

EDITORIAL

The last editorial criticized the fact that the draft Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources was still being kept secret. One of the people concerned questioned the wisdom of this and sent the current draft to us (see page 58), together with the letter printed below. We questioned the use of publishing the text at this stage in time but were convinced that we have an obligation to do so, and for the very reason that it was being kept secret. It has always been, and continues to be our policy to publish all information of interest to the conservation community. Even if the text had not been sent to us in this way and we would have obtained it through another channel we would unhesitatingly have published it.

We understand that Australia is hoping that there can be some informal consultations among all the treaty powers in March for the purpose of reaching agreement on the EEC and French issue (see page 4). Unfortunately, one cannot be too optimistic about the outcome of the closed consultations. There is every indication that these are issues that will not be resolved easily. It is a question of how dedicated the governments are to reaching an agreement and it is also doubtful if the final convention will be one to which the conservation community should give its full support.

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On 5 December 1976, France signed the Bonn Convention concerning pollution of the Rhine by chloride. France gave an undertaking at that time that the salt load, caused mainly by heavy potassium mining in Alsace would be reduced by 20 kilos per second by mid-1978 and to a total of 60 kilos per second by 1 January 1980 and indicated that it would take action before ratifying. In order to ensure that quick action could be taken, the other signatories fulfilled their obligations and paid their contributions before the treaty came into force. The sum paid for this "clean-up" amounted to a total of 132 million FF.

A start was made by France, but no-one knows if the measures have been continued or how the money has been used. It is difficult for those not in the country to judge

what has, if anything, been done to fulfil the original undertaking. Only one thing appears to be certain, and that is that the money, irrespective of how it has been applied, is gone. The treaty foresaw soil injection for the salt. The industry lobby said that soil injection was unacceptable, and this has been the big stumbling block to any further action.

Several members of the Netherlands parliament lobbied in front of the French National Assembly when this question was being debated (for report of debate see page 40). It was certainly not very wise of them to take an action which could be guaranteed to make the French even more stubborn in this question. It is apparent that nothing will be heard or achieved with regard to ratification until after the elections for the European Parliament have held. The French government has continuously stressed that it would tackle the problem vigorously after this event and one can only hope that France will then fulfil its promise to act.

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A document entitled "Contribution of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic to the topic of the Protection of Natural Flora and Fauna and their Habitat" which will be submitted to the 7th Session of the ECE Senior Advisers to governments on environmental questions, has reached us too late for inclusion in this issue (see page 2). This document, submitted by the Czechoslovakian government, contains both a "declaration" and a plan of action for the high-level conference proposed for the Autumn. At first sight its intentions are laudable. It seems, however, to forget that many European governments and several international organizations are already working toward the goals of establishing networks of areas the purpose of which, or if not the purpose, the existence of which, is geared to ecological "stabilization". Many more negotiations may be necessary to put these items in a form acceptable to the governments of ECE.

We shall report on the forthcoming discussions in the next issue. □

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

The section in your most recent editorial concerning Southern Ocean negotiations was of particular interest to me since I have been personally involved in those discussions. Based on my experiences, I have to admit that I

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am in complete agreement with your statement that the secrecy which presently surrounds the treaty is "unwarranted". Since any treaty which emerges will have a global impact, it would appear that the need for public disclosure is greater, not less, than in many other settings. The utilization of the living resources in the Southern Ocean certainly cannot be considered the exclusive province of the negotiating parties; it is therefore difficult to comprehend why the benefits generally attributable to public disclosure are being purposely withheld in this case.

Enclosed you will find a copy of the most recent Southern Ocean draft text. It is my sincere hope that you will see fit to publish it so that concerned parties everywhere may have the opportunity to examine and comment upon the important matters which until now have been within the exclusive domain of a few.

I realize that providing this document is a somewhat unorthodox action, but I strongly believe that it is one that is fully justified.

(name withheld upon request)