

VERBATIM RECORD

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OF THE

LEAGUE OF NATIONS

FIFTH PLENARY MEETING

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7th, 1927, AT 5 P.M.

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The President :

Translation : You will remember that at yesterday afternoon's meeting I said that I might have some suggestions to put forward concerning the Italian delegation's request that the question

of the creation of an International Institute of the Educational Cinema at Rome should be placed on the agenda of the session.

The delegations have now had an opportunity of studying the text of the proposal submitted by Count Cippico, which was distributed this morning. I do not think that, in the circumstances, there is any need to read it now.

I therefore propose, in conformity with the Rules of Procedure, that the Assembly should refer this request to the Agenda Committee, and ask the latter to report on it as soon as possible.

If no one has anything to say, I shall regard my proposal as adopted. (*Adopted.*)

27. — QUESTION OF THE INCLUSION IN THE AGENDA OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS : (a) WORK OF THE CONFERENCE OF PRESS EXPERTS : (b) WORK OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR THE CREATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL RELIEF UNION : LETTER FROM THE ACTING PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL.

The President :

Translation : His Excellency M. Villegas, Acting President of the Council, has sent me a letter, dated September 7th, 1927, which I will now read to the Assembly :

"The Council of the League of Nations, at a meeting held on September 2nd, 1927, adopted a resolution regarding the recent Conference of Press Experts which contains the following provisions : 'The Council communicates to the Assembly the resolutions of the Conference, and requests it to include in the budget of the Organisation for Communications and Transit the supplementary

credit necessary for the enquiries and other work entailed by these resolutions.'

"On September 3rd, 1927, the Council also adopted a resolution regarding the work of the International Conference for the creation of an International Relief Union which contains the following provision: 'The Council decides to communicate to the Assembly the results of that Conference with a view to future consideration by the latter.'

"In communicating to the Assembly the above decisions of the Council, I have the honour to request the Assembly to consider whether they should be placed on the agenda of the present ordinary session of the Assembly.

(Signed) VILLEGAS,
Acting President of the Council."

The Council has submitted two new questions for inclusion in the agenda of the present session of the Assembly. In order to avoid loss of time, I propose that, in accordance with precedent, the Assembly should refer the Council's communication immediately to the Agenda Committee, requesting the latter to submit suggestions as soon as possible.

If no one has any objection to raise, I shall regard my proposal as adopted. (Adopted.)

28. — REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE COUNCIL AND THE SECRETARIAT : CONTINUATION OF THE DISCUSSION.

The President :

Translation : The next item on the agenda is the continuation of the general discussion on the report on the work of the Council, on the work of the Secretariat and on the measures taken to execute the decisions of the Assembly.

His Excellency M. Urrutia, first delegate of Colombia, will address the Assembly.

M. Urrutia (Colombia) :

Translation : Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen — One of the most important questions placed by the Council on the agenda of the present session of the Assembly and appearing in the Secretary-General's report in undoubtedly the work of the Committee of Experts for the Progressive Codification of International Law.

Owing to its intrinsic importance and universal interest, particularly at the present time, and by reason of its intimate association with the aims of the League as enunciated in the Preamble to the Covenant, this question of the codification of international law at present occupies a foremost position in the minds of the civilised nations.

At its last session in Paris, the Inter-Parliamentary Union drew attention to the urgent need for codification, being of opinion that it might serve to eliminate the flagrant injustice and the numerous ambiguities attaching to international law at the present day, and might offer a sure and generally accepted basis for the settlement of international disputes, thereby promoting the supreme interests of peace.

The codification of international law may be described by some as an attempt to embody the principles of international justice in concrete rules, or as the perfecting of international law; or again it may imply, in the view of certain authorities — and perhaps rightly so — the reconstruction of international law. However

that may be, the fact remains that the movement answers to a universal need.

This need was made glaringly manifest during the tragic days of the World War, which seemed well on the way to destroy the material bases of an ancient civilisation and with them the essential principles of morality and international law. It is a need that is daily becoming more ingrained in the popular mind. A strong reaction has set in against methods of violence, and a firm conviction exists that nothing but a system built on law and order is proof against disruption.

One of the main obligations laid down in the Covenant is "the firm establishment of the understandings of international law as the actual rule of conduct among Governments". Many of these "understandings", however, are ill-defined and have never been sanctioned by general acceptance; the Covenant therefore contemplated subsequent action by the League with a view to achieving this result.

In setting up the Permanent Court of International Justice, the League has already realised one of the greatest ideals embodied in the Covenant, but this achievement has only served to emphasise the need for establishing international laws. The Committee of Jurists which met at The Hague in 1920 to frame the draft Statute of the Court rightly recommended the resumption of the work of codification begun before the war by the Hague Conference. International justice cannot hope to progress except by following in the steps and seeking the light of international law.

In 1924, the League Assembly, realising its duties and acting as the faithful interpreter of that universal aspiration to which I have referred, adopted a resolution, which some thought inadequate but which was undoubtedly very important, concerning the progressive codification of international law.

Last June, M. Zaleski, the Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs, submitted to the Council a report setting forth clearly the scope and objects of the Assembly's resolution and the effect given to it in practice, as shown more particularly by the publication of the admirable reports framed by the Committee of Experts. The Council, at the same session, associated itself with M. Zaleski in praising the zeal, accuracy and competence with which the Committee had performed its difficult task.

I, too, feel that I am doing no more than my duty in acknowledging our indebtedness to the Committee. Its work was both scientific and practical; it kept in view the different aspects of the questions submitted to it; it availed itself of the important studies carried on outside the League, and in certain matters, such as the exploitation of the products of the sea, established the fundamental bases for general and regional organisation. The Committee was, however, subjected to criticism on the grounds of undue timidity and conservatism in regard to questions such as those concerning territorial waters and on account of its opposition to certain measures already established in current practice and to certain tendencies that apparently prevail in international law.

On the other hand, it must be admitted that the Committee's sagacity and moderation are likely to inspire confidence in States which might view drastic reforms with some apprehension.

The Council saw fit to leave the Assembly to decide how the work begun in 1924 could best be carried on. The Assembly is in possession of all the data — including the valuable proposals contained in the Committee of Experts' report to the Council — which it requires as a basis for discussion and for framing resolutions regarding this matter.

• Suggestions and definite proposals will certainly be submitted when the question comes up for discussion before the First Committee of the Assembly, and, the Colombian delegation will state its views in due course. For the moment, I will confine myself to a few general remarks.

The problem before the Assembly is so vast, so complex and of so universal a character that, in order to estimate it and find a proper solution, it is essential to bear in mind all the factors, both within the League and outside it, which already contribute or may in future contribute towards the desired end.

Even before the League took up the matter, and again later, while this work was proceeding, the question of the codification of international law had been extensively studied, and the League should be able to derive substantial assistance from these previous efforts.

It would take too long to enumerate all these various studies, which were instituted by big scientific associations, by semi-political, semi-scientific bodies, such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union, by distinguished private individuals versed in the science of international relations or by the collective official efforts of groups of States.

As regards this last category, the efforts of the American States to secure the codification of public and private international law were begun more than a century ago. Proposals on the subject were outlined at the Congress summoned in 1826 by Bolivar, at that time President of Colombia, to whom M. Villegas, the Acting President of the Council, paid a well-merited tribute in his opening speech to this Assembly.

These efforts have been pursued with energy and determination during the last five decades. They resulted in very important international agreements, such as the agreement on private international law signed at Montevideo in 1889, in the pacts and resolutions of the Pan-American Conference, in special conferences and studies such as those of the American Institute of International Law, and, lastly, in schemes embodying the knowledge and experience of eminent jurists.

The fifth Pan-American Conference, which met at Santiago de Chile in 1923, decided, in order to give a fresh impetus to the work of codification of international law, which had been suspended during the war, to reorganise the Committee of Jurists set up by the Third Conference at Rio de Janeiro, so that the codification of public international law should be gradual and progressive and based upon a draft submitted to the fifth International Conference by the Chilean delegate, M. Alejandro Alvarez, and entitled "The Codification of International Law in America".

The meeting of the Congress of Jurists at Rio de Janeiro this year was thus the immediate outcome of the decisions of the fifth Pan-American Conference.

The work at Rio de Janeiro, however, was preceded by long scientific preparation. As far back as 1912, M. Epitacio Pessoa, the Brazilian jurist, submitted to the first Assembly of Jurists at Rio a draft on public international law, while his colleague, M. Rodriguez Pereira, presented a draft concerning private international law. On the same occasion, M. Alvarez submitted his work on the codification of international law.

These various efforts are evidence of a progressive spirit and a desire not only to codify international law but to reconstruct it and bring it into harmony with new international conditions.

I may perhaps be allowed to outline the results of the last Congress of Jurists at Rio de Janeiro. Owing to its intrinsic importance and to the fact

that the jurists taking part in its work were the official delegates of the American States, this Congress constitutes an official collective effort in the interests of international law — an effort which, on the one hand, does honour to the American Republics and testifies to their progressive spirit and their devotion to the principles of justice and, on the other hand, represents the most important contribution hitherto made by any group of States to the work of codifying general international law.

The Committee of Jurists at Rio adopted twelve draft Conventions on public international law, as well as a draft general Convention on private international law.

The Conventions on public international law related to the following questions: the fundamental bases of international law, States, the pacific settlement of international disputes, treaties, maritime neutrality, the status of aliens, diplomatic agents, consular agents, asylum, the duties of States in case of civil war, the exchange of publications, the interchange of professors and students.

The object of these various drafts, which will be submitted to the sixth Pan-American Conference at Havana in January next, is to define the fundamental bases of international law and to determine its sources and authorities and the rules for its interpretation.

From this point of view, by far the most interesting drafts are undoubtedly those relating to the fundamental bases of international law and States; the latter comprises certain vital questions, such as the recognition of new States and new Governments.

In the main it may be said that the drafts on international law framed at Rio are based on the following great principles of international law, which have been proclaimed and defended from all time by the American States and incorporated by most of those States in their internal legislation. Those principles are the absolute independence and unrestricted internal sovereignty of every State, subject to modifications arising out of voluntarily concluded treaties; political equality as between States; the duty of solidarity and special international co-operation between the States of the New World, which, far from excluding the States of other continents, implies the establishment of closer ties with them; the equality of civil rights as between nationals and aliens, etc., etc.

The general draft convention on private international law framed by the Cuban jurist, Antonio Sanchez de Bustamante, was based on the following principles: the *jus soli* determines the nationality of individuals; their "personal legal status" is determined by the test of domicile; juridical persons owe their existence solely to the law of the country sanctioning them and are therefore neither nationals nor aliens; the recognised jurisdiction is that of the country where the contract is fulfilled, etc. The acceptance of these principles would, in the opinion of the jurists at Rio, constitute a real reconstruction of private international law.

Although the Rio drafts were framed in an eminently American spirit and in the light of circumstances and conditions peculiar to the States of the New World, this does not mean that their learned authors, or the jurists who discussed and adopted them, intended to establish a body of international law different from — still less conflicting with — that of the European States. On the contrary, I think I may say that the jurists at Rio, when voicing the ideas of the Governments they represented, were anxious to

co-operate in the universal task of perfecting, codifying and reconstructing international law. Any new principles discovered in these Conventions should be regarded as proposals submitted by the States of the New World to other States, with a view to securing their introduction into universal international law. These ideas had already been enunciated by public men and eminent writers on international law in America and are in complete harmony with the categorical declarations made on the subject by the fourth Pan-American Conference at Buenos Aires.

When speaking of the codification of international law before this Assembly, it is impossible to forget the eminent services rendered uninterruptedly for more than half a century to the cause of the evolution and progress of international law by the patient and enlightened work of the Institute of International Law, which was founded in 1873 and whose motto has always been "*Pro justitia et pace*". Experts on international law in the different continents have taken part in the work of this Institute, and some of its illustrious members have been heard at the Peace Conferences, the Hague Court of Arbitration and the Permanent Court of International Justice.

The Institute's publications and recommendations are a valuable and trustworthy source of information to all who desire to ascertain what was, at any given moment, the reliable expression of the conscience of the civilised world on specific questions relating to international law. The work of the Institute has been, and still is, primarily scientific in character and, up to a certain point, is connected with international politics. It is, however, a valuable factor in the framing of positive international laws. There is perhaps no single important question of international law that has not been thoroughly studied and discussed by the Institute at its annual sessions, which now exceed forty in number.

Certain resolutions adopted by the Institute have had to be revised owing to changed conditions and the constant evolution of international law. A mere list of the Institute's committees and of the questions studied during recent years will suffice to show the vital character and the value of the Institute's contribution towards the codification and reconstruction of international law. Let me quote the following: the international responsibility of the State for damage caused on its territory to persons and property, nationality, conciliation procedure, the extension of compulsory arbitration and the compulsory jurisdiction of the Permanent Court of International Justice, navigation on the high seas, arbitral procedure, draft regulations relating to territorial waters, diplomatic and consular immunities, immunities to be granted to persons discharging functions of international concern, international air navigation, shipping regulations in maritime ports, the codification of international law.

It will be seen that some of these questions, such as nationality, territorial waters, diplomatic privileges and immunities, the responsibility of the State for damage caused on its territory, were examined simultaneously by the League Committee of Experts, the Institute of International Law and the Committee of Jurists at Rio de Janeiro. Instead of regarding these various activities as isolated and independent endeavours, we must bring them into harmony with one another and use them for the attainment of one common object.

The results achieved outside the League in no way detract from the high merit of the work accomplished at Geneva for the codification of international law, especially as the League is not

only endeavouring to promote, but has already promoted, with increasing success, the progressive codification of special subjects, through international Conferences convened under its auspices and through the Conventions resulting from those Conferences.

The Conventions on communications and transit, on navigable waterways of international concern, on maritime ports, on slavery and others I might name represent an important contribution towards the progressive codification of international law. The international conciliation and arbitration Conventions which the League encourages so vigorously constitute to-day a valuable worldwide system of moral links so powerful that it is no exaggeration to say that the principle of international conciliation and arbitration has become a sort of universal law arising out of an international consensus of opinion. Nor must we forget international labour legislation, which protects the once neglected interests of the working classes and serves to consolidate the valuable progress achieved in the matter of social reform.

The League of Nations has successfully continued the fruitful work of the two Hague Conferences, where, to quote the words of our lamented and most eminent colleague, Léon Bourgeois, "the heart-beat of humanity was first felt". The Hague Conferences will go down to history as the first universal effort to codify international law. The fact that these glorious acts, which instituted arbitration, condemned all barbarous methods of warfare, sought to protect defenceless populations, wounded combatants and prisoners, and reasserted the principle of respect for the dead — the fact that on dark occasions those acts were abjured is of but little moment. They will stand for ever as the expression of the thoughts and aspirations of the civilised world.

This, then, is the problem before the Assembly: How is the League to carry on effectively and with universal approval the great work it has undertaken in the interests of international law, work which has found its expression in its acts and in the studies of the Committee of Experts, on which more than thirty States have already pronounced an opinion?

In the light of past achievements, inaction would be equivalent to retrogression, and for the League would mean a failure to fulfil its most imperative duty. The League has contributed towards the strengthening of international justice, and has created the Permanent Court to administer it; as a natural corollary, it remains for it to define and perfect law, which is the inseparable companion of justice, and to secure its application, wherever this is necessary to regulate the life of the States.

The definition of law, the strengthening of justice and the maintenance of peace are the aims of our institution, but the project is so vast that to carry it out we must avail ourselves of all the efforts made, even outside the League, to attain this end. To co-ordinate these efforts, to harmonise and group them together, as is quite feasible in such a task as the codifying of international law, would be to render a great service to humanity. M. Briand, the eminent first delegate of France, when speaking a few days ago before the Inter-Parliamentary Union on the need for educating the public in regard to certain problems of international politics, said: "What we have to do is to establish the peace of the world on a legal basis, to make a legal reality of international solidarity, which is already apparent in fact as a physical reality. The task is sufficiently difficult to require the energetic co-operation of all concerned."

Endorsing M. Briand's words and applying them to the progressive codification of international law, we would repeat: "the task is sufficiently difficult to require the energetic co-operation of all concerned".

It will be for the Assembly, in the course of its coming debates, to find some formula which shall ensure this energetic co-operation, and I am sure that, conscious of its world-wide mission of civilisation, the Assembly will find such a formula, if it seeks it in the lofty and generous conception of international solidarity and of the benefits to be derived from consolidating and extending the empire of law and justice and perpetuating the reign of peace.

The President :

Translation : M. Moltesen, first delegate of Denmark, will address the Assembly.

M. Moltesen (Denmark) :

Translation : Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen—It is a pleasure to me to add my congratulations to those already addressed to the Secretariat and the technical organs of the League.

The story is told of a young Danish peasant who once bought a plot of land and built a house for himself and his wife. All the wisecracks told him it was a bad stroke of business, but he replied: "I have the sun on all sides, the land is well drained, and what is more, I am right in the middle of the world."

The Secretariat of the League seems to me to be in a similar position, and, provided that those directing its activities retain the same optimism and the same good fortune as the Danish peasant in the story, the Secretariat and its organs can count on an auspicious and untroubled future.

The Danish Government and the whole nation follow the League's work with the keenest interest. Every setback, every check, casts a gloom over the whole country.

We earnestly pray for the day when the whole world will come to perceive that it is in the interests of every State to co-operate under the auspices of the League, and when men will realise that nations are like individuals, and that the prosperity of one spells the prosperity of all.

We are gratified to note that during the past year the League has successfully dealt with and found a solution for a whole series of important problems.

Denmark hails with special satisfaction the preparatory work of the Committee of Experts on the Progressive Codification of International Law. This work is essential if the activities of the League and of the Permanent Court are to be established on a permanent and solid basis of unequivocal justice. It constitutes, moreover, one of the principal factors in the maintenance of peace.

It is Denmark's earnest desire that this work shall be pursued as vigorously as possible and we trust that the discussions of this Assembly will ensure its being continued in the form best calculated to secure the attainment of the lofty aim in view.

In this connection I might also mention the efforts made in the past year to strengthen the action of the League under Articles 11 and 16 of the Covenant. These questions are of vital interest to all the Members of the League, and are questions to which the Danish Government has always attached the greatest importance.

I need only remind you of the draft amendments to Article 16 which the Danish Government, in conjunction with the other Northern countries, submitted to the Assembly in 1921, and the principles for the application of that article which were unanimously adopted by the Assembly, and which constitute the most important contribution towards its interpretation.

There are two other questions on which I should like to dwell. The first is the Health Organisation, the continuous progress of which must be a cause of legitimate satisfaction to all the Members of the League. The second is the International Economic Conference which met at Geneva under the League's auspices from May 4th to 23rd, 1927. We regarded the convening of that Conference as a most important step, and consider that the work done there was most satisfactory in every way. It would be an excellent thing if this Assembly could decide upon a means of carrying on the work so successfully begun by the Conference.

I have referred so far to questions which fully warrant our optimism as regards the present position and the future of the League. Truth requires me, however, to mention also problems for which the desired solution has unfortunately not yet been found. I am thinking now mainly of the reduction of armaments.

The country which I have the honour to represent here has not adopted any particular standpoint regarding this question. The smaller States, it must be remembered, have the same interest as the big States in maintaining their security and independence. I can assure you that Denmark is prepared, for her part, to make any sacrifices that the League might be justified in demanding from her as regards this special issue.

At the same time, we must not lose sight of the fact that Article 8 of the Covenant imposes a general obligation to reduce armaments, and that by the very fact of our entry into the League we have all, great and small alike, pledged our honour individually to comply with the undertakings to which we have subscribed.

The enthusiasm with which the Assembly adopted the Geneva Protocol in 1924 still has power to move me, and I accordingly listened yesterday with the greatest interest to the speech of the first delegate of the Netherlands. We shall deem it an honour to associate ourselves with the principles of his draft resolution.

On September 24th, 1926, the Assembly adopted two resolutions, requesting the Council to convene a Conference on the reduction of armaments before the eighth ordinary session of the Assembly, unless material difficulties rendered this impossible, and, should this be the case, to summon a special Conference on the supervision of the private manufacture of arms.

Neither of these Conferences, however, has been convened since the last Assembly met. I venture to hope that, after the necessary preparation, we shall succeed in the near future in approaching the solution of this problem, which is perhaps one of the most important with which the League has to deal.

This Assembly, in my view, cannot pass over the question in silence.

We have assumed a responsibility before mankind. We cannot stand calmly by and watch the whole world being plunged again into the throes of an armaments struggle, with the danger of a world war in the near future—a war already predicted by eminent statesmen and generals, who have even foretold the date of its outbreak.

More discussions on paper and in committee will not suffice. The world wants deeds.

I cannot and will not believe, however, that the so-called failure of our efforts for the reduction of armaments has actually produced a panic. The question has hitherto been studied more particularly from the purely military angle; we ought, perhaps, to examine it from the economic and political, the purely civil standpoint, while proceeding with our technical investigations.

It might perhaps be possible at this stage to ascertain exactly what are the reasons for past failures as regards the reduction of armaments and to discover some more successful method of dealing with such obstacles. I will not stop now to consider certain proposals that have been put forward. I simply wish to try to make the Assembly realise how essential it is to-day that we should find some way out of this *impasse*.

I might mention other considerations which may partly explain why we have not obtained the results that we should perhaps have been able to obtain and for which we had hoped. I regret that certain States are still not Members of the League and that the efforts made through the League to obtain the adhesion of the United States of America to the Permanent Court of International Justice at The Hague have not proved successful.

Nevertheless, despite these negative results, the League is still a factor that counts, a factor that cannot be ignored by non-Member States. Its influence is continually on the increase, for it embodies an ideal that has been cherished by the noblest minds for centuries. The League has now found allies in economic and industrial spheres and in all the smaller States which, let us hope, may serve—to quote the simile of an English statesman—as the consecrated vessels in which the Divinity dispenses the sacred wine.

The President :

Translation : M. Adatci, head of the Japanese delegation, will address the Assembly.

M. Adatei (Japan) :

Translation : Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen—I must first of all claim the indulgence of the Assembly on account of the lateness of the hour and also for my very imperfect knowledge of the French language. I shall not detain you long.

Since the last session of the Assembly, the League has done most fruitful work in several directions. It has displayed untiring energy in trying to solve, to the fullest extent at present possible, all the difficulties we encounter in the economic, political and cultural fields.

An International Economic Conference was held here, as you know, in May last. The preparatory work for it was done most carefully and systematically, and even States which are not Members of the League sent delegates and took an active share in the proceedings. The Conference was held under the presidency of the eminent Belgian statesman M. Theunis. After comprehensive and exhaustive debates, resolutions were passed which are of very great importance, especially in matters of trade and commerce. I am convinced that the practical application of the principles embodied in these resolutions will mark the dawn of a new era in the economic life of the world.

Economic forces are a vital factor, whether for the maintenance of peace or as a cause of war. All nations earnestly hope for an era of world peace after the turmoil and difficulties of recent years, but that hope is deemed to disappointment

unless international economic relations are established on a basis of order and equity.

Every one of us must therefore spare no effort to ensure that the recommendations embodied in the maturely considered resolutions of the Economic Conference should be adopted by Governments, with a view to introducing a more equitable regulation of economic forces and so establishing on a firm basis the principle of international co-operation in the economic field.

Ever since the foundation of the League, the Government and the nation of Japan have urged the need of working to carry into effect the principle of equitable treatment of commerce, which is solemnly inscribed in Article 23 of the Covenant. For this purpose we have on several occasions submitted concrete proposals, more especially with reference to the treatment of foreigners and a suitable definition of coasting trade.

I need hardly say, therefore, that we attach great importance to the application of the resolutions which the Economic Conference adopted, after mature consideration, and for that reason our delegation wishes to study the delicate problem of modifying, as far as may prove necessary, the Economic Organisation of the League.

The League has also attacked with renewed vigour the arduous and complex problem of the limitation and reduction of armaments. In spite of all the unavoidable difficulties presented by a question which is of such wide scope and of capital importance for the peace of the world, the Preparatory Commission on Disarmament undertook the task of preparing a draft Convention. This draft was adopted at the first reading, but still contains many contentious points. There is nothing in this circumstance, however, at which we should be either surprised or discouraged.

As has often been said, and rightly, the problem is too vast and too complex to solve in a short time. Here again, as in all human enterprises of great moment, patience, perseverance and the helping hand of time are necessary.

If the League could achieve even a modest result in a question of such peculiar intricacy and such paramount importance, it would have justified its existence and greatly strengthened its position in the world; for even a partial accomplishment of the task would bring relief, morally, politically and financially, and would thus powerfully contribute to the maintenance of peace among nations.

The position of Japan in the question of disarmament is clear and well-defined. We ardently desire that the ruinous competition in armaments should be checked and that a real reduction be effected, a reduction to the strict minimum essential for national security and the discharge of international obligations, since the existence of armaments on a large scale always involves the risk of an appeal to arms for the settlement of any differences which may arise between nations.

On more than one occasion, both in the Preparatory Commission on Disarmament and during the Conference recently held here, our Government clearly expressed its opinion as to the need for a reduction in armaments and as to the procedure which should be followed to achieve this end. We can safely promise our sincere and loyal collaboration in all effective work which the League might undertake in this direction.

Under the auspices of the League, and in conformity with the resolution adopted by the Assembly at its fifth ordinary session, a Conference of Press Experts was held at Geneva, after full and careful preparation. Through this Conference

many well-known editors of newspapers and heads of news agencies from all countries of the world were brought together, and were thus able for the first time to study in common questions of importance to the Press, whose influence for the peaceful evolution of the world it would be impossible to over-estimate in these days.

If public opinion rules supreme to-day, the Press is undoubtedly its most powerful and influential agent. The work of the League and the extension of its beneficent activities depend essentially on the support it receives from the enlightened public opinion of all civilised countries. The immense task of enlightening public opinion and of bringing the *elite* of every country to work together for international concord belongs to the Press.

A better understanding of the conditions necessary to international peace and prosperity will mean a more sympathetic attitude towards the vital needs of nations. It therefore lies in the power of the Press either to strengthen or to undermine the position of the League, according as to whether it champions or challenges the League's cause. The greater the diffusion of just and equitable ideas through the Press, the firmer will become the moral basis on which the League is founded.

The Government of Japan therefore realises the manifest importance of supporting every movement towards concerted action on the part of the representatives of public opinion with a view to establishing better understanding and mutual respect among nations.

On the proposal of a Japanese expert, the Press Conference adopted a resolution designed to prevent the publication or distribution of news items and of articles which are manifestly inaccurate or grossly exaggerated or which wilfully misrepresent facts, and thereby to contribute towards international understanding and good will. The Press should be a real educational force making for international peace. With this object, and in order to give effect to the resolutions and recommendations adopted, the Press Conference, on the proposal of one of the Japanese experts, adopted a resolution that periodical meetings should be held. The Japanese Government itself attaches great importance to the activities of the Press and ardently desires to secure its assistance.

The Japanese Government and with it the whole nation are actively helping the League in its endeavours to create in international relations the degree of moral confidence, national security and economic equity essential for the attainment of the League's final goal, which may be described in the words: "Peace through Justice".

29. — GENERAL ARRANGEMENT OF THE ASSEMBLY HALL AND POSITION OF THE SEATS OF THE DELEGATIONS: REPORT OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE OF THE ASSEMBLY.

The President:

Translation: The Assembly will remember that yesterday afternoon I mentioned some investigations undertaken by the General Committee with a view to improving the general arrangement of the Assembly Hall and the position of the seats of the delegations.

As I informed you, the General Committee appointed a Committee of three members to submit suggestions. That Committee communicated the result of its investigations to the General Committee this afternoon.

The General Committee suggests the following modifications:

1. Some of the seats of the delegations will be moved so that all of them will face the President's chair.

2. The available seats will be so distributed among the delegations as to provide a seat for each delegate and substitute-delegate, but the total number of seats for each delegation may not exceed six.

3. The speakers' platform will be lowered by about a metre so as to reduce the difference of level between the speaker and the audience.

4. The President's platform will be lowered to the present level of the speaker's platform and thus will also be brought considerably nearer the centre of the hall.

The General Committee recommends these suggestions for the Assembly's approval and is of opinion that they are the only possible improvements during the present session.

Before next year's session, however, other improvements will be suggested and studied.

As all the delegations are interested in the efforts to improve the present internal arrangements of the hall, I wished to give you the above details regarding the recommendations of the General Committee in order to afford you an opportunity of giving them your support.

If there are no observations, the modifications recommended by the General Committee will be considered to be approved by the Assembly. (*Approved.*)

The Assembly rose at 7.10 p.m.