

## FIRST COMMITTEE.

## AMENDMENTS TO RULES OF PROCEDURE.

The first business transacted by the First Committee had reference to the maintenance or otherwise of certain temporary rules of procedure framed by the Assembly of 1933 regarding—

- (1) The formal adoption by the Assembly of certain Committee reports without discussion ; and
- (2) The faculty of convening a meeting of the Fourth Committee on a date not more than a week prior to the date of the first meeting of the Assembly, should conditions render such a course advisable.

The First Committee, after a short discussion, decided to recommend the Assembly to incorporate the first of these two rules in the Rules of Procedure and to maintain the second temporarily until next year's Assembly. This recommendation was adopted by the Assembly on the 24th September (Document A. 44).

## NATIONALITY OF WOMEN.

This subject has been dealt with in reports of previous Assemblies. The inscription of the question on this year's agenda was due to the desire of some States, especially South American States, to give opportunities for a discussion of the Montevideo Convention of 26th December, 1933, on the nationality of women (see Document A. 7). The points involved are national rather than international ; but apparently the various women's organizations are of opinion that there is a better chance of their being taken up nationally if they are discussed, in the first instance, by an international organization.

Sympathetic as I am to women's just aspirations, I felt no good purpose would be served by taking an active part in the debate. Quite early in the proceedings, however, the New Zealand delegate on the First Committee made a short statement on the effect of the recent New Zealand Act (British Nationality and Status of Aliens' Amendment Act, 1935), section 3 of which goes beyond the Hague Convention. New Zealand's attitude, as disclosed by that Act, especially section 3 thereof, has given considerable satisfaction to women's organizations.

There are few subjects coming before the Assembly which are more controversial. It is difficult to overcome national prejudices, nor are national customs sufficiently taken into account by those who, through the League, would internationalize much which is essentially national. On the other hand, there are many who, while firmly believing in the equality of the sexes, question whether reforms can be secured, through the League, in States which are opposed to reform and voice their opposition at the Assembly. In spite of the belief of the women's organizations that international action should precede national action, the debate made one doubt whether much progress could be made along these lines. The results achieved by the Conference for the Codification of certain points of International Law do not offer much encouragement ; and perhaps that experience has not weighed sufficiently with the women's organizations. On the whole, the tendency of the debate in the First Committee was towards drawing the attention of States to the Montevideo Convention (Document A. 7) and to the possibility of acceding to it. Of course, there were speakers who went further. Ultimately a small drafting Committee was set up and it produced a resolution which was quite acceptable to the New Zealand delegation. This was passed unanimously, and was accepted as an Assembly resolution on the 27th September. (Document A. 53.) It reads as follows :—

“ The Assembly—

“ (1) Remarks with interest the achievement accomplished by the American States in drawing up a convention in accordance with Recommendation No. VI of the Conference of the Hague of 1930 ;

“ (2) Draws the attention of the members of the League of Nations to the fact that the Montevideo Convention is open to the accession of all States ;

“ (3) Thanks the women's international associations for the assistance which they have rendered, and will render, to the League of Nations in this field ;

“ (4) Renews its recommendation that the States which have signed the Hague Convention of 1930 will deposit their ratifications at an early date ;

“ (5) Requests the Council to continue to follow the development of this important problem both in the national and in the international field in order to determine when such development has reached a point at which further concerted international action would be justified.”

So far as the Assembly is concerned the matter seems closed. It is for the Council to watch developments to the point when international action might usefully be taken. (See also Document A. 1/2.)

## STATUS OF WOMEN.

This question is related to the subject of nationality of women, dealt with above. So far as this year's Assembly is concerned, its inclusion on the agenda was due to a letter of the 26th September, 1934, signed by delegations of countries in Central and South America, requesting that the Assembly examine the status of women as a whole, and not merely in relation to nationality. The letter will be found in Document A. 8, which also contains the texts of—(1) a resolution on the civil and political rights of women passed at the Seventh Conference of American States held at Montevideo from 3rd to 26th December, 1933 ; and (2) an Equal Rights Treaty between the Governments of Uruguay, Paraguay, Ecuador, and Cuba.