

The Committee had before it a heavy agenda, the most controversial item of which was the draft constitution of the proposed International Refugee Organization. This occupied thirty meetings. Agreement on other items was, however, reached without the appearance of such fundamentally divergent views, although debate was often unduly prolonged.

The first of these was a resolution by the Economic and Social Council to the General Assembly on the assumption of functions and powers previously exercised by the League of Nations under various international conventions on narcotic drugs. Discussion centred mainly around the question of the special provision in the resolution providing for the exclusion of Spain from the United Nations system of narcotics control, but the resolution<sup>1</sup> was finally endorsed as presented.

The Committee endorsed a further resolution of the Economic and Social Council which recommended that the General Assembly draw the attention of members to the special importance of promoting the establishment and co-operation of voluntary National Red Cross and Red Crescent organizations, of respecting at all times the independent and voluntary nature of such organizations provided they are recognized by their Governments and carry on their work according to the principles of the Geneva and Hague Conventions, and of taking the necessary steps to ensure that in all circumstances contact may be maintained between the societies of all countries to enable them to carry out their humanitarian task.

Amendments were introduced to the effect, firstly, that the Economic and Social Council should take steps to improve the Hague and Geneva Conventions (proposed by France), and, secondly, that these societies should also have some relationship with the World Health Organization (proposed by the United Kingdom). The United Kingdom resolution found little support, but many felt that the French proposal had some merit. The New Zealand viewpoint, expressed by Mrs A. F. R. McIntosh, was that, while improvements in the conventions had been shown to be necessary during the present war, the improvements could well be left to the societies themselves, particularly as the whole debate had been an expression of support for any such action that might be taken. As regards the United Kingdom amendment, no good purpose could be served by such a liaison. The original resolution stressed the necessity for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to preserve their independent and voluntary character, and although the peacetime activities of such societies were similar to those of the World Health Organization and might overlap them, the wartime work of the societies was of such tremendous importance, and their position, power, and opportunities in the field of war so unique and of such value, that not even the skirts of such societies should touch any organization which might at any time, rightly or wrongly, be said to have political bias. This view was well supported, and both amendments were withdrawn

<sup>1</sup> Document A/194