

A Word With You

"OCEAN, thou mighty monster," sings the heroine of Weber's opera, "Oberon." New attention is being paid to the ocean, which can be a friendly monster as well as an unfriendly one.

For a long time, the ocean was thought of chiefly as an obstacle to cross—and for the greater part of human history, an obstacle not to cross. Closer to land, one could catch fish.

But nowadays explorers go out into the ocean not merely to cross it, but to plumb its depths. We are discovering that the three-fourths of our globe that is covered with water is, after all, part of our natural resources. The motto adopted at our recent Henry George Conference, "water is land," acquires extra meaning. For in the briny deep we are finding gas, oil and minerals, as well as multitudes of living things.

The Geophysical Year of recent memory has spurred continued exploration, and we are learning that the ocean is an important part of our environment. New inventions will enable us to walk the ocean's floor, live under water for long periods, and—who knows? perhaps discover Atlantis.

Scientists are also telling us that the algae that teem in the ocean form an inexhaustible source of potential food for mankind; also, that as we learn to de-salt sea water, we will have an endless supply. Not that we need it, as the dry earth and fresh water have scarcely been tapped—but the ocean is provid-

ing a rather overwhelming argument that ought to drown the alarms of Malthusianism.

All this is raising interesting and touchy questions about who is to get at these riches of Neptune and benefit from them. It is as though a new continent were discovered—however, the world-ocean is much larger than all the continents put together.

After explorers and occasional freebooters take a crack at a new continent, there usually arises the question of which nation lays claim to what; then which power structure within the nation; and finally the fencing in by the privileged few.

With the ocean, the problem of sovereignty is now on the agenda. Up to now, beyond three-mile and twelve-mile limits, the ocean has been regarded as the common property of mankind. But that was when it was only something to cross and fish in. Now that it is something to farm and mine and exploit, it could become an economic bone of contention.

Unless we have gained a little sense. One interesting proposal is that productive exploitation of the ocean be open to all persons of all nationalities and rental or royalty revenues therefrom go to finance the United Nations.

The ocean, mother of all life, confronts us once again with a new challenge. Have we evolved sufficiently to meet this challenge?

— Robert Clancy

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The Henry George News, published monthly by the Henry George School of Social Science, 50 E. 69th Street, New York, N.Y. 10021, supports the following principle:

The community, by its presence and activity, gives rental value to land, therefore the rent of land belongs to the community and not to the landowners. Labor and capital, by their combined efforts, produce the goods of the community—known as wealth. This wealth belongs to the producers. Justice requires that the government, representing the community, collect the rent of land for community purposes and abolish the taxation of wealth.

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