

or substitute to its provisions can be expected to prove acceptable unless it carries with it an extension of obligations and responsibilities under Covenant. As already stated, Ministers are convinced that that would be against the interests of this country and contrary to the wishes of the people.

Under these circumstances Ministers must advise that they have no suggestions to offer.

Ends.

—ATHLONE.

NOTE.—Copy sent to Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, New Zealand, the Irish Free State, and Newfoundland by despatch, 17th February, 1925.

No. 8.

The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

[Received 4th February, 1925.]

SIR,—

Government House, Wellington, 6th January, 1925.

I HAVE the honour to transmit to you, at the instance of my Prime Minister, the accompanying memorandum dealing with the proposed Protocol for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes.

I have, &c.,

CHARLES FERGUSON,
Governor-General.

[Enclosure in No. 8.]

Memorandum on the Protocol for Pacific Settlement of International Disputes.

It is desired by this memorandum to define as briefly as possible the principal objections which the New Zealand Government has to the Protocol, omitting all minor precise criticisms of the language used by the draftsmen of that document.

But it is desired first to record an emphatic protest against a process under which the British Empire is hurriedly called upon to give its adhesion to momentous novel conditions expressed in a document hastily prepared and vague in expression both as regards its effect and detail.

The League of Nations in 1923 propounded a Treaty of Mutual Assistance and recommended the Nations, members of the League, to agree to that Treaty. We have on record in the Document A.35 1924 IX of the League of Nations, the printed replies of the principal Nations rejecting that Treaty, and expressing their varying grounds for the refusal.

No outline of the present novel alternative scheme had been before the Council or the Assembly of the League until Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and M. Herriot addressed the Assembly at Geneva, Mr. MacDonald speaking on the 4th and M. Herriot on the 5th September, 1924, and it appears from page 42 of that record that the Assembly on the 6th September passed resolutions directing consideration by the First and Third Committees of the questions there submitted. The first and Third Committees presented a joint report on the 1st October covering this draft Protocol, which the Assembly later adopted.

It is to a document so initiated and so prepared within that space of three weeks, involving wide expansions and grave alterations of the Covenant of the League of Nations, that Great Britain, after a general election and a complete change in its Administration, is asked to give a speedy adhesion and to invite the self-governing Dominions to join it in that act.

In the case of New Zealand, the document itself did not reach the Government until the month of December, though this Government had some knowledge of its general effect in November.

If, as has been contended, the Protocol really defined no greater obligations than are already undertaken by the Nations in the Covenant itself, it might well be the case that, even in the short space of time allowed, Great Britain and the Dominions might have assented. But it is not true that the Protocol creates no new obligations. It is no mere form that we are asked to assent to, but matters of substantive, singular, and almost unexampled importance.

On what ground can it be contended that there is such urgency in the proposals as to require adhesion by Great Britain in March, 1925? Is it because the League insists on holding a conference on Disarmament this year and requires the Protocol as a condition precedent to the Disarmament Conference? If so, the answer is that the Disarmament Conference may well be postponed till next year, and that the British Empire is not to be driven into a decision which its Prime Ministers cannot unitedly consider merely on the grounds that the League of Nations is in a hurry to call a conference at Geneva. And a further answer is that it is absurd to ask the signatory nations to agree now to become bound by such conditions as are expressed in the Protocol on the mere chance that Germany and Russia, for instance, will agree in a scheme of disarmament to be later propounded.

His Majesty's Government has recognized that a Conference of the Prime Ministers of the Empire is essential to ensure due consideration of the course that the Empire should take. It appears to be