

The Chinese delegate made the usual reference to Article 19 of the Covenant, which treats with the reconsideration of treaties which have become inapplicable, describing it as a wise article, and inquiring why it had never been applied. At a later stage he introduced the following motion on the subject, which was referred to the First Committee :—

“The Assembly—considering that Article 19 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, which provides that ‘The Assembly may from time to time advise the reconsideration by members of the League of treaties which have become inapplicable, and the consideration of international conditions whose continuance might endanger the peace of the world,’ is one of the most essential articles of the Covenant in the cause of international co-operation and peace; observing that, nevertheless, it has not once been acted upon during the decade of the existence of the League; believing that such inaction has been due to the fact that the Assembly has not had the necessary assistance and advice—hereby resolves that there shall be appointed a committee to consider and report on the best methods to make effective the above-mentioned article.”

The representative of Uruguay feelingly referred to the friendly intervention of the Council of the League in the case of the threatened conflict between Bolivia and Paraguay; whilst the representative of Bolivia, whose country had not sent a delegation to the Assembly for several years, expressed gratitude to the Council for its action. The delegate from Peru, which again took its place in the Assembly after an absence of some years, made reference to the restoration of good relations between his country and Chile.

The representatives of Canada and Japan (both members of the Council) devoted a considerable portion of their speeches to the question of the protection of minorities, which is one of the duties of the League under the terms of the Covenant. The problem was also touched upon by a number of other speakers.

M. Briand, Prime Minister of France, delivered a speech in which he insisted on the progress made by the League in the past ten years, and stressed the necessity for international arrangements of an economic nature. He ventilated the idea of a United States of Europe acting together, mainly on economic lines, to organize and protect the commercial interests of the European States.

The Danish representative, in speaking of the reduction of armaments, said that his Government intended to put forward a plan aiming at the transformation of the army and navy into forces organized with the object should war threaten, of watching the Danish frontiers and patrolling the Danish waters. He went on to say that Denmark did not feel herself threatened by any of her neighbours, but that any danger which might arise would be that caused by a general war in which the Great Powers were involved. He said that the reorganization of the military and naval forces of his country would ensure of their being fully competent to carry out the tasks which devolved on Denmark in virtue of the Convention of Neutrality or of Denmark's membership of the League. It may be noted that a somewhat similar plan was put forward by Denmark in 1924, but not carried into effect.

The Belgian delegate devoted part of his speech to the danger of increasing tariffs, which, he said, had become more instead of less threatening since the International Economic Conference of 1927.

Mr. MacDonald had prepared the way for a detailed statement of British policy, and it fell to Mr. Henderson to make this clear in a long speech, delivered on the morning of the 6th September. The British Foreign Minister was followed with close attention. After a reference to the successful issue of The Hague Conference, which he designated as an ending of the World War, he dealt with the question of the Secretariat of the League of Nations, and the spirit which should guide the authorities in selecting the members. He paid a high tribute to the work and international spirit of the Secretariat; but he indicated that in some directions improvements could be made, especially in regard to security of tenure, promotions, pensions, and administrative control of the staff, and he proposed that the matter should be referred to the Fourth Committee.

Mr. Henderson then dealt at length with the question of disarmament. After stating that, in his opinion, security was the greatest political problem of the present day, he told the Assembly that, subject to the further consideration which was to be given to the matter in the Assembly, the Draft Convention on Financial Assistance (Document A. 10) would be signed on behalf of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the parts of the British Empire which were not separate members of the League. This adhesion, however, would be subject to reciprocity amongst the signatories, and also to its benefits being made available only to those who had accepted and carried out the General Treaty on Disarmament which the League was to draw up. The Foreign Minister further suggested that the model treaty for strengthening means for preventing war (submitted by the German delegate to the Preparatory Commission on Disarmament) should be referred to the Third Committee with a view of its preparation as a general convention which might be opened for signature at the 1930 Assembly.

Finally, he went, in some detail, into the differences between the Paris Peace Pact (which renounced war as an instrument of national policy) and Articles 12 and 15 of the Covenant (which permits defensive war in certain circumstances), and he proposed a draft resolution in the following terms :—

“The Tenth Assembly of the League of Nations—

“Notes with satisfaction the general adhesion of States members of the League of Nations to the Pact signed in Paris on 27th August, 1928, imposing on its signatories the renunciation of war as an instrument of national policy and the undertaking to have recourse only to pacific means for the settlement of their disputes;

“Considers that in order to take account of the progress thus made in the organization of peace it is desirable to re-examine Article 12 and Article 15 of the Covenant of the League in order to determine whether it is necessary to make any modifications therein.”