

## Science in the News

### **The Antarctic Treaty: It Opens the Continent to Scientists of All Nations; Bars Military Bases**

The Senate, by a vote of 66 to 21, has approved a 12-nation treaty which in effect internationalizes the continent of Antarctica. The treaty was proposed by the United States and signed by a dozen nations, including Russia, with scientific stations on the continent. Ratification by the Russians and five other nations yet to act was expected to follow closely the Senate action. The treaty bars all military activity on the continent and provides for unlimited aerial and ground inspection rights to accredited representatives of any nation signing the treaty. The entire continent, with a greater area than Europe and the United States combined, is open to all nations signing the treaty; no national claims of sovereignty to any of the continent's territory will be recognized. The principal, and at this date the sole, activity on the continent is scientific research. "For many, many years to come," the Foreign Relations Committee was told, "the principal export of Antarctica is going to be its scientific data. There is no single field of geophysics which does not demand for its completion data which can come only from Antarctica."

In recommending passage of the treaty the Foreign Relations Committee pointed out that it might set a pattern for future agreements on the international control of space. Of more immediate pertinence was that the treaty embodies, for the first time, several of the proposals that have stymied disarmament negotiations, particularly the right of inspection. No one supposes that the treaty is going to have immediate repercussions at Geneva, but it was felt that it would at least give both the Russians and ourselves some experience in what would be involved in a system of open inspection.

The immediate objective of the

treaty, though, has to do neither with disarmament nor with space. It was proposed by the United States as the only workable solution to the legal tangle that has existed in the Antarctic. Seven nations have made claims, most of them overlapping, to 80 percent of the continent. The United States, which appears to have the soundest basis for a claim on the basis of having made the earliest and most extensive explorations, has never made any claim. American policy, dating back to the 1920's, has been that no nation has the right to claim land its nationals do not occupy. Except for a few hundreds of scientists and supporting personnel, no one lives in Antarctica. We have therefore made no claim for ourselves and have refused to recognize the claims of other nations. The Russians, who also have some basis for a claim, based on what they insist was the sighting of the continent by a Russian ship in 1820, have taken substantially the same position as we have. Under the treaty the question of competing claims and possible claims is resolved by getting everyone to agree that no nation will insist on asserting national sovereignty over any part of the continent as long as the treaty is in effect.

#### **Senate Discussions**

The treaty was backed by the Pentagon, the State Department, the President, and both presidential candidates. But it was vigorously opposed by a minority in the Senate, predominantly Southern Democrats, but with enough others to form an unusual coalition ranging from fairly liberal Democrats (Gruening of Alaska and Engle of California) to the most conservative Republicans (Goldwater of Arizona and Bridges of New Hampshire). The two most conservative Democrats north of the Mason-Dixon line both spoke at length, Lausche of Ohio vigorously supporting the treaty and Dodd of Con-

necticut as vigorously opposing it. Bourke Hickenlooper (R-Iowa), who normally votes with Goldwater and Bridges, took the floor at the end of the debate to congratulate Chairman Fulbright of the Foreign Relations Committee for his masterful work in leading the supporters of the treaty and in turn was thanked by Fulbright for his excellent cooperation.

The opponents of the treaty stressed, above all, their displeasure that the United States should agree to international control of an area over which we might have asserted our national sovereignty. This gave an air of unreality to the debate. The supporters of the treaty repeatedly conceded that it was possible to argue that the United States made a mistake in 1924 in adopting the policy that no nation has a right to make territorial claims in Antarctica. But they said that even if we are convinced we made a mistake 36 years ago, it is still nothing but wishful thinking to assume we could now change our minds and expect that the Russians, in particular, would accept any claim we might make to exclusive control of Antarctica.

The opposition to the treaty had no effective answer to this. The opposition position was understandable, nevertheless, as a reflection of resentment of the view, held by most of the active supporters of the treaty, that the U.S. should be willing to accept the internationalization of Antarctica not merely as the expedient thing to do in this particular situation but as a desirable pattern for handling other international problems. The vote appeared to be a rough reflection of the division in the Senate between those who feel we can usefully try to resolve our differences with the Russians, and world problems generally, through international controls and those who feel that this is a dangerous illusion, who feel that any ceding of our powers to international groups, with the consequent restrictions on our national freedom of action, is probably a mistake.

The preliminary vote easily defeated (56 to 29) a motion to put off ratification until January, but this motion carried by less than the two-thirds margin that was necessary to approve the treaty itself. The vote that saved the treaty on the final roll call suggests that a number of senators were ready to vote for the treaty but would have preferred not to have to do so just before an election.