

SIXTH COMMITTEE.

PROTECTION OF MINORITIES.

This subject was sent to the Sixth Committee for consideration on a motion moved by the German delegation in the Assembly on the 10th September.

Petitions in connection with minorities are dealt with by a committee of members of the Council. This committee meets during the session of the Council, and this year there were meetings between the sessions. The German delegate on the committee entered a plea for more frequent meetings of the Minorities Committee, and asked that it should examine more in detail the questions remitted to it, and also that greater publicity should be given to the result of the examination. The debate gave an opportunity for an exchange of views and a restatement of the position of several countries in regard to the question of minorities, but no formal motion was proposed. A brief report was sent to the Assembly, which was adopted at its meeting on the 23rd September (Document A. 67).

MANDATES.

There is little to be said under this heading. In accordance with its usual practice, the Norwegian delegation moved in the Assembly that various papers on the subject be referred to the Sixth Committee. This was done. Some speakers in the debate seized the opportunity for reaffirming the principles of the mandatory system, and specific reference was made to public-health services and to the general conditions which must be fulfilled before the mandate regime can be brought to an end in respect of a country placed under that regime, a subject which had been considered by the Permanent Mandates Commission during its twentieth session (doubtless in view of the position of Iraq). The work of the Permanent Mandates Commission was referred to in appreciative terms.

The report of the Sixth Committee (Document A. 68) came before the Assembly on the 23rd September, when the draft resolution was adopted.

SLAVERY.

As stated in the earlier part of this report, I spoke in the Assembly on the 10th September, and in the course of my speech touched upon the question of slavery. (See *Journal* of 11th September.)

It was under a resolution put forward by Sir Arthur Steel-Maitland in 1922, when acting as a representative of New Zealand, that the question of slavery was first taken up by the League, and it was as a result of such resolution that the temporary Commission was appointed to collect the facts then in existence regarding the amount of slavery in the world. And so I felt I could not ignore the special appeal to me to speak on behalf of the setting-up of a permanent bureau by the League.

Discussion was opened in committee on the 16th September by Lord Lytton (delegate of Great Britain), who said that the Slavery Convention (which had been ratified by forty countries) was not to be considered as the end of the work of the League in the matter of slavery, but only as the starting-point of its labours. It was not the purpose of the British delegation to criticize the Governments where the conditions of slavery still existed—their difficulties were recognized—it was for the League to help them to overcome those difficulties. Lord Lytton referred to the fact that year by year the British delegation had put forward the suggestion of a permanent bureau, but he did not think it opportune to repeat the proposal this year, because of the financial difficulties under which all were working, and to which the Fourth Committee had drawn attention. He remarked that an analogy had been drawn between the Permanent Slavery Bureau (which it was desired to set up) and the Permanent Mandates Commission, an analogy which was rather misleading, as the Permanent Mandates Commission was a quasi-judicial body through the medium of which the League exercised its trusteeship towards the population of mandated territories; but that would not be the character of the permanent bureau, which would be composed of experts, of men well versed in the subject, capable of reviewing facts brought forward and able to hear the views of the Governments concerned. In that sense they would be capable of helping the League on the one hand and the Governments in which slavery existed on the other. This year the British delegation proposed to bring forward a modified proposal—namely, that the temporary Slavery Commission should be reconstituted. There were a number of documents dealing with slavery which required examination by some expert body; there was the definite demand for help by the Emperor of Abyssinia; and Lord Lytton suggested that the proposal which the British delegation had made regarding a permanent bureau should itself be referred to this temporary Commission. If the usual procedure were adopted of appointing a sub-committee, he would propose that that sub-committee should invite the Council to reconstitute this temporary Commission for one year on the understanding that the expense involved therein should be reduced to the lowest possible point.

The Chairman then drew the attention of the committee to the copies of letters from the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society and from the Emperor of Abyssinia, which had been distributed at the request of the New Zealand delegate. (A. VI 5.)

The Portuguese delegate saw no reason why a permanent bureau or a temporary Commission should be in existence. He said the question before the Committee was slavery and the progress that had been made. Since last year there had been eleven further ratifications of signatures to the convention, and demands for information had come from an increasing number of States, which showed good progress. Setting up new machinery of any kind would cost money. There would be compensation for setting free slaves, as well as the cost of organizations for the benefit of enfranchised slaves: in fact, the financial requirements would be considerable. He added that anything that could be done to make the convention more effective could be done through the League itself without the help of subsidiary bodies.