

NINETY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

New Zealand Government Offices, 415 Strand, London, W.C. 2, 12th February, 1937.

SIR,—

I have the honour to inform you that on the 20th January I left London in the company of the Hon. Walter Nash, M.P., Minister of Finance, Customs, and Marketing, for Geneva, in order to attend the Ninety-sixth Session of the Council of the League of Nations due to open on the following day.

The President of the Session was Doctor Wellington Koo, the representative of China. All the members of the Council, with the exception of Italy, were represented. The first meeting, which was private, was devoted to the consideration of the Agenda. To the Agenda as printed (C. 533 (1), M. 343 (1), 1936) was added, at the request of the Spanish Government, the item "Consideration of the Report of the Medical Mission sent to Spain by the Secretary-General of the League in response to the request of the Spanish Government." This request arose out of the resolution of the Council passed at its previous (extraordinary) session, a report on which I made to you under date the 23rd December, 1936. The part which M. del Vayo, Spanish representative, took in the debate was, however, not so much devoted to this item as to an objection which his Government took to certain implications arising under Item 24 (Situation of Persons who have taken asylum in the Embassies and Legations of Madrid). This latter question is not of so innocent a nature as the title would seem to indicate. Many of the refugees are, according to the Spanish representative, rebels against the legitimate Government of Spain, and whilst that Government was ready to consider the evacuation of women and children refugees, it made a reservation in regard to the rebels. The debate was not entirely confined to M. del Vayo and the Chilean representative, at whose Government's request the item was inserted in the Agenda; others, notably M. Litvinoff (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), took part. Ultimately the French representative made a suggestion which met with acceptance, and as a result it was decided to consider Item 24 in conjunction with the report of the Health Committee sent to Spain, the item appearing in the Agenda as follows:—

"Resolution of the Council of December 12th, 1936: Examination of the Report of the Health Mission sent at the Request of the Spanish Government, and Humanitarian Questions connected therewith (Evacuation of Persons who have taken Asylum in the Embassies and Legations at Madrid, &c.)."

Consideration of Item 17 (Request of the Iraq Government under Article XI, paragraph 2, of the Covenant) and Item 18 (Settlement of the Assyrians of Iraq) was adjourned.

Before the opening of the public meeting on the 22nd January the Council again sat for a short time in private in order to deal with certain appointments to the staff and to committees of the League. The appointments to the staff need no comment, although it is of interest to note that included in them was the appointment of Mr. S. Lester to the post of Deputy Secretary-General. Mr. Lester represented his country some years in Geneva as the accredited representative of the Irish Free State. Subsequently he was appointed League High Commissioner in Danzig, and held the post during a period of great difficulty. With his knowledge and experience he should be a valuable acquisition to the staff of the League.

APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES OF THE LEAGUE.

(a) The nomination of Bulgaria and Peru to fill additional seats on the Advisory Committee on Traffic in Opium and other Dangerous Drugs (Document C. 47).

(b) The appointment of Mr. W. W. Riefler, a citizen of the United States of America, as substitute member of the Financial Committee (Document C. 39).

(c) Renewal of the membership of the Advisory Committee of Experts on Slavery (Document C. 59).

(d) The appointment of members and substitute members of the Board of Management of the Staff Provident Fund (Document C. 49).

In each case the recommendations of the Rapporteur were unanimously approved.

The Ninety-sixth Session of the Council was opened publicly on the 22nd January, when the matters mentioned below came under review. With one exception they were not of a controversial nature and the action of the Council consisted in receiving the reports and recommendations and approving them or passing a resolution to meet the circumstances of each case.

FISCAL COMMITTEE.

The report on the Sixth Session of the Fiscal Committee is contained in Document C. 540, M. 226, and this was accompanied by a report by the representative of Sweden, who acts as Rapporteur to the Council on the subject. The Fiscal Committee devoted a considerable part of the time allotted to its Sixth Session to consideration of the question of fiscal evasion, a matter on which the Assembly of 1936 passed a resolution. The conclusions of the committee are of considerable interest, and its plan for combating fiscal fraud by requiring a country in which interest is paid to a non-resident to notify the Government of the country in which the recipient of the interest lives, is an attempt to meet the position. The plan has its advantages and its disadvantages, which the committee has frankly discussed. Under the resolution of the Council the plan is to be submitted to Governments with a request to notify the Secretary-General whether they are prepared to enter into an agreement