

The thanks of the Council to the members of the Commission for their very valuable report will be found in Document A. 39. The minutes of the Commission are contained in Document A. 18. Supplementary memoranda were also communicated to the Assembly from the British Government on the subject of the "Mui Tsai" system in Hong Kong (Document A. 40); from the India Office, London, regarding slavery in the Hukawng Valley in Upper Burma (Document A. 50); and from the Governor-General of the Sudan (Document A. 69) and the Director of Labour of the Government of the Philippine Islands (Document A. 70) on the subject of slavery in their respective territories.

In order that the suggestions outlined in the Commission's report should not be left as mere suggestions, the British Government submitted a draft resolution and protocol containing certain general principles which Lord Cecil considered might be adopted usefully by all civilized nations as a minimum code in the matter of slavery. These proposals were subjected to a very close examination in the Sixth Committee and sub-committee, and it was very evident that some of the articles of the draft Convention, and particularly those relating to forced labour, were, to put it mildly, not viewed with enthusiasm by several of the Delegations whose countries have colonial possessions. It was in order to meet these susceptibilities, and to ensure the widest acceptance for the Convention, that the original British draft laid down only the barest minimum code consistent with the high principles of the League Covenant, but even so it was considerably modified in the committee stages, and the British delegate, for the reasons set forth in his report as Rapporteur, also agreed not to press for the conclusion and signing of the agreement during that session of the Assembly. The report and draft Convention as finally approved by the committee and accepted by the Assembly will be found in Document A. 130.

I will only draw special attention to Article 6, because for the first time it proposes to embody in an international convention the opinion of the civilized world on compulsory or forced labour.

In its original form it read as follows:—

"The signatory States, recognizing the grave evils that may result from the employment of forced labour, except for essential public services, engage that where it is necessary for special reasons to admit the employment of forced labour they will take all necessary precautions, particularly where the labourers belong to the less advanced races, to prevent conditions analogous to those of slavery from resulting from such employment."

As it emerged from the sub-committee it read:—

*"Article 6.*

"The High Contracting Parties recognize that recourse to compulsory or forced labour may have grave consequences, and agree, each in respect of the territories placed under its sovereignty, jurisdiction, protectorate, or tutelage, to take all necessary measures to prevent conditions analogous to those of slavery resulting from compulsory or forced labour.

"It is agreed that,—

"(1.) In principle compulsory or forced labour may only be exacted for public purposes.

"(2.) In territories in which compulsory or forced labour for other than public purposes still survives, the High Contracting Parties shall endeavour progressively to put an end to the practice. So long as such forced or compulsory labour exists, this labour shall invariably be of an exceptional character, and shall not involve the removal of the labourers from their usual place of residence.

"(3.) In any case, the responsibility for any recourse to compulsory or forced labour shall rest with the central authorities of the territory, colony, protectorate, or mandated area in question."

When the article was under consideration in the plenary meeting of the committee Mr. J. D. Gray, who acted as substitute delegate, said he wished, on behalf of New Zealand, to dissociate himself entirely from the sanction given, in subclause 2 of this article, to compulsory or forced labour for private profit and gain, as the system was wrong and could not be justified in any circumstances. If, however, the committee felt that it was necessary to face the facts as they existed in some territories and to retain the clause, then he would move to insert, after the words "of an exceptional character," the words "shall be adequately remunerated." This amendment was carried on a division.

I believe Lord Cecil correctly summed up the work of the Temporary Slavery Commission and of the Assembly when he said it would bring immediate relief to hundreds and thousands of unhappy human beings who are now living under conditions closely resembling slavery.

COLLABORATION OF THE PRESS IN THE WORK OF DISARMAMENT.

A very interesting proposal for the convening of a conference of international Press experts, in order to devise methods by which the acknowledged power and influence of the Press in moulding public opinion might be used to the utmost in bringing about better relations and a complete understanding between nations, was contained in a resolution presented to the Assembly by the Chilean Delegation (Document A. 75). The purpose of the motion is to give the Press of the world, if it so desires, the collaboration of the League of Nations and the help of its machinery, and in this way extend its usefulness, particularly in the direction of disseminating international views and opinions among all peoples. The discussion in the Sixth Committee, whilst of a most sympathetic and favourable nature, emphasized the need for extreme caution on the part of the Council in any steps it might take in this matter, so as to guard against any action which might appear to be a dictation to or direction of the Press. The Rapporteur of the committee (M. Hymans of the Belgian Delegation) aptly voiced the general feeling of the delegates when he said that the Press, like any other great power, is jealous of its sovereign independence. The decision of the committee, which was adopted by the Assembly, is contained in Document A. 114.