

1937-38.
NEW ZEALAND.

SINO-JAPANESE CONFLICT:

REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS AT THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS AND "NINE POWER" CONFERENCE.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

New Zealand Government Offices,

415 Strand, London, W.C. 2, 9th December, 1937.

SIR,—

My report on the proceedings, at Geneva and Brussels, arising from the Sino-Japanese conflict cannot make cheerful reading. It must, too, be in a measure incomplete, for the matters that were the subject of our deliberations have unfortunately not been brought to an end. Armed conflict continues unabated as I write. Nevertheless the Conference proceedings have reached a stage at which a progress report and some comment are fitting.

The League Assembly and Council met in September, 1937, under the shadow of new hostilities, of undeclared war in China, and of prolonged hostilities and undisguised foreign intervention in Spain. The recent failure effectively to deal with aggression in Abyssinia, the earlier failure to deal with aggression in Manchuria, the consequent pessimism in many quarters as to the competence of the League at present to preserve peace, were main factors in the background. They are here mentioned but not enlarged on as germane to all discussions in Geneva and elsewhere.

Dr. Wellington Koo, the Chinese Ambassador in Paris, presented his country's case in the League Assembly and Council, and he did so with a competence and moderation that were impressive. He invoked the application of the Covenant, specifically citing Articles 10, 11, and 17. He left it to the Council to determine whether that body itself, or the Assembly, or the Advisory Committee set up under resolution of the Assembly of 24th February, 1933, should consider the matter.

The Council on the 16th September agreed that the Advisory Committee should meet at once to examine the situation to which attention had been directed by China. This Committee, it may be recalled, consisted of representatives of all States members of the League Council (New Zealand being thus included) and of certain non-Council members. Its members were Belgium, Bolivia, the United Kingdom, Canada, China, Colombia, Ecuador, France, Hungary, Iran, Latvia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Roumania, Sweden, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

The United States of America, in 1937 as in 1933, appointed a representative to the Committee on terms that can best be expressed by quoting a paragraph from the letter addressed to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations by the United States Minister to Switzerland (20th September, 1937):—

"The American Government recalls that the Advisory Committee was created subsequent to and on the basis of a major decision in the field of policy arrived at by the Assembly in regard to a matter referred by the Council to the Assembly. In the understanding of the American Government the Advisory Committee was created to aid the members of the League in concerting their action and their attitude among themselves and with non-member States for the carrying-out of policy recommended by the League. At present until the American Government is informed regarding the functions which the League will expect the Committee to perform, it is impossible for the American Government to say to what extent it will be able effectively to co-operate. In order that there may be no misunderstanding in regard to the American Government's position and no confusion or delay flowing from uncertainty, the American Government feels constrained to observe that it cannot take upon itself those responsibilities which devolve from the fact of their membership upon members of the League. It assumes that members of the League will arrive at their common decisions in regard to policy and possible courses of action by and through normal League procedure. The American Government, believing thoroughly in the principle of collaboration among States of the world seeking to bring about peaceful solutions of international conflicts, will be prepared to give careful consideration to definite proposals which the League may address to it, but it will not, however, be prepared to state its position in regard to policies or plans submitted to it in terms of hypothetical inquiry."