

JAPAN WORRIED ABOUT OUT OF LAW

TOKYO (NAN) --- Japan is worried about possibilities of becoming the big loser at the United Nations-sponsored Law of the Sea meetings, which could result soon in a vast 200 mile economic zone for coastal and island nations, such as Micronesia.

At the Law of the Sea meetings so far, "third world" nationalism from poorer, undeveloped countries and territories is again challenging the fishing industry of larger nations like the United States, Soviet Union and Japan.

The issue: the destruction of local fishing interests--like Micronesia--at the hands of the large, automated fishing fleets of the big powers.

The Director General to the Japan Deep Sea Fishery Association recently stated that "the destiny of the nation" depended on whether or not Japan could defeat a proposal to expand each nation's economic waters from 12 to 200 nautical miles.

Because the Japanese consume 11 million tons of fish each year and are Number One in fishing, Two-thirds of Japan's deep sea catch--more than 4,000,000 tons--is from inside the proposed 200 nautical mile limits of coastal and island countries like Micronesia.

Indeed, the Japanese can no longer make their traditional and popular raw fish "sushi" with prawns and other marine life taken from their inland and coastal waters because of pollution.

Also, prawns off South Vietnam and octopus near Spain is caught by Japanese fishing fleets in ever-increasing amounts.

A 200 mile fishing limit would cut off these sources and reserve it for the smaller, and less developed, coastal and island nations.

Since the U.S. and Russia both eased their opposition to giving larger resource areas to "third world" nations, pressures from the conference centers on Japan. A big 85% of Japan's "foreign" deep sea catch comes from areas to be designated "economic zones" off the coasts of the U.S., Canada, and the Soviet Union. And Japan knows that bargaining for fishing rights will give these three nations new leverage over Japan, and could make Japan even more dependent on foreign food supplies. (In 1973, Japan's 52% was the "developed" world's highest dependent rate.)

Japan's many shipping and oil companies are also threatened by another proposal at the Law of the Sea meetings which would set territorial limits at 12 nautical miles, instead of the present three. This proposal would, in effect, "nationalize" the Malacca Strait near Indonesia, which is Japan's oil life-line from the Middle East oil fields. In 1973, more than 80% of the ships that passed

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through the Malacca Straits were Japanese, and both Malaysia and Indonesia have raised claims that the Straits were their territorial waters.

In expectation that the 200 mile limit on economic waters will be passed by the Law of the Sea participants, Japan is taking two steps:

- 1) beginning negotiations with other nations to purchase fishing rights in waters where it now fishes freely; and,
- 2) rushing into joint ventures in these same areas.

Big Japanese marine and trading companies have already formed more than 100 joint ventures in over 40 countries, the most recent, and largest, is in oil-rich Kuwait. Nissho-Iwai, the same trading company that has shown an interest investing millions of dollars in a "superport" in Palau District, recently invested \$10 million in prawn fishing in the Mid-East nation.

While Japan's fishing, shipping and oil interest groups worry about these problems presented at the Law of the Sea meetings, Japan's military, called the Self-Defense Forces, eagerly await the results. A 12-mile territorial limit would also cut off the Soviet Union's naval access routes to the Sea of Japan.

But whatever the results of the Law of the Sea meetings, Japan's ships will continue to circle the globe, and Micronesia, in search of fish.