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TIMES WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY

D FUTURE OF THE LEAGUE

BRITISH SUPPORT REAFFIRMED

SANCTIONS AND REFORM

From Our League Correspondent

GENEVA, FEB. 1

At the end of a full debate the Committee for the Application of the Principles of the Covenant to-day decided to send the declarations of its members on the reform of the League, together with the documents on the subject, to the Assembly with a covering letter asking for further guidance. In the meantime the Committee will adjourn until it has received from the Assembly the necessary directions for the future progress of its work. That means that the question of League reform will be in abeyance until September, but it also implies that consideration of the League's future, and especially of Article XVI of the Covenant ("sanctions"), has entered into an active phase.

The discussions of to-day and yesterday, in which the representatives of Great Britain, France, and Russia outlined the views of their Governments, showed that the plea of the smaller States for a weakened League divested of "sanctions" has by no means found general favour. The discussion to-day brought out clearly the overwhelming volume of opinion against altering the Covenant, especially in the direction of weakening the automatic obligations of States in regard to collective action. It was made plain that if States are to be ruled by fear a weakened League will be of no more use to them than a strong one, and also that even were the League to be converted into a mere consultative body the goal of universality would still be far off.

LORD CRANBORNE'S SPEECH

It fell to Lord Cranborne to make a constructive proposal in a speech winding up the discussion.

He reminded the Committee that it had been set up to consider the application of the Covenant under existing conditions and to report to the Assembly the views of the nations represented on it. He said that considerable progress had been made. Valuable documentation had been obtained, views of the utmost importance had been expressed, and the declarations which had been made during the week were of a far-reaching character. It was now necessary to examine carefully the position which had been reached. They were merely an advisory committee, and it was essential that they should report before proceeding to a further stage. He doubted whether further progress could be usefully attempted at the present time. The views expressed by the various nations were divergent, and they required time to consider and reflect upon them. The situation could not be regarded as discouraging. On all sides there had been evidence of continued attachment to the principles of the Covenant and convinced belief in the importance of maintaining the collective system. The British Government had not weakened, and did not intend to weaken their support of the League. Mr. Eden had made the position of the British Government abundantly clear at the opening of the Council.

But, he added, while there was this broad measure of agreement, he thought that the Committee needed a breathing-space. Too great precipitation could do no good and might do infinite harm. The wisest plan in the circumstances would be to prepare a communication for the Assembly of the plainest and simplest kind, not entering into the fundamental issues nor attempting any assessment of views.

The Committee will hold a brief formal meeting for preparing this communication to-morrow, and will then adjourn.

Other speeches are reported on page 14

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