

The Assembly then proceeded to elect its six Vice-Presidents in accordance with the Rules of Procedure, and the following, likewise a prior choice, were elected: Viscount Ishii (Japan); M. Briand (France); M. Zumeta (Venezuela); Mr. Austen Chamberlain (British Empire); Prince Arfa-ed-Dowleh (Persia); M. Duca (Roumania).

DEBATE ON THE REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE COUNCIL.

On the 9th September the Assembly began the debate on the Report on the Work of the Council and the Secretariat and on the Report on the Work of the Permanent Court of International Justice (Documents A. 7, A. 7A, and A. 7B).

The debate was long, several questions being dealt with, but on the whole it lacked interest. Last year's protocol was present in the minds of all, and a few tears were shed over its fate; but the Assembly was faced with the knowledge that to at least one of the great Powers (Great Britain) the protocol was not acceptable, at any rate in its present form, and that many of the smaller Powers disliked the obligations placed upon them in applying sanctions. Mr. Chamberlain remarked in the course of his speech, in which he made a comparison between the Anglo-Saxon and Latin points of view, that the protocol was concerned more with the punishment of the aggressor than with the prevention of aggression; and to the representatives of States who were disappointed with the progress made, M. Motta, representing Switzerland, and speaking with the authority of one who has attended every Assembly, said that the Fifth Assembly had not voted for the protocol, but had merely recommended Governments to give it earnest consideration. This reminder was needed, for it cannot be made too clear that any resolution binding Governments to accept the protocol would have met with the keenest opposition. Interest having shifted from Geneva to London, Paris, and Berlin, the Assembly knew that it could do little but mark time, nevertheless the representatives of several countries, disappointed with results and not content with a "wait and see" policy, introduced resolutions concerned with arbitration, security, and disarmament, which were referred to the proper committees, and will be dealt with more fully later.

The principal Chinese delegate appealed for the reconsideration of existing treaties with various Powers, especially those possessing extra-territorial rights in China, and submitted a resolution, the wording of which was changed again and again, but finally the following one was submitted to the Assembly at its meeting on the 22nd September and passed:—

"The Assembly, having heard with deep interest the Chinese delegate's suggestion regarding the possibility of considering, according to the spirit of the Covenant, the existing international conditions of China, having learned with satisfaction that a Conference of the interested States is soon to take place in China to consider the questions involved, expresses its hope that a satisfactory solution may be reached at an early date." (See Document A. 60 (3).)

A representative of France introduced a resolution providing for preparatory work with a view of convening an International Conference to "examine economic difficulties which stand in the way of the restoration of general prosperity, and to discover the best methods of surmounting these difficulties and of avoiding disputes." This resolution was referred to the Second Committee.

Other resolutions introduced in the course of the debate and referred to the appropriate committees will be dealt with in that part of this report which relates to the work of the committees.

The general debate was concluded on the 16th September, and the members of the Assembly were then able to devote more time to the work of the committees.

As you know, the League has two official languages, English and French, but in practice the languages are of unequal weight. French predominates, and a knowledge of French, if not a necessity, is a desideratum and a great help in following the proceedings. From the first there has been a tendency, and occasionally a deliberate attempt, to relegate English to a back seat. On the 11th September M. Paul Boncour, a representative of France and a most effective speaker, delivered an oration, which was followed with keen interest and enjoyment by a crowded hall. When he finished the hour was late, and the President suggested that, as an immediate interpretation was not possible, an English translation of the speech should be circulated to Delegations. Mr. Chamberlain, in agreeing with the President's proposal as an exceptional procedure not to be regarded as a precedent, emphasized the equality of English and French. I fully endorse Mr. Chamberlain's attitude.

Amongst the resolutions proposed in the course of the debate on the report of the preceding year's work of the League was the following one made by the Chinese delegate:—

"It is desirable that the Assembly in electing the six non-permanent members of the Council should make its choice with due consideration for the main geographical divisions of the world, the great ethnical groups, the different religious divisions, the various types of civilization, and the chief sources of wealth."

This resolution was not referred to a committee, but was brought forward for consideration in the full Assembly at its meeting on the 24th September, and was passed in the form of a recommendation. The debate was a short one. During the course of it reference was made to a resolution of the 1921 Assembly that "non-permanent members of the Council should in future be elected according to a system of rotation for a fixed period." The same year the following amendment to Article 4 of the Covenant was voted: "The Assembly shall fix by a two-thirds majority the rules dealing with the election of the non-permanent members of the Council, and particularly such regulations as relate to their term of office and the conditions of re-eligibility." This amendment has not received ratifications to the number required to bring it into operation.