

1937.
NEW ZEALAND.

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

REPORT OF THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE DOMINION OF NEW ZEALAND ON THE SEVENTEENTH ASSEMBLY OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS, HELD AT GENEVA IN THE YEAR 1936.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

SEVENTEENTH ASSEMBLY OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

SIR,—
New Zealand Government Offices,
415 Strand, London, W.C. 2, 19th November, 1936.

I have the honour to inform you that, in company with Sir James Parr as a delegate, with Mr. C. A. Berendsen and Mr. R. M. Campbell as substitute delegates, and Sir Cecil Day and Mr. C. A. Knowles in the capacity of advisers, I attended the Seventeenth Session of the Assembly of the League of Nations which opened at Geneva on the 21st September, 1936. In this my first direct association with the activities of the League I was fortunate in being able to draw upon the extensive knowledge of procedure gained by my colleague Sir James Parr, whose long experience of the varied operations of the League proved of great value. In this connection it is fitting also that I should mention that Mr. C. A. Knowles, in addition to his role as Adviser, was also appointed Secretary to the delegation. His detailed knowledge of the system under which the League performs its functions is probably unrivalled among delegations, for he has attended every Assembly but one since the League's formation seventeen years ago.

It would be difficult to assess accurately or concisely the general feeling of the delegates who had gathered to take part in the Assembly's discussions. There was, however, even to the most casual observer, little room for doubt that the shadow cast by the recent great failure of the League in the Italian-Abyssinian dispute had produced a marked waning of confidence and an atmosphere amounting almost to gloomy foreboding. The President's reference in his opening speech to a year "crucial beyond all others in the destinies of mankind" accurately reflected the thought present in many minds. The League had been tried and had been found wanting. Was it any wonder, therefore, that among the delegates were many who doubted whether the Covenant, reformed or unreformed, could be made to work effectively? The world was yearning for peace, yet the nations were arming with an almost feverish haste, dominated by a fear which seemed to paralyse the will to bring about peace.

On this, as on other occasions, much attention was naturally focussed upon the attitude of the Great Powers towards the question of the reform of the League. Of the fifty-four States members (excluding Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Paraguay, all of which had recently given notice of withdrawal from the League to take effect two years from the date of such notice) only eighteen had forwarded to the Secretary-General prior to the opening of the Assembly on the 21st September, 1936, proposals for such reform in response to the recommendation adopted by the Assembly on the 4th July last. These were—

Argentina.	Hungary.	Peru.
Colombia.	Iraq.	Poland.
Denmark.	Latvia.	Sweden.
Estonia.	Lithuania.	Switzerland.
Finland.	New Zealand.	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.
France.	Norway.	Uruguay.

The Governments of the above-mentioned States in general expressed appreciation of the value of the League and a desire to ensure its maintenance; but, as regards its future *role*, the obligations under the Covenant, and the methods to be adopted in order to secure more effective results, considerable divergence of opinion was in evidence, as will be seen from Document C. 376, M. 247, 1936, VII.