

METHOD OF ELECTION OF NON-PERMANENT MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL.

The Seventh Assembly agreed to increase to nine the non-permanent members of the Council, and when the report of its First Committee on the method of election and the tenure of the non-permanent seats had been disposed of last year the question of the utilization of the single transferable vote, and the principle of proportional representation in general, was raised by one of the Norwegian delegates. Later in that session the Assembly requested the Council to instruct the Secretariat to study the system, with a view to the matter being considered by the Eighth Assembly. The Secretariat issued an interesting report (Document A. 41).

In the course of the debate of the Sixth Committee it was generally agreed that, if the principle of proportional representation were to be adopted, the single-transferable-vote system would be a form of it which could be applied to election for membership of the Council. It was thought, however, that the system adopted last year should be given a fair trial.

The Sixth Committee's report to the Assembly is Document A. 75, and the Assembly approved of it at its meeting on the 22nd September.

CONFERENCE OF PRESS EXPERTS.

On the 25th September, 1925, the Sixth Assembly of the League of Nations passed the following resolution :—

"The Assembly, considering that the press constitutes the most effective means of guiding public opinion towards that moral disarmament which is a concomitant condition of material disarmament, invites the Council to consider the desirability of convening a committee of experts representing the press of the different continents with a view to determining methods of contributing towards the organization of peace, especially (a) by ensuring the more rapid and less costly transmission of press news with a view to reducing risks of international misunderstanding, (b) and by discussing all technical problems the settlement of which would be conducive to the tranquilization of public opinion,"

with the result that a Conference of press experts was held in Geneva in August last, and attended by press representatives of most countries members of the League. It is to be noted that it was not a Governmental Conference. It is true that Governments nominated representatives, but these took part in the Conference as assessors, and with only an advisory vote. The report of the Conference (Document A. 43) was before the Sixth Committee. It will be seen that the Conference passed a number of resolutions which, if carried into effect, will, in its opinion, be "to the general interest to assure the propagation of press news as rapidly as possible and at moderate rates."

Questions of finance are involved in some of these resolutions, others contemplate administrative action, whilst yet others have a moral bearing. The Council of the League had already considered the Conference report, and had referred for study to the Organization for Communications and Transit the resolution dealing with rates, code telegrams, improvements in communication, conveyance of newspapers, and identity cards for journalists, but had deferred consideration of the other resolutions until December. The debate in the committee became rather lively, owing to veiled attacks made on some of the great press agencies and on a few newspapers, but the debate led nowhere, for there was little that the committee could do. The committee made a report to the Assembly (Document A. 77), and the resolution with which it concludes was passed on the 22nd September.

MANDATES.

Questions relating to mandates are usually referred to the Sixth Committee by the Assembly, and this year this was done on the motion of the Portuguese delegation. The debate in committee was very short. It was opened by Dr. Nansen, the principal Norwegian delegate, who dealt mostly with points of general interest; but in the course of his speech he suggested that perhaps the representative of New Zealand might wish to inform the committee of the steps which the Mandatory Power was taking to give the Mandates Commission full information on the situation at its next session. A reply to this suggestion was given immediately after Dr. Nansen had sat down. The reply, after referring to the approval which the administration of Western Samoa had elicited from the Permanent Mandates Commission since New Zealand had accepted the mandate in 1920, and to the recent agitation in Western Samoa against the Administrator, stated that according to the information which had been received the agitation had been stirred up by half a dozen white people; that the leader was a merchant who was the largest buyer of copra from the Natives and objected very strongly to the Administrator's action in improving the marketing of copra in their interests; that some of the European agitators were married to Samoan women, and consequently had influence with some of the Natives; but that, generally speaking, the large majority of the white population and of the Native population strongly approved of the administration. The reply concluded: "In the meantime I desire to state that a Royal Commission, of which the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in New Zealand is the Chairman, has been appointed by the New Zealand Government to inquire into the alleged grievances and to furnish a report generally on the administration. The Royal Commission has reached Samoa and is now sitting. As soon as its report is available it is my Government's intention to lay it before the Permanent Mandates Commission, which will, I presume, examine it and report to the Council. In the circumstances, I respectfully suggest that it is premature to discuss the matter now."