

FINANCIAL COMMITTEE.

The Council had already decided to give the Finance Committee the same status as that possessed by other technical Committees of the League, and it now remained for the Rapporteur on Financial Questions, the representative of Sweden, to propose the persons to be invited to serve as full members or substitute members. The Rapporteur's list of names was accepted by the Council (see Document C. 443, 1937), and the newly constituted Committee will serve to the end of 1939.

CONSTITUTION, PROCEDURE, AND PRACTICE OF COMMITTEES OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS: REFORM OF THE COMMUNICATIONS AND TRANSIT ORGANIZATION.

There had been differences of opinion in regard to the composition of the Communications and Transit Organization, and negotiations with a view to their elimination have been proceeding. The papers bearing on the subject are Documents C. 253, 1937, VIII, and C. 391, 1937, the former showing how the reform of the Organization is proceeding. All that it is necessary to say here is that the Rapporteur, the representative of France, wished to refer the whole matter to a Council Committee consisting of the representatives of the United Kingdom, France, Poland, Roumania, and Belgium, which would draw up an agreement for submission to the Council. The Rapporteur's proposal was accepted. His report is Document C. 457, 1937.

TECHNICAL COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS AND CHINA.

The Council had before it a report by the Chairman of the Council Committee for Technical Collaboration with China on the work of the Committee's Eighth Session. It is a report on a request made by the Government of China for the allocation of all the credits available for technical collaboration between the League and China in the Budget of 1937, and in that to be voted for 1938, for use in the prevention and control of epidemics and the general removal of the civilian population and refugees. The Chinese Government proposed itself to provide money towards the expenses involved, and suggested 160,000 Chinese dollars. On the terms of the report there is no need to enter. It is sufficient to say that the Committee of the Council recommended the provision for the purpose of the funds available, and requested the Council to consider whether it would not be desirable to invite the Assembly to increase considerably the credits that it was customary to vote each year for technical collaboration with China.

One of the results of the operations of the Japanese forces which have invaded China has been the mass movement of the population on a considerable scale, with the attendant risk of the spread of epidemics. As the President said in his opening remarks, the Council Committee was not able to express an opinion as to the means of arresting the danger. But the danger was serious, the task involved immense, and the money available on so modest a scale that that in itself was an argument for concentration of action. In the debate which followed, general support for the proposal was forthcoming, although it was realized that on the subject of finance it was for the Assembly to take decisions. A passage in the Polish delegate's speech is worthy of consideration:

"It might be wise to consider whether it would not be better for the League of Nations to refrain from increasing the number of its organizations dealing with more or less humanitarian activities, and give a grant instead to organizations such as the Red Cross, whose primary task it was to deal with problems of support and assistance in the case of big epidemics or disasters. It was a point worth considering in view of the political character attaching to any action by the League, even though such action might be purely philanthropic. In that connection he particularly urged the Secretary-General to take steps to prevent the League organizations which were going to deal with this problem from going outside the purely technical limits of their activity. That might help to avoid certain interpretations which had been put in the past on the technical activities of the League in painful circumstances."

The representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics suggested that the Council must make sure that the League would be assisting China: if it were left to the individual decisions of Governments it would not be known what assistance had been given, or, indeed, whether any assistance had been given at all.

I said that the report before us spoke not only of the existence of disease, but of the possibility of the spread of epidemics, and that the money available at the moment would not go far in dealing with the situation. As to the suggestion that action by the Council on the lines of the report might have a political interpretation, I did not share that view. To endeavour to arrest the spread of an epidemic would certainly assist the Chinese, but such action would at the same time assist other peoples, for the danger of epidemics crossing the frontiers was very considerable. "If the League was to justify its existence at all, it should throw all possible weight into the effort to prevent the spread of the epidemic."

The Council decided to transmit the report to the Assembly, and the Assembly's action thereon will be described in my report on the deliberations of that body.