

This year, however, the proceedings were distinctly dull. With the exception of the General Act for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes, Non-aggression, and Mutual Assistance (described in the section of this report dealing with the work of the Third Committee), no proposal of importance was made. But the last sitting supplied an incident which created a somewhat tense atmosphere. The Indian delegate on the Fourth Committee had fought strenuously for economy, but his efforts had been of little avail. Immediately after the report of that committee had been laid before the Assembly by the Rapporteur, the principal delegate for India mounted the platform. Having mentioned the grave anxiety with which the Indian delegation viewed the progressive increases in the Budget, he proceeded to criticize the lack of control of expenditure, and in effect charged the Assembly itself with remissness in scrutinizing carefully the various items of the Budget. With most of the points of his speech the Assembly was already familiar, but I do not think it was prepared for the warning he uttered. Speaking with earnestness, the Indian delegate declared that should his protest be ignored when future Budgets were being framed it might be necessary for the Indian delegation to refuse its vote, thus preventing the unanimity which is required for the passing of the Budget. My own impression is that a tightening-up of control and the giving of wider powers to the Supervisory Committee, or to another body which would take its place, would do much to secure less expenditure; but, after all, the practice of economy must proceed from the Assembly itself.

FIRST COMMITTEE.

QUESTION OF THE REVISION OF THE STATUTE OF THE PERMANENT COURT OF INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE.

This question, which was raised by several delegations during the early days of the Assembly, was referred to the First Committee for consideration. The committee, after examining the suggestion, contented itself with presenting to the Assembly a draft resolution, and this the Assembly passed at its meeting on the 20th September. It reads as follows:—

“The Assembly, considering the ever-growing number of matters referred to the Permanent Court of International Justice, deeming it advisable that before the renewal of the terms of office of the members of the Court in 1930 the present provisions of the statute of the Court should be examined with a view to the introduction of any amendments which experience may show to be necessary, draws the Council’s attention to the advisability of proceeding, before the renewal of the terms of office of the members of the Permanent Court of International Justice, to the examination of the statute of the Court with a view to the introduction of such amendments as may be judged desirable, and to submitting the necessary proposals to the next ordinary session of the Assembly.”

CODIFICATION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW.

The documents before the First Committee were A. 15 (the second report of the Committee of Experts) and A. 16, which is the report of the Committee of Experts on the resolution of last year’s Assembly regarding the proposal made by the delegate of Paraguay concerning a general and comprehensive plan of codification of international law.

It is more than possible that a Conference on Codification will be held in 1929, when three questions will be considered—*i.e.*, nationality, territorial waters, and the responsibility of States for damage done in their territory to the personal property of foreigners. Questionnaires have been sent to the Government by the Secretariat, and doubtless these are receiving attention.

The Committee of Experts considers that two further questions are suitable for international regulation—the legal position and functions of Consuls, and the competence of the Courts in regard to foreign States; but as the Conference, if it is called for next year, will already have its hands full, it is proposed that these two subjects should be referred to a future Conference. In the meantime the Committee of Experts is not to be called together, but further consideration will be given to the position by next year’s Assembly. A resolution on these lines was passed by the Assembly at its meeting on the 24th September.

On the question of a general plan of codification the First Committee was cautionary in attitude, as will be seen by the resolution which it submitted to the Assembly, and to which that body gave its approval on the 24th September. (See Document A. 56.)

ADVISORY OPINIONS OF THE PERMANENT COURT OF INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE.

The Swiss delegation introduced a motion on the 8th September recommending the Council to consider whether it would not be desirable to submit to the Permanent Court of International Justice, for an advisory opinion, the question whether the Council or the Assembly can by a simple majority request an advisory opinion under Article 14 of the Covenant of the League. This motion was referred to the First Committee, which submitted to the Assembly for approval a draft resolution reading as follows:—

“The Assembly, noting the divergences of opinion which exist as regards the requirements for voting in the Council or Assembly a resolution requesting an advisory opinion from the Permanent Court of International Justice, expresses the desire that, when circumstances permit, the Council may have a study made of the question whether the Council or the Assembly may by a simple majority ask for an advisory opinion within the meaning of Article 14 of the Covenant of the League of Nations.”

There were such differences of opinion in the First Committee that it would have been impossible to obtain unanimity on the Swiss motion. It was therefore considered advisable to leave to the Council the task of deciding when the time was ripe for the point to be studied.