

THE SECRETARIAT

The *Administrative Secretariat* of the Conference was exclusively French.

The *General Secretariat* was a political body, consisting of representatives of the States members of the Council of Foreign Ministers, and four other members appointed by the Conference (Australia, Brazil, China, and Yugoslavia). This body became the Steering Committee of the Conference.

CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE PLENARY CONFERENCE

The Foreign Ministers proposed that they should preside over the Conference called by them to consider the draft treaties which they had prepared. The suggested rule read :—

“ The chairmanship of the Conference will be held in the first place by the representative of the host Government, and thereafter in turn by each of the Members of the Council of Foreign Ministers⁽¹⁾ in the French alphabetical order, each Chairman holding office for three days.

“ Each Commission will elect a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman respectively and appoint Rapporteurs.”

Some of the smaller Powers, dissatisfied with rules of procedure which gave such preponderance to the Big Powers, opposed this provision. They maintained that it was unsatisfactory, that the Council of Foreign Ministers should draft the treaties, call the smaller Powers into an advisory conference, take the largest share of the discussion, direct the Conference through the General Secretariat, and then, finally, reserve to themselves the chairmanship. New Zealand, the Netherlands, and Brazil proposed amendments of similar intent, which were supported by the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia. The New Zealand amendment read :—

“ The chairmanship of the Conference will be held by the representative of the host Government.”

The amendment was put forward as being in harmony with diplomatic usage and a mark of courtesy to the host Government, and as having the practical advantage that a single Chairman would be likely to give consistent interpretations of the rules of procedure.

Questions of prestige were involved, and discussion showed that, while the amendment was acceptable to a majority, it would not secure unanimous approval. The French representative thereupon explained that it would be embarrassing for Mr Bidault to accept the chairmanship in those circumstances, and he asked, therefore, that the amendment be withdrawn.

⁽¹⁾ For this purpose, as for the issue of invitations to the Conference (though not for the drafting of the treaties), China was regarded as a member of the Council of Foreign Ministers.