

re-examination of the original intention of its founders would have the effect of putting it on a sounder basis and of actually increasing its authority and usefulness as an instrument of peace." After remarking that the United Kingdom Government was pledged to the principles set out in the preamble of the Covenant and that it was his conviction that the present difficulties of the League were not permanent, and that, therefore, there was no question of considering a modification of its juridical basis, he proceeded to set forth the views of the United Kingdom Government. Lord De La Warr had already remarked that there had perhaps been a tendency to stress Article 16 at the expense of those provisions of the Covenant which were devised specifically for the settlement of disputes. He now contended that the Assembly should recognize the actual situation as regards the coercive clauses. There should be no automatic obligation to apply economic or military sanctions. There would, however, be a general obligation to consider, in consultation, whether and to what extent Article 16 should be applied, and whether common aid should be rendered to the victim of aggression, but "each State would be the judge of the extent to which its own position would allow it to participate in any measure that might be proposed, and, in doing so, it would no doubt be influenced by the extent to which other States were prepared to act." I have quoted verbatim these last sentences because they foreshadowed a proceeding different from that which characterized the proceedings of the Co-ordination Committee in 1935. And might I remark in passing that no clearer indication of the difference could be found than in the suggestion that a State would be influenced by the extent to which other States are prepared to act. One with only brief familiarity of League procedure can envisage the process of whittling down until the resultant action would be so weak as at once to give rise to further taunts at the ineffectiveness of the Geneva institution. It is true that Lord De La Warr then averred that in the opinion of the United Kingdom Government it was of essential importance for the future of the League to preserve intact the principle that aggression against a member of the League is a matter of concern to all members. Of course, aggression is a matter of concern, and of great concern, if we are to judge from the lengthy debates on recent acts of aggression. It is not that members of the League are not concerned: it is the determination to act that is lacking.

The United Kingdom spokesman then invited the attention of the Assembly to further proposals:—

- (1) The modification or adaptation of the unanimity rule in its application to the first part of Article 11 of the Covenant. A change in this direction would enable the League effectively to intervene sooner.
- (2) The separation of the Covenant from the Peace Treaties as recommended by the Committee of Jurists appointed by the 1937 Assembly.

With the remainder of Lord De La Warr's remarks, which were of a general nature, there is no necessity to deal. It was recognized that the main object of his speech was to make known to the Assembly the United Kingdom Government's views regarding the Covenant; and many subsequent speakers took their cue from the United Kingdom delegate.

Of those who subsequently spoke, it is true to say that the majority favoured a suspension of the automatic application of the Covenant, and several reasons were adduced for such a course: the non-universal character of the League, since mediation by that body was hardly possible when Great Powers were absent; the resurrection of the old idea that nation must be pitted against nation in order to expand national life and to augment strength; the failure to implement Article 8 of the Covenant. But more than one orator admitted that the crisis which brooded over the Assembly was a crisis not only of the League, but of modern civilization, and that, if the issues now dominating world politics had to be settled by war, a new international organization would have to be erected on the ruins of the old. It was made evident that, even if before 1918 the idea of an organization having some degree of approach to universal brotherhood and providing for a common meeting-ground of the nations had not penetrated the mind of the masses, the experience of nearly two decades had convinced all who are not blind to facts or obsessed by outworn dogmas based on might over right that an international organization or League of Nations, whether this League or a reconstructed League, is a necessity.

It was felt in the Assembly that the League is well worth while. Politically it has been a partial failure, but in other respects many successes stand to its credit. The pity is that the masses—those who toil for their daily bread and have little to read beyond the daily newspaper (the policy of which is more often than not moulded in the interests of a group of people)—have not an opportunity of making themselves more fully acquainted with what has been done since 1920 in the name of humanity and of civilization.

On the other speeches a few lines will suffice. There were references to the work of the League in various fields; to national achievements; to China, which country is perhaps undergoing a rebirth in its struggle for freedom; to the Mahomedan world, various races composing which seem to realize more and more that there are ties of brotherhood which had been overlooked in the past. And let not the significance escape us of the outcry against partition in Palestine. Partition may or may not be a solution of the problem. Much sympathy is shown to the Jews, and admiration is unbounded for that courageous attempt to found a Jewish home in Palestine. But there is expressed the possibility of injustice to the Arabs, of creating a problem which may well bring misery and suffering in its train.