

FIFTH COMMITTEE.

INTERNATIONAL RELIEF UNION.

This Union, which owes its existence largely to the efforts of a distinguished Italian citizen, was set up by international convention drawn up as a result of a conference held in Geneva in 1927. The Committee has been functioning since 1933. It was of real assistance to the authorities after the earthquake in Baluchistan, as was testified by the representative of India.

The Fifth Committee had before it the report of the Executive Committee on the activities of the Union during the period 12th July, 1933, to 31st December, 1934 (Documents C. 346, M. 175), and to this I refer you. Consideration of the report did not require much of the Fifth Committee's time. At the end of a short debate, the Committee agreed to a draft resolution, which was passed by the Assembly at its meeting on the 27th September. It read as follows:—

“The Assembly—

“Having taken cognizance of the report on the activity of the Executive Committee of the International Relief Union for the period from July 12th, 1933, to December 31st, 1934;

“Is gratified to note that thirty States have acceded to the Union, and expresses the hope that further accessions will come to reinforce the authority and means of action of that Union;

“Expresses its satisfaction at the first steps taken by the Union in the presence of certain calamities and at the encouraging reception given by several Governments to one of its appeals;

“Furthermore, lays stress on the importance of the measures taken with a view to ensuring the co-ordination of the efforts of other relief organizations and encouraging, especially by the appointment of experts, preparatory studies for the purpose of facilitating future action;

“Pays tribute to the purposes of the Union and the steps taken to ensure its development.”

PENAL AND PENITENTIARY QUESTIONS.

The problem of the unification of criminal law and the co-operation of Governments in the suppression of crime has been before the Assembly for some years. Last year, under resolution of the Assembly, Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, framed by the International Penal and Penitentiary Commission, were recommended for consideration of Governments, who were at the same time invited to make observations. Document A. 21, which was before the Fifth Committee this year, summarizes the observations made by a number of Governments, and also furnishes information on the work of several organizations dealing with penal matters. In the short debate in the Committee there were references to the existence of methods of dealing with prisoners not in accordance with the best practice of civilized countries, and it was urged that these should be studied by the Penal and Penitentiary Commission.

The report of the Fifth Committee (Document A. 63) came before the Assembly at its meeting on the 27th September, when the resolution with which it concludes was passed. It will be noted that the resolution instructs the Secretary-General—

- (1) To request Governments accepting the standard minimum rules to give such rules publicity.
- (2) To convey to Governments an expression of hope that certain reprehensible practices (which are enumerated), where they exist, will be abandoned.

ASSISTANCE TO INDIGENT FOREIGNERS.

As stated in the Fifth Committee's report to the Assembly, the study of this question has not advanced far since 1934. A draft Multilateral Convention of Assistance to Indigent Foreigners, the text of which was before the Fifth Committee in 1934, was submitted to some seventy Governments, twenty only of which had by September in that year offered observations. However, observations from other Governments have since been received, and these are embodied in Document A.E. 21. Although little more than half the Governments to which the draft Convention was submitted have replied, the Fifth Committee was of opinion that the Committee of Experts which had drawn up the draft should meet again shortly. A recommendation to this effect was accepted by the Assembly at its meeting on the 27th September (see Document A. 55).

TRAFFIC IN OPIUM AND OTHER DANGEROUS DRUGS.

Several documents were before the Committee (C. 530, M. 241; C. 253, M. 125; C. 390, M. 176; C. 462, M. 198); but the most convenient document for the purpose of reference is the Aide Memoire, presented by the Rapporteur (Document A. V/6).

This question of opium and allied drugs is always the subject of a long and interesting debate in Committee. The most important point which emerged from this year's discussion was the anxiety felt by the representatives of a number of Governments at the persistence of the clandestine traffic in dangerous drugs; indeed, more than one speaker suggested that the evil was growing worse. With the measures adopted by Governments under the International Conventions legitimate manufacture can be strictly controlled. The Rapporteur himself stated in his opening speech that as a result of international effort the illicit traffic could not be supplied from legitimate manufacture. On the other hand, clandestine manufacture, from which the illicit traffic draws its source of supply, presents grave problems, and for discovery and suppression of the traffic new methods are required. One of several methods which could be adopted in an effort to effect suppression is a limitation of production of raw material. A conference on this aspect is under consideration.