

Ocean Resource Idea Oversold

THE ocean has been oversold as being a vast, untapped resource that may have a very important future effect on Oklahoma cow pastures. Instead of replacing beef with fish, we may have to replace fish from the ocean with beef from the prairies.

Arthur Maxwell, provost of Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution on Cape Cod, Mass., says the ocean "has finite limits and in some instances, we've already reached those limits." He says we're probably not going to get a great deal more fish out of the oceans than we do now, and we might get a lot less.

Many nations depend heavily upon fish for animal protein needed in their diets, but they are sailing farther to catch them. American fishing fleets have been cut back and some have gone out of business because the catch is too small. At least half of the fish consumed in the United States last year was imported.

At the same time, fishing fleets from Japan, Russia and other countries are plying their trade just outside our territorial limits. To protect their fishing, South American countries set out claims for 200-mile economic zones off their shores years ago.

The United States and most other countries hold onto traditional 12-mile territorial limits. There is con-

siderable support for the 200-mile economic zones, but fear also exists that trade and travel might be restricted if every little island could claim more than 125,000 square miles of sea and seabed.

The seabed may prove to be more valuable than fish, anyway. Although man has sailed the seas for thousands of years, scientists say that more is known about the surface of the moon than is known about the ocean floor. A lot of wealth may be found there.

Many nations are drilling ahead to develop offshore petroleum and natural gas, while the United States putters around with talk of a high tax to solve the fuel shortage. Thousands of wells have been drilled adjacent to California and Gulf states, with few serious spills of oil.

Extreme environmentalists and eastern state politicians are delaying development of Atlantic coast reserves, claiming fear of pollution

and unsightly refineries. What is to keep other nations from drilling on the Outer Continental Shelf, if we don't?

Mining of rich mineral nodule beds that lie on the ocean floor is on the way. More than 100 developing countries have formed a sea-mining bloc to recover manganese, copper, nickel and cobalt, as well as other resources, that await discovery.

In the United States, companies including Kennecott, Tenneco and Howard Hughes are building equipment to get started on ocean mining locations, even though ownership of mining sites is uncertain.

Food is still the main object in the present clamor over control of the seas, nevertheless. If supplies of fish should be permanently diminished, the most promising prospect for replacement is livestock that can convert vast acreages of grass and other fibrous materials into forms that humans can digest.