

into bilateral agreements in which tariff concessions would be contingent on the maintenance of existing exchange parities. The declared readiness of France to negotiate agreements on this basis, though at first sight surprising in view of the disabilities that her trade would suffer if she were forced off the gold standard after concluding such agreements, is reasonably explained as a considered move by a gold standard Government to burn the bridges behind it, making departure from gold more difficult. The resolution under this heading that finally emerged, as proposed by the United Kingdom representative, with the French representative's concurrence, urged that as many countries as possible should conclude bilateral agreements; it favoured the continued inclusion therein of the most-favoured-nation clause, and it suggested that, if necessary, the agreements should be subject to the provision that "in the event of a large variation in the rate of exchange between the currencies of the contracting parties there should be power to revise the agreements at short notice."

From the angle of possible monetary action the clearest reluctance was displayed by countries not now on the gold standard to bind themselves to any early return to that standard. Thus, in the final stages of drafting a non-committal summary of the general committee's discussions, exception was taken (primarily by the United Kingdom representative) to words stating that "a restoration of the *stability of the monetary basis*" was felt to be essential to the regular development of international trade; the word "stability" was objected to because of its evident ambiguity in implying either stable exchange rates or stable internal prices; the discussion and the redraft agreed in placing first emphasis on the latter of these two objectives. That "we are nearer to achieving stable purchasing-power than to achieving any general adoption of the gold standard" was certainly the consensus of opinion.

NUTRITION AND AGRICULTURE.

New Zealand was one of twelve countries whose representatives at Geneva in 1935 asked by formal requisition that the Assembly should place the subject of nutrition on its agenda, the stated grounds being that the relation between nutrition and health has become a significant social and economic problem and that the subject has an important bearing on world agricultural problems. This led to an extended discussion in the Second Committee, which drafted recommendations, later adopted by the Assembly, for further examination of the practical means of securing better nutrition.

As might be expected, the discussion disclosed no differences of opinion. With only different emphasis and in different language, delegates from a score of countries deplored the failure of man to live as abundantly as his health required and as agricultural progress has made possible. If it was conceded that the problem is especially pressing in the older and more highly protected countries, there was none the less a recognition that there is no community that does not have its black patches, that the extension of consumption rather than the curtailment of production can be the only sound and enduring objective, and that, whether immediately realizable or not, the improvement of health through better nutrition and the benefiting of agricultural producers are purposes that are wisely to be pursued in unison.

The difficulty is, of course, to say how these admittedly desirable ideas can best be translated into reality, and, more particularly, to say what contribution the League of Nations and related organizations can bring to the problem. Without doubt the answer must be that the solution will wait upon the taking of appropriate action in the individual countries. The League can usefully collect, analyse, and publish information on the measures that are taken in all countries; and the resolution as adopted looks to this clearing-house function as the part the League can take.

The significance of the attention given to this problem, and of the favourable public notice which it received, is that they point to a new awareness of consumers' interests; and, if there is a vagueness about the action to be taken in recognition of those interests, there is no doubt that recent trends at this end of the world do strongly suggest that Governments will not be content with ineffective resolutions.

It is, I think, not too remote from the object of this report for me to suggest that New Zealand might most appropriately further the purposes indicated by the League of Nations' unexceptional resolution, and at the same time consult her own enlightened self-interest, by taking every possible step towards extending to the optimum figure the consumption of agricultural foodstuffs within the Dominion. Already our favourable figures in infantile mortality are at once an inspiration and a challenge to the world. Is it beyond the bounds of reasonable possibility to aspire towards a like leadership in respect to adequate nutrition and health?

FOURTH COMMITTEE.

M. Radulesco, the Chairman, has on several occasions represented Roumania on the Fourth Committee, so that the Committee enjoyed all the advantages to be derived from the possession of a Chairman thoroughly familiar with its work and procedure.

Document A. 25 gives the financial situation on the 31st August last, and it is convenient for the purpose of reference. A brief recital of the situation as it emerged from the speeches on the first day of the debate will, however, not be out of place here. The year 1934 ended with a cash surplus of 3,878,641 gold francs. The receipts of the year were 30,198,115 francs, and the expenditure 26,319,474 francs. It is of interest to observe how the receipts were made up. The sum of 22,186,192 francs only was in respect of contributions, as against a budget of 30,827,805 francs—that is to say, more than one-fourth of the contributions remained uncollected. The balance was represented by 6,643,379 francs contributions of arrears and 1,368,544 francs appropriations in aid. Although the revenue of the League showed a reduction in respect of current contributions, the position was not quite so disturbing as appeared on the surface, since the reason for the fall in receipts was to be found