

*Proposed Amendments to Articles 3, 12, 13, and 15 of the Covenant.*—The report on the deliberations of the committee is numbered A. 119 (1), and it was considered by the Assembly on the 4th October. Briefly, the amendments contemplated were,—

- (1.) A provision in the Covenant itself of a fixed annual date for the meeting of the Assembly ;
- (2.) A provision making it obligatory for the members of the League to establish permanent Commissions of Arbitration and Conciliation ; and
- (3.) The suppression of the word “generally” in paragraph 2 of Article 13, thus strengthening the obligation to resort to arbitration in certain cases.

As will be seen, the committee recommended that none of these amendments should be adopted, although it approved of the principle of conciliation as being in conformity with the Covenant, and suggested that the question should be studied by a special committee, whose report should be made available for the next Assembly. This recommendation was approved unanimously by the Assembly.

*Proposed Amendments to Articles 12, 13, 14, and 15 of the Covenant.*—The Permanent Court of International Justice having been established, it was considered advisable to amend these articles in order to provide for “judicial” settlement of disputes. The changes are shown in the committee’s report numbered A. 119 (3), and the amendments were unanimously approved by the Assembly on the 4th October.

*Proposed Amendments to Article 21 of the Covenant.*—These amendments are two in number, and were proposed—

- (1.) By China, which sought to have the words “regional understandings” eliminated ; and
- (2.) By Czecho-Slovakia, extending the scope of the article in the direction of providing for the recognition by the League of agreements making for peace between a limited number of States.

The proposal is doubtless an outcome of the treaty between Czecho-Slovakia, Roumania, and Yugo-Slavia, providing for common action in certain emergencies, which treaty the States who are parties to it claim makes for the maintenance of peace.

The second of the two amendments was rejected by the committee, not because the principle underlying it was not considered good, but because it was thought that the time had not yet arrived for a revision of the article. In consequence of this decision the amendment proposed by China was not proceeded with. At the same time the committee drew attention to the utility of agreements between members of the League tending to define or complete the engagements contained in the Covenant for the maintenance of peace, and also to the practicability of their being negotiated under the auspices of the League. In these views the Assembly concurred on the 4th October.

*Proposed Elimination of Article 10 of the Covenant.*—The elimination of this article, you will recollect, was proposed by the Canadian Delegation last year. The proposal is based on the assumption that the article provides that the boundaries of a State, as constituted at the time the Covenant was signed, can never be altered even in the interests of justice, and that it was the duty of every member of the League to go to the assistance of any State also a member, in order that the *status quo* might be preserved. I understand that this article was the object of much criticism when the Bill providing for the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles was before the Canadian Parliament. The Bill became law, but it was understood at the time that the Government would do its best to obtain either the elimination or the amendment of the article. The committee’s report, Document No. A. 119 (6), which came before the Assembly on the 4th October, contains the views on Article 21 of the Committee on Amendments to the Covenant, together with an interpretative resolution. The latter, however, was not accepted by the First Committee, which decided to recommend the Assembly to postpone the examination of the proposal until next session, and a resolution to this effect was passed by the Assembly.

*Protection of Minorities.*—The committee’s report on Professor Gilbert Murray’s proposal that the Council should be invited to form a permanent Commission to deal with complaints addressed to the League under the minorities clauses of the Treaties of Peace is numbered A. 163. Provision for the consideration of complaints having already been made by the Council, however, Professor Murray withdrew his proposal.

*Interpretation of and proposed Amendment to Article 18 of the Covenant.*—This, you will recollect, is the article which aims at putting an end to secret treaties. Its interpretation was considered by a committee of jurists, whose report was presented to the First Committee. The committee’s recommendations, proposed amendment of the article to meet the recommendations, and series of regulations will be found in Document I. 25 (1), and gave rise to an animated discussion in the Assembly on the 5th October. The proposed amendment to the article is to the effect that “it shall not be obligatory to submit for registration instruments of a purely technical or administrative nature which have no bearing on political international relations, nor instruments which consist merely of technical regulations defining without in any way modifying an instrument already registered, or which are only designed to enable such an instrument to be carried into effect.”

It will be noted that the term “instruments of a purely technical or administrative nature” has not been defined, and many members were in consequence dubious as to the value of the amendment. It was evident that unanimity would not be forthcoming, and further consideration of the amendment was adjourned in the following resolution moved by Mr. Balfour :—

“The Assembly, taking note of the proposal for the amendment of Article 18 contained in the report of Committee No. 1, decides to adjourn the further consideration of this amendment until the Third Assembly, it being understood that in the meantime members of the League are at liberty to interpret their obligations under Article 18 in conformity with the proposed amendments.”