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## Policy for Ocean Resource Development

Marine resource development by the United States is proceeding at an unnecessarily slow and inefficient pace. This situation stems from three basic problems: the lack of a clear and stable national policy to encourage investments by private businesses, the lack of a suitable organizational entity to be fully responsible for overall development, and the need to limit government involvement to regulation and certain public services.

This situation can be improved in a relatively short time if the federal government will recognize and act in the problem areas cited above. The first step is to reaffirm the separate but related roles of private industry and government. An important need of any industry involved in commercial offshore development is a stable and consistent government policy. This means that it is necessary to provide reasonable regulations that will remain in effect for a long enough period—say 10 years at the minimum—that investors can expect to recover their costs with a reasonable return in proportion to the investment and risk required. It is also necessary for the government to provide assurance that it will maintain law and order and protect private property offshore.

The second step is to establish an organizational entity to administer the overall development of all offshore resources. Several regional public authorities should be established to manage all ocean development in specific geographic areas. For example an Atlantic outer continental shelf authority with jurisdiction over all offshore resources from the Canadian border to the Florida Straits would be logical. Its landward boundary would be the traditional 3-mile limits of the coastal states. Its offshore boundary would be the recently established 200-mile limit or a depth contour of 2000 meters, whichever is the greater distance offshore.

It would be important for each authority to be a viable economic entity. To achieve this, each would be assigned title to all resources within its boundaries, including those in the water column and on and under the seabed. Authorities would issue bonds, grant leases, contract for services, and negotiate licenses for private business to operate facilities. Actual physical development of the ocean resources would then be carried out by private industry or public utilities under appropriate lease arrangements with the authority. Of considerable importance would be the motivation and ability of each authority to assess the total resources within its boundaries and to establish development plans and policies that would ensure the maximum long-term benefit. Revenues could be distributed by formula to the federal government, to adjacent coastal states, and to the authority for further investment. The governing board of the authority would consist of representatives elected or appointed from adjacent coastal states. This board would employ the necessary staff to carry out day-to-day operations.

The third requirement is for the Administration and Congress to limit the role of the federal government to regulation, certain public services, and the maintenance of law and order. This means that such activities as charting and mapping and synoptic weather and sea state reporting should be carried out by the federal government as part of its global activities. The protection of private property and the policing of the nation's new seaward boundaries should remain the responsibility of the Coast Guard. The federal government in its regulatory role should ensure that all operations are conducted in a safe manner, as concerns life, the environment, and the resources. No federal reorganization would be necessary if this plan of action were adopted. Rather, it would permit the federal government to eliminate, or reduce in size, many of its units now concerned with the ocean.

By taking these three actions the United States would at the same time encourage commercial ocean development and set a world standard for managing its adjacent ocean resources.—W. S. GAITHER, *Dean, College of Marine Studies, University of Delaware, Newark 19711*