may not last long and there seems to be little hope of restraining buying.

Many people believe that once the Krill shelves are cleared the Antarctic supermarket will be forced to close, following the example of the Petrelian Anchovies in the West African Anchovies and the North Atlantic Fisheries.

WOMEN

We have been informed that, possibly as a consequence of our comment in the last issue of ICE, the chiropractor, Mr. Rowland, is now opening his addresses - 'Ladies and gentle men...'

Congratulations.

This issue was produced by:
Paul Dickenson, Mark Carter, Linvill Secomb, Jodi Greenpeace, Andrew Herrington, Max Smart, Brian Appleford.
Special thanks to: Brian, Ken, Jimmie, Frank, Isabella, ANU Students Association.

CHE LEAVES

Che d'Square has left Canberra. Before departing she appealed to delegates to reconsider exploitation of Antarctic resources. "The penguins have always looked after their environment well," she said, "Just look at them - it's all there in black and white."

We have been informed that, possibly as a consequence of our comment in the last issue of ICE, the chiropractor, Mr. Rowland, is now opening his addresses - 'Ladies and gentle men...'

Congratulations.

This issue was produced by:
Paul Dickenson, Mark Carter, Linvill Secomb, Jodi Greenpeace, Andrew Herrington, Max Smart, Brian Appleford.
Special thanks to: Brian, Ken, Jimmie, Frank, Isabella, ANU Students Association.