

An account of the work done in the period under review by the organ of the League dealing with communications and transit will be found in Documents A. 6 and A. 6 (a). Much of the work is of only passing interest to New Zealand; but on humanitarian grounds alone the question of oil pollution of navigable waters presses for solution, for the effect of the pollution on bird-life causes intense suffering. Apart from this, damage is done to coastal fisheries and the breeding of fish, and there is disturbance to the amenities of seaside resorts. Governments are able to take, indeed several countries have taken, action to control to a considerable extent pollution in territorial waters, but they are at present powerless to control effectively waters beyond their territorial limits; and a draft convention covering the latter was drawn up at Washington in 1926. It prohibits the discharge of oil and fatty mixtures within fifty to one hundred and fifty nautical miles of the coast. The convention, not having been ratified, is inoperative, although several countries are endeavouring to observe its provisions.

On the invitation of the United Kingdom Government, the League is now considering the question with a view to convening a conference of experts to study the question closely. It is to be hoped that this procedure will result in the preparation of a convention open to the signature of all maritime States.

The Second Committee's Report (Document A. 31) was adopted by the Assembly at its meeting on the 26th September (see also Documents A. 8 and A. 16).

#### CO-OPERATION OF THE PRESS IN ORGANIZATION OF PEACE.

This matter, which was referred to the Second Committee, has occupied the attention of two previous Assemblies. In November, 1933, a Conference of Government Press Bureaux and Press Representatives was held at Madrid, on the invitation of the Spanish Government. The Conference passed a number of resolutions, which will be found on pages 34 to 38 of its report. Resolutions (numbered 3 and 6) bear on the dissemination of false news, a question with which the Conference was largely occupied. Resolution 3 reads as follows:—

“The Conference recommends the establishment of an impartial fact-finding body, composed of impartial non-official experts, who, with the full but informal collaboration of the Government press bureaux, will report on technical and financial methods of remedying the spread of false news, studying more particularly the memorandum which the International Association of Journalists accredited to the League of Nations, submitted in reply to the inquiry concerning the spread of false news.”

Another resolution of the Conference was one expressing a desire that meetings should be periodical, and the concluding paragraph of the draft resolution for submission by the Second Committee to the Assembly dealt with this point. This paragraph read as follows:—

“The Assembly,—

“Requests the Council to authorize the Secretary-General to facilitate, by such means as are at his disposal, the preparation for and organization of the next conference of Government press bureaux and press representatives, by lending the services of the appropriate sections of the League to perform the secretarial work of the Conference, if such services are desired by the Government convening the Conference, after consultation with the Organizing Committee and the press organizations concerned.”

The estimate of the cost involved was very small, some 7,000 francs, but the Fourth Committee refused the credit. Nevertheless the draft resolution as worded was sent to the Assembly.

A good account of this matter of co-operation of the press will be found in the Second Committee's report to the Assembly (Document A. 44). The resolution with which the report concludes was adopted by the Assembly at its meeting on the 26th September.

#### FOURTH COMMITTEE.

In view of the intense criticism of the finances of the League during the past few years, and of the effect such criticism has had on those responsible for the conduct of finances, I recommend, at the outset, a careful study of the reports of the Supervisory Commission (Documents A. 5 and A. 5 (a)).

As has been pointed out in previous reports, apart from exchange troubles and a tendency (now checked) for the League to take up work which is not definitely its concern, the problem is very largely one of unpaid contributions. The responsible authorities have endeavoured to meet the charge of over-budgeting in order to cover deficits anticipated through the non-receipt of contributions. The Supervisory Commission in its first report states:—

“‘Over-budgeting’ is a term which might suggest that the budgetary authority deliberately asks for larger credits than it requires, in order to allow of extravagant expenditure or of expenditure on purposes other than those for which the credits have been sanctioned. In this sense there is not any over-budgeting by the League. The Commission is in a position to assure the Assembly definitely that expenditure is carefully restricted to the objects sanctioned by the Assembly through its budgetary credits, and that the employment of the budget grants is strictly controlled. Indeed, the severity of the rules on the subject of transfer of grants is such that irregularities in this respect would be exceedingly difficult.”