

ECONOMIC COMMITTEE.

The report of the Economic Committee, which is one of the permanent organizations of the League, is Document A. 55. It deals with a number of subjects, many of which have been under investigation for a considerable time. One of these is the question of the abolition of import and export prohibitions and restrictions, and the labours of the committee have reached a stage when it has been possible to suggest to the Council that an international Conference be held, probably in 1927. A preliminary draft agreement, drawn up by the Economic Committee, will be found in the document referred to above. Amongst the other subjects which have been considered are the problems of the suppression of false Customs declarations, which might be regulated by means of an international agreement; the drawing-up of an additional act to the protocol of 1923 concerning arbitration clauses in commercial agreements, providing for the execution of arbitral awards rendered abroad; a study of the unification of legislation concerning bills of exchange; and an investigation into the problem of economic crises and consequent unemployment. It will not be out of place to mention that last year a Conference was held at The Hague for the revision of the International Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property. Whilst this conference was not held under the auspices of the League, it was attended by two members of the Economic Committee in an advisory capacity. The work of the Economic Committee during the twelve months preceding this Assembly has been admirably summarized in the report of the Rapporteur (Document A. 94) submitted to the Assembly, which passed the resolutions with which it concludes at its meeting on the 24th September.

COMMUNICATIONS AND TRANSIT.

The organization of communications and transit was established in virtue of Article 23 of the Covenant, which imposes upon the members of the League the duty of making provision to secure and maintain freedom of communications and transit, and equitable treatment for the commerce of all members of the League. Two international Conferences have been held—one at Barcelona in 1921 and the other in Geneva in 1923, and one of the duties of the organization is to prepare for these Conferences.

The report of the organization is Document A. 31. It treats of a number of matters in which New Zealand, having no land frontiers, can have little interest, but it will be observed that the organization has been inquiring into the unification of buoyage and lighting of coasts in relation to the question of safety at sea, the organization of life-saving at sea, and the unification of tonnage measurement; and that it has also studied health regulations with a view to suggesting the introduction of reforms for lightening the burdens on international trade and navigation and reducing the number of declarations and formalities. There is also in the report a reference to the Passport Conference held at Geneva in May last, and the recommendations which that Conference felt able to make.

Other questions which have been under study for some considerable time are the reform of the calendar and the fixing of Easter, and a separate report (Document A. 33) has been published on these subjects. As regards the former question, it would appear that public opinion is not sufficiently advanced for calendar reform to become practical politics; but the fixing of Easter is a question which, if not ripe for settlement, at any rate offers more opportunities for early discussion.

It will be noted that the next International Conference on Communications and Transit is to be held in 1927. No conventions are to be concluded, and, as the Conference will be of short duration, the organization has suggested that it should be held immediately before the Eighth Assembly, thus permitting a reduction of expenditure on the part of both the League and the participating States. In spite of this suggestion, however, a motion was introduced by the Italian delegate providing that the Conference should be held in a city in Latin America. There were several references to this proposal in the course of the debate, and ultimately a resolution was passed expressing the hope that, should the Fourth Committee consider it possible to grant the necessary credits, the Council should convene the Conference in a town outside Europe.

The Second Committee's report to the Assembly is Document A. 96, and the resolutions contained therein were passed on the 25th September.

HEALTH ORGANIZATION.

The report of the Health Organization for 1925 is Document A. 17, useful because it contains not only an account of the work of the organization performed since the last assembly, but also a brief history of the organization itself. Probably no organization of the League can perform international work of greater importance, but, at the same time, with respect to no organization is there a greater temptation to exceed the limits of a reasonable programme. Hitherto, the discussion of the organization's report by the Second Committee has given rise to resolutions providing for new investigations, and it has been very difficult to resist the wishes of the delegates who have mostly represented the smaller nations. On this occasion resolutions were introduced by the delegates for Cuba, Czecho-Slovakia, and Uruguay, having reference to infant mortality and the protection of children, and dealing respectively with eugenics, international investigation of physical culture and scholastic hygiene, and problems of nutrition. Apparently these motions were introduced without any previous attempt to ascertain whether the Health Organization had the time or the staff to make the necessary inquiries, so it was suggested that, rather than give a direction to the organization to make such inquiries, it would be better to ask it to consider whether it could undertake them. Resolutions on these lines were passed on the understanding that no further sum should be inscribed on the Health Budget.

A question of importance was the help to be given by the League in future to the Singapore Bureau of Epidemiological Intelligence. It will be remembered that the International Health Board