

The Second Committee had as the basis of its proceedings the reports I have already cited, and some others. These others included (i) a report on exchange control, submitted by a Committee composed of members of the Economic and the Financial Committees; (ii) a report on the structure and functions of the Economic and Financial Organizations. They are, of course, available for reference amongst the League's publications, and I need not even summarize them here. I draw attention also to the preliminary memorandum prepared by Mr. N. F. Hall for the League's Economic Committee on "Measures of a National or International Character for Raising the Standard of Living." A platitude though it may be, as Mr. Hall conceded, the constant need "to approach economic problems by way of the standard of living of the mass of the community" surely deserves the emphasis that Mr. Hall gives it, if only because emergency measures and what often pass under the vague term of "planning" or rehabilitation are so apt to lack any clearly rational purpose. The memorandum is a corrective to that common error.

For a summary of the Second Committee's work on general economic and financial questions I cannot, I think, do better than reproduce verbatim the four resolutions recommended by it and duly adopted by the Assembly:—

"I. The Assembly—

"Recognizing that the political events of recent months and the recession in general economic activity which has involved a fall in the price of primary products render it difficult for the time being to pursue a concerted policy towards the relaxation of exchange control contemplated by the last Assembly;

"Viewing with concern the recession in economic activity from which almost all countries are suffering:

"(1) Urges all Governments, when considering the measures to be adopted to stimulate economic activity, to ensure that the measures enforced will not create such disturbances in other countries as to intensify the general depression and thus defeat the very object for which they were introduced;

"(2) Urges Governments to take all possible steps to promote international trade by the relaxation of restrictive measures such as quotas and excessive tariffs, and by the conclusion of bilateral commercial treaties based on the most-favoured-nation principle, and in general that of non-discriminatory treatment;

"(3) Urges those Governments which enforce a system of exchange control to take all appropriate measures towards its relaxation, and, in this connection, draws their special attention to the closing paragraphs of the document laid before the Assembly entitled 'Report on Exchange Control,' and urges all countries, when concluding bilateral treaties with such Governments, to help them to the best of their ability to effect such relaxation.

"II. The Assembly—

"Considering that demographic problems play an important part both in the national economies of the various countries and in the general economy of the world;

"Recognizing that the economic aspects of demographic problems have hitherto been insufficiently studied:

"Requests the Council to constitute a special Committee of Experts to study demographic problems, and especially their connection with the economic, financial, and social situation, and to submit a report on the subject, which may be of practical value to Governments in the determination of their policies;

"Expresses the hope that a place or places will be reserved on the said Committee for the experts of countries interested in the problem which are not members of the League of Nations.

"III. The Assembly—

"Recognizing that the collection, analysis, and dissemination of information relating to economic and social policies and experience can contribute materially to raising the general level of human well-being:

"(1) Requests the Co-ordination Committee to keep constantly in mind the bearing of the whole economic and financial work of the League on the fundamental problem of the standard of living;

"(2) Requests the Economic Committee to consider the advisability of maintaining for another year its sub-committee on this subject, in order that definite proposals for the further prosecution of this work may be laid before the Assembly of 1939;

"(3) Requests the Economic and Financial Organization—

"(a) To extend its inquiry into agricultural credits, within the limits of the budgetary provisions available, to countries that may consider such an inquiry useful, and in the first instance to the Argentine and Uruguay;

"(b) To study methods of providing medium-term credit to industry;

"(c) To undertake a study of the causes which have led to the harmful deforestation and soil erosion of certain areas, and of the measures which Governments have undertaken to check and counteract these tendencies;