

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE UNIFICATION OF PRIVATE LAW (ROME).

The current work of this Institute, one of the League's organs located in a centre other than Geneva, was noted in the First Committee. Its scope will be sufficiently indicated by mentioning subjects, all relating to draft uniform laws or legal practice, that are being dealt with in some form or other: Civil liability of motorists and compulsory insurance of motorists; innkeepers' liability; sales (international trade being involved); contracts between absent persons and contracts concluded by agents; enforcement of maintenance obligations abroad; international loan contracts; assistance to indigent foreigners; protection of authors' rights, and establishing a standard publishers' contract.

The Assembly, at the First Committee's suggestion, decided that the work of the Institute shall be placed on the Assembly's agenda every year. The First Committee and the Assembly also looked to the Institute for collaboration in the work that forms the subject of the next succeeding paragraphs in this report (Document A. 64, 1937, V).

STATUS OF WOMEN.

The persistence of many women's international organizations, anxious that women's status should be discussed and national progress in this connection brought under comparative review at the League of Nations, was amply rewarded in 1937. The subject was given by far the greatest part of the time of the First Committee, a body which, like all the main Committees of the Assembly, includes representatives of all States members of the League.

Representatives of fifteen Governments, New Zealand being one, in September, 1936, requested that the whole question of the status of women be included in the agenda of the next ordinary session of the Assembly. This request being granted, the way was open for a general discussion. It was facilitated by the communications from Governments and women's international organizations received in 1936 and 1937 (League Documents A. 33, 1936, V; A. 14, 1937, V; A. 14 (a), 1937, V; A. 14 (b) (c), (d), 1937, V). Reference to these and to the record of discussions in the First Committee will show the diversity of conditions in different countries and, not less striking, the substantial progress that is being made towards the goal of full equality of the sexes. It is needless for me here to cover the ground in detail.

"Is the matter one that concerns the League of Nations?" was a first question raised—or, if it was not abruptly asked at Geneva, it may properly suggest itself. The French representative's reply, "The League has the right to say that any matter of human interest concerns it directly, and that nothing which affects mankind could be regarded as being outside its sphere of action", if it expresses a sentiment to which no exception will be taken, leaves unanswered the reasonable question as to what precisely the League might do to further the no doubt admirable aspirations of the women's international organizations. Nor, it must be admitted, did the prolonged discussions in the First Committee very usefully answer the question. Do they not rather confirm the impression that for the most part the problems that are raised call for attention in each country separately rather than in Geneva?

It is, on the other hand, fairly arguable that the League of Nations can properly function as a clearing-house for the exchange of information on this as on other matters of universal but mainly domestic concern, and that periodically a review of such matters by the Assembly and its Committees is justified by its bearing on action taken in various countries.

A due balance between the latter view and that which would underline the modest rôle of the League in matters of domestic concern is struck by the resolution recommended by the First Committee and accepted by the Assembly. This recognizes that the collecting and publishing of full information is the extent of the League's possible contribution, that the services of existing organs of the League should mainly be used in so doing, and that there should be consultation with women's international organizations as the bodies most anxious and most competent to advance the cause. The text of the resolution follows:—

"The Assembly:—

"(1) Having regard to the information concerning the question of the legal status of women, more particularly the political and civil status, which has been collected by the Secretary-General in accordance with the resolution of the Assembly adopted on September 27th, 1935;

"(2) In view of the fact that in general the trend is for law to develop in the direction of equality between the sexes:

"(3) Considering it to be desirable that a comprehensive study should be prepared and published giving full information on the legal status enjoyed by women in the various countries of the world as the result of the provisions of national law and the application of these provisions;

"(4) Considering that, by its resolution of 27th September, 1935, the Assembly recognized 'that the question of conditions of employment, whether of men or women, is a matter which properly falls within the sphere of the International Labour Organization,' and expressed the hope that that Organization 'will, in accordance with its normal procedure, undertake an examination of those aspects of the problem within its competence—namely, the question of equality under labour legislation—and that it will, in the first place, examine the question of legislation which effects discriminations, some of which may be detrimental to women's right to work';

"(5) Considering that the International Labour Organization is engaged in the study contemplated by the Assembly's resolution and that the comprehensive study now in view should not cover matters which have been recognized to fall within the scope of the International Labour Organization;