

ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE CONDUCT OF BUSINESS.

The proceedings did not differ from those of previous Assemblies. At the second sitting the agenda (Document A. 2 (1)) was examined and the items apportioned amongst the six committees formed to deal with—

- (1) Constitutional and legal questions.
- (2) Work of the technical organizations of the League.
- (3) Reduction of armaments.
- (4) Budgetary and financial questions.
- (5) Humanitarian and social questions.
- (6) Political questions.

A small Agenda Committee was appointed to report on the items proposed in the course of the Assembly. Sir Muhammad Habibullah (India) was elected Chairman.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS OF THE ASSEMBLY.

The meeting of the Assembly was then suspended to permit of the six committees electing their Chairmen. The result of the voting was as follows: First Committee, M. Scialoja (Italy); Second Committee, M. Motta (Switzerland); Third Committee, M. Benes (Czecho-Slovakia); Fourth Committee, Count Moltke (Denmark); Fifth Committee, Mr. O'Sullivan (Irish Free State); Sixth Committee, M. Janson (Belgium).

On the resumption of the sitting the Assembly elected six Vice-Presidents in accordance with the rules. Its choice fell on M. Briand (France), Dr. Stresemann (Germany), M. Adatci (Japan), M. Balodis (Latvia), Mr. Ramsay MacDonald (British Empire), M. Chao-Chu Wu (China).

The president, the six Vice-presidents, the six Chairmen of committees, and the Chairman of the Agenda Committee, form the General Committee of the Assembly.

REPRESENTATION OF NEW ZEALAND.

As sole delegate for New Zealand, I nominated myself for all the committees, but, as it is impossible for one delegate to attend the meetings of more than two committees at the most (since groups of three committees sit alternately), I was obliged to have recourse to members of the staff to act as substitutes. The meetings of Committee No. 3 I decided to attend personally; and I nominated my Private Secretary, Mr. C. Knowles, to attend those of Nos. 2 and 4, and Mr. C. B. Burdekin, the Librarian in my office in London, to attend those of Nos. 1 and 6. For Committee No. 5 I was able to obtain a substitute in the person of Miss Phoebe Myers, B.A., who was visiting Geneva, she having kindly offered her services. The arrangement outlined thus permitted my attending meetings of every committee should my personal presence be required, but, in the case of five of the committees, to delegate the work if deemed advisable.

DEBATE ON THE REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL.

Formalities having been disposed of, the Assembly was free to take up the discussion on the Report to the Tenth Ordinary Session of the Assembly on the Work of the League since the last Session of the Assembly. (Documents A. 6 and A. 6 (a).)

The discussion was opened on the afternoon of the 3rd September by Mr. J. Ramsay MacDonald, the British Prime Minister. The speech is summarized in the *Journal* of the 4th September, and is fully reported in the verbatim record of the Assembly's meeting of the 3rd September. To these I would refer you, but it would not be out of place to mention here the more salient points of the speech. As one of the men who prepared the way for the protocol of 1924, it was natural that the Minister should refer to this, but he did not dwell on it. He gave it as his opinion that the Briand-Kellogg Peace Pact, signed in Paris last year, was a starting-point of further work, and said that the British Government was desirous that the Pact should be not only a declaration on paper, but should be translated into constitutions and institutions that would work for the peace of Europe. This was his text for an exposition on disarmament and the twin subject of arbitration. He thought that the best preliminary to a successful international issue on disarmament was an agreement between America and Great Britain in the field of naval armaments, and he was very optimistic of the result of negotiations which were proceeding. He referred to the so-called "gaps" in Articles 12 and 15 of the Covenant (which permit war in certain circumstances), and called for their revision to bring them into harmony with the Pact of Peace (a subject treated at some length a few days later by Mr Henderson, the British Foreign Minister), and then proceeded to make a statement that the British Government had decided to sign the optional clause. That Mr. MacDonald intended to speak about the optional clause was no secret, but his words were nevertheless received with all the enthusiasm which they would have commanded had they come as a surprise. He proceeded:—

"Further, my Government has consulted His Majesty's Governments of the other members of the British Commonwealth of Nations who are also members of this League, and I believe that each of them will instruct its representatives at this Assembly to sign the optional clause during the present session. In accordance with their rights and their position here, they will make their own statements on this subject."

The Prime Minister made brief mention of Palestine and of the position of Egypt, and concluded his speech in the following words:—

"The Government which I represent here to-day is willing to take those tremendous steps towards a new era of international relations because it does not want the substance of its nation, of the nations, to be wasted; it does not want people to be impoverished, and it does not want civilization itself to be destroyed by further resort to arms."

The speech was followed by a full Assembly with almost rapt attention, and at the end enthusiasm was spontaneous and universal.