

Before proceeding to an account of the work of the Assembly I should make brief mention of the composition of the New Zealand delegation. I attended as sole delegate, with Mr. R. M. Campbell and Mr. C. A. Knowles as substitute delegates. The delegation was completed by the inclusion of Miss J. R. McKenzie and Miss E. M. Hannam. As first delegate I was New Zealand's representative on each Committee, and, bearing in mind the group system of meeting and the experience of my staff, nominated as substitutes for Committees 1 and 4 Mr. Knowles; for Committees 2 and 6 Mr. Campbell, and for Committees 5 and 7 Miss McKenzie. For Committee 3 Mr. Campbell or Mr. Knowles was appointed to act.

The discussion on the report on the work done by the League of Nations in 1937-38 (Document A. 6, 1938) opened on the afternoon of the 13th September. A welcome change, or rather a revival of an old custom, has been made in the Assembly *Journal*, in that it contains summaries of all speeches made in the Assembly. My necessarily brief reference to such speeches may be supplemented by a study of the pages of the *Journal*, which, until the printed verbatim record is completed, remains the only official account of the proceedings of the plenary meetings.

The first speaker was M. Sandler, Sweden's Foreign Minister, and spokesman of one of the group of northern Powers which have placed their own interpretation on certain Articles of the Covenant. He was followed by M. Patijn, Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Netherlands, which country is also included in the group just mentioned. M. Sandler made some remarks of a general nature before he dealt with the Covenant of the League, while M. Patijn's speech was devoted entirely to the Covenant. The reports of the special Committee set up by the Assembly of 1936 to study the application of the principles of the Covenant had been allocated to the Sixth Committee, and as the representatives of countries were in a position to make known in that Committee the views of their Governments, there is no need here to dissect any remarks on Covenant reform made in the course of the general debate. Perhaps the object of those who dealt with the reform of the Covenant in the general debate was to stress the importance which their Governments attached to the question, and it must be made clear that they were perfectly within their rights, since any aspect of League activity may be touched upon. We must therefore take note of M. Sandler's action in drawing the attention of the Assembly, at almost the beginning of its deliberations, to the views of his Government and of the other Governments associated with it. He quoted from the joint declaration of the seven countries whose representatives had met at Copenhagen:—

“Convinced that their countries ought to continue their co-operation in the work of the League of Nations, the Foreign Ministers wish to state that their Governments are determined for the future to keep to the course which they have drawn up for themselves by their declarations, according to which, under present conditions and the practice followed during the last years, the system of sanctions has acquired a non-obligatory character. They are of the opinion that this non-obligatory character of the sanctions applies not only to a particular group of States, but to all members of the League. They are convinced that it is in the interests of the League itself that this liberty of decision is expressly acknowledged. In this spirit they prepare for the discussion of the report put before the Assembly by the Committee of Twenty-eight.”

In answer to the question whether it would be useful or inimical for the League to allow ambiguity to exist as a result of divergencies between theory and practice, M. Sandler said it would be doing a great disservice to the League and to its future if the Assembly ignored the problem. M. Patijn, whose analysis of Article 16 and its application in theory and practice is well worth reading, reminded the Assembly that the report of the special Committee to study the application of the principles of the Covenant contained no proposals for amendment, and he added that developments were taking place and that the Covenant was amending itself. He claimed for his Government the right to decide in each particular case, and in the light of its own military situation and geographical position, whether or not it would allow the armed forces of other members of the League to pass through its territory, and he extended that right of unfettered decision to the application of Article 10.

Whilst we of New Zealand regret the negative attitude of so many Governments in connection with collective security, we cannot help appreciating the anxiety with which the question of sanctions is viewed by those countries which are near neighbours of Great Powers, including Powers which are not only no longer members of the League but are opposed to the League and much for which it stands.

Lord De La Warr spoke on behalf of the United Kingdom. His speech covered a number of matters which are in the hands of various standing Committees of the League, including trade and nutrition. He stressed the importance of securing the right type of Judge in connection with the elections to the Permanent Court of International Justice which are to take place next year. But it was that part of his speech which was devoted to the Covenant which most compelled the attention of his audience. In introducing the subject he said: “It seems clear to the Government which I have the honour to represent that an honest avowal of the limitations of the League and the