

24th September was devoted by the Assembly to a discussion of the dispute between Poland and that country, which had been referred to it by the Council. It is needless to recapitulate the circumstances attending this unhappy difference, which has lasted nearly a year; useful information is obtainable in the Supplement to the *Journal* of the 24th September, which is attached to the draft agreement prepared by M. Hymans (Document A. 106). The debate will be found in the Provisional Verbatim Report of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Plenary Meetings, already sent to you, from which it is clear that the sympathy formerly felt for Poland had diminished as a result of her somewhat uncompromising attitude. The Assembly passed the following resolution, Poland abstaining:—

“The Assembly having heard the explanation of M. Hymans on the dispute between Poland and Lithuania, and having taken note of the resolution of the Council of the 20th September, expresses its warm appreciation of the skill and patience displayed by M. Hymans in the cause of peace, and thanks the Council for its action, and assures it of the full support of the Assembly. Appealing to their wisdom and to their common memories of the past, the Assembly calls upon the two peoples to reach an agreement, which is as necessary for them as for the peace of the world.”

COMMITTEE No. 1.

The duties of this committee consisted almost entirely of consideration of proposed amendments to the Covenant. It sat a great number of times. I was a member, but the work of other committees was, in my opinion, of so much importance to New Zealand that I was unfortunately unable to attend any of the meetings of Committee No. 1.

Amendments to Rules of Procedure.—It is not necessary to do more than mention the resolution of the Assembly (Documents A. 103 and A. 128) amending the first and second paragraphs of Rule 20 of the Rules of Procedure.

Amendments to the Covenant: Article 26.—In view of the wording of Article 26 of the Covenant, paragraph 1 of which reads, “Amendments to this Covenant will take effect when ratified by members of the League whose representatives compose the Council, and by a majority of the members of the League whose representatives compose the Assembly,” it was necessary for the Assembly to seek for guidance when considering proposed amendments. It was therefore decided to take first that report of the committee which dealt with Article 26, and it came before the Assembly on the 3rd October. I recommend a careful study of the report, Document A. 119 (4), as it contains the views of the committee as to the procedure of the Assembly when voting on amendments, together with a resolution providing for an amendment to the article. The recommendation as to procedure, and each of the paragraphs of the resolution, one of which, you will observe, was slightly amended during consideration by the Assembly, were voted on separately, and in each case the voting was as follows: Thirty-seven States for; none against; one abstention; thirteen States did not answer the roll-call.

In the course of the debate I raised the question of a quorum, which is not provided for in the Rules of Procedure, and stated that I should invite my Government to have the following placed on the Agenda of the next Assembly:—

- (1.) The question of the quorum necessary to constitute a meeting of the Assembly and of its committees.
- (2.) Consideration of No. 5 of Rule of Procedure No. 19, which reads, “For the purposes of this rule representatives who abstain from voting shall be considered as not present.”

The rapporteur, in replying, said that one might have confidence in the President, but that it would be a good thing to introduce into the Rules of Procedure a stipulation expressly requiring a quorum; and that it was also necessary to amend the provision in the Rules of Procedure according to which delegations abstaining were considered to be absent.

I am strongly of opinion that a quorum should be fixed for both Assembly and committees, and that the abstention of States from voting is wrong in principle. Absence from debate is, of course, another matter.

During the debate it was recommended that Governments should first ratify the amendment to Article 26, if necessary, independently of other amendments. On the ratification of this amendment depends the fate of the other amendments which have been carried by a three-fourths majority.

Position of Small States in relation to the League.—This is a problem of considerable difficulty. Various methods have been proposed by which States, small in size, that could not become full members of the League, might be attached to the organization, and three of these methods are dealt with in the committee’s report (Document A. 119 (2)). You will see that the committee was unable to come to a definite decision; and as, for the present, the question apparently excites only an academical interest, the Assembly, on the 4th October, adopted unanimously the view of the committee, that it would be “preferable to await the results of experience . . . before expressing an opinion upon the methods by which they (small States) might be admitted to the League.”

Proposed Amendment to Article I.—The committee’s report (Document A. 165) deals with the amendment which would have become necessary had the views of the Argentine Delegation last year, providing for the inclusion in the League of all sovereign States recognized by the Community of Nations, except by voluntary abstention on their part, been adopted. It was generally supposed that the Argentine Delegation, in putting forward the suggestion, had in mind the reception of Germany into the League, and you will recollect that because its views did not prevail it left Geneva. Nor was the Argentine represented at this year’s Assembly. The committee carefully considered the matter, but felt unable to make any definite recommendation, for reasons which are given in the report, which was adopted by the Assembly on the 4th October.