The Committee adopted its report to the Assembly on the work of the Communications and Transit Organisation between the fourteenth and fifteenth ordinary sessions of the Assembly, and the draft resolution attached thereto. The Committee unanimously declared that it did not consider a discussion of the report to be necessary in plenary session of the Assembly.


The Committee decided to empower the Chairman to appoint a Rapporteur for the work of the Health Organisation.

THIRD MEETING.

Held on Saturday, September 15th, 1934, at 4 p.m.

Chairman: M. Van Lanschot (Netherlands).


The Chairman informed the Committee that, in accordance with the decision taken by the Committee at its previous meeting, he had appointed Mr. Riddell, delegate of Canada, Rapporteur for the work of the Health Organisation between the fourteenth and fifteenth sessions of the Assembly.


M. Visoianu (Roumania), Rapporteur, submitted the draft report by the Second Committee to the Assembly on the co-operation of the Press in the organisation of peace and the draft resolution contained therein.

The Chairman read the following note by the Secretariat, which had already been distributed to the delegations:

"If the Second Committee approves the draft resolution submitted by its Rapporteur on the question of the co-operation of the Press in the organisation of peace, it will have forthwith to refer the question to the Fourth Committee, as provided in Article 16 (a) of the Financial Regulations. If a two-thirds majority of the Fourth Committee is in favour of an appropriation for this purpose, the Supervisory Commission will then have to examine the financial aspects of the matter. The appropriation should be sufficient to enable the Secretariat to lend its assistance in a further conference which might take place in 1935, on conditions similar to those on which it did so at the Madrid Conference.

"As we do not know what Government may be prepared to convene another conference, the appropriation required can only be estimated on the basis of the cost of the Madrid Conference.

"In that case, the Government of the Spanish Republic paid all the expenses of local organisation. It also paid the travelling and subsistence expenses of some members of the staff.

"On the understanding that the inviting Government would again defray the cost of organising the conference, the appropriation that would be required is estimated at 7,000 francs—viz.:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Travelling and removal expenses</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sundries</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>7,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

M. Visoianu (Roumania), Rapporteur, pointed out that, however limited the co-operation of the League Secretariat might be at future conferences, it would involve certain expenditure. The necessary credits were very small in view of the work to be accomplished. He added that the unanimity of the Second Committee would give greater weight to the draft resolution.

M. Borgbjerg (Denmark), as a member of the Government which had taken the initiative of convening the conference held in Copenhagen in January 1932, supported the Rapporteur's

---

1 The resolution was adopted by the Assembly on September 26th, 1934.
2 See report of the Committee to the Assembly (Annex 2).
proposal that, in future, the secretarial work of conferences of Government Press Bureaux and Press representatives should be carried out by its competent services.

He thought the Press was to a great extent responsible for the development of the feelings which had led to the last war. A similar responsibility was borne now by the Press, which was constantly announcing that a fresh world war was inevitable. The present development of the air and chemical technique of war should render war impossible. A choice had to be made between the destruction of European civilisation and the peaceful progress of national communities, by applying modern technical methods and advances to the development of international relations. As Minister of Public Instruction, M. Borgbjerg himself was doing all he could to place the teaching of history on a basis of truth and to endue it with a spirit of peace. He would like the Press to use its powerful influence in the same direction.

M. SIERRA (Spain), as representative of the country which had invited the Assembly to convene the last Press congress in Madrid, reminded the Committee that the starting-point for the active work undertaken in this sphere was the resolution of the thirteenth Assembly, based upon a report by Viscount Cecil. The Assembly had formally stated that means should be sought to establish the closest possible connection between the work of the League and the work of the Press, in order to prevent the spread of false information. It was the Spanish Government which on that occasion drew the Assembly’s attention to the evil effects of the dissemination of false information by the powerful means now at the disposal of the Press.

Lord Cecil’s illuminating report had pointed out that an obstacle existed in the shape of the liberty of the Press. The question arose whether the spread of false information could be avoided without affecting the liberty of the Press. The Assembly had recognised that that was an extremely difficult task. In particular, the resolution declared that a broad form of press should be maintained. The organs of the world Press, for their part, had stated that they could not consider the study of such an important problem if there was the slightest danger of the liberty of the Press being affected.

Nevertheless, the question existed. As the Danish delegate had just remarked, the great war had, to a certain extent, been the consequence of Press intrigues and campaigns. Who could say whether future international conflicts might not arise in the same way? The question, therefore, was to find some way to prevent the Press from exercising a bad influence on public opinion, without affecting the liberty of the Press.

The Copenhagen Conference had begun the study of an extremely complicated problem, and the Madrid Conference had gone into that question at length. In the resolutions adopted in Madrid, to which the Rapporteur had referred, it would be seen that the two considerations with which Lord Cecil had been concerned still existed. There was no doubt that a problem of such importance ought to be brought before the League of Nations and that the work accomplished in Madrid should be continued, even if no State issued a special invitation. The question was too serious to be lost sight of by the League, which should, on the contrary, study the best means of solving it.

Among the resolutions voted in Madrid, there were some of a general character which represented statements of principle, such as the liberty of the Press and the necessity for cooperation in order to prevent the spread of false information, while there were others relative to professional matters. In particular, the congress had voted a resolution proclaiming the necessity for establishing closer collaboration between the Government Press Bureaux and the organs representing concerns belonging to the free Press. Some of these resolutions were of very great importance, such as the establishment of a court of honour for journalists as a means of suppressing the spread of false news. Questions concerning the professional, economic and political status of foreign Press representatives had also been dealt with, together with questions as to the status of journalists as intellectual workers, questions, that was to say, connected with the work of the International Labour Organisation.

At the thirteenth Assembly, it had been proposed that the resolutions of the Assembly and the various Committees of the League should be rapidly communicated to the Press organisations by the League’s wireless station, and that means should be sought to obtain greater flexibility in the official Press organs.

All those resolutions proved the importance of the problem, and the League must certainly continue the work which had been initiated, without waiting for invitations from any State.

The Spanish delegate did not think the financial aspect of the question of the collaboration of the Press in the organisation of peace could raise the slightest difficulty in the Fourth Committee. The credit of 7,000 francs required for such a work seemed to him insignificant.

M. CASSIN (France) said that his delegation supported the resolution submitted by the Rapporteur. He pointed out that the Committee on Moral Disarmament had marked off the questions to which it could devote its attention, those relating to the Press. It could be noted with satisfaction that the questions which had not been handled by the Committee on Moral Disarmament had been treated in Madrid in a sense favourable to moral disarmament.

There was, however, a nice point which he felt he must raise. The Rapporteur and the Spanish delegate had touched on the principle of liberty of the Press. The French delegation strongly supported the liberty of the Press, but was of opinion that the less liberty enjoyed by the Press in any country, the greater was the responsibility upon the Government of that country as regards the action of the Press in arousing popular feeling.

He could not omit to mention the important work done by the Madrid Conference in respect of the desires of ex-servicemen. The Danish delegate had referred to the evils of false information. The men who had suffered physically from the evil effects of false news—he was referring not only to French ex-servicemen but also to the international organisations of ex-servicemen—had
consistently stated in all their congresses that the system of the dissemination of news should be reformed. Consequently, the French delegation could not but support the conclusions of the Madrid Conference—i.e., the prevention of the spread of false information, the rectification of false information and—what was of the highest importance—the granting of a status to foreign newspaper correspondents. If such status was not some day adopted, it would be impossible to guarantee the trustworthiness of news. With the whole work of the Madrid Conference, there was connected the establishment of the League’s wireless station.

Obviously, that work could not lead to immediate results, but undeniably progress had been made already, and certain problems which had appeared extremely difficult in Copenhagen had been found easier of solution in Madrid. If a third and fourth Conference met, it might be possible to reach a settlement. At present, the Assembly could not discuss the substance of the problem, but could only give material facilities. The definite, practical and modest solution submitted by the Rapporteur therefore deserved the Committee’s approval.

M. Cassin desired to submit one remark regarding the interpretation to be placed on the last paragraph of the resolution. As regards the phrase “requests the Council to authorise the Secretary-General”, it was understood that the Assembly did not thereby wish to deny that it possessed the power itself to authorise the Secretary-General; the Secretary-General and the Secretariat collaborated with the Assembly as well as the Council. The Assembly acted through the Council because, not being itself a permanent body, it entrusted to the Council the duty of granting the necessary authorisation when the occasion arose.

M. Cassin pointed out that resolution VI adopted by the Madrid Conference expressed the desire that the League Council should examine the question of the differences in the internal law of States so far as concerned responsibility for false information and its rapid correction, since such divergences might delay the appeasement of public opinion in the various countries. It might be possible to draw the Council’s attention to resolution VI of the Madrid Conference, in order that the Council might not limit its assistance to a pecuniary authorisation but might also consider the work which it was expected to do in order to facilitate future conferences. The point might be mentioned in the report if not in the resolution.

M. MENGELE (Hungary), who had taken part in the Madrid Conference, paid a tribute to the experience and work of the members of the Secretariat. While it was perhaps regrettable that definite or more complete solutions had not been found in Madrid, especially as regards the suppression of false news, and while questions had been discussed which, in his opinion, were outside the scope of the Conference, the meeting had nevertheless achieved very real progress, and such congresses made a very valuable contribution to the fulfilment of the ideas on which the League was based.

The Madrid Conference had unanimously expressed the desire that such meetings should be convened periodically. Since it was important that the League Secretariat should continue to give its assistance, M. Mengele associated himself with the Rapporteur’s proposal.

M. Komarnicki (Poland) agreed to the text of the resolution submitted to the Committee and also approved M. Visoiu’s report.

The Polish delegation had been one of the first to raise, during the discussion on moral disarmament, the question of the most suitable means of combating the spread of false news. Numerous proposals on the subject had been submitted to the Disarmament Conference. He asked M. Visoiu to insert in his report—for instance, it might be introduced in the part referring to the efforts of the Institute of Intellectual Co-operation in the sphere of broadcasting—the text adopted by a large majority in the Committee on Moral Disarmament.

The Polish delegate also warmly supported M. Cassin’s suggestion regarding the resolution adopted in Madrid. The latter constituted a complete programme, which should be warmly recommended to those preparing for the next Press Conference. The agreements which had already been applied in that sphere between some countries of Central and Eastern Europe had, with few exceptions, rendered extremely valuable services from the point of view of moral disarmament.

M. Komarnicki also wished to draw attention to the statement attached as Annex A to the report on the discussions at the Madrid Conference concerning the campaign against the spread of inaccurate information. This statement, which was, as it were, a “protocol of non-aggression” of the Press, had been signed by the representatives of the Government Press Bureaux of sixteen countries.

Attention should also be drawn to the importance of the first paragraph of resolution VI adopted in Madrid emphasising the differences at present existing in the internal law of States so far as concerns responsibility for false information.

The work submitted by M. Pella to the Committee on Moral Disarmament would also be extremely valuable for those preparing for the new conference.

M. LIEYEGOED (Netherlands) noted that the two main ideas by which the members of the Madrid Conference had been guided—namely, the freedom of the Press and the abundant supply of authentic information communicated to the Press with the least possible delay—were entirely

---

2 See "Second Conference of Governmental Press Bureaux and Representatives of the Press", Madrid 1933, pages 40 to 42.
in keeping with the principles which governed the position of the Press in the Netherlands. For that reason, he was in favour of anything that would secure a wider recognition of those two fundamental ideas, whether in the field of law or in that of agreements between Press associations.

In accordance with the Netherlands' tradition, which was reflected in the fact that there was no special legislation dealing with the Press in the Netherlands, it seemed preferable that the reform of the Press, including the campaign against false news, should, as far as possible, be in the hands of the Press organisations themselves. It was nevertheless obvious that the Netherlands Government would always be prepared to give effective assistance whenever required, with a view to reaching the ideal of journalism based exclusively on the search for truth. The Netherlands delegation therefore attached the greatest importance to the agreement between the Swiss, Netherlands and Polish associations of newspaper publishers concerning the rectification of false news. The results of such agreements would be more substantial if the journalists' organisations were to take part in them.

In that connection, the Netherlands delegation, while supporting the conclusions contained in the report of the Madrid Conference and the draft resolution submitted by the Rapporteur to the Committee, wondered whether, in the event of the example set by the three countries mentioned being followed by a series of bilateral and multilateral Press agreements providing for the possibility of rectifying false news, any international settlement as to the right of rectification should not be limited to co-ordinating and sanctioning the results which were the outcome of spontaneous growth. M. Lievegoed therefore advocated a study of the action taken by the Press organisations. It would be interesting to see what methods the journalists would employ to prevent any abuses to which the right of rectification might give rise.

Political propaganda, from whatever side it was exercised, always sought fresh channels, and it was by means of rectifications which would be nothing less than disguised propaganda that such propaganda would find new means of access to the Press. This it was essential to avoid, in order to obviate discriminating a right that deserved the fullest measure of respect and moral support. It was to be hoped that the Press organisations would find means of counteracting those abuses.

M. Lievegoed wondered whether that result could be attained by an international settlement drawn up without recourse to practical experience. He would merely put the question, since he was convinced that the danger to which he referred would not escape the attention of the experts dealing with that important question of the day.

He also supported the proposal that the Secretariat be authorised, by the inclusion in the budget of a small but sufficient credit, to take over the secretarial work at such conferences.

In conclusion, the Netherlands delegation highly appreciated the work begun at Geneva and so ably continued in Copenhagen and Madrid, work that raised great hopes for the future.

Mr. van Broekhuizen (Union of South Africa) said that, as an old newspaper man of more than fifty years' experience, he was in a position to say a few words about the Press. The Rapporteur had placed before the Committee a very optimistic view of what was going to happen in the future. He must admit that he personally was very pessimistic. Liberty of the Press existed in the Union of South Africa, but he would ask how many countries allowed the publication of the real truth about every nation in the world.

The Madrid Conference had recommended the establishment of an "impartial fact-finding body". In view of every nation's national aspirations, was it possible to get such a body? He made bold to state that in time of war if an angel from Heaven were to try to enlighten the people he would be crucified. He feared he was expressing a very pessimistic view, but such was his experience of very many years in South Africa, a country which had suffered in the past from misrepresentation. In time of war, opponents tried to misrepresent each other and to bring forward the worst side of the other nation. Liberty of the Press was an ideal which could be claimed to exist at present in South Africa and in some other countries, but he asked whether the liberty of the Press was not restricted on the one side by money and on the other side by politics. That was a question which might be asked at the Conference, and he looked forward to the dawn of a new era when there could really be established, in the words of the report of the Madrid Conference, "an impartial fact-finding body, composed of impartial non-official experts, who, with the full and informal collaboration of the Government Press Bureaux, will report on technical and financial methods of remedying the spread of false news". To him, that was really a question of the greatest importance, and, after an experience of fifty years in public life, he asked if it was possible. Everyone realised what the League of Nations had done in the past in that connection, but suppose such a body of men existed, and had to report the truth to the nations at war, was it probable that it would reach the men at war, or would it only be published by nations not interested in what was happening? He feared that the latter would be the case.

He hoped, however, that his pessimistic view of the question would be changed by future events. It was very easy for the Committee arrily to predict a wonderful future, but he felt that it must get down to practical facts and try to decide what could really be done so that true facts might be published by all the nations. When that day arrived, he felt that a new era would have dawned and that everybody would live in an El Dorado.

General Tanczos (Hungary) said that his delegation approved M. Visioianu's report and the accompanying resolution as they stood.
M. Cavazzoni (Italy) paid a tribute to the words of warning uttered by Mr. van Broekhuizen. He would, however, point out that, while realities must not be overlooked, all effort should be made to strive towards the ideal which the South African delegate had so well described. For that reason, M. Cavazzoni would vote in favour of the proposals submitted to the Committee.

With reference to the French delegate's remark that the responsibility of Governments increased in proportion to the restrictions on the freedom of the Press, he would add that there were many cases in which the organs of the Press, besides obeying Government instructions, were subservient to certain groups of industrialists whose only object was to make money and who did not hesitate to convulse the peoples with the menace of war.

M. Cavazzoni emphasised the importance of the assistance which the Press rendered to the work of the League by the publication of its discussions and their results in such a manner as to arouse the interest of public opinion. As an example he might mention the assistance granted by the world Press in the League's campaign against the abuse of narcotic drugs. That campaign had already given good results, especially in Europe, and, in that respect, the League could thank the Press, which had helped it in the good work. That was an additional argument for approving the report and adopting the resolution.

Mr. McDougall (Australia) said that the Australian delegation was fully in sympathy with both the report and the resolution; but some words which the Rapporteur used in introducing the note by the Secretariat had caused certain misgivings in his mind. The Rapporteur had indicated the desirability of a unanimous vote on the resolution, in order that the Fourth Committee might be induced to grant the small credit which was said to be necessary. That was a suggestion that pressure should be brought to bear on the Fourth Committee to make the sum available for that particular purpose. Mr. McDougall reminded the Committee that the failure of a number of nations to pay their contributions to the League made it impossible at the present time for the League to undertake new work involving new expenditure. He was not aware whether the collaboration of the League in the Madrid Conference involved any special vote, but the note of the Secretariat suggested that future collaboration might do so. He did not think it at all desirable that the Second Committee should attempt in any way to influence the decisions of the Fourth Committee, faced, as the Fourth Committee was, with the quite appalling situation of unpaid contributions.

M. Wunsz King (China) supported the resolution and paid a tribute to the valuable work done at the Madrid Conference, which had been convened and conducted by the Spanish Government with the assistance of the League Secretariat. So far as he could judge, the importance of this question and, he might add, its chief difficulty, lay in the manner in which the liberty of the Press could be reconciled with the suppression of false news in the interests of international peace and good understanding. He would therefore urge, in the name of the Chinese Government, that at the next conference a satisfactory arrangement to reconcile these two factors should be made.

In the meantime, he wished to state that the Chinese Government had accepted the resolutions of the Madrid Conference. He also wished to associate himself with the remarks made by the Polish delegate in referring to the declaration made by representatives of Government Press Bureaux regarding the spread of inaccurate information.1 To that declaration China was a party, and an additional declaration was made by the Director of the Information Section of the Kuomintang in Europe.

M. Visianu (Roumania), Rapporteur, replying to the various observations in his report, wished, in the first place, to inform the Spanish delegate that he shared the desire that the Conference might be certain of meeting again. He thought, however, that it was not within the competence of the Committee to take steps to that end, and that great caution was necessary. If no Government took the initiative of inviting the Conference within such period as might be agreed to be unduly protracted, and if, on the other hand, it was felt that the conference ought to meet, the Assembly would always be able to reconsider the matter.

The Rapporteur was further convinced that the Press organisations would appreciate the support of the organisations of ex-servicemen, of whom M. Cassin had made himself the spokesman. That would, no doubt, confirm the determination of the Press organisations to achieve results.

The Rapporteur agreed with the interpretation which M. Cassin had proposed to place on the last paragraph of the draft resolution. He was also prepared to mention in the report the question raised by M. Cassin as to the differences existing in the internal laws of States regarding the responsibility for false information.

He was also prepared, if the Committee agreed, to insert in the report a reference to the work of the Committee on Moral Disarmament as proposed by the Polish delegate. He would, however, point out that that was a very delicate question. Indeed, it was not for the Committee to preclude the programme of work of future Press conferences. The previous conferences had themselves drawn up the procedure to be followed for drafting their programme. That work had been entrusted to a Committee of very complex composition. The Second Committee should observe every precaution and should not forget that, in any case, all the proposals would have to be submitted to the competent Press organisations.

1 Annex A of the report on the Second Conference of Government Press Bureaux and Representatives of the Press, held in Madrid.
The Rapporteur shared the anxiety expressed by the Netherlands delegate in his observations, and agreed with him as to the necessity for acting with the greatest caution. He realised the advisability of recommending the study of the steps taken by the Press organisations.

Mr. McDougall (Australia) and Mr. van Broekhuizen (Union of South Africa) stated that while they were entirely in sympathy with the objects of the resolution they must, for the reasons already mentioned, abstain from voting for it.

The Committee unanimously adopted the resolution on the co-operation of the Press in the organisation of peace, the delegates of the Union of South Africa and of Australia abstaining from voting, and requested the Chairman to bring the resolution to the notice of the Fourth Committee.

FOURTH MEETING.

Held on Monday, September 17th, 1934, at 4.30 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Bennett (Canada).


M. Bianchini (Italy) expressed his appreciation of the work performed by the Economic and Financial Committees, whose members, though often very closely associated at home with their Governments' current activities in the economic and financial sphere, displayed the utmost independence and the widest possible spirit of co-operation at Geneva. He then proceeded to review the main economic and financial questions investigated by the two Committees.

He described first the efforts made since 1906 for the unification of laws relating to bills of exchange. He surveyed the action taken by the League and its Economic Committee, and observed that the two Conferences convened in 1930 and 1931, although they had not achieved universal unification, had nevertheless attained the very considerable result of reducing the various legal systems relating to bills of exchange to two—viz., the continental system as codified by the Conferences mentioned, and the Anglo-Saxon system, as codified by the Bills of Exchange Act and the Negotiable Instruments Act. That represented a noteworthy simplification, which might be the first step towards a measure of standardisation that was much to be desired. It would henceforth be easy to lay down sure and precise rules for the solution of conflicts between the laws embodying the two fundamental types.

M. Bianchini went on to describe the practical and technical results of the simplification thus achieved. He arrived at the conclusion that the Conferences had done extremely fruitful work and that the Economic Committee might feel every satisfaction at having afforded them its full support. He hoped that this first codification of private law, in the strict sense of the word, would be followed by progress in other fields, and that it represented a contribution to legal studies applied to the development of the technique of international trade.

He noted that, at its last session, the Economic Committee had considered the question of tourist traffic as an international economic factor. He drew special attention to the fact that it was incorrect to suppose that the growth of the international tourist traffic concerned certain countries alone. All countries, either because of their climatic or geographical advantages, or because of the special features of their national culture, might offer attractions to foreign tourists. The growth of tourist traffic was a matter of social progress. Its importance was constantly increasing and did not stop short at the frontiers of any country. For that reason, he hoped that the study proposed by the Economic Section and initiated by the Economic Committee would be continued, and that the efforts thus begun would give useful results.

He passed next to the economic and financial situation in general. Here he noted that the growing importance of the home market had relegated foreign trade to the second rank and that the organisation of trade in general was gradually becoming a function of government in several countries. He observed that the general strengthening of Customs barriers, the protection of agriculture in the industrial countries, the industrialisation of the agricultural countries, quantitative restrictions and currency control measures had more and more reduced the volume of international trade and speeded up the race towards self-sufficiency and economic nationalism. That policy might have yielded results had it been pursued by one country only and had the others consented to represent the necessary makeweight; but as each country took identical measures in the national sphere, they cancelled one another out. The result had been not only null; it had been definitely negative. It had seriously added to the disturbances which it had been desired to remove. In no case, had the individual problem been solved. That therefore was a difficulty which transcended the national boundaries and the final solution of which could be found only in concerted action on the international plane. After describing certain of the principles by which the Fascist Government had been guided in its action both at home and in international relations, and after depicting the corporative organisation by which those principles had been given shape.

1 The resolution was adopted by the Assembly on September 26th, 1934.