

of the League, may, in the long-run, prove to have been futile, since it cannot help infringing on subjects which most Governments consider to be matters of national rather than international concern, the committee has made valuable suggestions, and its investigations into many economic and financial questions, especially at a time like the present when in some countries something approaching chaos reigns, cannot fail to be of service when the temper of the world is better attuned to making for international co-operation where it appears advisable. It is not necessary here to recapitulate the work of the Committee. Interesting accounts are given in Documents A. 59, 73, and 91, and in the report of the Second Committee (Document No. A. 133), the resolutions contained in which were passed by the Assembly at its meeting on the 28th September.

Pan-American Congress.—Brief mention only need be made to the resolution (Document No. A. 158) passed by the Second Committee and confirmed by the Assembly on the 30th September, suggesting that the Technical Organizations of the League should be allowed to co-operate in any future action contemplated by the Pan-American Congress in which these organizations could assist. A somewhat similar resolution was passed by the Third Committee and accepted by the Assembly.

COMMITTEE No. 3.

Reduction of Armaments.—Of all the subjects that came before the Assembly there were three or four of outstanding practical importance, actual or potential. One of these was the question of relief to Austria. A second, of little interest to New Zealand but a burning question among the newly created European countries, was the question of minorities. A third was the extent of intervention, if any, by the League in the Greco-Turkish War. The last, and not the least important, was the problem of disarmament.

Before dealing with the work of the committee in detail it is perhaps worth while to emphasize one aspect of the subject which is no doubt obvious on reflection to any one, but which forces itself on the attention as soon as the problem is discussed with a view to a practical solution. It is the fact that no quick and easy solution is possible. Any plan which is to be workable will take long and detailed preparation. At the conclusion of the war it appeared possible, no doubt, to some people that by a stroke of the pen the victorious Allies could decree a disarmament, total or proportionate. Such a short cut to the millennium, however, while in fact impossible even at the moment of victory, is obviously inconceivable now. This will be clear if one considers the position of individual countries—*e.g.*, of France. France has to take into account the pressing burden of armaments on her financial resources, but at the same time she has to consider the possible danger from Germany and perhaps from a combined Germany and Russia, both of which Powers are outside the League at present and outside any disarmament agreement to which they do not specifically adhere. It is true that the forces of Germany are limited by the Peace Treaty. But evasion by camouflage is a possibility to be guarded against, together with developments such as aeroplane services, which are legitimate in themselves and yet capable of immediate adaption for military purposes. The position of France is mentioned because it is a striking instance, but the principle is general. Any scheme of disarmament has to be compatible with an approach towards a generalized arrangement in the future, to which, together with other nations, Germany, the United States, and Russia will be parties also. But it has to provide for the practical necessities of the moment, and to allow for the jealousies and suspicions that exist. It may be, perhaps, that no scheme is possible under such circumstances. At least, it is exceedingly difficult, and it is made the more so by the extraordinary complexity of the subject-matter. On the other hand, it is helped by the fact that nations are feeling the pressure of the cost of maintaining armaments on the present scale so greatly that they are ready to devise a workable scheme when otherwise this might not be the case. This fact was shown by the attitude of the French representative, M. de Jouvenal, who was clearly all the time in close communication with Paris. But, in any case, the trial is worth making. Failure in some attempts leaves the situation worse than if no endeavour had been made, but such is not the case here. And, as a result of careful scrutiny of the debates and proposals, the conclusion which is suggested by them is that, while the complexities and difficulties are very great indeed, there is just a chance, and, indeed, more than that, a fair chance of success. It will take time, however, in any case—two or three years at least, unless the participation meanwhile of Germany or the United States facilitates progress and simplifies the whole question.

A report has been prepared, for submission to the New Zealand Government, day by day as the discussion proceeded. The printed report to the Assembly (Document No. A. 124) is so clear and full, however, that it would be mere duplication to reproduce it here; but it should be of service to indicate what parts of the report are of principal importance, what is the significance of other parts, if it lies below the surface, and what was the attitude of the principal Powers represented, since the latter not only gives an insight into the position, but is an indication as to whether a practical outcome is or is not likely or, indeed, possible.

The work of the committee is divided into four parts:—

- I. Various.
- II. Reduction of Naval Armaments.
- III. Reduction of Land Armaments.
- IV. Treaty of Mutual Guarantee.

Of these, III has, for practical purposes, been merged in IV. The reasons for this will be stated afterwards.

NOTE.—Continual reference is made to the Temporary Mixed Commission, or T.M.C. This was a committee consisting partly of military experts, partly of delegates to the Assembly, which examined the question continuously throughout the year. They had the help of experts and other subordinate