

PROPOSAL TO AMEND ARTICLE 18 OF THE COVENANT.

A few sentences will suffice for the proposal made by the Peruvian Government, that the following paragraph be added to Article 18 of the Covenant:—

“The Secretariat of the League of Nations may not register any Treaty of Peace imposed by force as a consequence of a war undertaken in violation of the Pact of Paris. The League of Nations shall consider as null and void any stipulations which it may contain, and shall render every assistance in restoring the *status quo* destroyed by force.”

This proposal was studied by the Committee on Arbitration and Security, and also by the Committee of Eleven appointed to consider amendments to the Covenant designed to harmonize it with the Pact of Paris, but the Third Committee did not consider it desirable to examine the question, and on the 30th September it so reported to the Assembly. (Document A. 72.)

DRAFT CONVENTION ON FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.

It was the Government of Finland which some years ago proposed that the League should render financial assistance to any member menaced by war. The question had been exhaustively dealt with in the past, particularly in 1929, when a convention which had been drafted by the Financial Committee of the League was under examination by the Third Committee. The Assembly last year directed that the Financial Committee, in conjunction with the Committee on Arbitration and Security, should draw up a text which could be submitted to Governments for consideration. It is known that after the close of the Tenth Assembly the question received the close attention of a number of Governments, so that when the Committee on Arbitration and Security met in April and May last it had before it not only a text, but a number of suggestions from various Governments. These will be found in Document A. 15, whilst Document A. 11 contains the text for which the Tenth Assembly had asked and a useful introductory note.

As to the principle itself—to arrange for financial assistance to a State wrongfully menaced by war, with the guarantees of States members of the League—no one disputes that it is fully worthy of thought and consideration. It was, however, the method of application of the principle which had to be determined, and the Committee therefore considered the draft article by article.

I will not attempt to summarize the debate, but Article 35 was inserted in order to meet the attitude of those Governments which, although favourable to the principle of the convention, would not be prepared to accept its obligations until a Disarmament Convention had been framed and put into force. An attempt was made in the course of the discussion of the Third Committee to obtain the deletion of the paragraph and to substitute a paragraph providing for a committee of the High Contracting Parties meeting immediately after the General Disarmament Conference, in order to determine the date on which the Convention for Financial Assistance should come into force. The Italian delegate, in advocating the retention of the article, stated that in his opinion Governments could not bear the burden of guaranteeing financial assistance unless the other burden of armaments were diminished. The British delegate maintained that the suppression of the article would put the whole convention in danger, since, in that event, many countries would not sign.

After an adjournment the British, French, German, Italian, and Netherlands delegations submitted a new text with a view of obviating difficulties of interpretation. In introducing it Lord Cecil stated that it was the Council's duty, under Article 8 of the Covenant, to formulate plans for disarmament, and that (under Article 35) the convention would not come into force until the signatories had accepted such plans. The amended text met with more general acceptance, and was finally adopted.

The report of the Third Committee to the Assembly is Document A. 70. It contains not only the text of the convention as drawn up by the committee, but a useful commentary. The report was passed by the Assembly at its meeting on the 29th September, when it was decided to open the convention immediately for signature by all members of the League.

As stated earlier in this report, the representatives of a number of countries, including Great Britain, signed the convention.

MODEL TREATY TO STRENGTHEN THE MEANS OF PREVENTING WAR.

In 1929 the Assembly resolved that the draft model treaty should be sent to the Committee on Arbitration and Security with a view of considering the possibility of establishing a draft general convention on the lines of the treaty. The Committee on Arbitration and Security, which held a session in April and May, 1930, when examining the draft, was confronted with problems of great difficulty; indeed, some members of the Committee doubted the wisdom of converting a model treaty into a general convention. Various points of view held in regard to some of the problems were met, but so divergent were the views on other problems that the draft convention which was ultimately produced by the Committee on Arbitration and Security contains alternative texts of two articles. These alternatives, known as A and B, concern the degree of compulsion to be exercised in regard to military measures recommended by the Council, and the supervision of those measures; and the vexed question of sanctions. In short, the view of certain delegates was that the convention should make contractual the moral obligation contained in Article 11 of the Covenant, but should not provide for an extension of sanctions under Article 16 of the Covenant. This view is represented by alternative B. Other delegates, however, sought a rigid formula, designed to meet all conceivable contingencies. This view is embodied in alternative A.