

I must admit to considerable surprise at Viscount Cecil's statement that all competent authorities agreed that the number of slaves in the world to-day ran into millions, and that he believed personally that there were at least five million. While this certainly strengthens greatly the case for doing something of a definite nature, if possible, to improve the situation, I fail to see that the setting-up of a League Commission is likely to effect this end. I am afraid that the only effective action the League can take is by informing public opinion and focusing it on the States concerned, who are by no means insusceptible to the condemnation of their fellows, though the age-old customs die hard. The documents on this subject, besides A. 77 already referred to, are A. 13; A. 13 (a), (b), and (c); A. 17, A. 17 (a) and (b); and A. 54.

MINORITIES.

Though not of direct concern to New Zealand, by far the most important as well as the most controversial subject dealt with by the Committee, from the world standpoint, was that of the treatment of minorities. Any one who followed the three lengthy debates in the committee on this subject could hardly have failed to be impressed by the depth of feeling evinced in the speeches by the representatives of the two contending schools of thought, despite the efforts made to express them in as conciliatory a form as possible. On the one hand, the representatives of Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Bulgaria pleaded for greater consideration to be extended to those of their fellow-countrymen now forming minorities in the so-called "minority States," and for improvement in the procedure with regard to minority petitions; and, on the other hand, the representatives of these States (Roumania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia) strongly resented the insinuation that their treatment of minorities gave ground for any legitimate criticism, and condemned the suggestion that anything further should be done to encourage minorities to believe that they possessed special privileges exempting them from loyal obedience to the laws of the States in which they are now incorporated. The spokesmen for the minorities admitted that the alterations in procedure regarding minority petitions adopted by the Council during its Madrid session, about a year ago, had effected an improvement from their point of view, but urged that the bulk of petitions sent in were still rejected by the Secretariat as "unreceivable" on technical and other grounds, and that, of those few which *did* reach the Council, only an infinitesimal proportion were decided in favour of the petitioners, so that the feeling had become prevalent among the minorities that it was useless to send in petitions, which might only lead to increased severity towards the petitioners. It was generally felt by the members of the committee not directly interested that it would be, at any rate, premature at present to alter procedure so recently adopted and which admittedly had effected some improvement. At the same time, there is no getting away from the fact that the bitter feelings kept alive in Central and Eastern Europe by this question constitute an everpresent threat to peace, and are therefore of concern to the whole world.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

THOMAS M. WILFORD,

High Commissioner for New Zealand.

The Right Honourable the Prime Minister, Wellington, New Zealand.

Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, not given; printing (415 copies), £18 10s.

By Authority: W. A. G. SKINNER, Government Printer, Wellington.—1931.

Price 9d.]