

No. 6.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Governors-General of Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, New Zealand, the Union of South Africa, and the Irish Free State, and the Governor of Newfoundland.

[Telegram.]

19TH JANUARY. Please inform your Prime Minister that following statement will be issued to Press here to-morrow for publication on morning of 21st January :—

Begins : The correspondence with the Governments of the Dominions and India as to the possibility of arranging for a special meeting of the Imperial Conference in March to discuss the questions arising out of the Protocol for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes indicates that the exigencies of Parliamentary and other business render it impossible for a representative meeting to be held in London at the time suggested. In the circumstances the only possible course seems to be to endeavour by correspondence to arrive at a common conclusion on the issues involved, and His Majesty's Government have informed the Governments of the Dominions and India accordingly.

—AMERY.

No. 7.

The Governor-General of the Union of South Africa to the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

[Telegram.]

26TH JANUARY. Your telegram of 15th January.* Geneva Protocol. Following for Prime Minister from my Prime Minister :—

Begins : Ministers after careful consideration of the proposed Protocol regret to have to inform British Government that they feel themselves unable to accept the same or to recommend its acceptance by Parliament. The reasons which have led Ministers to arrive at this conclusion may without going into details be stated as follows :—

1. It seems generally admitted, and Ministers share that feeling, that the League of Nations as at present existing, with America, Germany, and Russia standing aloof, cannot over any length of time achieve its great and primary object of ensuring peaceable world, and must, unless these great nations become members, necessarily as time goes on assume more and more the character of political alliance. To accept Protocol, Ministers feel, would be only to make it more difficult for countries at present outside the League, notably America, to become members, and would consequently contribute very materially to making it impossible for League to attain its real object and so give an additional impulse to the diversion of its activities in the direction of an alliance having as its object the maintenance of a balance of power.

2. It is quite impossible even approximately to calculate or tell in advance what are going to be the obligations and consequences direct and indirect which may accrue from an acceptance of the Protocol or what may be the many and various international complications to which it may give rise.

3. By accepting the Protocol the character of the League will be so modified that no nation being a member of it, subject to the provisions of the Protocol, can rightly be said any longer to retain its full measure of sovereign rights. This, Ministers deem a matter of very grave concern, in view more particularly of indefinite character of the obligations which are sought to be imposed and of the practical consequences it may have for the weaker nations not possessing influence derived from power to add prestige and weight to their interpretation of the obligations thus assumed.

4. Ministers feel convinced that while public feeling in the Union may be taken as sincerely in favour of a real and genuine League of Nations, it is generally felt that the League, as it is at present, has not yet arrived at that stage, and that to have obligations of the Union under Covenant extended any further is not in the interests of this country.

5. In matters of such a grave nature as the relationship and obligations of nations over against the League professedly instituted with a view to the guardianship of the peace of the world, but under present conditions more especially the protector of the circumstances and requirements of particular nations and countries Ministers feel they are called upon to exercise particular vigilance and to bestow particular attention upon the peculiar position and interests of South Africa, and are of the opinion that these interests demand that no international obligations should be entered into which may entail a participation and interference by the Union in matters which do not, or only remotely, concern her and whereby her real and proper interests may eventually be jeopardized.

Ministers have considered question as to making suggestions which may serve as amending proposals to the provisions of the Protocol. They find, however, that, from the very nature of the circumstances which have necessitated the drafting of the Protocol, no amendment

* No. 5.