

It was agreed that this Committee should be empowered to invite to take part in its discussions, during the consideration of any given proposal, any other member of the League whose opinions it might seem desirable to ascertain.

As to the terms of reference of this limited Committee of twenty-eight members, the General Commission in its draft report recalled that these were defined in the two texts already adopted by the Assembly—namely, the recommendation of the 4th July, 1936, inviting Governments to submit proposals, and the Resolutions of the 8th October, then under discussion. Furthermore, it followed from the latter resolution that the limited Committee would take the place of the Committee of all the Members of the League appointed by the Assembly's resolution of the 25th September, 1931, and also of the Special Committee appointed by the Council to study the question of the prohibition, in virtue of the provisions of the Covenant, of the supply of arms and war material to belligerents. The Commission agreed that it would be highly desirable that the Governments of States Members of the League which had not yet made known their views on the problems to be dealt with, either by written proposals (in accordance with the Assembly's recommendation of the 4th July, 1936) or in the speeches of their delegates in the Assembly, should forward to the Secretary-General any proposals they might desire to submit. These would be examined and classified by the Secretary-General.

With a view to seeking universality as, in their opinion, the best guarantee for the efficacy and success of the League of Nations, the Chilean Government had submitted a proposal that, either directly through diplomatic channels or by the convening of a diplomatic conference, the views of States who are not members of the League should be ascertained. To this suggestion the General Commission could not agree, on the ground that it was for the Members of the League themselves, in the first place, to study the problems connected with the question of the application of the Covenant. One such problem was that of universality to which various Governments had referred. The point raised by the Chilean delegation and other delegations which shared its view might, it seemed to the General Commission, be met by the fact that the limited Committee would certainly have to consider this question and possibly to examine the appropriate methods for ascertaining the views of non-Member States. The proposal of the Chilean delegation and any other proposal to the same effect would thus be considered by that Committee.

Finally, the draft report of the General Commission concluded with a resolution, for despatch to the Assembly which, after referring to the decision to set up the limited Committee, stated that—

“The Committee will as soon as possible draw up a report, which will be forwarded to the Governments of the Members of the League.”

It seemed to me that the adoption of this final paragraph as it stood might, and probably would, result in the postponement of further discussion of the important questions involved until the next ordinary meeting of the Assembly twelve months hence. I therefore thought it my duty to the New Zealand Government to express concern at this possibility and to ask that consideration be given to the inclusion in the Resolution of a clause empowering the Committee to recommend that the Assembly should be convened as soon as possible after the Committee's report is made available in order to ensure something definite being done without the delay of another year. Several of the delegates associated themselves with this attitude, including the delegate of Norway, who submitted a proposal in support of it. Eventually, the view was accepted and as a consequence the following addition was made to the paragraph above quoted—

“The Committee shall be authorized to propose a special session of the Assembly, should it be considered advisable to do so.”

This met the main point I had raised.

The subject was further dealt with on the 10th October, when the Assembly adopted the General Commission's Resolution (quoted in Document A. 83), which reads as follows:—

“The Assembly—

“Recalling its recommendation of 4th July, 1936, and its resolution adopted on 8th October, 1936 :

“Adopts the foregoing report ; and

“Decides to set up the committee proposed in this report to study all the proposals which have been, or may be, made by Governments regarding the application of the principles of the Covenant and the problems connected therewith.

“On the basis of this study, the Committee will prepare a report, as soon as possible, indicating the definite provisions, the adoption of which it recommends with a view to giving practical effect to the above-mentioned recommendation of 4th July, 1936.

“This report shall be submitted to the Governments of the States Members of the League of Nations to serve as a basis for the decisions to be taken in this matter.

“The Committee shall be authorized to propose a special session of the Assembly, should it consider it advisable to do so.”

On the same day at a preliminary meeting of the Committee itself it was decided on the suggestion of the United Kingdom delegate, that the 7th December should be the date on which this Committee of twenty-eight members should meet at Geneva in order to commence its study of the problems, in the light of proposals already made by Governments, or of views expressed in the Assembly by their delegates, and of any others which may be received prior to that date.